

## AVG Saylorsburg, PA Enthusiastically looking forward to serve...

### A Saga of Dedicated Service, over Three Decades

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam ([www.arshavidya.org](http://www.arshavidya.org)), Saylorsburg, PA, (AVG, in brief), under the auspices of 'Arsha Vidya Pitham', founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati (<https://tinyurl.com/y5p35j66>) in 1986, is dedicated to the propagation of the age-old Vedic Wisdom of India, as taught and exemplified by Pujya Swamiji, both in the East and the West. A center for learning the knowledge of the ancient sages of Bharat, AVG is an Institute for the Study of Vedanta, Samskritam, Yoga and Meditation.

Over a period of three decades of its useful existence, the demand for the services of the AVG having increased considerably necessitated a New Facility. A vision of the Founder, this New Complex, recently inaugurated in the AVG campus, houses a spacious Lecture Hall, a Dining Hall, a well-equipped kitchen, and also a basement level holding a multipurpose space and a conference room.

Successfully completing its 33 years of *seva* in teaching, the AVG enthusiastically looks forward to serving the aspirants/students, with devotion and dedication. Seeking to impart Universal Values for a happy, harmonious living, with cordial human relations, and most importantly to foster inner peace, the AVG endeavours to reach out to people on regular basis by offering its outreach programs in different cities of the U.S.A., a good number of them having regular visits from the Acharyas and other teachers. In keeping with the Vedic traditions, the AVG also periodically conducts, supports and facilitates various camps, seminars and workshops in Astrology, Ayurveda, and Yoga, besides extending patronage for learning Chanting, Music, and Drama.

### The Invisible Presence and Guidance

The invisible presence, unbounded love, compassion and guidance of the Founder, Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1930-2015), continue to bless the AVG and its activities. The devotees too are the recipients of his benign blessings on visit to his residential cottage ('Ganga'), now re-named as 'Dayalayam' – The Abode of Compassion, where he lived for decades, as a veritable embodiment of compassion, showering his benign blessings on one and all who paid a reverential visit, from time to time, for his *darshan*!

It is well-known, 'the vision that Vedanta holds is that the reality of the self, the world and God is one non-dual consciousness that both transcends and is the essence of everything. Knowing this, one is free from all struggle based on a sense of inadequacy', and Pujya Swamiji, 'a distinguished, traditional teacher of this invaluable Vedic wisdom, endowed with the depth of understanding and nuanced appreciation of Western culture made him that rare teacher who could communicate the vision of non-duality to modern listeners. He was able to make one see, with immediacy, the truth of oneself as the whole. Besides teaching Vedanta tirelessly for five decades, in both intensive resident course and public discourse, he also addressed several international conventions.'

### Varieties of Regular Programs

Various programs and activities are held, regularly, at the AVG, under the able guidance of the present Head, revered Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati assisted by the other Acharyas and teachers. Every year, on the first January, the program commences ushering in the New Year, invoking the grace of the Lord, with a large number of devotees assembled at the AVG temple, blessed by the Acharyas. Subsequent programs continue, periodically, with the usual Long weekend camps like the 'President Day', 'Easter', 'Memorial', and 'Independence Day' and 'Thanksgiving'. Besides these camps, also conducted is 'Bhashyam' camp for adults followed by three family camps and two children camps unaccompanied by parents, in July and early part of August. The AVG offers two complimentary camps, one in August and the other on the 'Labor's day', in recognition and appreciation of its patrons. Also offered are two one-week courses, followed by an in-depth eight-week Vedanta course for adults, conducted by the Acharyas, from September to November. All camps are well attended as usual, with new attendees as well. The programs conclude with the year-end camp during Christmas holidays, followed by the laksarachna-mula-mantra japa at the AVG Temple.

AVG's attempt in every camp has been to lend clarity to all the selected topics through classes and satsangs, as exemplified by Pujya Swamiji himself, and vouchsafed in these significant words, "There is nothing more fascinating than clarity whether it is in precious stone or an idea. The crystalline clarity does attract. We need clarity in terms of priorities in life, values, attitude and finally of what IS."

### Curriculum and Teachers

'In keeping with AVG's commitment to authentic representation of the Vedic tradition, all teachers of the AVG are traditionally trained; some of them are of international repute. The purpose of the AVG is to make available the teaching of Vedanta in an authentic, traditional manner. In addition, several classical Indian disciplines of knowledge have been incorporated into the AVG programs, which are fruitful pursuits in their own right, and can also serve as aids to the study of Vedanta. Ongoing classes in Yoga, Meditation, Vedic Chanting and Sanskrit language are part of the AVG's regular curriculum.

In addition, the AVG offers special workshops in Ayurveda, the classical system of medicine, in Astrology, in Yoga, and in the performing arts of Classical Indian Dance and Music.

### **Yoga Classes**

AVG offers both ongoing classes by qualified Yoga teachers and special workshops with qualified Yoga teachers. All classes are General Level, suitable for beginners as well as continuing students. Workshops are held with a resident teacher and touring teachers. Topics include therapeutic issues, teacher training, and how to structure and maintain a Yoga practice.

### **On-site Facilities and Amenities**

There are several on-site facilities and amenities at the AVG campus for the convenience, comfort and benefit of the retreatants and visiting devotees. The following are some of them:

Bookstore ([www.arshavidya.us](http://www.arshavidya.us)), with an extensive collection of books, videos and audio related to Vedanta and allied topics; in particular, makes available the books by Pujya Swamiji (<https://tinyurl.com/yxr9g4uf>) published from Arsha Vidya Research and Publication Trust (<http://www.avrpt.com/>), Chennai, and also books by several of his Disciples. Other books made available, include on Religion, Philosophy, Arts, Music, Literature, Sanskrit, linguistics, Yoga, Ayurveda, Astrology, and many other cultural and practical topics of universal appeal and interest.

Library with select books on various related topics, helpful for the retreatants.

Yoga Studio, a world-class facility, designated to accommodate as many as 60 students, fully equipped with props and central heat and air-conditioning.

Fully equipped gym for regular exercise.

Wooded Trail (named '*Shanti Trail*') for walking, jogging and biking, in the 100-acre property, contiguous to the AVG campus.

AVG campus (located on the 14 acres of secluded land, a serene setting in the Pocono Mountains), with modern accommodations suitable to contemplative study.

Complimentary vegetarian meals, as well as tea/coffee and snacks are provided to weekend program participants and visitors.

Vedanta, Sanskrit and Chanting classes are free; room and board for resident courses, moderately charged.

### **Temple in the Vedic Tradition**

'All that is here is a manifestation of the Lord', hence 'the Lord can be invoked in any form. In keeping with its commitment to spiritual teachings, AVG is home to a shrine for Lord Dakshinamurti, the first spiritual teacher in the Vedic tradition. Qualified priests perform pujas, Vedic *samskaras* and *homas*.'

## **Anniversary Celebration**

Held in the second week of August, annually, the AVG Anniversary Celebration is attended by about thousand people consisting of devotees, students and disciples of Pujya Swamiji. Normally, the program beginning at 9.30 am and concluding by 4 pm, consists of a Music concert, Dignitary Address, Anniversary Address (by the Head of the AVG), followed by a Banquet Lunch, and ending with a Q & A Session(also conducted by the Head of the AVG).

## **Special Events**

Spread over the year, the AVG observes annually, in its Temple precincts, various Special Events, including Mahasivaratri, Gurupurnima, Pujya Swamiji's Birthday, Ganesha Chaturthi, Dipavali, and Gita Jayanti.

## **Outreach Program**

'The teachers at the AVG offer regular classes in the surrounding community, and visit different regions in North America, for short periods, to take classes and set up ongoing programs of study. There are many people who value the teachings at the AVG but are not able to attend as many classes as they would like, due to distance and/or time constraints. In order to make the teachings offered at the AVG more accessible to these people, the teachers at the AVG travel to various places. They conduct regular classes in the surrounding community, within commuting distance of the AVG. In addition, these teachers visit more distant regions in North America, for short periods, to take classes and to set up ongoing programs of study. Acharyas and teachers are available for: Introductory public talks on Vedanta; Vedanta classes; Initiation of Vedic Heritage classes for children and teens; Initiation of new 'Gita Home Study' groups; Private or group instructions in Vedic chanting; Sanskrit classes; Sessions on stress management and perspective on one's emotional life; Classes on *puja*, prayer, meditation; Yoga and Values; *Bhajans* and *Satsang*.

## **Gita Home Study and Vedanta Classes (GHS & VC)**

GHS & VC are conducted, periodically, in 75 places spread over 20 States of the U.S.A., and in 13 places, spread over six countries, outside the U.S.A.

## **Vedanta Teaching Centers in India**

Some of the Vedanta Teaching Centers, in India, are at: Rishikesh, Utterkashi; Ahmedabad, Gujarat; Anaikatti Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu; Nagpur, Maharashtra; Secunderabad, Telangana; Surat, Gujarat.

### **Self-Supported Vedanta Teaching Centers (SSVTC)**

SSVTC are located at: Somerset, NJ, ([www.arshabodha.org](http://www.arshabodha.org)); SF-Bay Area, ([www.arshavidyacenter.org](http://www.arshavidyacenter.org)); Arsha Vidya, Ontario, Canada (519-938-8708); Arsha Vidya Satsanga, Houston TX ([chandra.raghu@gmail.com](mailto:chandra.raghu@gmail.com)).

### **Online Vedanta Classes (OVC)**

For OVC, visit/call: [www.srshakulam.org](http://www.srshakulam.org), [www.arshavm.org](http://www.arshavm.org); [www.arshadrishti.org](http://www.arshadrishti.org); [www.arshavidya.es](http://www.arshavidya.es); [www.arshavidya.org.uk](http://www.arshavidya.org.uk); South Florida (561-737-4124); Makawao, HI (808-344-0006); Alameda, CA (510-733-0467); Castro Valley, CA (510-733-0467); Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (55 21 2287-2774).

### **All are Cordially Welcome**

As the saying goes, '*nissvase nahi vishvasao kada ruddho bhavishyati*' – 'there is no certainty about when the inhalation will be obstructed' -- meaning, there is no certainty when the life would end. Any procrastination, therefore, in knowing oneself as *purna* -- the whole, the perfect, the limitlessly free, is fraught with needless trials and tribulations in life. There is no other means to help an individual for the removal of spiritual ignorance that causes a lot of sadness, stress and strain, than each one looking within and addressing this fundamental issue, at the earliest, through a reverential study of the *shastra* (scripture), for a period of time. The AVG is always at the service of all devotees and aspirants, cordially inviting everyone to participate in the camps and other programs/activities. Those who are not able to attend the weekend or weeklong programs, can try to attend at the AVG the first and third Saturday and Sunday classes on Meditation and Bhagavad-Gita.

### **Teachers, Staff and the Management**

Offering *pranams* and expressing gratitude to all its Acharyas and teachers, for their loving guidance, and unconditional support to run its various activities, with ease and comfort, the AVG gratefully recognizes and appreciates all the help and generosity of its Board Members and the supporters. Also, the staff members and other employees of the AVG rightly deserve appreciation and thanks for their support and care that helps the Management administer the *jana seva* task of running this elegant institution flawlessly, year after year. The Management is beholden to all the devotees for their continued support, love and commitment to the AVG.

## II

### **New Lecture Hall / Dining Hall Complex**

The newly opened spacious Lecture Hall and Dining Hall Complex at the AVG, aims at serving the growing number of devotees/students, seeking the Vedic Wisdom and the ancient cultural and spiritual heritage of Bharat.

With a total footage of 33,750 square feet (plus 4,680 square feet of the patio, the grand total being 38,430 square feet), the New Complex has a first floor, lobby, a patio and a partial basement. On the first floor are the main auditorium, the dining hall, the well-equipped kitchen, and a lobby. The basement has mainly the children's activity hall, storage facilities, and the mechanical/maintenance room.

### **Main Auditorium**

The main auditorium, with a sitting accommodation for 400 persons, has a professional stage, and the audio-visual system, planned by an expert audio-visual engineer, is designed in such a way as to enable the audience to hear the class lectures and see the stage through monitors from several areas. The acoustic design was planned by an expert acoustic engineer, as per whose recommendations, two front side walls were modified, and the curved ceiling front panels, and the fiber covered panels on the walls are all for acoustic purposes. Pujya Swamiji was very particular about the sound system and the acoustics; hence the acoustic panels in the hallways as well as in the dining hall were specially designed to avoid echoes. The fully equipped, professional stage, with proper spot lights and curtains, has a large projector screen which can be moved up and down automatically, and has also a wheel chair lift. The New Facility, using geothermal energy system installed for heating and cooling the system, takes the energy from the deep underground water table which is at 55 degree through energy exchangers. Also, used in the New Facility are all low energy LED bulbs for lighting purpose.

### **Kitchen, Serving, and Washing areas**

Adjacent to the spacious Dining Hall accommodating 400 retreatants is the well-furnished kitchen, with modern equipments, designed by a professional expert. The hot plates in the serving area are doubled to handle a large crowd. Also there is a salad bar, as desired by Pujya Swamiji, for those who are not accustomed to spicy Indian food. The perishable items such as cream cheese and butter are placed in the hygienic, safe, refrigerated pits. The dishwashing area is so designed as to be hidden from the public view but at the same time, convenient for people to leave their used trays and cups on the conveyor belt moving towards the dishwashing area, adjacent to the Dining Hall, where the dishwashing machine is so designed as to shred all food remnants and reduce them, along with other garbage, to one fourth of its quantity.

### **Basement, other Facilities**

The basement has a large open area for children's program as well as for overflow. There is a large kitchen storage area and a room for storing children's costumes. There is a video conference room for the AVG Board of Directors' meetings so that even those who are far away from the AVG can participate through video conference. There is also a dining room for the employees, and a large mechanical/maintenance room in the basement. There are several bathrooms located in different parts of the building, including the basement, for the convenience of the Retreatants. Wi-Fi is provided throughout the building including the patio. The entire landscaping of planting 92 trees, about 60 plants and lawn, was organised by a Board Member of the AVG. Also, earmarked, adjacent to the Dining Hall, is an Interview Room for Swamiji, where people can conveniently meet him in the New Complex itself rather than having to go all the way to his cottage.

### **Initiation of the Project and Support**

Decade ago, an ardent devotee who had been attending Pujya Swamiji's classes and expressed her wish to have an auditorium in the name of her late husband, also made a sizable offering to Pujya Swamiji for the purpose. This seed money created a *sankalpa*, for the present New Complex, in Pujya Swamiji, who arranged to have a suitable design and the required permits, and Dr. Ashok Chhabra (Swami Jnanananda), a senior student and disciple, was entrusted with the responsibility of supervising the project. The New Complex would not have been possible without the unstinted labour of love of two elderly and prominent Board Members of the Gurukulam. Committed to see the successful completion of Pujya Swamiji's vision, not only did they themselves munificently donate for this New Complex, but also worked hard to raise funds for the entire project. Many other donors were also prompted to donate on account of their untiring fund-raising endeavours.

## III

### **Remembering the Founder of AVG**

As far back as 1893, Swami Vivekananda unfurled the banner of Vedanta in the West, and also made Yoga familiar to the Westerners through his well-known treatise on '*Raja Yoga*' (1895). Following the trail blazed by the great Swami, over a period of more than a century, many more personages and institutions in the U.S have also been doing good work in this direction, and the contribution of Pujya Swamiji, in this regard, is quite considerable. For decades, in India and around the world, Pujya Swamiji worked tirelessly disseminating the Vedic Knowledge, through his well-established institutions, both in India and the U.S. He also took keen interest in providing Yoga training to the aspirants through qualified Yoga teachers in the AVG.

Personally speaking, the author met Pujya Swamiji for the first time while participating in a program in Washington in 1993, marking the celebration of the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Appearance at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago. While Pujya Swamiji spoke eloquently on the occasion, the author had the privilege of paying homage to Vivekananda. Later, in the year 2000, participating in the 'UN Millennium Peace Summit' at New York, he also had the privilege of visiting the AVG (along with other monastic delegates to the Summit from India), where all were formally honoured by Pujya Swamiji. Since then, the author had several occasions to visit the US, from time to time, to attend various programs and conferences. He could also attend, often, the anniversary celebrations and other programs at the AVG, and every time Pujya Swamiji and the Gurukulam have been very kind, helpful and supportive during his visit and stay. Whatever little knowledge of Vedanta he has gained is solely due to his participation, from time to time, in the lecture programs and Vedanta classes conducted by Pujya Swamiji and his senior disciples who are the Acharyas at the AVG. The author just tries to visualize, how overjoyed Swami Vivekananda would have been if he were to visit the AVG, to see the commendable work done for over three decades, in dissemination of the Vedic Knowledge, and the Hindu Dharma! In this context, let Pujya Swamiji's words speak: "Swami Vivekananda is looked upon by an informed Indian as a person who enshrined in himself all that is true and noble of the spiritual heritage of Bharat. His vision to make everyone see the beauty of oneness, love and harmony, backed by his tireless efforts to actualize it, is getting unfolded all over the world not only through the Mission and Order he founded but also through various other individuals and institutions who owe to Swamiji's vision for their inspiration..." These significant lines, revealing the source of inspiration behind the great work done by the AVG, are from Pujya Swamiji's Benediction to the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of the author's book on Swami Vivekananda ([www.vivekanandagospel.org](http://www.vivekanandagospel.org)), commemorating Swamiji's 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary (2013)!

As we know, Pujya Swamiji, a distinguished Vedantic teacher par excellence, taught Vedanta in India for decades and around the world since 1976. Under Pujya Swamiji's guidance, various centers of Vedic teaching were founded around the world – two primary centers in India at Rishikesh and Coimbatore, and one in the U. S., and also by his students, more than 100 centers in India and the world over, which carry on the same tradition of Vedantic teaching. In the significant words of Sri Gurumurthy (<https://tinyurl.com/y64rc9lm>), "Pujya Swamiji was undoubtedly one of the greatest teachers of Vedanta in modern times. A teacher of teachers, he turned out more than hundred disciples who are renunciates and are highly respected as scholars and teachers in his tradition. In addition to teaching, Pujya Swamiji also initiated and supported various philanthropic efforts through the 'All India Movement for Seva.' But the greatest contribution of Pujya Swamiji was the creation of the 'Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha' (2003), which has emerged as the legitimate voice of the Hindus at the global level."



## Reverential Homage to the Founder

As we remember Pujya Swamiji on the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his *mahasamadhi* (September 23, 2019), we pay our reverential homage to his hallowed memory, with a prayer that we may be enabled to live up to his teachings. May we also constantly remember his laconic but significant *mahavaakya* (great saying): “All that is here is Ishwara”, and dedicate ourselves for the service of Ishwara in everyone and everything, and be blessed thereby. *Harih Om Tat Sat.*

*(Acknowledgement: The first and second part of this write up, besides drawing the related material from the available AVG literature, are mainly based on the introductory talks by Sri Suddhatma Chaitanya, General Manager, and Dr. Ashok Chhabra (Swami Jnanananda), Board Secretary, on the 33<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the AVG, on 11 August, 2019. – Swami Jyotirmayananda).*

### **Arsha Vidya Research and Publication Trust announces**

Arsha Vidya Research and Publication Trust, Chennai - offers books, audios, videos and ebooks on the following platforms:

- 1) Online purchases on our website [www.avrpt.com](http://www.avrpt.com) - books and pen drives of Pujya Swamiji's talks.
- 2) Our APP 'Teachings of Swami Dayananda' - a free download from Google Playstore for Android and I-phones offers online purchase of e-books, audios and videos.
- 3) E-books are also available on AMAZON Kindle.
- 4) Kindle ebooks provide paperback version through a print-to-order facility which can be ordered on Amazon..

We welcome you to use any of these facilities to avail of Pujya Swamiji's Teachings.

#### **For more details please contact:**

Arsha Vidya Research and Publications Trust

4, Srinidhi Apartments

Mylapore

Chennai 600004

[avrandpt@gmail.com](mailto:avrandpt@gmail.com)

Mobile: 095007 77910