

The anniversary went off very well inspite of the rains! About 500 people attended the function. We had specially invited the people from the nearby villages and the Aim for Seva, Anaikatti hostel students.

The celebrations started 3 days earlier with an anniversary retreat conducted by Chief Acharya Swami Sadatmanandaji on the Ten Shanti mantras . It was attended by 55 participants. The rain Gods also decided to join in. We had unprecedented rains with thunder and lightning for 3 days before the event. But after blessing and purifying the place, the rains stopped for a few hours on the day of the function and the sun peeped out to bless the event!

The program started at 10 am with arti to Pujya swamiji's paduka.

This was followed by an invocatory prayer by Smt Sarada Subramanian who sang a stuti to Lord Ganesha in her devotional and melodious voice.

The next item on the program was a dance by Smt Pavithra Srinivasan on Gita natyam. She brought the dhyana sloka and the verses of the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita alive !

It was not just a dance performance , but one in which all of us knew the words and the characters. She has founded the organization Arsha Kala Bharati and committed herself to present all 18 chapters of the Bhagavad-Gita with dance and music, for children and adults to help appreciate our scriptural texts. (visit www.gitanatyam.com).

This was followed by a report on Gurukulam activities by Sri Ravi Venkataraman, Secretary of Sruti Seva Trust who flew down from Chennai for the event.

The Chief guest Sri N.V. Nagasubramaniam, Chairman Kothanda Rama temple trust, Coimbatore and a devotee of Pujya Swamiji , could not attend and his message was read out by Swami Jagadatmanandaji . This was followed by a very lively talk by Swami Jagadatmanandaji in Tamil. Brief excerpts of his talk below translated by Smt Sadika in English.

Brief write-up of Swami Jagadatmanandaji's talk :

“ Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati resides in the hearts of everyone of us. With his divine grace, he has lead us in the pursuit of knowledge. May his blessings guide us towards attaining the knowledge of Advaita and to live with that vision.

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam has achieved the unimaginable in the past 33 glorious years since its inception. A Gurukulam is a place for students to learn and live under the guidance of a Guru. We call Arsha Vidya as a Gurukulam for this auspicious reason : in a Gurukulam

system, the disciples reside with the Acharya all the time, listening to and imbibing the teachings of the Guru while performing Guru seva. This is called living with the Master.

Swamiji talked about the stages for the pursuit of freedom.

Purushartha Nishcaya- ascertaining the objectives of life. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha are called purusharthas. Out of these four Purusharthas - Dharma, Artha and Kama are Avantara Purusharthas, ie, secondary goals of life. The Parama Purushartha, ie, the primary goal of life is Moksha (freedom). One has to learn about all the four Purusharthas and understand that the primary purushartha is Moksha. This is *Purushartha Nishcaya*.

Sadhana Nishcaya-ascertaining the means for freedom in the form of knowledge After adopting Sadhana Nishcaya, we require

Pramana Nishcaya – Ascertainment of the appropriate means of knowledge of reality. It is in the form of Veda vakyam- the Upanishads.

The journey does not conclude here. The next step is choosing the **right tradition** to follow which will lead you to your destination. There exists several disciplines such as Advaita, Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita or Shaiva Siddhanta, etc. Even within each one of the disciplines, there are several sub-branches. It is said that as per the punya (good karma) accumulated from previous births through virtuous deeds, one gets to know about the Advaita tradition. We will then further come to know about Bhagavan Shankaracaryaji and his bhashyams.

To understand the message of Shankara Bhashyam or any sacred text we **need a Guru**. Only a Guru can unfold the Shastras. The shastras cannot be self-taught. To acquire a Guru, more punya is required. A Guru must be a *shrotriya brahmanishta* - one who is well versed in the scriptures, lives by it and has understood the ultimate truth. One has to have a lot of punya to find the right Guru like Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Pujya Swamiji has taught the messages of the scriptures to one and all in the easiest and most understandable way possible. The blessed are the people who were fortunate enough to meet, interact and learn from Pujya Swamiji.

Personally, I did not get the opportunity to study under Pujya Swamiji. I am only a Bhakta of Swamiji. I regard Pujya Swamiji as Lord Dakshinamurti himself. The Mahatmas who were Swamiji's disciples are my Gurus. Swami Paravidyanandaji and our Chief Acharya Swami Sadatmanandaji taught me *Upanishads* and *Brahma Sutras* in the same voice and light, Pujya Swamiji would have extolled its messages unto me. I am indeed blessed and fortunate for this opportunity.

You would all have heard of the metaphor '*Philosophers' stone*'. Many would say that it is applicable to Pujya Swamiji. Just as how any metal that came into contact with the Philosophers's stone would also turn to gold, such was my transformation with Pujya Swamiji. As an expression of gratitude , I serve our Gurukulam along with Acharyaji, under his guidance.

Pujya Swamiji regarded one and all equally and would accept any individual as his shishya (disciple) regardless of their country of origin or religion and would teach them. Our Gurukulam continues Pujya Swamiji's legacy by embracing the very same principles and imparts knowledge to all seekers. In 2024, Acharyaji is starting a 108 day course residential course on Vedanta and Sanskrit. This will be followed by a long-term course. Over 70 students from across the world will be participating in the 108 day course. I pray to Lord Dakshinamurti that more programs will be conducted in the years to come .

Swamiji expressed his gratefulness and thanks to all present.

He thanked the staff, teachers and the devotees associated with the Gurukulam for their support and prayed for them . Swamiji thanked the chairman, Sri Shantaram and Smt Sunita amma and all the other trustees and expressed our heartfelt gratitude to them for their support.

Swami Tadevanandaji, our well-wisher who is present in all important events held here at our Gurukulam and Swamini Brahmaleenanda were on the dias gracing the function.

Swamiji thanked them for being present with us today on this auspicious day."

Swamiji said- " The list of people we are grateful to will go on and on. We thank one and all.

The people from our neighbouring villages have been invited for the function and will join us for lunch on this auspicious occasion. Acharya Sadatmanandaji was keen to keen to invite them, in keeping with the convention earlier followed before Covid.

Many devotees and well-wishers are gathered here today . We pray that in the years to come, this will multiply and many more benefit from the Gurukulam and its activities.

Our sincere gratitude to everyone. We request for your continued support. Thank you."

Dr Parthasarathy, Medical Officer-in-charge presented a report on SDJ (Ayurveda hospital) which is part of Sruti Seva Trust. It was started by Pujya Swamiji 9 years back . Due to the commitment of Dr and his staff the SDJ Hospital has grown in size and efficiency and caters to people worldwide.

This report was followed by Anugraha bhashanam by Swami Sadatmanandaji.

Swamiji in his crisp and objective way spoke about the role of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam from different aspects.

Brief write-up of Swamiji's anugraha-bhashanam-

“ We are celebrating the 33rd anniversary of this AVG which was founded by Pujya Swamiji on 31st Oct 1990.

What is Arsha Vidya Gurukulam?

Simple meaning is : *guru* means teacher and *kulam* means residence. Gurukulam means residence of the teacher. This implies a place of learning . Of what? Learning Arsha Vidya- the knowledge preserved and imparted by the rishis.

So AVG is a place of learning, receiving the knowledge imparted by the rishis. This is a simple meaning.

Pujya Swamiji beautifully presents the spirit of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam . These are his words -

“The study of Vedanta is a serious study of oneself and it therefore entails personal care and attention on the part of the teachers. In the Gurukula set-up, the student receives this important care from the teachers. Arsha Vidya Gurukulam's are a humble effort to provide the students with this environment. “

Another way is to look upon the Gurukulam as an embodiment of the grace (krpA) and compassion (dayA) of Pujya Swamiji .

It is an avenue which provides an opportunity **to be a Contributor**. As Pujya Swamiji said *“Everybody is a consumer, but one has to become a contributor for one's growth”*.

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam provides an opportunity to become a contributor. I am very happy that there are so many devotees who are contributing in terms of their knowledge, finance and their service. Thus, Arsha Vidya becomes an avenue for becoming a contributor. One more point Pujya Swamiji would highlight is that this Gurukulam is a place where the teaching is given **without any agenda**. Here we teach the students who come from all over the world, but we have no agenda for them that they have to start a center in our name, promote AVG, etc. Ofcourse, If they want to start some center, we may help . This is a rare thing to happen. Generally Asrams will have agenda to expand. But here we just teach without any agenda.

One more way is to look upon this Arsha Vidya Gurukulam as a place which is **contributing to the society**. Before this Gurukulam came up here, there were very few trees here. But after the Gurukulam came up, the green coverage has increased! This has been

officially accepted. One of the ardent devotees of AVG, Smt Sunitamma mentioned how there were only two trees here. Many trustees and their family members would themselves come and plant the trees. Swami Siddhabodhanandaji , Sri Ramanji and many others have contributed to make this place green. So, AVG is contributing to the environment. In a small way, this place **provides employment** to the people around and many of the workers have been with us for a long time. This place is trying to contribute in whatever manner it can.

This Gurukulam also provides an **altar for worship**. We have a beautiful temple of Lord Dakhsinamurti and also a temple of Kalyana Subramaniam (Lord Murugan) . Everyday regular pujas are done morning and evening by highly trained priests. The pujas are done under the guidance of Swamini Sharadanandaji and Swamini Vedarthanandaji. We really appreciate their dedication to the maintenance of the sanctity of these temples. Both the Swaminis also teach chanting to the students and are very particular about the purity and precision of pronunciation. I am happy to announce that they will be resuming the weekly classes very shortly.

In this manner this Arsha Vidya Gurukulam is a place for holistic growth. This place can work well only if the various supporters in the form of donors, sponsors, devotees, seva team members, management staff and the teachers who are all contributing in their own way.

Sri Ramchandranji , a senior student and also a teacher, has been providing his seva as the editor of Arsha Vidya Newsletter. We appreciate his silent contribution. It is not an easy job, Not only he has to serve as the Editor but he also has to answer the people if newsletters are not received by them or any other queries.

Like him so many people are contributing in their own way. Many Swamijis are coming to AVG and blessing it. I thank all of them. We pray for the blessings of Pujya Swamiji to continue the activities of this Gurukulam for the purpose of which it was founded by him.”

Finally, there was a vote of thanks by our Manager, Mr Anandan.

The program completed on time and ended with a sumptuous lunch prepared by our kitchen staff team. The rains stayed away all day.

We remember Pujya Swamiji on this memorable day and thank him for creating AVG, Anaikatti where the sampradaya of teaching still continues to this day.

We appreciate all staff members for the excellent arrangement and planning in spite of the rains and for another memorable anniversary!

- Report by Ms. Padma