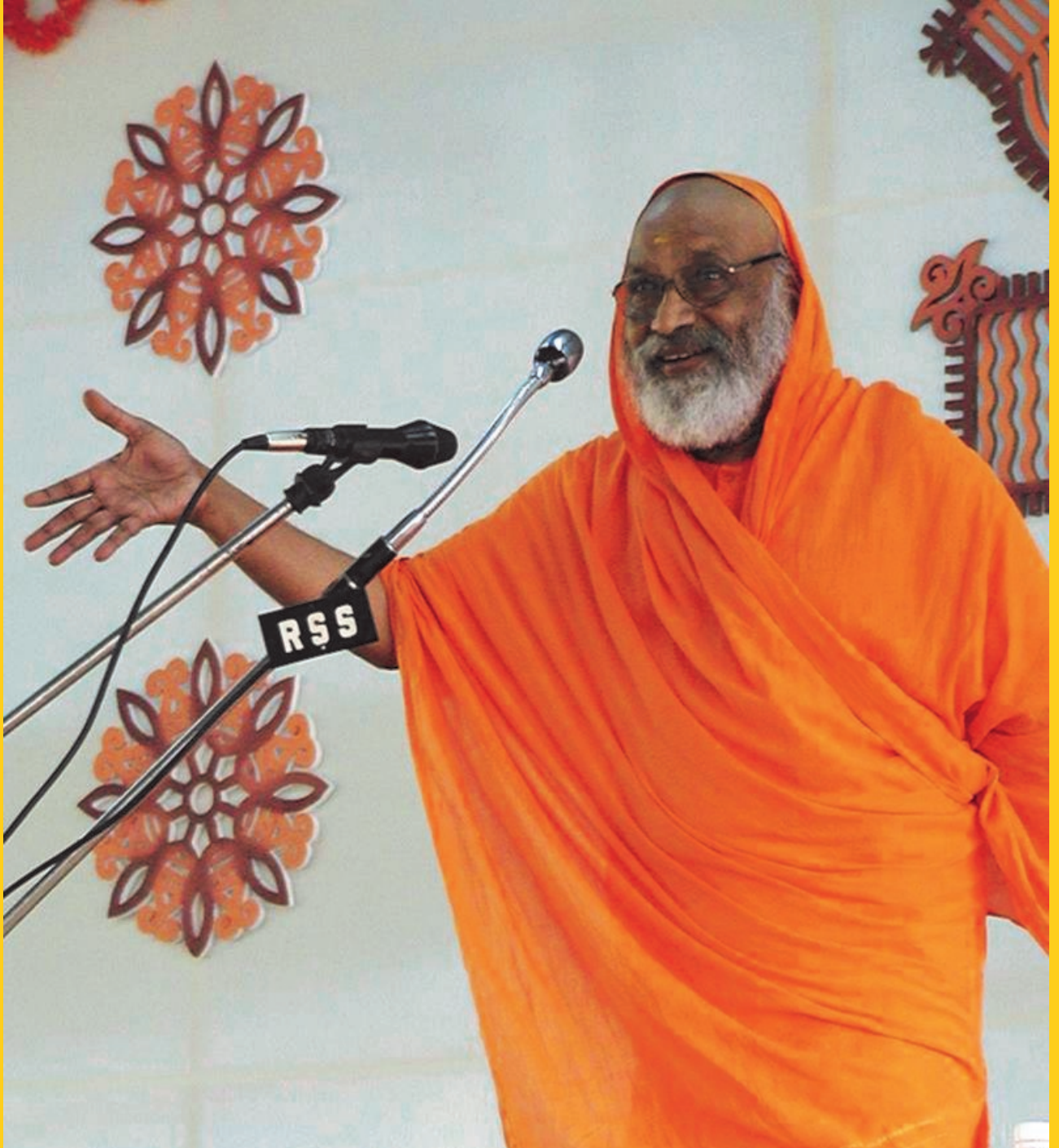




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**31st Anniversary Celebrations at
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti , Coimbatore**



**Shodashi of Swami Prashantanandaji
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti , Coimbatore**



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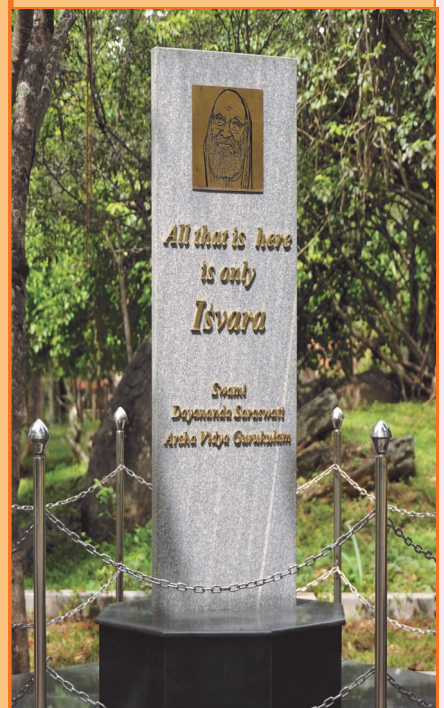
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This is the ninth part of the serial article, continuation from October 2021 newsletter.

EQUATING JĪVA AND ĪŚVARA

The word *tvam* means *jīva*, the doer and enjoyer, which is you. Who is that you? When I say 'you,' I do not mean *satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma*, limitless Brahman. I mean the person who comes to me to learn. That is the person to whom I am talking. In this instance, 'you' means the person who is sitting here. That person, that *ahāṅkāra*, ego, listening to me, is the one who looks upon himself or herself as a doer and enjoyer, as happy or unhappy, a listener, a thinker, etc. That is 'you,' whoever that 'you' is. Thus there are many yous. Any 'you' can be told, 'You are Īśvara,' whether the 'you' is big or small; whether it is Lord Indra himself or a local somebody. You can even say '*tat tvam asi*' to a mosquito! The mosquito does not need to hear it in this lifetime because it does not have an I-sense. It does not have the problem of *samsāra*, like thinking, 'I am happy, I am unhappy' and so on. No teaching is necessary for a mosquito. The teaching is for the one who says, 'I am bound, I am limited,' the one who is always struggling, trying to prove him or herself to be somebody. This person, the *jīva*, is equated to Īśvara. Who is Īśvara? He is *parokṣaḥ*, remote. Who is this *jīva*? He or she is *aparokṣaḥ*, self-evident. Look at the difference. It seems that before you go to a teacher and learn Vedānta, you are *aparokṣa-ātmā*, known directly to yourself as someone who is sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy. You are a doer and an enjoyer. All this is known to you. Then you go to a teacher, and he says, 'You are *parokṣa* Īśvara.' So *aparokṣa-jīva* becomes *parokṣa* Īśvara. What was self-evident becomes remote. This means you are a remote Īśvara, you are not here and now anymore, unless either Īśvara is yourself or *aparokṣa-jīva* is Īśvara. If *aparokṣa jīva* is Īśvara, then Īśvara becomes a mere *jīva*. In other words, you simply have another name. You thought you were only Mr. So-and-so, and now you are told you are Īśvara. So just one more name and you are still only 5'9" tall.

But the *śruti* does not say that. It has already described Īśvara as *jagat-kāraṇam*, the cause of the world. Only one, non-dual *satyam* was there before. Before the creation, this entire *jagat* was *satyam*. Here again there is apposition. The *upaniṣad* says, 'This *jagat* was *satyam* before.'⁵¹ This means that the cause of the world is *satyam*, and from *satyam* alone the creation has come. Thus *satyam* means Īśvara, there is no doubt here. Īśvara is that *satyam* and that *satyam* is Īśvara. *Śāstra* makes it very clear.

REALITY IS ONE

Therefore, when *śāstra* says, 'By knowing that, everything becomes known',⁵² it is the original *pratijñā*, statement. In Chāndogya Upaniṣad, in the sixth chapter, young Śvetaketu comes home after twelve years of study, and his father Uddālaka asks him, 'Did you ask your teacher for that knowledge, gaining which everything is as well known?' Śvetaketu says, 'I don't think my teacher knew that.' Then Śvetaketu himself asks this question, 'Is there such knowledge?' And his father teaches him, 'Yes, there is such knowledge, gaining which everything is as well known. Anything born of clay will be as well known to you once you know what clay is.'⁵³ Everything else is but word and meaning, clay alone is the truth.⁵⁴ Only *mṛttikā*, clay, is *satyam*, existent.' Everything else is *nāma-rūpa*, word and meaning, let them differ. *Nāma* and *rūpa*, name and form imply function.

RESOLVING THE CONTRADICTION

So all of them are *nāma-rūpas*. If you know the cause of everything, which is *satyam*, then you have known everything. This is the original statement of Uddālaka. Śvetaketu is then told, 'You have to know only one thing.' That one thing is everything, and that *satya-vastu*, that *ekam eva advitīyam*, one non-dual Brahman, is what you are. Brahman is *ātmā*.

⁵¹ सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् (Chāndogyaupaniṣad 6.2.1)

⁵² येन विज्ञानेन सर्वं विज्ञातं भवति (Chāndogya & Muṇḍakopaniṣad)

⁵³ यथा सोम्यैकेन मृत्पिण्डेन सर्वं मृन्मयं विज्ञातं स्यात् (Chāndogyaupaniṣad 6.1.4)

⁵⁴ वाचाऽऽरम्भणं विकारोनामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम् (ibid.)

Everything else is *nāma-rūpa*. Therefore you have no other choice here, except to understand what the *śruti* says. When it is said that you are *Īśvara*, then between the meanings of the words ‘you’ and ‘*Īśvara*’, there is an apparent relationship between the qualifier and the qualified.⁵⁵ Here again, there is a problem because the words in apposition are contradictory. It is very easy to qualify a pot or a lotus by saying the pot is blue or the lotus is white, but can you say that a *parokṣa* *Īśvara* is yourself?

There is a statement in *śāstra* that says ‘*vajra-hastaḥ purandaraḥ*.’ *Purandaraḥ* means Indra. Indra is in heaven. And he has a big weapon in his hand, a *vajra*, thunderbolt.

Now suppose I say, ‘You are Indra.’ ‘

Which Indra? Indra is in heaven.’

‘Yes, you are that Indra in heaven.’

‘But Indra is *parokṣa*, you say. How can I be that Indra?’

This is a contradiction, so you just walk away. Even for discussion, there has to be some basis.

Īśvara is *parokṣa*, you are *aparokṣa*. Where is the comparison? If not even comparison is possible, then identity is definitely going too far. Moreover, if you take into account that he is the creator of the *jagat*, etc., then you are finished. So this placing of words in apposition itself is a problem. But it is used. And we use a method of inquiry and analysis that helps you to discover exactly what the vision of the *śāstra* is. We will discuss this method later. Therefore, we do not have any problem with what the *śruti* says.

What is the meaning of these words *tvam* and *tat*? One of them, *tvam*, means *jīva*, the doer-enjoyer person, that is the meaning of the word ‘you.’ And the other word, *tat*, means *Īśvara*, someone who is *sarvasya kartā*, the creator of all. He may be a doer-enjoyer, and he is an enjoyer of *ānanda* all the time. But you are someone who is *sukhī-duḥkhī*, sometimes happy, sometimes sad, experiencing the results of *karma*. He is the giver of those results, whereas you are a helpless person. In fact, everyday you pray to him; ‘You are everything, oh Lord.’ So how can this Lord be yourself? It is just not acceptable.

To be continued...

⁵⁵ विशेषण-विशेष्य-भाव

This is the sixth part of the serial article, continuation from October 2021 newsletter.

Emotional maturity: a prerequisite for renunciation

Emotional maturity means freedom from inner impulses. What are these impulses? They are the *rāgas* and *dveṣas*, likes and dislikes, that create emotional needs. We all have emotional needs—we require a father, we require a mother, we require a spouse, we require children, and we require friends. Every now and then, we require a pat on the back, some form of encouragement, and also some form of support to wipe the tears from our eyes. These emotional needs are strong needs, whereas, needs such as hunger, thirst, and other physical needs can be dealt with more easily. When we are emotionally dependent upon other people around us, we don't have freedom. Therefore, *sannyāsa* or renunciation is an expression of the freedom that a person enjoys. What sort of freedom is this? It is an emotional freedom that is the result of emotional maturity. It comes when one has discovered from within what one has hitherto been seeking from others, such as approval, encouragement, appreciation, and acceptance. When one finds that approval, acceptance, and encouragement arising from one's own self, the person becomes free from those needs. It is this freedom from emotional needs that is called maturity.

Atha here represents the gaining of the requisite emotional maturity or inner purification, *vairāgya*. *Vairāgya* means freedom from *rāga* and *dveṣa*, freedom from the impulses of attachment and aversion. The most important qualification for *sannyāsa* is *vairāgya*. Very often, *vairāgya* or dispassion is thought to be a negative thing, like the giving up of everything. However, it is not as much a process of giving up, as a process of growing out of one's need for something, quite like no longer needing crutches because the body can hold itself upright. *Vairāgya* means growing out of emotional needs. As the disposition of the mind changes, the nature of needs itself changes. There is then only one need, the need for *mokṣa* or unconditional freedom, which manifests in different ways depending upon one's emotional maturity. For instance, in an immature person, it may manifest as the

need for sense gratification. In a person who is more mature, it may manifest as the need for emotional gratification. In those who are even more mature than that, the need may manifest as the need for ego gratification. When the person grows further, however, it manifests as the need for spiritual gratification.

The qualifications for gaining knowledge

What are the qualifications for gaining this knowledge? Who is fit to be a student?

The one who has the desire to gain the knowledge alone is fit for the knowledge. Vedānta doesn't demand that a student be a man or a woman, fair or dark, young or old, be of one caste or another, or have any particular skill or anything at all. All that is said is that the student should have the desire to know, which calls for a great deal of emotional maturity or self-growth. The desire to know is the main qualification for eligibility as a student.

The text of the Tattvabodha talks about the four-fold qualification for gaining the knowledge: *viveka*, *vairāgya*, the *śamādiṣaṭkasaṁpatti* and *mumukṣutva*. *Viveka* means discernment, the ability to separate the real from the unreal or the permanent from the impermanent. It is basically the ability to discern what one really wants in life. That happens when one inquires or takes stock of one's life and asks, "What is it that I am really seeking in life?" That one is constantly seeking something in life is very clear. It is that which causes one to restlessly pursue one thing after another and fulfill one desire after another, even as newer desires keep on arising. Upon realizing this, one begins to look into whether there is a desire behind all desires. And it is after having inquired into all the achievements that are possible through the performance of various types of actions or rituals that a contemplative person gains *vairāgya*, dispassion. Why is that? It is because, as we saw earlier, that which is infinite and immortal cannot be created or obtained through effort.

The contemplative person realizes that whatever can be obtained through any kind of effort is limited and that the limitless cannot be created or attained. Therefore, he discovers a dispassion toward everything that is ever created or ever attainable. Such an attitude is called *vairāgya*, the freedom from passion; one is then neither attached to the wordly pleasures and success nor averse to them. As a re-

sult, one develops *mumukṣutva*, a keen desire for *mokṣa* or knowledge.

Some people ask, “Swamiji, it is said that we should become free from desires, but isn’t the desire for *mokṣa* also a desire in itself?” It is, but the fact of the matter is that the desire for *mokṣa* is the only desire that can ever be fulfilled. No other desire can be completely fulfilled. The desire for *mokṣa* alone can be truly fulfilled because *mokṣa* is a fact that is already accomplished; it requires nothing but the knowledge of the self, the self that is already free. *Mokṣa* is our own nature.

The desire for *mokṣa* can be fulfilled when we understand that we already are ever liberated, ever free; the desire for liberation becomes fulfilled in the wake of this discovery of the true nature of one’s self. The discernment that the one desire behind every desire is the desire for *mokṣa* is called *viveka*. One realizes that unconditional freedom or unconditional happiness can be attained by the knowledge of the self alone.

Having discerned this truth, Āśvalāyana goes to the teacher to gain the knowledge. One goes to a place that is appropriate to fulfill a given desire. When the desire is for food one goes to the dining hall; there is no point in going to a teacher. To watch a movie, one goes to a theater. Similarly, to learn, one goes to a teacher. Depending on what we want to learn we must go to an appropriate teacher. As Pūjya Swamiji would say, a keen desire for liberation should get transformed into a keen desire for knowledge. That is the next stage of maturity.

Everybody is a *mumukṣu* in that everybody is seeking freedom, but it is necessary to recognize that freedom can be attained only through the knowledge of the true nature of the self. That is the kind of transformation that took place in Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. The verses of the first chapter and first ten verses of the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita show us the transformation of Arjuna from *mumukṣu* to *jijñāsu*, that is, from being a desirer of liberation to becoming a desirer of knowledge. He then submits himself to Lord Kṛṣṇa with a request for self-knowledge.

To be continued...

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

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

श्रुत्वा चैतत्त्रिलोकज्ञो वाल्मीकेनारदो वचः । श्रूयतामिति चामन्त्र्य प्रहृष्टो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ १-१-६

śrutvā caitatrilokajño vālmīkernārado vacaḥ | śrūyatāmiti cāmantrya prahr̥ṣṭo vākyaṁabravīt || 1-1-6

Narada immediately answered. Narada is the one who knows whatever happens in the three worlds - *trilokajñāḥ*. He moves about and never remains in one place for a long time. Narada was that great traveler. He had the information of all the three worlds. He knew all the news. If he came to a court the king would receive him, give him a seat, offer him salutations, and later ask him, “What news?” Narada was a great courier. Any traveler will have great stories to tell, and Narada was a great storyteller as well as a great trouble shooter.

It seems that Narada was waiting for Valmiki to ask - as if Narada knew what was to come. He wanted Valmiki to write this Ramayana, the story of Rama. Narada was happy, *prahr̥ṣṭaḥ*, when Valmiki asked this question. Narada had decided that Valmiki would be the author qualified to write this story. It was Valmiki who, while being encased in the anthill, had repeated Rama’s name for years without knowing what it was. Having heard Valmiki’s question, Narada answered. Drawing Valmiki’s attention, Narada told him to listen, and he said these words without allowing any time for Valmiki to change his ideas – double *ca* is there. Narada saw the time was right and he spoke.

बहवो दुर्लभाश्चैव ये त्वया कीर्तिता गुणाः । मुने वक्ष्याम्यहम् बुद्ध्वा तैर्युक्तः श्रूयतां नरः ॥ १-१-७

bahavo durlabhāścaiva ye tvayā kīrtitā guṇāḥ |

mune vakṣyāmyaham buddhvā tairyuktaḥ śrūyatām naraḥ || 1-1-7

“Hey, *muni*, saint, let me tell you, those various qualities which you mentioned, those *guṇas* which you look for in one man, are many, *bahavaḥ*. They are rare qualities, *durlabhaḥ*- seldom found in one person. In most men if one virtue is there another is lacking. These virtues are not easy to procure, much less all found in one man. They are difficult to acquire. But, knowing very well who is that man endowed, *naraḥ yuktaḥ*, with those qualities, I am going to tell you, *vakṣyāmi*. Please listen. There is one who is born in the family of Ishvaku, a man named Rama.

To be continued...

The Wholeness of You by Swamini Saralananda

This is the sixth part of the serial article, continuation from October 2021 newsletter.

The Posture Of This Book

Spirituality is the posture of this book. What if one could just glean the possibility that I am an ultimately good, decent, loving person, free from all the things I don't want to be. Perhaps if I seek to know, I can discover something far better about myself than what I have always taken myself to be. Maybe I am wary of believing any of this. Yet the more you are alive to yourself and you are ready to come out from under any form of a numbed delusion, you will be seeking. I make the attempt in these pages to strike a deep chord in you, somewhere that will resonate. The proof of the pudding is only in the eating.

Is it All in My Head? Subjective vs objective

Most of us have a quaint feeling that life is something 'out there' happening to us. The truth is, you are your life, you make up the reality of your own life. It is the condition and disposition of your mind that heavily influences how you interpret and then relate to the world. A very interesting book titled, "The Three Pound Universe" talks all about the brain. The title points to the fact that it is your mind which is the world you live in. It is your mind where you live, in your own private universe. The outer world presents me with all kinds of experiences but I choose the what, where, and manner of how I respond. This reminds me of a time, when a close friend had told me they had seen an excellent movie and when I went to see it, I walked out in the first ten minutes. Therefore, no two people ever interpret and live in the same world. Life is only whatever I experience within my own mind in every given moment. Although we can say that many things do "come at me" without my choosing, still, every one of us will have our own unique way of interpreting, then responding. From that I create my own private, subjective world and my own unique life.

We All Live In Two Worlds

Based on this, we can say that we all live in two worlds -firstly, an objective, public world of common things, and secondly our own world of subjective interpretations. We can all agree that water is wet, it rains now and then, sugar is sweet and fire is hot.... no problem. But then by means of my likes and dislikes, my complexes, prejudices and fears, I

carve out of that public world my own private subjective world. "I hate when it rains, I think people are mostly selfish, I'm afraid of dogs". The logic is simple. All through the day my mind may be engaged in the public world, but my subjectively colored interpretations will determine what kind of responses I make. My responses to the world are what determine the quality and course of my life.

A simple example: A man and woman are sitting in the waiting room of a doctor's office and a third lady walks in. On a table there is a vase sitting with some very fragrant lilies in it. The lady entering, just being friendly, says "Oh, aren't these beautiful, they're so fragrant!" The other woman looks up at her with a sad, face tears begin to well up in her eyes; she looks down and says nothing. The man just nods his head indifferently, he has no interest in flowers. So here are three different experiences of one same object. The sad woman has been reminded of her mother's funeral two months ago where there was a large bunch of these lilies filling the room with their fragrance. The cause of the individual responses is not the point, this just demonstrates how each of us experience our own unique responses to things. In every waking minute what goes on in the mind is painting the moving picture of my life.

It's very useful to recall some of the instances we all have, quite often. For example: when someone looks at me the 'wrong way' and I question, Did I do something wrong or do they not like me for some reason. Most of it has no basis in truth, but I do suffer anywhere from minor discomfort up to maybe some very debilitating pain. There are so many 'misunderstandings' like this that crowd my life.

'Mango Man', An Experience

I want to share this one personal anecdote from not very long ago. In the small town where I grew up, there has been a homeless man moving around the town for the last few years...somehow people came to call him "Mango Man". His appearance was like some kind of a 'Big Foot' (a frightful mystery part human.) He was heavily covered up in dark coats, his hair un-cut for many years, hung down in matted dread locks long enough to pass his knees. His face was also covered with hair, and you could hardly see anything of his face except some eyes peering out. He would always walk very slowly and most often be seen just standing, looking out at the street; and yet once in a great while I could swear that when I would look at him from my moving car, there was some eye contact.

Mango man's nails had not been cut for years, they curled around in strange shapes and sometimes he would be holding a stick. There was so much to wonder about him. He was

so heavily covered up in the hot tropical weather. Where did he get his food and water? You never saw him eating or drinking, only once in a while he would be sitting on a bench. There were so many questions one could ask about how he could possibly live like this.

I like to think of myself as compassionate but realized that this man brought out negative judgment in me. I knew I would never want to be near him because I was sure he would smell very bad. I heard that he was deemed harmless and was released from a state mental ward because he said he would rather be out in the open rather than cooped up inside. He would sometimes sit on a bench near where I shopped and I would see him there and think that he was such a pathetic sight and a little bit scary. He was an object of 'an unknown' and I had some fear. I decided one day, that this was not how I wanted to feel about another human being. So, I went back into the store and bought a sandwich and a cold drink. I decided I would go and say hello and give that to him.

That day he was holding a small, broken, black umbrella to have a little shade from the hot sun. So, I had to bend down and look under it to see his face. I was totally amazed. First of all, he did not smell. Secondly, he had the most beautiful eyes and face even though it was covered with so much hair. He did not look very old and I simply said, "Hello, I brought this sandwich for you." He slowly reached out and took it, putting it down on the bench and said in a very soft and sweet voice... "Oh, thank you."

I couldn't resist in the surprise of the moment and I spontaneously said to him, "Hey, you're really handsome under all that hair." No response, no smile. Then I asked him if I could buy him a better umbrella, and again just a soft, sweet, "no." Although I have always given a lot of lip service about not judging others, I felt so happy that I was able to discover him as just a soft, odd human being and not some, strange ominous individual. But I also felt regret about taking so long to do this.

This homeless man has given me one of the most inspiring lessons of my life. That beautiful, handsome face under there was not a boogey man, even if he looked like one from a distance. A flip side paradox of this is that once in a while people have taken me wrongly to be some kind of an unfriendly person and I had no idea what I had done. They were projecting something on to me and probably they did not even know why. That's how our subjectivity works, it takes over because it comes out of the unconscious part of our mind which is not known or understood for most.

To be continued...

Swamiji started the talk with an uplifting bhajan on guru - *guru mahima guru mahima apaara mahima guru mahima*.

One important aspect of any culture is the celebration of festivals. These festivals are of various types—Jayanti or Utsava. Utsava means celebration of some incarnation's birthday or sometimes celebrations connected to agriculture like pongal or to some festival connected with beginning of the year like ugadi or to some festivals called celestial festivals-*divya utsava* which is related to movement of luminaries. One such festival is guru peyarchi. "Peyarchi" means transition. The planet Jupiter (guru) takes 12 years to complete one round around the sun. That is why Pujya swamiji would say that to complete the study of any subject matter thoroughly, it takes 12 years. Like grammar or jyotisha to study thoroughly takes 12 years.

Guru or any graha itself does not affect your life. You must be very clear about this. Astrology or your horoscope or any graha does not decide your life. It is just indicative of your karma. It is a model presented by our rishis who because of their extraordinary power of observation saw the connection between the celestial conditions in the sky and human life. Based on that they had jyotisha sastra by which a person's life is indicated by the conditions of the stars and the movement of the planets. So we should not think that Jupiter will affect me or rahu or ketu will affect me. No graha can affect you. This one should be very clear about because some people are afraid that Sani or Rahu or Mars will adversely affect them. You need not be afraid of any graha because graha is just indicative of your karma. So if at all you should be afraid of anything, it should be of papa karma. You should avoid papa karma so that you will not have papa phalam. This is an important thing we should know about astrology.

In fact in the astrology model, some of the grahas are considered to be benevolent. If they are well-placed in your horoscope, they indicate good karma on your part. Guru is one such beneficent planet. That guru takes 12 years to complete its orbit round the sun and it takes one year to enter and complete its path in one rasi. So every year, guru will be changing its rasi. Today guru will be moving from

Makara rasi to Kumbha rasi. Based on that astrologer will say, if you have this sign, this guru peyarchi is good for you or if you have that sign, you should be careful. In fact we should always think that my guru is always showering his blessings on me, so no graha can do anything to me. That should be our conviction.

Another thing, the graha guru , Jupiter is invoked in Lord Dakshinamurti. Really Brhaspati is the graha who has a different figure and color,etc. but that planet guru is invoked in Lord dakshinamurti who is also guru. That is why today in South India you will find big crowds in Dakshinamurti temples, where pujas will be done specially. Guru's grace is invoked by worshipping Dakshinamurti.

Today we chanted a shloka . These three shlokas are glorifying the guru who is also a devata and even among the devatas, he is the guru of all devatas. Today I will give the meaning of the first shloka and the rest next year.

Devanam ca rishinam ca gurum kaanchana sannibham

Buddhibhutam trilokesam tam namami Brhaspatim

This brahaspati is the teacher, guide of all the devas and even great rishis. He has a golden complexion. He is presiding over our intellect and because of this high position of being guru of devatas and rishis, he is considered to be lord of the three lokas.

In our tradition we can invoke a particular form of the Lord or we can invoke jagat karta isvara or we can invoke the limit-less, attribute-less brahman. All three of them can be invoked. Here the lord of the three worlds is invoked. To that trilokesa brahaspatim, I salute. Brahaspati is another name for guru. Brahas means speech and pati means the Lord. So I salute Lord Brhaspati.

Om Tat Sat

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti, Coimbatore
31st Anniversary Celebrations

Report on the 31st Anniversary celebrations at AVG, Anaikatti on 07-11-2021

The anniversary celebrations started at Guruteertha, the memorial place of Pujya Swamiji. There is a beautiful practice at the Gurukulam here, that before any celebrations, Pujya Swamiji's permission and blessings are taken. This is called ***anujna puja***. Then puja swamijis padukas were taken in a procession chanting gurustotram and placed at the altar in the lecture hall.

The program started with an invocation prayer on Ganesha by Kum Bala, Chitra and Emy (all 2 year course students). Br Sharanji was the MC of the program who spoke of the tradition of the gurukulam which he said is well- depicted by our vata-vrksha emblem. Swami Jagadatmanandaji, our acharya Sw Sadatmanadaji and Swamini Brahmaleenanandaji graced the dias and gave anugraha bhashanams . The speakers went down memory lane and remembered their association with Pujya swamiji and their learning experience at the Gurukulam. For new students and guests, it was a glimpse into the Gurukulam history and for the old students, a journey down memory lane.

Swami Jagadatmanandaji spoke very eloquently about how Pujya Swamiji brought about a transformation in his life. His personal reminiscences touched many hearts. Some excerpts of his talk -

“ I always used to wonder is there a person who can love me selflessly and accommodate me by all means and in all times. Is there a person in this world who loves me even after many mistakes, failures, hopelessness and could there be one person who is ready to help me and lift me irrespective of my frequent faults? Is there a person to trigger my inner vision and show me a path which is the only way to moksha?

Even after all my family, friends gave up on me , only one hand held my hands strongly and took me towards the truth of truth-*satyasya satyam*. That person was Ishwara with a name and form called Parama Pujya Swamiji. Swamiji equated the Self, atman to me and made me understand I am Satyam. Knowledge of this Satyam as oneself is explained by Swamiji as parama purushartha as this is the only real means of knowledge. It leads to freedom from sorrow.

In my earlier life (before sanyasa), I was wandering for recognition. Even after achieving excellence in education, wealth and fame I was not recognized by any one. After a long search when I finally surrendered to Paramapujya Swamiji , he simply said that already I

am full and complete. With all my surprise, I started my study of Vedanta.

We are blessed with Paramapujya Swamiji who is ever living as a beacon light to the essential view of life which is Vedanta and as the way of life which is dharma. Before leaving his physical body Swamiji said, *"I will be with you forever at all times"*. It is true that Swamiji is Ananta: and we feel his presence in every walks of life as a guiding principle, motherly love and compassion. Usually Sanyasis will not be interested to commit themselves into starting any institutions as it becomes another samsara. But Parama Pujya Swamiji was an exception and because of him only today thousands of teachers of Arsha Vidya Sampradaya teach Vedanta and Sanskrit all around the world. Hence Swamiji is praised as teachers of teachers. Swamiji's main teaching is to understand the Value of Values. Today we celebrate our 31st Anniversary of our Gurukulam and the Sruti Seva Trust. On this auspicious occasion I thank our beloved Acharyaji for being a great support and taking up the vision and mission of Parama Pujay Swamiji to further levels. I see Acharyaji as Parampujya Swamiji as he is a learned scholar and full of contentment."

The next speaker was Swamini Brahmaleenanandaji who has been associated with Pujya Swamiji and the Gurukulam even before its inception and continues to be associated even now. She gave us a glimpse of how the Gurukulam infrastructure was built one by one over time. She shared several interesting anecdotes with Pujya Swamiji at the Gurukulam.

As Br Sharanji said, she took us back in time making the past times at the Gurukulam come alive to the audience . Swamini was in the first long term course conducted at the Gurukulam. There were Sunday classes for local people. Food was served to anybody who visited the Gurukulam. It was a place all felt welcome. She emphasized the important role played by volunteers who supervised all the activities and made the place and greenery as it is now. She also thanked the teachers and acharyaji for continuing the sampradaya.

After that, Mr Vallabhesanji, general manager presented the annual Gurukulam report for 2020-21 of the activities and projects done at the Gurukulam in the past one year. This was followed by the annual report presented by Dr Parthasarathy from SDJ Ayurvedyalaya which is a part of AVG activities 2020-21. He spoke of the impact of Covid on the operation due to which it was closed. But he spoke positively of how they used this period to improve and streamline their infrastructure and functionality . They are now ready to open by the end of December this year.

Acharyaji then honoured the three doctors - Our inhouse Dr Guru Maharaj, Dr Ramesh

who is available at a call when anyone is sick. Staff and students at the gurukulam are very grateful for their ready service. Acharya honoured all of them with a shawl and token gift and the audience expressed their gratitude with a loud applause. Acharyaji was then honoured by Sw Jagadatmanandaji .

This was followed by an anugraha bhashanam by our acharya, Sw Sadatmanandaji. A brief excerpt of the talk –

“ Today we are celebrating the 31st anniversary of AVG. It was founded on 31st Oct, 1990. The uniqueness of this and other gurukulams founded by Pujya Swamiji is that it is a place where traditional, authentic teaching of Vedanta is given without having any agenda for the students.

As we look back over the past 30 years, we can see what are the factors that are required and have contributed to successfully running an organization -

- **Clarity of purpose** . Pujya Swamiji was very clear about the purpose of this gurukulam. He used to say that the Gurukulam provides a place where people can learn Vedanta in a comfortable, safe and conducive atmosphere where everything is taken care of.
- **Effective leadership**. Pujya swamiji was a great visionary and he provided very good leadership to the gurukulam.
- **Public support**. Pujya swamiji mobilized that support very well. In fact whatever support we have now is because of Pujya Swamiji's efforts. We are just harvesting what he has sown. Local support of people around is very important which he mobilized.
- **Continuation of the activities for which Gurukulam is founded**. There is tendency that other activities creep in and the main activity gets stopped. That did not happen here. This gurukulam is meant for conducting Vedanta courses and this is done in many ways in the form of short term, long term courses, retreats.
- **Coordination between the management and the teaching faculty**. That also has happened here to a great extent. Therefore this Gurukulam is able to function effectively.
- **Grace of Isvara**. Dakshinamurtis grace, Pujya Swamiji's grace is there. Because of all these reasons, this organisation is running successfully.

Swamiji then thanked all the trustees, supporters, volunteers, management staff, all teachers for their support and prayed to lord Dakshinamurti and Pujya swamiji for their continued grace so that gurukulam can continue its activities.

The program ended with a vote of thanks by Br Sharanji to be followed by a special anniversary lunch!!

2021 Camp on Brahma Sutra Bhashya **at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA, USA**

The 2021 Fall Vedanta Camp by Swami Tattvavidanda (Swami TV) covered Adhyasa Bhashya and the first Sutra in the Brahma Sutra. Every word of the Bhashya was analyzed threadbare to provide students the ways and means for inner transformation. This is the first time in a decade that the camp enrollment had surpassed the available slots for physical attendance subject to Covid 19 limitations. There were about 90 people enrolled for live attendance and a similar number from other continents and time zones who attended remotely over live streaming sessions.

It was the first-time attendance for a few students. One such couple, who had come just for the earlier one-week camp only, rearranged their work schedule to attend the following 5-week course fully and even have decided to relocate to an area near the Gurukulam. Some students, who were never exposed to Vedanta were captivated by the teaching and now cannot think of life without sustained sadhana. Such anecdotes of transformation point to the power of the teaching, that is synonymous with the teacher.

Characteristic to Swami TV's teaching, the style was once again multidimensional, multidisciplinary, integrated, original, ever fresh and taught with unconditional and non-directional love for the learners. Swamiji quoted Bertrand Russel at a satsang, "The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge". The entire teaching was a meditative experience for the students, inspired by the love of Swamiji and guided by the highest standards of scholarship. The purpose is only one and that is for every attendee to realize that moksha is here and now, and that the inner transformation required is indeed possible with clarity, earnestness for the truth and effortless sadhana.

Swamiji examined every facets of divisive and fragmentary thinking that is present in one's secular and religious lives and how that must be overcome to realize the oneness that expresses itself as unconditional love for all beings. The entire teaching, while guided by the words of Bhashyakara, also leveraged examples from the lives and works of great Mahatmas and Philosophers attesting to the fact that knowledge knows no boundaries. A partial list includes the following - Literary works of Shakespeare, Kalidasa, Philosophies of people such as Bishop Berkley, Immanuel Kant, Sutras of Panini and Patanjali, Prasthana-Thraya Bhashyas, words of Buddha, Christ, Nisargadatta Maharaj, Ramana Maharishi, Akandananda Maharaj and Guru Nanak, quotes of Scientists such as Einstein, Newton and Schrodinger, poems of Swami Rama Tirtha, quotes of Swami Vivekananda, sto-

ries of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, vision of God of Spinoza popularized by Einstein, Kabir's poems, lyrics of St Thyagraja, quotes of St Francis of Assisi, and works of Bertrand Russell. The teachings seamlessly integrated the findings of latest research in medicine, surgery, organic chemistry and astrophysics. Yes, they even included articles from New York Times. The spirit of oneness that came through was not conceptual but one that resonated in the heart of the students. Swamiji used tikas and recommended translation of Brahma Sutra by Thyagaraja and Swami Gambhirananda. Teaching methods included Abhinaya, humor, electronic gadgets, anecdotes as well as a skit based on Adhyasa Bhashya directed by Swamini Srividyananda and enacted by some of the students.

There were many requests for the return of 7 to 9 weeks Course. Swamiji has assured that he will continue to teach once a week from India starting from December 2021.

The camp was enhanced by Sanskrit classes taught by Swami Muktatmananda. Swamiji covered sandhi and some of the vibakthi rules using numerous examples from Bhagavad Gita. His simplified style inspired many students to continue the study of Sanskrit and requested Swamiji to conduct online classes once a week throughout the year which he graciously agreed to do. Terry Coe taught Sanskrit classes for the beginners who were never exposed to Devanagari scripts.

Arpan and Monica gave yoga classes every morning during the camp to keep the attendees fresh and active. Chitra engaged them with meditative songs during some nights after the satsang sessions.

It was due to Pujya Swamiji's vision for the new facility and the realization of it with Swami Veditmananda's blessings and leadership that such a large number of attendees could be accommodated even while adhering to Covid 19 related restrictions. The students are grateful to ashram staff and management for providing a nice learning environment and for sumptuous meals.

Sample topics covered

While an exhaustive list of topics covered is not possible here, a small representative list is included to give an overview so that the reader may be encouraged to procure the recordings from the ashram's bookstore.

Spirit of the sutras are to use minimum words that hints at the truth. First there is the word and then silence wherein one discovers the truth. Adhikarana nyaya is used in expounding and organizing the 555 sutras into 191 adhikaranas. This nyaya is likened to a Court proceeding with five element model namely subject matter,

doubt surrounding the subject matter, purvapaksha views, utara paksha which is a systematic refutation of the purvapaksha views, and siddhanta which is the conclusion.

Adhyasa: An individual is limited not because he is essentially limited but because in his ignorance, he has mixed up the real with the unreal which is called adhyasa. If he addresses this mix up and eliminates it in his life, through viveka then eventually he will know the truth and thus be liberated. This is an interesting situation, in that, adhyasa – superimposition has to be established first in order to negate it, thereby eliminating the basic cause of human suffering. The transactional life of a human being is centered on the ‘me and mine’ syndrome.

Artha adhyasa : The syndrome of me, is aham-idam as in ‘I am the body and body is me.’ Sentient being is taken as body which is insentient and vice versa.

Samsarga Adhyasa: The syndrome of mine is mama-idam as in ‘my sofa, my house, my money.’ The sentient I is connected to insentient in terms of quality.

There are other adhyasas such as dharma adhyasa as in atma dharma (lakshana) of asthi bhathi being superimposed on vishaya Dharma which is jadam. For example, dharma adhyasa can be understood when one says ‘pot exists and it is evident.’

Khyati prakaranam.: Khyati means erroneous perception. The various khyathi vada of Vaiseshikas & Naiyayikas, Sunyavadis, Kshanikavijnana vadis, Akhyati vadi from the Mimamsaka School and Sankyas were analyzed and dismissed. The philosophical vision of khyati is that in life you are looking for certainty. The cardinal principle of philosophy is that uncertainty is a fact of life. Death is certain but when it will be is uncertain. Sankara subscribes to anirvacaniya khyati, which is, life is a glorious uncertainty.

Adhyasa Bhashya is epistemological and not subject to emotions. There is adhyasa in pramana-premaya vyavahara, which includes Veda as a pramana as well. Without the pramatha (knower), there cannot be pramana (means of knowledge) and prameya (known) and the very appearance of pramatha is due to adhyasa. Further, atma itself is aprameya meaning it cannot be objectified and known by the buddhi. It is svatha siddha and only by adhyasa there is an appearance of

pramatha.

While it is true that shabda pramana (Vedas) is an independent means of knowledge, it has to be loaded onto the buddhi first and buddhi cannot comprehend the light of awareness that lights up the buddhi. The role of Veda as an independent pramana has to be understood in negative terms only. It teaches you that self-knowledge is knowing all that is not the self. Negative understanding is the highest understanding. One can refer to the bhashya in second chapter of Gita where all this is explained. In addition to these classes, Pujya Swamiji's lectures that is the basis for the Gita home study has Sankara's teaching on the role of Veda as a pramana.

Conceptual Vedanta: The entire Course emphasized the need for learning via direct perception (aperception). When you gain knowledge, but you do not realize it, it remains as conceptual knowledge and slowly becomes poison-like. The poison is, that you get a false notion that you are a vedantin, and then you may even consider yourself as a teacher of vedanta. Because once you declare even to yourself that I am a teacher of Vedanta, then the process of learning comes to an abrupt end. There is no more learning, because that heart is unfit for learning anymore. It leads to what is called spiritual ego and that is the poison, just like undigested food becoming poison. Swamiji refers to himself as the speaker only and not a Guru or teacher and explained why he considers himself a learner only all the time.

Panini Sutras, Mimamasa, Nirtuktam were dealt with in detail wherever appropriate. For example, the word 'shraddha' is understood as follows: Reality is sat and it is understood provisionally as the other and somewhere above. In Sanskrit anything which is paroksha, the other, is indicated by the syllable ra which is letter repha. For sat, if you attach repha it becomes shrat because sa becomes shra. So shrat is the reality, sat taken as the other and paroksha. Hence 'shrat dadati iti shraddha.' Shraddha is the right mental attitude, which is the capital in this journey of discovering the reality. It helps us to get established in that sat which is taken as shrat as paroksha and the other. With that attitude one is sure to gain satyam as not the other and not as paroksha but recognize the truth as aparoksha and as atma. Shraddha is therefore love and cheerfulness in taking up and pursuing the sadhana and the intense enthusiasm to reach the goal.

The topics were reinforced during the daily meditation sessions and nightly satsangs.

They included topics such as but not limited to

- Conclusion is not the truth
- Mind converts search for truth into conclusion
- World is not material but mathematical
- World of objects is linguistic, observational, and not existential
- Matter is a matter of belief
- Traditional means fossilized intellect.
- Brahman is not a concept. Gita and Upanishad do not offer an image of God to worship
- Both mind and matter are unreal. Mind validates matter, matter validates mind
- Where, why, when cannot be asked about ajnanam or about big bang (since space, time , causality are created after big bang.)
- Fear and greed cause adhyasa
- Adhyasa is pramana siddham and anubhava siddham but not yukthi siddham, meaning it is not logical
- Truth is timeless, not traditional, not observational, not linguistic, and existential

The day we love the spirit of glorious uncertainty, we know life which is the spirit anirvachaniya. That is why the first sutra is 'Brahma jignasa' emphasizing enquiry. To begin enquiry, one cannot be trapped by what is known in the mind which is only based on the past. Even the so-called future is only a projection based on the past. All knowledge based on memory is only an impediment to the enquiry. An open mind leading to creative intelligence is required for beginning the enquiry.

In the first sutra, atha in 'athatho brahma jignasa' is understood as here-after the enquiry of Brahman begins. It describes the prerequisite that is shown as not dharma jignasa. It refers to sādhanā chatuṣṭaya namely viveka, vairāgya, śat sampatthi of the mind and mumukṣutvam. Each of these were covered in-depth. The six-fold sampatthi (wealth) of the mind as described in Brhadaranyaka upanishad were addressed exhaustively.

Sama - quietude from vasana vikshepa (scattering of the mind)

Dama - mastery of indriyas from vikshepa of Indriyas

Uparama – withdrawl from kamyā karmas and focus on dutiful and purposeful actions in order to prevent vikshepa of karma

Tithiksha – endurance to protect from vikshepa of sukha and dukha of the body/mind

Shraddha – intense desire to know the truth to protect against the vikshepa of ‘doubting thomas nature of the mind.’

Samadhana – attention that protects against the vikshepa of the mind due to ahamkara (ego) and mamakara, otherwise described as the ‘me and mine’ syndrome.

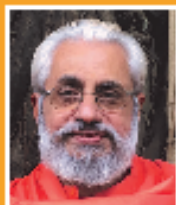
Concluding statements.

All the lectures were focused on empowering the learners to realize that one must be a light unto oneself. The sastra and teacher are there only to point to the inner guru. With direct perception of the teachings the inner transformation is but natural.



Written by T.K. Srinivas, Nov 14, 2021

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Namaste and welcome to the fourth edition of the Vedic Wisdom Festival presented by Aarsha Vidya Foundation! This time too, it is a two day virtual global festival on Zoom. Masters from across the country and the globe will unfold the vedic vision for a complete life. The topics range from Ayurveda and Mental health, How Vedanta works, The glory of temples, Yoga for Vedanta, Sanskrit - the oldest and the most sophisticated language, Learning for Life from the Bhagavad Gita, Kalarippayattu - The ancient Indian martial art and much more.

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Tribute to Swami Prashantanandaji

Swami Prashanthanandaji was born on 27th July 1931 to Shri. Panchapakesa Iyer and Smt.Rukmani at Kumbakonam. He Spent his early childhood at Maraiyur[Vedapuri] a hamlet in Mayiladuthurai. He's the second child among four and eldest son of his parents. His poorvashrama name is Shri.Lakshminarayanan. He studied in Little Flower High School, Kumbakonam.

Lakshminarayanan moved to Chennai [then Madras] in the year 1948 at the age of 18 and took the job in Madras Railways in the year 1950. He developed close relationship with Pujya Swamiji the time he started attending Swami Chinmayanandaji's public talks in Madras from 1952 and was actively involved in raising funds for Chinmaya Mission, Madras which formed the basis to buy the current property at Harrington Road from Mr.Rajarathinam, IPS.

As instructed by Swami Sivanandaji of Divine Life Society, Rishikesh and Swami Chinmayanandaji, Laxminarayanan studied entire Veda with a Vedic Scholar at Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham, T.Nagar, Madras for over eight years. His brahmacharya name was Shantha Chaitanya.

He has travelled widely along with Swami Chinmayanandaji throughout India and organized innumerable public talks. When Pujya Swamiji was actively involved in conducting Vedanta Course in Sandeepany Sadhanalaya in Mumbai, Swami Prashantanandaji took charge of administration of the ashram.

He always remembered how Swami Chinmayanandaji molded him in each and every aspect of running the Ashram and dealing with devotees, managing funds etc. In one of the Jnana Yagna's of Chinmyanandaji, I was introduced to Pujya Swamiji and Swami Prashantanandaji in early 1980's. I met Swami Prashantanandaji again at Andhra Ashram, Rishikesh. He was taking care of the administration work there.

In Anaikatti Ashram he was taking care of kitchen, garden etc, along with teaching. When I was a brahmachari in Rishikesh Ashram, whenever Swami Prashantanandaji, visited we used to sit and discuss hours together.

When I stayed in Manjakkudi, Swami Prashantanandaji visited on several occasions and he took me to Thiruvaidaimaruthur Rathothsavam and other temples like Shri Kothandaramar Temple, Vaduvur.

Pujya Swamiji's poorvashrama brothers Shri.Srinivasanji, Shri.Ramachandranji and

Shri.Dharmarajanji are very close friends of Swami Prashantanandaji. Shri Dharmarajanji's wife is a close relative of Swami Prashantanandaji. Many senior disciples of Pujya Swamiji are ignorant about this fact.

As stated by Shri S Natarajan Mama, [one among the Board of Trustees of Swami Dayananda Educational Trust, Manjakkudi] the trees planted by him in Anaikatti Gurukulam will echo Swami Prashantanandaji's name forever.

Om Tat Sat

By SWAMI SADEVANANDA SARASWATI

“The wave being not independent of water, you don't have to remove the wave in order to see the water. So too, if the thinker, the thought, and what is thought of are dependent upon the *ātmā*, which is the reality of all three, you don't have to remove any of them to recognize the *ātmā*. The recognition is that all three are *ātmā* while *ātmā* is not any of them. ”

“*Vēdānta* is not a topic in books. It is just you, it is your vision, it is your responses to situations. *Vēdānta* helps change your scales of vision. Your emphasis changes, and so small things remain small because you are concerned with something bigger. Thus *Vēdānta* does bring about a cognitive change. Your cognition changes, thereby, a number of changes can take place.”

“A mature person is one who first accepts facts and then becomes alive to facts. When you relook at what you consider a fact now, you find that it is nothing but someother fact. And so what is the fact? If a person is aware of that, he or she is mature in the true sense. Such a person is called *sthitaprajña*, a wise person.”

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Shodashi of Swami Prashantanandaji

Swami Prashantanandaji's Shodashi was organized at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti on 31st October 2021 at 11 am. The programme started with a prayer and earlier pujas were performed at the adishtanam of Swamiji, which is just in front of the gurukulam. From the morning people started visiting the gurukulam and visited the Samadhi to pay their respects to Swamiji. It was noticeable everybody were remembering their connections with Swamiji and sharing the memorable events. The Swamijis visited are

Sri Shivalingeshwara Swamigal, Sri Kamakshi Dasa Swamigal , Sri Ponmanai Vachaka Swamigal, Sri Varahi Swamigal, Sri Sadashivanandaji

Swami Chainmayananda Dasaji, Swami Sakshatkritanandaji, Swami Tadevanandaji, Swami Ganeshaswarupanandaji, Swami Vishwatmanandaji, Swami Aishwaryanandaji, Swami Nateshanandaji and Swami Sadevananda ji.

Br. Sharanji welcomed the gatherings and followed by Shradhanjali was delivered by Swamijis. Following is the talk of Swami Sadatmanandaji in memory of Swami Prashantanandaji.

Prashantah yah svarUpaNa prakrtyApatithaiva ca,mahAsamAdhiprAptam tam, vandehamswAminammuhuh

I salute again and again to Swamiji who has attained mahasamadhi, who was of the nature of tranquility and he was that way even by his natural disposition.

We are observing this sixteenth day samaradhana conventionally called Shodasi samaradhana of Swami Prashantanandaji. I think of many of his qualities, but some of them I would like to share with you.

- The first and foremost quality of Swamiji was his Gurubhaktih- sharanagatih. There was no limit to what he can do for Puja Swamiji. He did not have his own wish. He had resolved his wish into the sankalpa of Puja Swamiji. He was a great example of surrender-guru bhakti. In fact in his room, he had stuck some papers with the bhajan- *more lagi lagan guru charananaki*. Not stuck just in one place, but in 3-4 places. It shows how much value he had for the guru.
- The second quality was his simplicity. He was very simple in his actions, in his possessions, in his interactions with people and in his lifestyle .
- He had this quality of humility. He was very humble and he never tried to project himself, always keeping himself behind. To everybody, he was very humble.

- The fourth quality of swamiji was his compassion. He had really imbibed compassion from Pujya Swamiji so much. He was very mindful not to hurt anyone. He tried to do his best to reduce the dukha of others.

He did not have any such problem of arrogance. He never felt- "How can I listen to this very junior swamiji?" He will come and sit in my class also. He had love for listening to sastra. He was a very simple mahatma with whom you can interact without any inhibition. People felt very comfortable with him. Now he has become one with Parmatma. We invoke his grace on this day and let us always get inspiration from his life.

Later all Sadhus were taken for Shodashi Biksha. 16 items were offered to each Sadhu along with dakshina. Every sadhu was honoured by Swami Sadtamananda ji and arathi was done. After that food was served. It was noticeable even after the conclusion of the programme people were standing outside and discussing about the memories of Swami Prashantananda ji.

Om Tat Sat



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