

## Three Year Course at AVG Anaikatti



The three-year course in progress at AVG, Anaikatti is quickly approaching the end



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of its second year. The student base has seen very little attrition – it may even have quietly increased in number. The large number of students in this batch can, and must, be attributed to Pujya Swamiji being recognized as the greatest of Vedanta teachers alive today. There are many reasons for such recognition, not least of which the caliber of the teachers that have graduated from previous three-year courses. The current students are reminded of this every day as they benefit from Swami Sakshatkrtanandaji's ongoing

support of each one of the 80 plus full-

time students living here in ashram. Swami Sakshatji quietly attends to all the details that make it possible for us to remain focused on our studies. Whether it be assisting in our understanding of a particular line of inquiry in bhāṣya, or explaining how a challenging Panini sutra is applied, or the need for a medical referral or special dietary requirement, or someone to turn to for guidance and reassurance, Swami Sakshatji is there. It is also Swami Sakshatji who teaches the daily Sanskrit classes and takes the Vedānta classes when Pujya Swamiji is not in residence.

We have been studying Taittirīya Upaniṣad bhāṣya in the morning Vedānta class with Pujya Swamiji. Having completed the Z+kc'valla', we are now in the Brahmānandavallā' looking at the five loci of error for placing the "I" notion. Pujya Swamiji guides us

through bhāṣya, clearly pointing out the connections that help one to discover the full purport of the words, and expanding bhāṣyāra's explanations so that one is gently guided to a place where there is no other option but to recognize the truth. This detailed analysis and attention to syntax of the Sanskrit sentences reflects the increase in of Sanskrit now being used in classes as the students become more familiar with vocabulary and grammar. For

many it is an additional blessing that we are able to record and listen to the classes a second time allowing us not only to review grammar points that are highlighted, but most importantly clarify our understanding so that our level of Sanskrit does not inhibit the teaching that is being given.

Ever alert to the objective that the students themselves are links in the paraA' para, with the potential of teaching in the future, Pujya Swamiji's classes also teach the student how to teach. No unnecessary words are used. Each metaphor, many times in the form of an anecdote, or joke, carries a clear explanation of even the subtlest inquiry to be found in the bhāṣya. Constantly alert to the students' level of understanding, Pujya Swamiji expands and gives further clarification when needed, explaining the reason for such detail; no matter where students are from, what background they have, what obstacles they face, each one is reassured that they will understand what is needed and is thus able to relax and let the pramāṅga do its job. The one whose mind has been clinging to the mistaken identities sees the truth shining in the very being of the guru – and the compassion of that truth manifest in Pujya Swamiji knows no bounds as the student begins to humbly acknowledge the mistakes one by one.

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The afternoon Vedanta class, is dedicated to the study of Bhagavad G+´t´ alongside Z´aE´ k´ch´rya´s bh´c´ya. Anyone who has read the G+´t´ Home Study course books, that are available in several different languages, has an idea of how it is to listen to Pujya Swamiji unfold the Bhagavad Gita. Pujya Swamiji's extensive knowledge of both the Gita and Upanic´ads coalesces in each and every class. We are currently studying the Fourth Chapter. Having covered in detail the discussion of avat´ra – Gita being the only place where avat´ra is discussed so elaborately by the [´ruti, we have started our inquiry into the main topic of this chapter, the nature of action. Pujya Swamiji leaves nothing to chance with regards to understanding the tatparya of the Gita. Even topics, such as the varG´a system, that have been so misunderstood and thus challenged, when handled by Pujya Swamiji become yet another source of appreciation for the attention to detail and intelligence in the Order of \*[´vara.

The study of P´G´ini sk´tras during Sanskrit classes continues. We are following Laghu Siddhanta Kaumud+´, which contains approximately 1300 of P´G´ini's nearly 4000 sk´tras. P´G´ini's brilliance cannot be overstated. As we sit taking notes, trying to remember the sutra that was learned last week – or yesterday – because it is plays an important role in arriving at the final form of the word we are currently looking at, one can only marvel at the fact that P´G´ini didn't have paper, and books to assist him. As Pujya Swamiji has said on occasion – perhaps the diet then was rich in something that we are not getting nowadays.

Each day ends with satsang. These days, even though Pujya Swamiji still answers any doubts that have arisen or clarifies any confusions, by the end of the hour one or two students have also taken the microphone and, standing in front of the class, told the story of how he or she came to Vedanta and met Pujya Swamiji. The stories are as varied as the students here. Not only is there a wide range of family backgrounds, but a wide range of cultural backgrounds too, with students coming from all over India, as well as Malaysia, Japan, Brazil, Taiwan, Russia, New Zealand, Italy, England, Canada, and the U.S. Student participation in satsang doesn't stop with these stories – we are now taking it in turn to chant some of Taittir+´ya in front of everyone as well. When one has not yet assimilated that there is no second thing, and thus nothing to fear, looking out at approximately 100 shining faces with a microphone no more than 6 inches from one's face can be a little unnerving.

As minutes turn into hours, and hours in to days, days to weeks, weeks to months and months to years, appreciation grows for the grace that manifests in the form of the contributors who give time, money, and energy so that each three-year course can take place. What to say then of the contributor of contributors, Pujya Swamiji, who with boundless compassion, tirelessly and enthusiastically repeating what must have been said by him thousands of times before, assists each student in addressing a problem that when is fully understood, does not even exist.