

5th Long term Vedanta Course at Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam, Nagpur

The 5th long-term course in Vedanta and Samskritam commenced at Dr Shrikant Jichkar Memorial Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam, Nagpur, on GuruPurnima day (3rd July 2023), considered by many to be one of the most auspicious days in the year.

The day began with the Chief Acharya of the Gurukulam, Swamini Brahmaprakashananda (Mataji), remembering Pujya Swamiji and expressing her reverence by doing the Guru Puja in the lecture hall. The shraddha bhava and meticulous manner in which Mataji performed the puja was a source of inspiration for all the students, online or on campus.

The puja was followed by the Inauguration Program for the long-term course, which was attended by esteemed guests, including the President of the Gurukulam, Smt. Rajashri Jichkar; Trustee and Vice President, Shri Avinash Pande; Trustee and Treasurer, Shri Pramod Jaiswal; and Trustee, Shri Yajnavalkya Jichkar. The occasion was also graced by a disciple of Pujya Swamiji and a longstanding Gurukulam patron, Shri S.M. Rao, from Dubai.

The proceedings of the program began with the Asst. Acharya of the Gurukulam, Swamini Tattvamayana (Swaminiji), chanting Vedic prayers. Smt. Rajashri Jichkar then honoured Mataji and Swaminiji through a traditional offering of a shawl and coconut. All the guests were then welcomed in the same manner, as Mataji shared a brief background on each of them and their contribution to the Gurukulam over the last couple of decades. During the program, Mataji repeatedly and fondly remembered Dr Shrikant Jichkar, who, with the blessings of Pujya Swamiji, was the inspiration behind Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam.

Smt. Rajashriji then offered a few words of encouragement to the students. Shri Raoji remembered Pujya Swamiji by singing the verse '*śāntākāraṃ bhujagaśayanam*', which he learnt from Pujya Swamiji and sang for him on several occasions.

The audience had the privilege of having as a guest of honour Swami Sakshatkritanandaji, who joined the online program from Rishikesh Ashram through a Zoom Meeting. He offered an anugrahabhashanam in which he motivated the students by reminding them of the great punya they had accumulated to get the desire to study Vedanta and get the chance to be with the teacher for that sake.

Swaminiji then talked about the importance of having a guru. She encouraged the attendees to maintain a student's attitude and be open to continuous learning for spiritual growth and ultimate freedom. She invited the students to embrace the opportunity of being in a place where the teachings are lived in every moment. Swaminiji then offered a few words of encouragement before handing over to Mataji to

conclude the program with her anugrahabhashanam.

The day at the Gurukulam ended in the evening with all the residents of the Gurukulam joining Swaminiji in doing Pada Puja to Mataji to express their love and reverence and seek her blessings to help them achieve a clear understanding of the teachings and to live up to the knowledge received.

Highlights on Mataji's anugrahabhashanam by Swaminiji – Mataji talked about the significance of Guru Purnima, a special day to honour all gurus, starting with the first guru, Ishvara. She emphasised that everything in the world is a manifestation of Ishvara, and all are not separate from this reality.

She said that we often get caught up in the differences and limitations of life, not acknowledging our true nature. She encouraged us to seek completeness and limitlessness within ourselves beyond the roles we play in society.

The guru is compared to a philosopher's stone, who can make other people as good as himself. They help us understand that we are not different from Ishvara and that the purpose of life is to understand our true nature, which brings immense relaxation and completeness.

She also highlighted the guru's role in passing on this sacred knowledge through generations. She called for dedication from the students to gain this wisdom and freedom for themselves.

In her anugrahabhashanam, Mataji inspired us to honour and thoroughly learn from our gurus, to see the divine in everything, and to seek our true reality beyond our worldly identities. She will guide all of us to find our purpose in life by understanding our limitless and complete nature.

Om Tat Sat

To be ready for the study of *vedānta*, I should be able to accept myself just as I think I am and be willing to present myself to others as I am. I should like myself as I am but at the same time have a strong desire to find absolute freedom not subject to the limitations that seem to bind me. I should be free of self-condemnation. I should simply like myself but knowing that I seem to be bound, I long to be free. When I suffer from *dambhitvam*, pretentiousness, it is scarcely possible for me to have a true desire to be free. - Swami Dayananda Saraswati