

Inauguration of Ārṣa Vijñāna Gurukulam at Washington, DC.



Pūjya Śrī Svāmijī inaugurated the Ārṣa Vijñāna Gurukulam at Washington, D.C. on the 11th of September 2010, the most auspicious day of Ganesha Chaturthi.

Ārṣa Vijñāna Gurukulam is the fifth Gurukulam to be established by Pūjya Svāmijī.

The fact that this new Gurukulam was inaugurated in Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, is very appropriate to a Guru of the stature Pūjya Svāmijī. There are many devotees in the area who are in need of a Gurukulam for their Vedantic studies.



The day began appropriately with an elaborate pāda pūjā ceremony at the Gurukulam in Lanham, Maryland. Pūjya Svāmijī was accompanied by Sri Svāmi Pratyagbhodānanda, and Sri Svāmini Prajñānānandā. Sādhvijī performed the pāda pūjā for Pūjya Svāmijī. The āvahanti mantrā was chanted, and an ārati for Dakṣiṇāmūrti was performed. About 50 regular students were in attendance and received prasāda from Pūjya Svāmijī.

The second part of the inauguration was held at a public location provided by Smt. and Sri Ramani. Three hundred devotees





waited for Pūjya Svāmijī to arrive at the venue. They sang bhajans and there was a great excitement in the air.

Amid many festivities, including presentations and speeches, the highlight of the day was a talk by Pūjya Svāmijī entitled, “Spiritual Growth and Śāstrā.”

Pūjya Svāmijī began the talk by pointing out that the word “spirituality” meant different things to different people, unlike the word “table,” which meant the same thing to everyone. He reminded us that there was no communication when a speaker and a listener had different understandings of the words being used. Svāmijī discussed the basic human problem of self-judgment. He said: “animals do not have self-judgment. They do not sense inadequacy in themselves. A show dog, for example, does not need a pedigree certificate. The certificate is for the human owner, not the dog. It is the human being that has the problem of self-judgment and inadequacy. The human being alone has a sense of want. No matter how one looks at oneself, one is found wanting. When one doesn’t want to be wanting and is yet found wanting, the problem is never solved, even if one moves to new surroundings”.

Pūjya Svāmijī pointed out that if the sense of want was real, there was nothing that could be done about it, and if it was not real, there was no need to do anything about it.

Tying in his earlier comments about the meaning of spirituality, he made sure that we understood exactly what he meant when he used that term. For a topic to be considered within the realm of “spirituality,” it must offer a solution to the basic human problem of self non-acceptance. It must be able to solve that problem here and now, not by seeking refuge in the hereafter, such as heaven, or in some other place and time.

He said, “If the problem can be solved here, when alive and kicking in this body with all the limitations and wants at every level, if there is a solution in spite of all this, then there is spirituality - this is the only spirituality. We can see for ourselves that the basic problem can be solved, because we are not always wanting. We have times of happiness and joy, sometimes for no apparent reason. We never have a day where we do not find ourselves with some sense of want, yet there are also times when we are happy”. Pūjya Svāmijī asked us to consider what this conveyed.



“This is where Śāstrā highlights our experiences and tells us whether or not it is true that our sense of wanting is real, in spite of the fact that we are happy from time to time. We can learn from this. With the help of the Śāstrā, we can inquire into this deeply and discover that limitlessness is our true nature. The Śāstrā tells us judgment is wrong. It is true that the body, the knowledge one has, and one’s perceptive powers are all limited; the one that is conscious of these limitations has got to be limitless. That is the truth we must recognize. If limitation is a point of view - what is the view? The view is that one is free of all limitations. This is what we can learn from the Śāstrā. One is already free, not from the result of any action, but because it is one’s nature and the truth of the self. This we must know. Quoting the Mundaka Upanishad, Pūjya Svāmijī said, “The uncreated is not a consequence of action. The discernment and dispassion of the seeker leads her or him to this understanding, after the seeker has examined all fields of experience and arrived at the conclusion that they are time-bound. All action is limited and can yield only time-bound gains. Actions cannot produce the limitless, because limitlessness is uncreated; it just is. To see this with clarity one requires the help of a teacher.

Pūjya Svāmijī said: “having a guru in one’s life is not for the sake of hero-worship”. He further added that if a spiritual leader was to say that he or she gained the knowledge without any teaching, or seeking help from a guru, the correct response would be to tell the spiritual leader to keep whatever they had gained



to themselves and enjoy what they had without sharing it with others. Svāmijī pointed out that the Śāstrā says that the qualified teacher is the one who has gained the knowledge by listening to his or her teacher. This is the meaning of the word “śrotriya.” Thus the knowledge has survived through an unbroken teacher-student lineage. To believe that one could gain self-knowledge without effort or teaching was at best spiritual romanticism. Pūjya Svāmijī came to a perfect conclusion of his talk by making it vividly clear that to properly utilize the Śāstrā as a mirror, one must have a teacher who has studied the Śāstrā to guide one through the quagmire of self-doubt and self-judgment. “When limitless truth of the self is revealed through the words of the Śāstrā aided by a qualified teacher, all mistaken notions of the self are dismissed”, he said.



Pūjya Svāmiji discussed the importance of studying with a teacher, while acknowledging the fact that removing self-ignorance is not a quick-fix, but rather a committed pursuit dedicated to the gain of the knowledge. This knowledge has been handed down through many generations, and Pūjya Svāmiji having received it from his teachers has handed it down to his disciples who were in turn handing the knowledge down to their students.

Pūjya Svāmiji spoke highly of Sadhviji, who is the Acharya of the newly inaugurated Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam, and stated his confidence that the studies to be held at the Gurukulam were in keeping with the sampradāya and that we could feel

confident in taking full opportunity for study. Pūjya Svāmiji expressed enthusiasm about the attendees, and said that after seeing the size of the crowd, he was encouraged to go about the Gurukulam in a big way. Svāmiji encouraged the people to immediately buy property, and promised to make a fundraising trip to Washington D.C. during his US visit in December and January.

The program concluded with a vote of thanks, after which the audience were served with special lunch.

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