

## New year celebration at AVG Anaikatti, Coimbatore, India

New Year Celebration at AVG Anaikatti is now a habit to many of our devotees and 2024 is no exception. Many devotees gave puja sankalpas and several turned at the Gurukulam up for the Special puja scheduled at 10.30 am. The function was well attended by Swamijis, Swaminis and devotees.

This year's celebration started with the Eleven Draviyam Abhishekam to Lord Dakshinamurti, with the divine chanting of Rudram and Chamakam by Swaminis Saradanandaji and Vedartanandaji. The devotees also joined the Swaminis in chanting, making the temple vibrate with the hymns and devotion. After the Abhishekam and while the Alankara was being done to the Lord, everyone of us were blessed by the Swamijis and Swaminis and with their New Year messages to ponder over and bring into our life.

Brief take-aways from the Anugraha Bhashanam of Acharyaji, Sw Shankaranandaji who was present conducting a 10 day retreat for sadhakas and Swamini Brahmaleenanandaji.

### New Year Day Anugraha Bhashanam of our Acharya, Swami Sadatmanandaji

Happy New Year 2024! We have so many New Year days. We have got Gujarati New Year, Tamil New Year and then we have got this English New Year. Some New Year day we celebrate because we want to start afresh. We want to press the refresh button with a hope that tomorrow will be better, next year will be better. Now things are not going okay, this year it will be alright. From next year I will change. Therefore, we have New Year resolutions! Whether New Year resolutions work or not is a different thing. But the New Year resolutions are indicative of our hopes, indicative of our commitment to grow. So if you have made some New Year resolutions, it is alright. You can take these New Year resolutions in the form of prayers and wish. We can hope that we will be able to do better. Generally we wish everybody – "Happy New Year". What is the meaning of this Happy New Year. Year is year. Year is aspect of time which cannot be happy or unhappy. It is *asangah*. It floats like a wind.

*What do we wish when we say Happy New Year?*

We wish - May your New Year be filled with moments of days of months of happiness. So when we wish a Happy New Year to others and ourselves, it is nice to ponder over, what is this happiness? Constantly laughing is not happiness. In fact, it is madness if somebody is laughing all the time. Having constant excitement or constant sense pleasure, that also is not happiness. Happiness is a state of being happy. It is centered on "I". It is my state of being happy. Sukham is What everybody fundamentally wants is happiness.

*How to attain this happiness?*

Our Vedanta says that ultimate happiness (*parama sukham*) is by the discovery of fullness. By discovering that I am limitless Brahman, you discover inner happiness which is otherwise called fullness. So the ultimate means of being happy is the discovery of my inherent, natural fullness which is my true nature. To own up that fullness, one requires relative happiness. A person who is relatively happy and calm alone can discover I am shanta svarupa. Therefore we require relative happiness. For that the simple principle is - *pratikulasya tyagah anukulasya grahanam*. Whatever is non-conducive, obstructive that we drop and whatever is conducive to your happiness that we adopt. What are pratikula ie, non-conducive to our relative happiness, we need to remove these obstacles.

*Very briefly, we see, what are the things that are non-conducive (pratikula) to our happiness?*

Constant judgement of others and ourselves.

Our insistence and resistance. Why it happened like this?

Carrying hurt, grudge in our mind. Not letting resentment go away, but holding on to it. That obstructs our happiness.

The fear that something will happen to me to my loved ones.

All these obstruct relative happiness.

*Let us see now what are conducive (anukula) to happiness ?*

One is the attitude of gratitude. That is very conducive to happiness. We acknowledge whatever blessing we have received in our life. That gratitude is very conducive to happiness.

Second thing is- **The mind to share** whatever you have. You enjoy sharing. If you have that mind, you have more avenues for happiness. One Swamiji said - what is the address of happiness? The address is that mind which enjoys sharing. The inclination for sharing that is very conducive to happiness.

Third thing is- Earning more and more **punyam** by prayers By puja (kayika), by chanting (vacika) or mental japa or meditation (manasa). According to our sastra that is the decisive means for relative happiness.

And the last one is - **prayerfulness**. Prayerfulness is the awareness that everything is given and given is non-separate from the giver. In other words, it is appreciating Isvara in every person, in every situation; appreciating the order that is obtaining everywhere.

*Sarve bhavanti sthAne, aham bhavAmi sthAne.*

Everything is in order, and I am in order.

That order is Isvara. Appreciating the presence of Isvara is the greatest way of being happy.

I wish you all the best to discover this happiness throughout the year. Om tat Sat

### **New Year 2024 message of Swami Shankaranandaji**

I wish you all a very happy, auspicious beginning. May this beginning bless everybody, may this year be fulfilling and bring you more blessings as you go. Time moves whether we want it or not, time moves.

Shankaracarya says in Bhaja Govindam -

*dinayāminyau sāyaṃ prātaḥ  
śīśiravasantaḥ punarāyātāḥ ;  
kālaḥ krīḍati gacchatyāyu-  
stadapi na muṣatyāśāvāyuh .*

*Dina, dina* means day. *yāmini* means night. *dinayāminyau punarāyātaḥ* - Now it is day, it will become night. Night will become day. *śīśiravasantau* – autumn and spring, they will come. Seasons will roll. *kālaḥ krīḍati* – time plays. *gacchatyāyu* – even as time plays our longevity ebbs away. *tadapi na muṣcatyāśāvāyuḥ* - what doesn't go? The hope that somehow things will become better. Hoping doesn't make things better.

In the same Bhaja Govindam Acharya says -

How long the hope continues? The person has lived a long life. *aṅgaṃ galitaṃ palitaṃ muṇḍaṃ* - His hair has gone grey. All the parts of the body are decaying. *daśanavihīnaṃ jātaṃ tuṇḍaṃ* – What about the teeth in his mouth; either they are not there, or they are very new, now in modern times. Then, in Shankara's time, when it is gone it is gone. There are no teeth in the mouth. *vr̥ddho yāti gr̥hītvā daṇḍaṃ* - he walks with a stick. Still what? *tadapi na muṣcatyāśāpiṇḍaṃ* - The expectation that something outside will make me good, like I will win a lottery or somehow, I will become rich or somehow things will work out. This, 'some how thing will work out', is a fond hope even when a man has become old. This is true in Shankara's time, this is true today also for lot of people.

*In this new year what should we do? What can we do to make it more fruitful for us ?*

In the whole Gita, Bhagavan has three things to tell us. Three things to do. *Yajna daana tapah karma* - karyameva, should be done. What are the three things Bhagavan asks us to do? *Yajna, daana, tapah*.

**Yajna** does not mean fire ritual. Yajna means relating with Isvara. Bringing more Isvara into one's life, seeing Isvara's presence in the world, in situations, in people, in all always. So, you don't look at a person just as a person, you look at the person as the manifestation of Isvara. We have to bring that attitude in ourselves. We learn to accept thing as they are because that is how Isvara is in front of me. My freewill is not in changing the world. I can't change anybody. If somebody changes, they are being kind to me. What should I do? I should learn to accept what is, by seeing that is how Isvara is.

What do I have in my hand? An ability to respond to what comes in front of me. In that response lies my freedom. And that is where I can grow. Yajna means connecting with Isvara. Start with a prayer. But that is not all. Extend that prayerfulness through the day. See Isvara in every situation, if we can. That is *Yajna*.

What is **daanam**? I have some resources, some wealth. It is an easy way of starting. What I have I share. Give to people who are in need. Reach out, do something. I can't give much. I give what I can. I can give 10 Rupees, I give 10. I can give 100 Rupees, I give a 100. I can give a thousand, I give thousand. But give, because in giving one becomes rich. Hoarding one becomes small.

Who should I give it to? To people in need, preferably. If I give it to you and you give it to me, that is our exchange programme. You take a gift to a birthday party and the birthday party host will give you a return gift. This is the modern culture. We don't need to scratch each other's back. We have to give to the one who needs. This is *daanam*.

**What is Tapas ?** A discipline, some discipline which I don't have, which I want to grow into. We can all have one *tapas*, in one day. Any day is good. Can I try to make a start with what we call *wak* tapas, at least some part of the day. What is *wak* tapas? I speak if what I say is going to be beneficial to the listener. If it is not going to be hurtful to the listener. If it is needed and warranted by the listener – useful, not hurting and he wanted to listen to you. If not, I don't speak. Try doing this one tapas. If not the whole day, for one part of the day, one hour, half an hour, 15 minutes. We try, we make a beginning. We do what we can do, then new year becomes a year to celebrate. I should celebrate in what way I have grown from the last year to this year. That will be a celebration. Otherwise, every year we come and wish everybody 'happy new year, happy new year', and we go away. What do we do?

This is my prayer that we should all grow over the year, so we feel we have accomplished something over the year, and ultimately over the years we should grow to a point where we don't need to grow any further and we can be satisfied

being who we are. Om tat sat.

### **New Year 2024 message of Swamini Brahmaleenanandaji**

Swaminiammaji started with what we all of us wish every new year – that all our wishes/ desires should fructify the way we want, assuming what is good for us will remain good for ever. Unfortunately it is not so and Swamini amma went on to quote from Bharathiyar – while in the first line of his verse he says that whatever we think should succeed; but immediately in the very next line, he says that we should always think of only good.

In another verse, he prays to Mata Parasakti that the bad should be removed from his mind before he prays for the success of his wishes. She quotes from the Prasanthara Ratna Malika, when answering the question – what is the most desirable for a human being, Sankaracharya says *sva para hitaaya* – that is the one which is good for self and others. Many times, we do not know what is good for us and do not know how to choose.

When we choose something, thinking it as an Amruthopamam for us, and realize that it is visham in the long run. Though all of us want to choose what is only 'hitam' for us, we seldom realize that what is 'hitam' to us could well be a 'ahitam' to others. Such a choice will also become a 'ahitam' to us in the long run. Therefore, we should choose not only what is good to us, but also not bad for others. Only dharma will be good for us as well as others.

At the next level it is 'hitAtma'. When Arjuna asks Bhagawan – please tell me what is hitAtma, Bhagawan shows the way to Moksha by Atma jnAnam. The atma is the same in everyone of us and thinking and doing good for all of us is hitAtama. Thinking '*lokA samasthA sukhino bhavantu*' is hitAtma – not seeing any difference between '*sva*' and '*para*'. She concluded her anugraha bhashanam by saying that we have all been blessed with this manushya janma only to think and do what is hitam to self and others. Om Tat Sat.



By the time the devotees were blessed with the above anugraha bhashanas, our priests completed the alankara to Lord Dakshinamurti. What else could bless the devotees on a new year's day better than the blissful darshan of the Lord immediately after the wishes and blessings of our Swamijiis and Swaminis. Devotees could not remove their eyes from the floral and ornamental decoration of Lord Dakshinamurti.

The New Year Day celebrations ended with Prasadam of Lord Dakshinamurti and a lovely and tasty lunch served in our dining hall to about 500 people.

*Om Tat Sat*



- Report by Ms. Padma