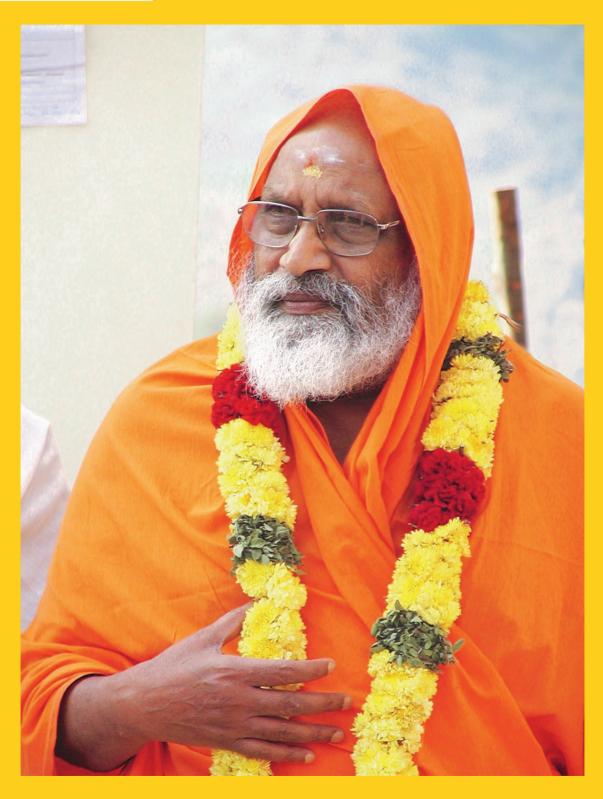


# Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Rs. 15







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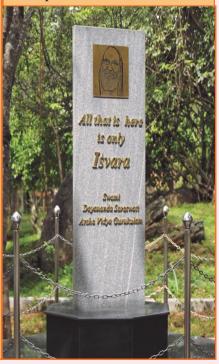
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## Sādhana-pañcakam Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk

This is the fifth part of the serial article, continuation from June 2021 newsletter.

VERSE 2

सङ्गः सत्स् विधीयतां भगवतो भक्तिर्दृढाऽऽधीयतां

शान्त्यादिः परिचीयतां दृढतरं कर्माश्च सन्त्यज्यताम् ।

सद्विद्वानुपसृप्यतां प्रतिदिनं तत्पादुका सेव्यतां

ब्रह्मैकाक्षरमर्थ्यतां श्रुतिशिरोवाक्यं समाकर्ण्यताम् ।। 2 ।।

sangah satsu vidhīyatām bhagavato bhaktirdṛḍhā''dhīyatām

śāntyādiḥ paricīyatām dṛḍhataram karmāśu santyajyatām |

sadvidvānupas rpyatām pratidinam tatpādukā sevyatām

brahmaikākṣaramarthyatām śrutiśirovākyam samākarṇyatām || 2||

सङ्गः saṅgaḥ - gathering, association; सत्सु satsu - with people committed to the pursuit of knowledge; विधीयताम् vidhīyatām - may it be done; भगवतः bhagavataḥ - of the Lord; भिक्तः bhaktiḥ - devotion; दृढा दृश्चष्टह्व - firm; आधीयताम् ādhīyatām - may it be cultivated; शान्त्यादिः sāntyādiḥ - the six-fold virtues of sama, etc.; पिरचीयताम् paricīyatām - may they be collected, gained through practice; दृढतरम् dṛḍhataram - very firmly; कर्म karma - actions (even enjoined actions); आशु āśu - quickly; सन्त्य-ज्यताम् santyajyatām - may they be completely given up; सिद्धहान् sadvidvān - one who knows the truth; उपसृप्यताम् upasṛpyatām - may he be approached properly; प्रतिदिनम् pratidinam - daily; तत्पादुका tatpādukā - his feet (lit. 'sandals'); सेव्यताम् sevyatām - may (the knower of the truth) be served, worshipped; ब्रह्मेकाक्षरम् Brahmaikākṣaram - non-dual, imperishable Brahman; अर्थ्यताम् arthyatām - may the knowledge be sought; श्रुतिशिरोवाक्यम् srutisirovākyam - Vedānta, upaniṣads (lit. 'mahāvākyas, statements that are the head of the Veda'); समाकण्यताम् Samākarṇyatām - may they be listened to well.

'May you associate with people who are committed to the pursuit of knowledge.

May you cultivate a firm devotion to the Lord. May you firmly practice to gain the six-fold virtues of śama, etc.<sup>28</sup> May you quickly and firmly renounce actions, even those enjoined by the śruti. May you approach properly one who knows the truth, and serve him daily. May you request from him the knowledge of the imperishable, non-dual Brahman. May you listen well to the statements of the *upaniṣads*.'

#### IMPORTANCE OF SATSANG

The previous verse said ātmecchā vyavasīyatām, may one entertain the desire for self-knowledge. That desire for self-knowledge is called śubha-icchā,<sup>29</sup> a desire for that which is śubha. Śubha means auspicious, and what is auspicious is mokṣa. So let this be entertained first. Then, in order to fulfil this desire, the verse said nijagṛhāt tūrṇam vinirgamyatām, there should be a certain vairāgya, dispassion towards other pursuits. Then what should you do?

Saṅgaḥ satsu vidhīyatām; may you seek the company of, associate with sat-puruṣas, people who are committed to the pursuit of knowledge. Saṅgaḥ satsu means satpuruṣaiḥ saha vāsaḥ, association, living with and keeping the company of sat-puruṣas. This is very important because the desire for ātmā has to be protected, like one protects a small spark. In the old days, they used to make fire by churning a rod with two wooden blocks, one on top of the other. The friction caused by this churning would create some sparks, and they would collect the sparks in cotton. This was very carefully tended and then made into fire.

Similarly, the  $\bar{a}tma-icch\bar{a}$ , desire for  $\bar{a}tm\bar{a}$ , will have many obstructions. There can be a lot of waylaying. For example, some people go to Rishikesh, giving up everything, only to end up learning to play the  $v\bar{\imath}n\bar{a}$ . You need not go all the way to Rishikesh for that. So they cannot completely dedicate themselves to  $v\bar{\imath}n\bar{a}$  either. It becomes a problem. This is what they call waylaying. You get yourself

 $<sup>^{28}</sup>$  Śama = mastery over the mind; dama = mastery over the external organs such as eyes, ears etc.; uparama = doing what is to be done by you at a given time, place and situation; titikṣā = enduring both pleasant and unpleasant situations with a cheerful attitude; śraddhā = commitment to the words of śruti and the ācārya; samādhāna = focus, concentration.

<sup>29</sup> शुभस्य मोक्षस्य इच्छा इति शुभेच्छा

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> A stringed instrument played in Indian classical music.

completely waylaid. You do not reach what you want to reach and instead you go for other things. So you learn some  $v\bar{\imath}n\bar{a}$ , some bhajans and some  $\bar{a}sanas$ . Afterwards, you start your own society. This is an unfortunate thing, allowing yourself to be totally sidetracked.

Instead, you must find people who are really given to the pursuit of this knowledge. One should keep company with such people alone, saha vāsaḥ krīyatāṁ Then this desire, however small a spark it may be, can become a big and all-consuming fire. One must have this burning desire for the knowledge, because only a person with that kind of desire can really understand this. This is something very special. Ātma-icchā is the main thing, it is the only solution for you. No other solution is available. The ātmaicchā is such a jealous desire that it does not allow for other desires. It has to be an all consuming desire.

In Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, a śirovrata is discussed; a person with his hair, as though, on fire. If your hair caught fire, what will you do? Will you ask somebody, 'What shall I do now?' No, you will just dive into any water available, however dirty the water. That is the kind of urgency we are talking about. Similarly here, the person has this allconsuming desire for ātmā, meaning desire for ātma- jñānam, knowledge of ātmā. Ātmā is already there, so what is needed is ātma-jñānam. To tend this small little flame of desire so it becomes an all-consuming fire, you need to have satsaṅga with sat-puruṣas, those whose dedication is to knowledge. Vid-hīyatām means krīyatām, may one do this.

There will be many difficulties along the way. These are called *antarāyas*, hindrances. Any one small thing can switch off the desire. You may think, 'I'll see about this later,' or else you might conclude, 'There is nothing there, what is the use of all that?' People can easily get sidetracked. There are many obstacles to *mokṣa*. This is because what you are interested in, is something that is against the ordinary, common pursuits of a human being. Since you are going against the current, the natural *svabhāva*, disposition of a human being, naturally there can be any number of obstructions. These obstructions can be emotional or they can be external.

#### DEVOTION HELPS TO ELIMINATE OBSTACLES

To get rid of these obstructions, bhagavataḥ-dṛḍhā bhaktiḥādhīyatām; may you cultivate dṛḍhā bhakti, firm devotion, for Bhagavān. Who is Bhagavān? Bhagaḥ asya asti iti bhagavān, the one who has bhaga is called Bhagavān. Bhaga means ṣaḍ-aiśvarya, the sixfold absolute virtues. They are aiśvaryam, overlordship, jñānam, all knowledge, vairāgyam, total dispassion born of fullness, vīryam, power, yaśas, fame and śrī, all forms of wealth. Bhagavataḥ bhaktiḥ means devotion for which the object is Bhagavān. It is not Bhagavān's bhakti! 31

Bhakti is an internal attitude. When you do physical pūjā, that is also bhakti. But dṛḍhā bhakti is in the form of a conviction that with the grace of Bhagavān, it is possible for me to eliminate all my obstacles. Another word for bhakti is viśvāsa. Upāsana, various practices of meditation and worship, are also bhakti. Not only do you perform pūjā externally, internally you also do dhyānam,<sup>32</sup> meditation, also a form of bhakti. Dṛḍha-viśvāsaḥ, strong faith in Īśvara, likewise is bhakti. This means that tomorrow will not be a problem. Things will happen for you, as they are meant to. There is nothing for you to worry about, no worry for the future. You live for today. Having strong faith in Īśvara, in the order of things, that is the surrender.

Bhagavat-bhakti is an important thing in this pursuit. It is both a religious pursuit and a spiritual pursuit because Bhagavān, the Lord, is involved here. All that we are seeking is Bhagavān, in fact. Bhagavatbhakti is part of the seeker's virtue, and is for gaining as much of the Lord's grace as one can in order to eliminate all the obstacles. The dṛḍhā bhakti itself gives you a psychological advantage. With devotion and faith, naturally you can relax because you let Bhagavān take over, it is his job. Once you have given the job to an efficient being like Bhagavān, you need not bother about it. We cannot have a better, more efficient person than Bhagavān.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> कर्मणिषष्ठी नखत सम्बन्धषष्ठी

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> सगुण-ब्रह्म-विषय-मानसव्यापारः ध्यानम्

So hand over the baby to Bhagavān. Let him babysit, why do you bother? Make Bhagavān your babysitter, this is the idea. What is the baby? It is a problem baby. 'Problem baby' means your problem is the baby. Hand over all your problems to Bhagavān. You cannot have a better babysitter. Bhagavān has so many tricks. Whatever the baby wants, he can bring. He can keep the baby in good humor, so there is no problem for you.

#### **BREAKING THINKING HABITS**

Śāntyādiḥ paricīyatām; śānti means śama, mastery over the ways of the mind. The word ādi means 'and so on,' referring to dama, uparama, titikṣā, śraddhā, and samād-hāna.³³ Paricīyatām means may you collect a lot, or in other words, abhyasyatām, may one practice. Let śama and the other virtues be collected by you, practiced by you. How can you practice inner tranquility? Understand the ways of your mind. Śama covers all of your psychological and emotional well-being. Dama is external discipline. Śama means understanding the ways of your mind. These can be gained through effort alone, involving a lot of pain, sacrifice and understanding. The whole process is a painful one. You have to deny yourself of certain things. You have to go through the pain because the more you look into yourself, the more painful it becomes, to yourself and to others. Others also should be understanding. And you should be understanding to yourself. Only then can you go through that small spell, which one has to go through.

Therefore, śāntyādiḥ paricīyatām, may these qualities be cultivated in your daily living. You have to break old habits by living, understanding, maintaining a certain attitude, and so on. It is especially important to break thinking habits. These are very difficult to handle. Being diehard, they do not go away easily. May these thinking habits be reconstituted so that you do not get into the same groove of wrong thinking. When wrong thinking is there, pain will be there immediately. There are certain ways of thinking that cause pain, and you must understand these well. You must do whatever is necessary to have psychological well-being.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 33}$  The six-fold qualifications for seeker of self-knowledge – refer to footnote 28.

#### THE PURPOSE OF SANNYĀSA

Dṛḍhataraṁ karmāśu santyajyatām; here he is prescribing sannyāsa.<sup>34</sup> This renunciation of karma is meant for a sannyāsī, of course, and therefore we have to understand this properly. Dṛḍhataraṁ means very firmly. Karma here means vihitakarma, all the karmas enjoined by the śāstra. Kāmya-karma, karma to fulfil a desire, was mentioned before. The person is already set to give up kāmya-karma. But now it says one should give up vihita-karma also. You cannot give that up unless you take sannyāsa, so here the verse says, 'May one quickly give up karma in accordance with the śāstra.' The time has come for you to give up even nitya-naimittika-karmas, the daily duties, etc., which you have been doing regularly and properly. This is because your commitment is for only one thing, knowledge. How do you give up these duties? By sannyāsa, which means letting your sole pursuit be for knowledge. Sannyāsa is not simply cutting off all your hair and wearing ochre robes. There is something special about sannyāsa.

The special thing is that once you take *sannyāsa*, you are not good for anything else. The only thing you are good for is *ātma-jñānam*. A *sannyāsī* is meant only for *jñānam*, knowledge. You are not qualified for anything else. You are not qualified for marriage. You are not qualified for a job. You disqualify yourself from everything else by taking to a life of *sannyāsa*. Thereby, there is a clinching that takes place inside. You have committed yourself. There is nothing else you can do. Thus, you pursue *jñānam* to the exclusion of everything else. This total dedication does something good. Simply taking to *sannyāsa* is not enough to gain *jñānam*, but it does help a *mumukṣu*, one who wants to gain this knowledge and discover freedom. Therefore, it is important to understand the spirit of this, the dedicated pursuit of knowledge. The author also gives you a certain time for that, namely *āśu*, quickly, do not postpone.

To be continued...

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Renunciation, the final stage of life in the Vedic tradition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> कर्म आशु विधिवत् त्यज्यताम्

## Kaivalyopaniṣad Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati's transcribed talk

This is the second part of the serial article, continuation from June 2021 newsletter.

#### The four āśramas or stages of life

As we understand it, *brahmacarya* is the first stage of life. It is the life of a student. A *brahmacārī* is one who approaches the teacher, lives with the teacher and serves him, and studies the Vedas and related texts under his tutelage. It is not only a period of the study of scriptures in the *gurukula* or teacher's house, but also a study of how to live life effectively. Traditionally, the students learned dharma-śāstra or texts dealing with the righteous way of life, and learned of various rituals, their purpose, and how and when to perform them. They learned to recite the Vedas and were required to memorize them with their meanings. They learned vyākaraṇa or Sanskrit grammar, the principles of logic, astrology, and so on. The student's only priority was to study, along with observing the discipline required to pursue knowledge and keeping oneself fit. Service to the teacher included going out into the community to beg for food and serving food to the teacher. All of that was a part of the duties of the students. Sometimes, such service also included taking cows and other cattle out to graze and taking care of them. If there was a farm, the service included participating in the activities of farming, and so on. One can see that all this also provided the students sufficient exercise. Such was the life of a student—no political activities or any other kinds of activities at all.

The second stage of life is *gārhasthya*, the life of a householder. Well-equipped with knowledge and training, the student would come home from the *gurukula*. He was now ready to lead an active life, a life of pursuing *artha* and *kāma*, success and pleasure, both here and in the hereafter, on the basis of *dharma* or duty, right-eousness, responsibility, and accountability, wherein there is sensitivity towards the needs of others.

The life of a householder is one of duty and pleasure, though not indulgence.

There is a fair amount of self control because indulgence damages a person. When a householder lives life intelligently, he turns from being a consumer to becoming a contributor; he gains maturity, by which he becomes free from the cravings for pleasure and success. He discovers the inner poise with which one can live with oneself without any need for external props. Such is the life of a *grhastha*.

Living in this manner equips one for the next stage of life - that of a *vānaprastha* or 'forest dweller.' The person now retires to a forest, a place devoid of social activity. A man goes alone, or, if the wife chooses to join him, with his wife. They hand over all the responsibilities of the household to their children and live a life of worship in a secluded place. They live as friends in preparation for a life of *sannyāsa*.

The final stage of life is *sannyāsa* or the life of renunciation, in which *mokṣa* is the primary pursuit; the person renounces all possessions and relationships. *Sannyāsīs* forfeit even the right to earn money to feed themselves; they have to depend upon the mercy of others for that. Of course, they have no home. Traditionally, they were wondering monks and, if they did stay at one place, it would either be to sit at the feet of the teacher for scriptural study or to teach others.

The four āśramas or stages of one's life are thus brahmacarya, gārhasthya, vānaprasthya, and sannyāsa. These days, we don't have vānaprasthya as a distinct stage of life, and leaving home as a child to stay at a gurukula is also quite rare; so we may say that there are two stages of life, gārhasthya and sannyāsa.

Each of the Vedas is made up of four sections: the Samhitā, the Brāhmaṇa, the Āraṇyaka and the Upaniṣad. The first two sections, the Samhitā and the Brāhmaṇa, are mainly concerned with rituals and *dharma* and address the needs of the *gṛhastha*. The Āraṇyaka contains meditations and forms of worship that are to be performed in the forest and so this section addresses the needs of the *vānaprastha*. Finally, the Upaniṣads address the needs of a *sannyāsī*.

The Upaniṣads occur after the *karma-kāṇḍa* and at the end of the teachings of the Vedas and are called Vedānta, as in *vedānām antaḥ vedāntaḥ*, the end of the Vedas.

There is another way to understand why they are called Vedānta. The word *anta* does not just mean the physical end; *anta* also means final ascertainment. In that sense, Vedānta can be understood to be the ultimate vision of the Vedas.

#### The meaning of the word upanisad

Upaniṣad means self-knowledge. The word upaniṣad is derived from the root sad, to which the prefixes upa and ni are added. In the root sad, the letter sa gets changed to ṣa because of a sandhi-rule, and thus we have the verbal root upaniṣad. A pratyaya or suffix called kvip is added to this verbal stem to convert it into a noun; this suffix is added and dropped. Even in the English language, we find instances of such usage; for example, the suffix 'er' in the word cooker, which indicates the verbal noun, is subsequently dropped, but the meaning of the word cook remains, 'the one who cooks.' The suffix added to the verbal root upaniṣad transforms it into the verbal noun upaniṣad. In addition, the suffix kvip imparts to the noun the sense of agency and, therefore, upaniṣad, which means knowledge, is seen to bring something about or do something.

The subject matter of the knowledge contained in the *upaniṣad* is indicated by the first prefix *upa*, which implies a sense of nearness. Hence, the word *upaniṣad* means the knowledge of something that is near. How near is near? When nearness is not qualified, it implies unqualified nearness. So what is it that is near? Nearness, as we know, is a relative concept. For instance, this table is nearer to me than you are. Then again, my body is nearer to me than this table is. However, my mind is even nearer than the body, and, in truth, my self is nearer than anything else. Thus, the word near ultimately resolves into the self. By this, we can understand that the *upaniṣad* is the knowledge of the self.

*Ni* means *niścitam*, well ascertained. Here it indicates a knowledge that is free from any doubt or vagueness. Therefore, not only is the *upaniṣad* the knowledge of the self, but it is also a knowledge that is free from doubt, vagueness or error. Doubt is an obstacle to clarity, as are vagueness and outright error, of course. Sometimes, we have knowledge, but it may be erroneous knowledge. If what is

lying in front of us is a rope and we imagine it to be a snake, it is knowledge all right, but an erroneous knowledge. Sometimes, we may wonder, "Is it a rope or a snake?" That would be a kind of knowledge that is mixed with doubt. Such knowledge cannot be called true knowledge either. It could also be that sometimes, it appears as though something is there, but we don't know what it is. In such an instance, there is some degree of knowledge, but it is devoid of clarity. *Niścitam jñānam* is a clear, abiding knowledge that is free from any hint of vagueness, doubt or error.

#### Self-knowledge is unlike any other knowledge

In the case of self knowledge, unlike the condition of every other form or kind of knowledge, what one seeks is what one wishes to attain or become. The fact is that we are seeking to become something all the time. We are seeking to become different from the way we now are because we are not happy with what we find ourselves to be. Therefore, there is a constant endeavor to bring about some change, so that we may be different, and thus happier and more acceptable to ourselves. As Pūjya Swamiji¹ says, one is always only seeking to be a pleased self, a happy self, a satisfied self. Yet why does one want to become a pleased self? It is because he is not pleased with the person he finds himself to be; his perception of himself does not measure up to his expectations of himself. He perceives himself as being inadequate, wanting or lacking, and is not willing to be that wanting, lacking or inadequate being. Therefore, he wants to be free from every limitation; he wants to become limitless.

When we analyze what we are seeking to be, we will discover that we are seeking to be free from every form of limitation; in being limitless alone can we be pleased with ourselves. In the Chāndogyopaniṣad, sage Sanatkumāra says to sage Nārada, yo vai bhūmā tatsukham nālpe sukham asti², indeed, in that which is bhūmā or abundant and limitless alone is happiness. Only the limitless can provide happiness.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Swami Viditatmananda's teacher, Swami Dayananda Saraswati

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Chā.Up. 7.23.1

*Na alpe sukham asti*, there cannot be *sukha* or happiness in that which is limited. It is a very fundamental definition of happiness that the Upaniṣad lays out, in that happiness can only be in the limitless and not in anything that is limited. It is therefore that, whenever we find ourselves limited or lacking in any way, we become unhappy.

In fact, when we say that we want to be happy, it amounts to saying that we want to be limitless. This may not be understood by most people, because happiness is usually associated with things other than oneself, such as wealth, name, fame, recognition, heaven, and so on. These are things that the vast majority is trying to achieve, accomplish, or become. Yet, going by the definition given in the Upanisad, it is very clear that happiness can only lie in limitlessness and also that there cannot be happiness in being limited.

Wanting to be adequate, or happy, or pleased, amounts to wanting to be free from every limitation. This is the endeavor of every individual. It is this endeavor to become limitless that has been making us assume embodiments one after the other endlessly, from the beginning of time itself. Vedānta says that this desire to become limitless can be satisfied only when it is discovered that we already are the limitless. A limited being cannot become limitless. Regardless of what one does, regardless of how much one acquires or gains or attains, one can indeed never *become* limitless. As the Muṇḍakopaniṣad says, nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena³. That which is akṛta, uncreated, cannot be created through karma, action. By nature, the limitless is uncreated and free from all considerations of time. That it is timeless means that it is here right now. Whatever is present right now does not have to be created; it has only to be discovered.

That the limitless has only to be discovered or only to be known amounts to saying that what one wants to become is but what one needs to know, because 'becoming' limitless can only be accomplished by knowing that one already is of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Mu.Up. 1.2.12

the nature of the limitless. Vedānta says, *tat tvam asi*<sup>4</sup>, 'that thou art.' Because one is limitless, the knowing of this fact and the becoming of what one seeks to be are one; in truth, what each one of seeks is nothing but our own true nature. When one gains the knowledge, one spontaneously becomes limitless, one spontaneously owns up to his true nature, which is limitlessness. Such spontaneous or abiding knowledge alone is true knowledge. If it is an effort to remember, it cannot be called knowledge. While it may need remembrance for a while or until it becomes abiding knowledge, as long as it takes effort to remain limitless, it cannot be called an abiding knowledge; knowledge is called *niścitam jñānam* only when it is free from error, vagueness or doubt.

The third element of the word *upaniṣad* is the root *sad*. We saw earlier that the *kvip-pratyaya* imparts an element of agency. Therefore, the teaching of the *upaniṣad* or self-knowledge is seen to do something. What it does is indicated by the root *sad*. According to the *dhātupāṭha* or dictionary of verbs, the root *sad* has three meanings: *gati*, *viśaraṇa*, and *avasādana*. *Gati* means movement as in going somewhere; this knowledge 'takes' us somewhere. *Viśaraṇa* means loosening; this knowledge loosens something that is deep set. *Avasādana* means destruction; this knowledge is seen to destroy something.

When we say that the knowledge of the self takes us somewhere, what do we mean? Where does it take us? It takes us where we want to be; it takes us to limitlessness. This knowledge 'takes' us to *brahman* by revealing the fact that limitlessness or *brahman* is our very nature. It does not take us to any place in a literal sense, but it is as though taking us to limitlessness, because we feel separate from limitlessness. By removing the distance that is created by ignorance and eliminating the inhibiting factors that are responsible for this notion, the knowledge enables us to recognize that we are limitless.

To be continued...

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Chā.Up. 6.8.7

## The Wholeness of You by Swamini Saralananda

This is the second part of the serial article, continuation from June 2021 newsletter.

## The Innate Longing for Wholeness

#### Alienation And The Birth Trauma

The sense of alienation does not come from not being loved by others; it has its roots so deep, all the way back to the womb. At a deep subconscious level, unrecognized, unacknowledged and unexamined, everyone wants to get back that sense of absolute safety when mother and child were one and all our needs were fulfilled without any effort. Alienation started the day we were born when we first entered this world and the umbilical cord was cut...no more the passive, relaxed, safe oneness with the mother.....the pain and crying begins with our first breath. Of course the infant cannot think in words such as "Now I have to breathe on my own", "Please don't hurt me.", "I'm cold...keep me warm.", "I need this, bring it.", "I'm afraid, please don't let me be alone". But a definite felt sense of these pre-verbal feelings are there. And since tangible memories are, for the most part, woven with words, those pre-verbal impressions, which get far more deeply embedded than we think, are not easily recognized, examined and analyzed. But these earliest, primal fears and pains did get registered, got imbedded, we can say as kinesthetic, body memories. These are the most difficult to access. There are times we experience painful feelings of alienation and they seem to have no explanation. It is very possible that they trace back to the preverbal birth trauma. Yet only when we begin to understand this can we begin to get relief from that buried pain.

Many people have a vague notion and take for granted that since an infant is so undeveloped and can't know anything, that it won't know what is happening to it. Since it cannot voice any protests or concerns, it's as though it's not quite fully 'there'. This is why it is so easy to neglect and abuse, infants. We have to include all the degrees and varieties of trauma and neglect that are typically inflicted by the parents, family and community, all throughout the growing up of a young

life.

Just picture a doctor holding up and hanging a tiny fragile infant upside down, maybe slapping it, (thankfully those days are gone) then handing it off to a nurse who sticks things in its mouth to suction and give a rough scrub to dry the body and all whatever else they do in a cold sterile room. No one will call this abuse because it's considered necessary, maybe so, but it still doesn't change the fact that this little bundle of nothing-but-feeling-sensations, experiences all this as a terrifying shock. It's called birth trauma. First, the newborn had been in a frightening way, squeezed and pushed through the birth canal, out of the warmth, safety and comfort of the womb and then instead of being soothed, it was subjected to those other invasive sensations. In Western psychology some well recognized modalities of therapy like "Rebirthing "and "Primal Scream Therapy" give full credence and attention to the birth trauma.

Thus, as the child grows, the pain and crying continue because no parent can ever be perfect in meeting all the needs for this totally helpless and totally dependent child. Often times, the mother doesn't even know what the child is crying for and gives the wrong thing. Since the child is born with total helplessness there will innately be a total natural and absolute trust in its mother figure. This trust is again something wordless, a basic instinctive necessity for survival. The fact that no parent can ever be ready to fulfill the child's needs well enough to match that total and absolute trust, is not out of a lack of love and all good intentions. It is just a fact of life...no human can be a perfect anything. Thus, when the child's every need is not met, to greater or lesser degree, the mothers' ineptness leads to a gradual erosion of the child's natural basic trust. This is true for all of us. There is no way any parent can be infallibly trustworthy.

The infant begins to figure out, "I will not always be fed when I'm hungry and I might starve; I will not always be taken care of when I am cold, wet, hurting, sick, lonely, frightened." Again, even when for the child these feelings have no words, they still get registered, absorbed, and programmed in as fear and insecurity. Thus, the child slips farther and farther away from having that original total trust in the mother figure and the world it helplessly finds itself in. Yet, the total de-

pendency will be there for a long time.

Birth trauma is the earliest and natural setup for feelings of distrust and insecurity. No one escapes this and everyone carries in relative degrees, some insecurity-anxiety into later years. Sometimes people blame themselves and feel ashamed of being weak just because this sense of insecurity is there. It can cause us to look at others and think that they are more confident and together than we are. But all we're doing is comparing our insides to their outsides. Then we feel alone with this, which causes again a sense of alienation.

#### Can Alienation Ever Be Resolved?

Bo Lozoff, who did a lot of volunteer work with prisoners, wrote a book: "We're All Doing Time". He pointed out that everyone is imprisoned in a wrong self-identity. The purpose of this book, is to present the possibility that we can make a shift in understanding our identity and discover a wholeness that can free us from the pain of alienation. It is an identity in wholeness we all long for, acknowledged or not. It is to be discovered, as our very nature, an already accomplished fact. It is available to be known as the profoundest center of our being. It is the Ultimate Self. We all long for that and it a gained via a clarity of understanding. This understanding will be revealed in the chapters to come. It is the understanding of subtle pure awareness which is our Being, wherein there is no separation from anyone or anything else.

That non-exclusive identity means that we would love others as we love ourselves. That non-exclusive identity means we love others and ourselves in One Whole Beingness.

To begin this journey of discovery of that Beingness, which is the self-evident self, does not imply that we should give up any of our other relationships. The more we are clear about ourselves, it will only enhance our ability to enjoy more genuine relations with others. It does not require us to drop out and give up anything we have. This quest leads us to first discover that all we want and need ultimately, can be found within ourselves. From that secure posture of self-fulfillment and wholeness we can give so much more.

#### The Futility Of The Rat Race

There is a universal, natural longing to find this 'love in unity'. Our natural beingness just wants to be itself. We don't choose this longing. It wants to get home to its original state, the oneness that we have 'tasted' both in the womb and in 'peak experiences'. The more we are alive and present to ourselves, the more pronounced is that longing. Opposed to being gracefully present to ourselves, it is typical to find the vast majority engaged in an endless list of activities, appearing to be constructively achieving something. It seems so real and valuable, all that we do. But most of these activities are ways to distract ourselves in order to not feel the chronic dull ache of discontent. "I want...gotta get...I want... gotta get...I want.... gotta get...I want.... I want.... I want.... I want.... I want.... I want.... It's endless.

The sense of insecurity and alienation can express itself through an addiction. An addiction is a compulsive driven activity wherein a person is helplessly compelled to engage in an activity in order to distract from the background pain and discomfort. Of course, addictions to substances are of course more obvious and tragic, yet driven-ness to over-achieve can also be an escape from addressing the issue. The truth is that all addictions are covering up the pain.

### **Discovering My True Self**

Is it really possible to discover a Whole and Complete Self? Ancient teachings and mystics are there in every culture, all saying the same thing, telling us about a sacred Self and its nature as Unconditional Love. They tell us that it is meant to be discovered and "owned", in fact that this is the whole purpose of our lives. The ego is always longing and struggling to just be what the true Self is, full, complete, safe and whole. What else is there to want after that? You wouldn't be reading this, unless somewhere in the deepest part of you, you know there is at least some truth in this. Very few people are seekers because it requires one to be awake enough to the realities of life. To have figured out that no matter how we gain and attain in life, of things, relationships, money, fame and power, there is never a satiation point. Spiritual seeking remains superficial, until we realize that everything we have done so far has not worked to give us freedom from lack and want.

It is said that the only obstruction between me and my True Self, which is the

wholeness we are speaking of, is ignorance of it. If ignorance is the problem, then knowledge has to be the remedy. This knowledge completes itself through self-inquiry in a prepared mind.

#### You Are Your Life

There's nothing more important in your life than you because the fact is: You are your life. Most of us have a quaint notion that life is something 'out there' happening to us. But the truth is, it is not what happens to me that makes my life but rather how I respond to it. Take for example a woman who, as a child, heard only scolding and put-downs from her father. Now as an adult she may get stuck living out a pattern that any man who speaks to her with respect or any kind of tenderness can easily take advantage of her. And suppose a man had a mother who was promiscuous with numerous men, he would probably live out his life irresponsibly indiscriminate with women, never finding happiness in a satisfying, lasting relationship. For either one of them, it is not their fault, they are not to blame for their issues, but it is only within themselves that they can discover the solution. And only unconditional love can be the resolution for the pain that they experience from these issues. Everything we want, do and suffer can only be resolved in the Self, in ME..... the source of Unconditional Love.

#### This Sounds Selfish?

".... but this all sounds so selfish?" We may as well start with that objection right up front. 'Self-love' is an expression used here for: Self-acceptance, self-worth, self-respect, self-validation, self-care, all in all, unconditional self-love. It is a huge claim to make that to have this within one's self is even possible. There are those who have gone before us who teach that it is. If we can come to discover that Unconditional Self- Love is an already accomplished fact, it means that it is not a matter of my effortful doing. To commit to discover self-love is not 'selfish' but rather 'Selfish'. The 'self' refers to my small, egocentric personality while 'Self' refers to my innate, essential nature. That essence, the Unconditional Love is the true and real meaning of the word 'I'. And that is a fact, which is possible for any of us to discover. To discover that truth means I will be fully fulfilled.

To be continued...

## Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is new serial article based on the document transcribed and edited by Sri. John Warne. The material in this document was presented by Swami Dayananda Saraswati at the three year course on Vedanta and Sanskrit at Sandeepany, California, 1979-1981.

शुक्राम्बरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजं । प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये ॥ कृजन्तं राम रामेति मधुरं मधुराक्षरम् । आरुह्य कविताशाखाम् वन्दे वाल्मीकिकोकिलम् ॥

śuklāmbaradharam viṣṇum śaśivarṇam caturbhujam | prasannavadanam dhyāyet sarvavighnopaśāntaye | kūjantam rāma rāmeti madhuram madhurākṣaram | āruhya kavitāśākhām vande vālmīkikokilam | |

To remove all obstacles one meditates on Lord Vishnu, clad in white, the moon-like splendor, the four wondrous arms, the welcoming smile. I salute Sage Valmiki, the cuckoo perched on the bough of poetry singing sweetly the honeyed syllables Rama Rama.

Ramayana is the story of Rama, the ways of Rama. Properly pronounced, the emphasis is on the second long 'a' of the word  $r\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ , Ramayana, not on the third. The life of Rama. The word  $r\bar{a}ma$  itself was a word even before Rama came. The name was given to him. The Sanskrit word was already available. There are two ways of looking at a word. One way of looking at the word  $r\bar{a}ma$  is  $pratip\bar{a}dkam$ : in terms of the root or crude meaning of the word which declines  $r\bar{a}mal$ ,  $r\bar{a}mau$   $r\bar{a}m\bar{a}l$ . Then there is yogikam,  $vyutpatty\bar{a}rtha$ , which means you get into the word. You see from where the word has come, how it has come. Many Sanskrit words, especially names, do not have root forms. They are just taken as they are. Most words, though, have an origin, and the origin is from the root. The root is called  $dh\bar{a}tu$ . The  $dh\bar{a}tu$ , the root, for the word  $r\bar{a}ma$  (long first 'a', as in father) is ram (short first 'a', like the 'e' in 'the'):  $r\bar{a}ma kridayam$ .

This root, *ram*, has its meaning in *kridayam*, in reveling, in play. The noun form indicates a certain quality - an action is involved in it. You have to say how

the noun form has come: ramate iti rāmaḥ. Ramate yasmin iti rāmaḥ, in whom one revels is Rama. The first 'a' becomes dīrgha: ram becomes rām; with the nominal ending su it becomes rāmaḥ in the nominative singular. The meaning then will be 'in whom the people revel.' That will be the meaning of the word rāma, Rama. One thing is clear: you can revel only in that which is a source of happiness. You cannot revel in a source of unhappiness - you can grovel, but not revel. You can revel only in happiness. Rama becomes a source of happiness. His life, his form, his knowledge: at every level he is a source of happiness. You are pleased, and Rama is pleased.

Rama, as it is used, can be taken as  $\bar{a}tm\bar{a}$ . Rama is a name for the  $\bar{a}tm\bar{a}$  because the source of happiness is the self. The source of happiness is the Lord, the one who is full. You dip yourself in that fullness and you are happy. 'You' means the mind. Rama can mean the self, can mean the Lord who is all, can mean the person who is a source of happiness. This meaning is from the standpoint of the etymology of the word.

The story of Rama has mingled with the people of India. It has crossed the shores of India to other countries. In Indonesia it has been altered by the Muslim influence. The story is popular in Thailand and Bali: it is studied and Rama is worshipped. In Iran, Persia, the Ramayana is talked about. Valmiki's story of Rama has spread beyond India. It is an epic poem. In Sanskrit such a composition is called  $itih\bar{a}sa$ .  $Iti + ha + \bar{a}sa$ :  $itih\bar{a}sa$ .  $\bar{A}sa$  means that which was; ha means indeed; iti means in this manner, evam. In this manner it was.  $Itih\bar{a}sa$  means history; this was there like this. In Hindi the subject matter History is called itihas. That is that word. The meaning of it is 'this is how it was.'

As a poet, Valmiki had the license of adding to and embellishing the canvas, the story of Rama. A poet is given that particular freedom. Therefore the Ramayana is not just a book of history; it is a *mahākāvya*. A *kāvya* means a poetic epic. History means purely factual. A *kāvya* based upon history is something like a historical novel - like Shakespeare writing about Cleopatra. There was a Ulysses,

but the story centered on him may not be all facts. The Ramayana is poetry based upon history. Rama was a person, a most respected and revered person, who moved around India. He was looked upon as an *avatāra*, as the Lord descended. He was looked upon as God incarnate. His exemplary life made him a hero in his own time.

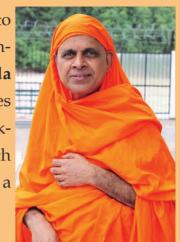
Because of the Ramayana, the story of Rama passed from generation to generation. Rama has come to stay and to continue to influence the lives of people. Whether Rama influences or not, the Ramayana does. Every child in India has this story told to him or her. He or she hears the stories from the Ramayana day after day from a grannie or from an auntie in the hut-home. Every day in the night the story is told. Even today it is a habit. The children love the stories, and who is the grown-up who does not love a story? It is unfolded as a continuous serial, and the children anticipate the next chapter. What is going to happen to Rama? What is going to happen to Rama's wife, Sita? Each day another bit comes.

Later, I studied the Ramayana in a Tamil translation which I found to be true to the Sanskrit original. I studied a number of pages each day until I was done. I found it to be absorbing. I found that all that the elderly woman had told us as children was there. The old ladies know the story very well because it was told to them by their elders. It is the *paurāṇikas* who in fact sing the Ramayana. Rama's sons, Lava and Kusha, sang the story to Rama, not knowing this was their father. Because of certain problems, they had been separated from him, and they lived in the *āśram* of Valmiki. There they learned the story from Valmiki, the author. The two boys go to the court of Rama and they sing. Rama recognizes them by their very singing. It is a very moving story. It first came to the public in the form of that singing. Rama heard it first, and he approved. It had his stamp of approval. By that it gains a certain authenticity. We will see how Valmiki came to write about it.

To be continued...

#### Sannyasa Diiksha

Sri. Ramanathan of AVRPT Chennai was initiated into sannyasa order on 21st July 2021 by Swami Sakshatkrtananda Saraswati. His yogapatta is **Swami Ramesvarananda Saraswati**. Swamiji has listened to Vedanta for decades from Pujya Swamiji. Swamiji will be stationed in Manjakkudi and continue to take care of Arsha Vidya Research and Publication Trust activities and also Jnanapravaha - a facility for Vedanta study at Manjakkudi.



#### BRAHMALEEN SWAMINI SIVATMANANDA SARASWATI'S SHODASI

Shodasi of Swamini Sivatmananda Saraswati's (previously P. Sarala Prasad, Hyderabad) Mahasamadhi was performed at Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. Sixteen Arsha Vidya Acharyas and Sadhus were invited, honoured with 16 gifts and given dakshina. It was befitting to see a good number of Swaminijis be part of the sixteen. A few of Swamini Sivatmanandaji's batchmates from the Rishikesh 3-year course of 2003-2006 were also among the 16 sanyasis invited. The Shodasi Pooja was followed by a bhandara for 100 sadhus. Incidentally this was the first bhandara after the pandemic lockdown where sadhus were served food at the ashram instead of being given food packets. Heartfelt appreciation and thanks go to Swami Suddhanandaji, Swami Sakshatkrtanandaji, Swamini Atmalinanandaji and Swamini Aaptanandaji for guiding Swamini Sivatmanandaji's purvashrama family and students in planning the Shodasi.





## 10 Day Vedanta Retreat at Arsha Vidya Pitham, Rishikesh

ARSHA VIDYA PITHAM is pleased to announce 10 Day Vedanta Retreat at SWAMI DAYANANDA ASHRAM, Rishikesh with **Swami Sachidananda ji** 

Vedanta Retreat/ Camp is a structured programme for people to gain insights about Vedanta. Even for a student who has been learning vedanta, a retreat at our Ashram at Rishikesh is a perfect way to gain a fresh perspective into the subject matter of Vedanta. This retreat would be a perfect way to reorient oneself with the whole.



Each day begins with morning prayers at the temple, followed by a Guided meditation session, two classes on the topic, a yoga class, chanting class and Q and A session in the night satsang. Swami Sachidananda ji has been teaching in camps at Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh. His retreats are well received and participants leave the ashram with a sense of joy and fullness gained through Vedanta vichara.

- Topic: Discovering Contentment and Joy (A vedantic exploration through select verses from the Bhagavad Gita)
- Teaching medium: English
- Date: 9th September -2021 (Thursday) to 18th September 2021 (Sunday)

Those who are interested in attending the camp are requested to apply on or before 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Kindly find the online application form at our website www.dayananda.org

For further enquiries please send an email to dayanandacamps2014@gmail.com or call at +91-135-2430769 & 2438769 between 08:30 to 12:00 & 15:00 -18:00 Hrs only.

#### Instructions to fill the online form:

- Go to www.dayananda.org
- Click on the link Online Application 2021/Registration
- Fill all Mandatory fields
- Click on Submit and go to your mail and activate the registration (Note that the activation mail could be delivered at your spam folder)
- Go to www.dayananda.org and Click on the link Online Application 2021/Login
- Login and select the course as per your choice.
- Please register separately for each applicant
- Management reserve the right to cancel any registration at any time during the camp period.

#### SHINE

## Spiritual Heritage of India for Next-generation Empowerment



Our children and grandchildren often ask – "Why do we ring a bell in the temple? Who is God? Why do a puja? etc...The answers to these questions is an integral component of the child's education which cannot be outsourced to modern school education and classes. Unlike other religions, being a Hindu does not mandate our children to attend compulsory religious classes. Then, what do we do? Simple. We own up our Dharma as parents, to live and share the strength of the Indian Culture as we raise powerful global citizens.

Inspired by Pujya Swami Dayananda ji, the journey of SHINE began when Swamini Brahmaprajnananda was asked by parents attending Vedanta classes in Mumbai, 'Can you do something for our children?' Hence, we set up the SHINE program to share the richness and practicality of the Spiritual Heritage of India for Next-generation Empowerment. Led by Sonali Ambasankar and Rashmi Kaikini, parents pursuing Vedanta and rooted in Sanatana Dharma, our key projects are:

Creation of informative, entertaining and free video content for children on youtube.

Classes (offline and online) and online camps for children where they learn simple shlokas, dharma based stories, 5-step puja, panchamahayajnas, stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata, introduction to Samskritam, discussion of relevant issues and much more.

Visit our webpage to get a glimpse of the ongoing programs and enroll your kids. <a href="https://discoveratma.com/shine-for-parents-and-children/">https://discoveratma.com/shine-for-parents-and-children/</a>

We began our YouTube channel in the year 2020 and are proud to share valuable resources like the following links to videos (3-10 minutes) made especially for children.

#### Marga-darshanam





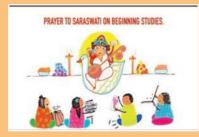


Other topics are – The Panchamahabhutas – our five great connections, Dharma - The secret of all Superheroes | Part 1-3

"Little chants for daily offerings" - Playlist of many shlokas with chant and repeat https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqym9dQN9a-OTUBwKOll1rD-KtG0K-wjW







Know our deities — "Ishta Devatas"

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqym9dQN9a-OTUBwKOll1rD-KtG0K-wjW

My ideal Bhagavan Sri Rama, Shiva - Devo ke Dev Mahadev - The teacher of all teachers, Devi Saraswati, My best friend Ganesha and more







Please subscribe to our SHINE quarterly newsletter, Samvaada — a dialogue which allows the flow of meaning that is full of valuable resources enriching our children's lives. https://discoveratma.com/shine/shine-samvaada-newsletter/

What the children say -

"I feel very comfortable in the class. I loved the letter writing activity. This class makes me very relaxed after chanting the shlokas. I love to learn about Gods and Goddesses. I loved the how to do puja session. I liked everything taught in all the classes. All different topics were new to me. Thank you for teaching us in a way in which we can express ourself and have fun with each other as well as know so many things. You are the best teacher I have found, in all the classes I attend." Anugrahi, 11 years old, Mumbai.

"I enjoy the class because I like how the teacher makes the class interesting. I would like her to add some more games to the session. I feel a lot of progress in me. I enjoy all the prayers – kayikam, vacikam and manasam. I enjoyed the newspaper flowers activity. It was a mind churning activity. Mere mandir ka saman, was my favourite activity." Yutika, 11 years old Mumbai.

To get involved please write to shine@discoveratma.com.

#### Om Tat Sat

"The more you see  $\bar{l}$ śvara's order, the less you are away from the Lord. To recognize this order is to surrender to this order. In surrender you let the order rule your life."

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

#### SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA SARASWATI PEETADHIPATHI OF SRI VASAVI PEETHAM

Swami Satchidananda Saraswati was appointed as the second Peetadhipathi of Sri Vasavi Peetham at Bengaluru on June 20, 2021.

In keeping with the Covid-19 norms a traditional Peetarohana Ceremony was conducted at Sri Vasavi Kanyaka Parameswari Temple, Malleshwaram, Bangalore.

The ceremony was conducted invoking the blessings of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati and in the presence of Sri Dr.Shivarathri Deshikendra Swamiji (Head of Suttur Mahasamsthanam, Mysore), Sri Swami Brahmananda Ji (Head of Chinmaya Mission, Karnataka), Sri Siddalinga Swamiji (Head of Siddaganga Mutt, Tumkur) and Sri Vishwaprasanna Theertha Swamiji (Head of Pejawar Mutt, Udupi).

Sri Vasavi Peetham is the spiritual institution to provide religious and spiritual guidance to the 300 Vasavi temples spread across Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Orissa.

The Peetham was in need of a Sannyasi to lead in 2013. The representatives of the Peetham approached Pujya Swami Dayanada Saraswati at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti to seek guidance and bless the Peetham. But little did they know that Swami Sachidananda Saraswati would be leading the institution today.

His purvasrama name is Sri Niraj Bhoopalam. He is from Shimoga, Karnataka. He studied long term Vedanta courses conducted in 2010-13 and 2014-17 at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti. As a Brahmachari he served Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati personally with great devotion. He received sannyasa diksha from Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati at Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh in 2018. He has been a teacher in many of the Vedanta camps held at Rishikesh. He is also the Vice Chairman of Arsha Vidya Kendra, Bengaluru and has been teaching Vedanta at the Kendra since 2019.

He is appreciated for his singing, dynamism and teaching. He is soft spoken, humble and friendly towards everyone. He is fluent in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Sanskrit and English.

Arsha Vidya family offers best wishes and prayers for Swami Sachidananda Saraswati, the youngest Sannyasi in the Arsha Vidya Parampara to be able to contribute to Sanatana Dharma in a big way in the coming days. - *Report by N. Avinashilingam* 





### Arsha Gurukulam, Somangalam

A new Gurukulam of Arsha Vidya Family has born on 8th July 2021 at Somangalam, 9 Kms SW of Tambaram near Chennai. This gurukulam runs under the patronage of Sri. R Kannan of Sriram Group. 14 students continue their full time studies of Vedanta and Sanskrit and other allied subjects at the facility that will continue till Sep 2023 under the tutelage of Swami Sakshatkritananda assisted by Swamini Vidyananda.

The place is blessed by Lord Adiguru Sri Vidya Dakshinamurti to whom daily pujas take place with the chanting Sri Rudram and other Suktams.



Devotees who wish to visit the gurukulam are requested to write in advance to sakshat.avg@gmail.com or message to 6381461866.

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## Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Annual Subscription: Rs. 180 /-

Published by: V. Sivaprasad

Trustee, Sruti Seva Trust, Anaikatti, Coimbatore 641 108

Edited by:

Ramachandran S.N (+91 94879 11949)

Printed by: B. Rajkumar Rasi Graphics private Limited

40, Peters Road, Chennai 600 014; Phone - (044) 28132970

## Arsha Gurukulam, Somangalam photos

Lord Adiguru Sri Vidya **Dakshinamurti** 



