

## 108 days Course Inauguration at AVG, Anaikatti

September 2nd 2019, *Bhadrapada Shukla Chaturthi*, apart from being the first and the main day of the ten day Ganapati festival that is celebrated all over India, also happened to be the inauguration day for the 108 day Bhagavad Geeta course, a precursor to the next long term course that is to be conducted under the able guidance of Swami Sadatmananda ji at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti.



The day started early at 4.00am with Ganapati Homam, and despite the early hours, many students showed up excited to witness their very first *homam* here. Soon after *poorNaahuti*, Bhatt ji the chief *archaka* continued with the regular *abhishekam* to Lord Dakshinamurthy, dressing him in spectacular garments and ornaments, decorated with myriad colourful flower garlands, it was tough to take eyes off of him once *pushpanjali* was completed!

We, the students and the teachers, then proceeded to Guru Tirtha at 7.15 am to offer our respects to Pujya Swamiji, where we were joined by Swami Tattvavidananda ji and Swami Satchidananda ji along with Swaminis Atmaratananda ji and Brahmaleelananda ji, all of whom had especially come down for this occasion to Anaikatti. At 9.15 am we assembled in the lecture hall where we all sat down in our respective assigned seats from the previous night. Swami Satchidananda ji was the Master of Ceremonies and he introduced all the Acharyas of the course, before requesting them to offer their Anugraha Bhashanams.

Swami Tattvavidananda ji in his fearless and frank style told us right away that most of us did not have an open mind! To listen to the *shastra* one needs to be empty of all preconceived notions, pre-formulations, and pre-judgements, we need to be humble enough to say, ‘I don’t know’, and also be very alert to what is being taught and talked of. Swamiji also said that study of *samskrutam*, especially literature was necessary to enjoy the *rasa* of life, which is in fact our real nature, and he impressed upon us that we must develop scientific temper, and that Veda or Vedanta is not against science.

Swami Shankarananda ji, who spoke next continued in the same vein and said that we are already what we seek, and therefore this beautiful journey without goals that Swami Tattvavidanandaji had talked of, was that much more lovely, especially when we receive *guru krupa*, *ishwara krupa*, and *aatma krupa*. Without the compassion and grace of one’s teacher, one’s *daivam*, and one’s own Self this study is impossible. With the 108 day Bhagavad Geeta study we will soon discover that we are no different from *jagat kaaraNam brahma*, he said. Geeta is both a *yogashastra* which prepares us as well, as also *brahmavidya* which shows us who we really are.

Concluding the session Swami Sadatmananda ji spoke eloquently about how Vedanta is a *taraNa vidya*, how this knowledge helps us to swim across the ocean of *samsaara*. He also talked of how Vedanta study will turn all that we have into a luxury, i.e. if things and people are there and act conducive towards us well and good, we are happy, if not, well and good too! Modern life unfortunately is so dependent on everything and everybody, that it has made luxuries into necessities. We are unable to be without technology even for a second for example.

After this spectacular session by *Swamijis*, we headed to the temple again for *Ganapati Caturti Puja*. Sixteen rounds of *Ganapati Atharvaseersha Upanishad* was chanted while the *abhishekams* were done, followed by regular *shodasopacaras*. Chief Archaka, Bhatt ji despite such a grueling schedule conducted all the rites with great *shraddha* with the help of Krishna ji and Sriram ji. Under the guidance of Swamini *ammam* all the *poojas* went off very well, and it provided an auspicious start for our new course. *Prasadam* and Lunch followed which were delicious as usual, and kept up the AVG standards of being a great *Annadaana kshetra* as per Pujya Swamiji’s vision, where no one who comes here leaves hungry.

There are about 100 students from different parts of the globe and in India. Representing Canada, Brazil, Bulgaria, Hungary, Japan, Poland, Romania, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey, as well as Andhra, Telangana, Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, UK, UP, Delhi, Odisha, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala etc. The student body is diverse and international with about half of them being women. Logistics for such a large group is not simple, but it was expertly conducted and streamlined with the help of Sumukhi ji, Kumar Chaitanyaji, Sharan ji, Ramachandran ji, Padma ji, and of course Swami Sadatmanandaji.

From allocating rooms as per preference, to seating arrangement in the lecture hall as per height, to inventory list of items in the rooms, to getting insurance, a new sim card, electing representatives for the various *seva* activities, all this was done in a very systematic manner. Within a matter of two-three days, all of us are well-settled and ready to start our classes from tomorrow i.e. September 3rd 2019. We are excited and looking forward to it with great eagerness. Given the sample classes that were conducted today as part of the *Ganesha Chaturthi* and Inauguration celebrations, we have no doubt that this will be a spectacular journey within and without.

**Report by Krishna Kavita**

**More photos in wrapper 3**

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