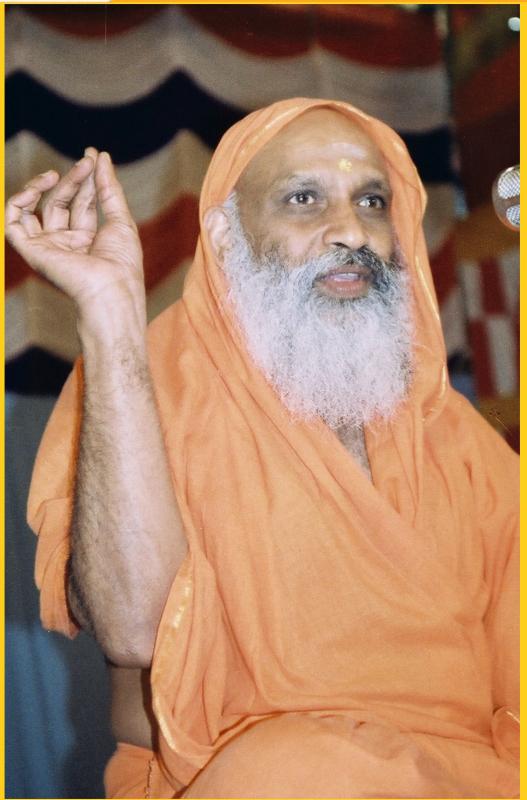


# ARSHA VIDYA MONTHLY JOURNAL



# Kenopanishad Camp at AVG Anaikatti









Bhandara at AVG Anaikatti



# Sadhu Bhiksha on 19/12/2024 (Thursday) LH SPL / Smt. Thlabandula Subha Sai & Sri. Rangasai, Guntur

Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal

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# Focus, *Samādhāna* By Swami Dayananda Saraswati

# What is *samādhāna*? *Cittaikāgratā*

Right in front of you, *agre*, there is only one thing, *eka*. This is *ekāgra*, and *ekāgratā* is the abstract noun. The meaning of *samādhāna* is the status of your mind, *citta*, focusing on one thing at a time, *cittaekāgratā samādhānai*. This is an accomplishment for oneself. C*itta-ekāgratā* has to be mentioned, because people may have difficulty in keeping the mind in one track of thinking. To keep the mind in a particular track of thinking for a length of time is an accomplishment, because the mind moves. *Cittaekāgratā* is the capacity to bring it back. This is called *samādhāna*.

You all have this *citta-ekāgratā*, capacity to keep the mind in a given track. People often tell me, "Swamiji, I have no concentration." This is a common thing. If somebody confirms that, it is another form of manipulation. If you want to manipulate people, tell them they should develop concentration. "Yes, Swamiji, how can I develop concentration?" Everybody will ask you that. Even if you ask God to develop concentration he will ask how, because this is a common problem. In fact, there is no problem at all. We will make a problem out of no problem. Who has no concentration, tell me? You may say, "I have no concentration because when I read the book, my mind goes all over the place." Which book? "My text book, Sanskrit." You said it. Suppose you are reading about a particular topic that you like, or the book is a novel by an author you love. There, you find concentration. You will read the whole book in one day. From where do you get this concentration? You can understand that unless you have it, you can't apply that concentration under any circumstances. So, in what you are interested, there is concentration. But what you are interested in, what you have a value for cognitively, intellectually, you may find is not compelling, emotionally. There is no hero, no drama. Sanskrit is *rāmaḥ*, *rāmau*, *rāmāḥ*. How did *rāmaḥ* become *rāmāḥ*? It is a problem. There are *sūtras* for that, so you not only have to know *rāmāḥ*, you also have to know how it became *rāmāḥ*. There are two problems. But once you begin loving that, you have concentration, because there is a certain emotional satisfaction in it. That must be there. Everybody has concentration, unless there is some pathological problem, so for somebody to say that you must have concentration is another form of manipulation. As though the person saying it has concentration. Everybody has concentration for a topic. You have to discover that. Any topic, once you get involved in it, once you begin to understand it properly, elicits concentration. So no one can say that he or she has no concentration.

Still, someone can say, "Swamiji, if I have concentration, why, when I am chanting a mantra, does my mind move away? It goes all over." It is the mind's nature to go all over. It should not be stagnant. Otherwise you won't be able to know anything. The thought frame must be momentary, because you can't see the motion unless it is. It has to be momentary, like a movie. Your mind is not like a Polaroid camera. It is momentary, so you don't see a single picture. It goes on taking pictures; that is how the mind works. It has to move; the *Bhagavadgita* confirms it: cañcalam hi manah. "The mind has to move, okay, but why should it not chant, when I want it to? When I am repeating something mentally, my mind moves away from what I am repeating." Do you know what? This is called meditation. Part of the definition of meditation is to bring back the mind to what you are doing. That is what meditation is, so you cannot complain to me anymore that you cannot meditate. Bringing the mind back to the object on which you are dwelling is the definition of meditation. So nobody can really complain, "My mind moves away." Bring it back. Bringing it back is meditation. You can no longer say that the mind moves away, because you understand the logic. Moving away is natural, but if you don't bring it back, there is no meditation. Your attempt to bring it back is meditation. "Whenever it moves away you bring it back" is the advice given by Bhagavān, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, *yato yato niścarati tatastato niyamyaitad* (6.26). That is meditation. And that capacity to bring it back is what is called *citta-ekāgratā samādhānai*.

*Samādhāna* can also be taken as a mind that is not interested in too many things, or in doing many things at the same time. Trying to do many things at the same time is so common that we even have a new word for it—'multitasking.' This is a particular kind of habit that is not helpful in this pursuit, so we need to have *samādhāna*. And also, too many irons in the fire is a problem. When there are too many things out there to do, we need *viveka* and *vairāgya*, as already mentioned. Here, a certain *citta-samādhāna* is also required. You have only one thing in front of you, and this is what you are seeking now. That is the main, the predominant occupation. "This is what I want now, this is what I am doing now, at this time in my life." So what you are doing draws your attention, has you, for the time being. Now Vedanta has you—and Sanskrit also. Nothing else has you, because you are committed to them. This is *samādhāna*.

### Om Tat Sat

You may be mortal from the standpoint of the body. You may be blind or deaf from the standpoint of the senses. You may be restless from the standpoint of the mind and wanting in knowledge from the standpoint of intellect. But from the standpoint of "I" that is aware of the body, senses, emotions, knowledge, memories, ignorance, you are self-evident, being simple consciousness or awareness.

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati

# Vālmīki Rāmāyaņa As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

*This is the fortieth part of the serial article, continuation from Nov 2024 edition.* 

अहं राघव कैकेय्या वरदानेन मोहितः। अयोध्यायां त्वमेवाद्य भव राजा निगृह्य माम्॥ २-३४-२६

aham rāghava kaikeyyā varadānena mohitaļ | ayodhyāyām tvamevādya bhava rājā nigŗhya mām || 2-34-26

Rama entered Dasharatha's palace and the assembly. At the first sight of his dearest son, King Dasharatha swooned and fainted, falling to the floor. Others began to wail and cry. Gathering himself, Dasharatha rose and spoke, "I have made a mistake. I did not know what I was doing. Rama, take me as a captive. I have been cheated by my own promise. Unwittingly I gave my word. How could I know that this was a burning fire covered and hidden by ashes? I was innocent, deluded. I did not know that a snake was hidden there. It is my mistake, I must live with it, but you, my son, do not have to follow it. Take me captive and take the throne right now. Take the crown here and now."

In India, when there was Mohammedan rule, there was always a problem that the father would be thrown into prison and the son ascend violently to the throne. That is the history of Muslim rule in India. Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal, was tossed into prison when Aurangzeb decided he should rule. Then the son met the same fate at the hands of his son. Somehow, that is their custom. The story and values of the Ramayana are ingrained in the fibers and the thinking of the people of India. It is impossible for them to think, however cruel the father is, of the son overthrowing the father. The father would not be cruel to the son anyway. It is all part of the culture. What is possible in one culture is found nowhere in the other. The influence of the story, being shared everywhere from childhood, is very much a part of India.

एवमुक्तो नृपतिना रामो धर्मभृतां वरः । प्रत्युवाचाञ्चलिं कृत्वा पितरं वाक्यकोविदः ॥ २-३४-२७ भवान् वर्षसहस्राय पृथिव्या नृपते पतिः । अहं त्वरण्ये वत्स्यामि न मे राज्यस्य कङ्क्षिता ॥ २-३४-२८ नव पञ्च च वर्षाणि वनवासे विहृत्य ते । पुनः पादौ ग्रहीष्यामि प्रतिज्ञान्ते नराधिप ॥ २-३४-२९ evamukto nṛpatinā rāmo dharmabhṛtām varaḥ |

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pratyuvācāñjalim krtvā pitaram vākyakovidaļi || 2-34-27 bhavān varsasahasrāya prthivyā nrpate patiļi | aham tvaraņye vatsyāmi na me rājyasya kanksitā || 2-34-28 nava pañca ca varsāņi vanavāse vihrtya te | punaļi pādau grahīsyāmi pratijnānte narādhipa || 2-34-29

Hearing his father's choked words, Rama, the one who knows how to talk, spoke, "You must be the emperor for another thousand years. There is no way I can take you as a captive. You are my lord and king. I will gladly dwell in the forest these fourteen years. I have no desire at all to rule at this time. Do not think you are hurting me by sending me this way. There is not the slightest injury or resentment on my part. When the vow is fulfilled, I will come back and again I will hold your feet."

श्रेयसे वृद्धये तात पुनरागमनाय च। गच्छस्वारिष्टमव्यग्रः पन्थानमकुतोभयम् ॥ २-३४-३१ न हि सत्यात्मनस्तात धर्माभिमनसस्तव। संनिवर्तायतुं बुद्धिः शक्यते रघुनन्दन ॥ २-३४-३२ अद्य त्विदानीं रजनीं पुत्र मा गच्छ सर्वथा। एकाहं दर्शनेनापि साधु तावचराम्यहम् ॥ २-३४-३३ śreyase vṛddhaye tāta punarāgamanāya ca | gacchasvāriṣṭamavyagraḥ panthānamakutobhayam || 2-34-31 na hi satyātmanastāta dharmābhimanasastava | sannivartayitum buddhiḥ śakyate raghunandana || 2-34-32 adya tvidānīm rajanīm putra mā gaccha sarvathā | ekāham darśanenāpi sādhu tāvaccarāmyaham || 2-34-33

Weeping, Dasharatha, giving the approval that Rama sought, said, "Please go, and please safely come back. But won't you wait one day and night before you go. That way I will be able to spend some time with you? This will allow Kausalya and others to be comforted. There was a well-designed scheme that took advantage of me, causing my own wishes to work against me. For you to take them upon yourself is a great sacrifice. Your commitment to *dharma* is total and fully evident. I am happy and proud, yet at the same time I cannot stand your departure. When, three times, I promised to do whatever this woman wanted, I was trapped. For you to have to do this to fulfill those words is my mistake and my regret. It is a wonder in *dharma* that you willingly make this choice." न चैतन्मे प्रियं पुत्र शपे सत्येन राघव । छन्नया चलितस्त्वस्मि स्त्रिया भस्माग्निकल्पया ॥ २-३४-३६वञ्चना या तु लब्धा मे तां त्वं निस्तर्तुमिच्छसि । अनया वृत्तसादिन्या कैकेय्याभिप्रचोदितः ॥ २-३४-३७फलानि मूलानि च भक्षयन् वने गिरींश्च पश्यन् सरितः सरांसि च ।वनं प्रविश्येव विचित्रपादपं सुखी भविष्यामि तवास्तु निर्वृतिः ॥ २-३४-५९na caitanme priyam putra sape satyena rāghava |channayā calitastvasmi striyā bhasmāgnikalpayā || 2-34-36vañcanā yā tu labdhā me tām tvam nistartumicchasi |anayā vṛttasādinyā kaikeyyābhipracoditaḥ || 2-34-37phalāni mūlāni ca bhakṣayan vane girīmsca pasyan saritaḥ sarāmsi ca |vanam pravisyaiva vicitrapādapam sukhī bhaviṣyāmi tavāstu nirvṛtiḥ || 2-34-59

Rama knew what he must do. He had given his word to Kaikeyi that he would go. He had to go now to make both his words and his father's words true. He asked his father to let him go and to go on this very day. "The moment I gain the forest I will be happy. There will be fruit and roots in abundance. The beauty of the mountains and trees and rives will unfold before me. You think perhaps that I will miss the kingdom, but I will get everything there."

यस्यास्तव पतिस्त्यक्तो राजा दशरथः स्वयम् । भर्ता सर्वस्य जगतः स्थावरस्य चरस्य च ॥ २-३५-५ नह्यकार्यतमं किंचित् तव देवीह विद्यते । पतिघ्नीं त्वामहं मन्ये कुलघ्नीमपि चान्ततः ॥ २-३५-६ यन्महेन्द्रमिवाजय्यं दुष्प्रकम्प्यमिवाचलम् । महोदधिमिवाक्षोभ्यं संतापयसि कर्मभिः ॥ २-३५-७

yasyāstava patistyakto rājā daśarathaḥ svayam | bhartā sarvasya jagataḥ sthāvarasya carasya ca || 2-35-5 nahyakāryatamam kiñcit tava devīha vidyate | patighnīm tvāmaham manye kulaghnīmapi cāntataḥ || 2-35-6 yanmahendramivājayyam duṣprakampyamivācalam | mahodadhimivākṣobhyam santāpayasi karmabhiḥ || 2-35-7

Sumantra, who was there in the assembly, had been stuffing his anger the whole time. Finally he let go and vented his wrath at Kaikeyi, "Kaikeyi, oh, what you have done. Just look, you have destroyed everything. You want your son to have a kingdom and this has cost Dasharatha's peace and his joy. A husband should be like a god to his wife. How do you think you are going to make a decent life after doing this? Have you not destroyed both your husband and your family? Your achievement is nothing. This great king, the great tree of *dharma*, In-

dra-like in his objectivity and unswayed by other's emotions, is now helpless, felled by your action. Unshakable as a mountain, fullness like the ocean, our king lies here now, made miserable by your whims. Still there is the opportunity now to change this curse and right what you have wronged. Ask Rama not to go, withdraw your boon, perhaps the wondrous prince will listen. You choose to finish off the abundant mango tree that yields the sweet fruits we all thrive on. The tree you nourish is the neem tree, margosa, of which every part is bitter. Except for its shade it is a useless tree. Were you to pour gallons of fresh milk at the foot of your sour tree, it would not produce one single sweet fruit. You think that Bharata is going to be happy? I tell you, Bharata, who has been well brought up, is no less a person than Rama. When he comes here and finds out what this is all about, he is not going to accept this kingdom.

"I have heard a proverb: The son takes after the father; the girl takes after the mother. This I have heard, but I never believed it at all. There are always exceptions, and this is no rule. I never had any great faith in this. But now it looks to me as though there may be some truth in it. You see, Kaikeyi, I know your mother. Your father had been given a boon by a great saint. Your father had the capacity to talk with all the beasts and creatures of earth. Once, when your father and mother were together, your father suddenly laughed. She demanded, 'Why are you laughing? Are you laughing at me or are you just crazy.'

Your father replied, 'No, no, I am laughing at something else. I heard some of the creatures talking and it was funny and I laughed.' 'You did? You heard them? What did they say?' 'Well, I cannot tell you that,' he said honestly. 'Why can't you tell me?' He said, 'You know, according to the sage who granted me this ability, if I share what I have heard from these animals I will die. I am not supposed to tell the secrets.' 'I don't care about that, tell me.' That, Kaikeyi, was your mother. Therefore I see that it is true after all that the daughter takes after the mother.'' Sumantra, a man of wisdom and sweet words, was angry and wanted to strike and to make Kaikeyi think a little bit. But Kaikeyi did not budge.

*To be continued...* 

# Mahābhārata As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the sixteenth part of the serial article, continuation from Nov 2024 edition.

Purocana took the Pandavas to the new house and Bhima immediately smelled wax. He said the house smelled of wax. The Pandavas could see that this house was made for destruction. Yudhisthira knew that the plan was to eliminate the family altogether, and Bhima was furious. Bhima wanted them to abandon the house and to expose the entire plot to kill them. But Yuddhistira asked him to wait, because they did not have any real evidence of Duryodhana's intention. They knew Duryodhana would have already ingratiated himself with the citizens of Hastinapura and that the Pandava plea would not be heard. Yudhisthira advised patience so that the family could survive the exile and gather strength over time. Dhrtarashtra controlled the kingdom and the army. Yudhisthira said to wait, because Duryodhana would not light the fire until some time had passed and he could be sure that he would not be suspected of having planned the conflagration. Duryodhana and his henchmen would not torch the house until the citizens of Hastinapura had forgotten about the Pandavas. Yudhisthira asked his family to move into the house and to wait until he asked Vidura what they should do next.

Purocana shadowed the Pandavas. He had built a moat around their house and said that it was to assure their privacy. Bhima saw the moat not as a means to deny intruders but as a way to deny the family escape if there was fire. Bhima wanted out, but Yudhisthira pacified him, "The same Lord who kept you from being poisoned will take care of us."

Dhrtarashtra, Pandu, and Vidura were brothers. Vidura sent a messenger to the Pandavas princes living in the wax-walled house. The code word for the messenger Vidura sent was in a language other than Sanskrit. Yudhisthira trusted the messenger was from Vidura because the message was delivered in dialect. Yudhisthira learned that the messenger himself was a miner, one who could dig a tunnel out the back of the wax house to a safe place some distance from the structure. The Pandavas decided that to conceal the tunnel job they would need to find a way to take Purocana out of the house daily. Yudhisthira made a point to go out and about daily; he knew Purocana would follow him as a matter of course. Purocana took care to know where the Pandavas went and who they talked with.

Every day Purocana would follow whichever Pandava went out - to the forest, to the temple for meditation, to see the sights. In time the miner announced that the work was done and the escape tunnel was ready. A small trap door lead underground from one of the back rooms. The tunnel had been dug from the room where Purocana stayed. Purocana would often have family members, women and children, come and share the room.

Months passed while the Pandavas settled into a routine. Then the word from Hastinapura came to Purocana that the house was to be set on fire on the next dark night before the new moon day. Nobody would suspect arsonry if the house burned down now. On the thirteenth day of the fortnight, Purocana prepared himself. He made sure that no one from his family was not there when he turned the house into a raging inferno.

Every day before the fire Bhima made sure that the trap door to the tunnel was open and the way was clear. The Pandavas planned and agreed that after the burning they would not let anyone know that they had survived the fire. They did not want anyone chasing them after they made their escape from the conflagration of wax and oil. They would make it look like they had been caught in the fire. They would wait for the right time for them to reappear. Their decisions were in line with the words of strategy that had been sent by Vidura. The Pandavas saw the logic of his arrangement, and they followed his counsel.

They could not stand up in the tunnel, and they had to carry Kunti. Hurrying along the path that Vidura's hidden message had advised, they were guided away from the raging fire and into the open by the light of the stars. At the end of the tunnel the Pandavas were met by another cohort who also spoke in the dialect. Vidura had sent someone to assist them and had prepared a boat that was to take the Pandavas to the far bank of Ganga. From there the family was to make its way to the nearby town Ekachakra, selected by Vidura. Looking back at the wax house, the Pandavas saw the total destruction and the fate they had escaped.

Bhima carried Kunti out of the tunnel and then some distance to a grove of trees that they thought to be safe enough. Kunti said that she was very thirsty and tired. She did not want to go any further. Bhima made a bed a leaves and put his mother down. Everyone else rested while Bhima went to bring water. He found a beautiful pond with huge lotus leaves and fresh flowers. The water was clean and Bhima drank deeply. He thought he would take a dip to refesh himself. Then he made a large cup out of a lotus leaf and carried water to his family. After drinking the water the others slept while Bhima rested and thought about Kunti. Kunti was the sister of Vasudeva. Vasudeva, in the *vṛṣṇivamśa*, was the father of Krishna. Kunti had married into the Kuru family as the wife of great Pandu. She was the mother of these five great sons, though two were born of Madri. Thinking of this, Bhima became despondent. He came to appreciate and to question the *karma* that had now brought Kunti to this lonely situation and a shabby place in unfamiliar territory.

Bhima wrestled with his thoughts and watched his family sleeping. The forest they were in was the property of a *rākṣasa* called Hidimba. Hidimba loved human flesh, and anyone who came his way was a potential dinner for him. Hidimba lived with his sister Hidimbi. From his perch in a treetop, Hidimba smelled humans, and looking down he saw the Pandava group resting in the grove. Hungrily, Hidimba asked his sister to go and kill the people he saw below and to bring them to him. That was Hidimbi's job; she could not escape her brother's spell. He was her master. She came down from the treetops and saw there the *deva*-like Bhima. It was love at first sight. She was infatuated with Bhima. All her evil thoughts disappeared, and she no longer wanted to kill Bhima. She changed her form and appeared before Bhima in a white sari. She looked like an *apsara*, a celestial.

"Who are you?" Bhima asked.

"I am Hidimbi, sister of a *rākṣasa* who is in charge of this forest. My brother does not let go of anybody who happens to pass this way. He is waiting for me to bring the bodies of you and your friends. He sent me here to kill you. But when I saw you I changed my mind, and now I want to marry you. I want you to be my husband."

Bhima laughed, "What?"

She said, "We should get out of here, you and me. I will carry you to a safe place. I can take many forms. I can fly. I can do many things. I am a *rākṣasī* you know. I have all these powers. Let us go before my brother comes."

"Let him come," replied Bhima.

"He is a *rākṣasa*. He will kill you," said Hidimbi.

"I am really not too worried about a *rākṣasa*. He is just another pest," said Bhima.

"You talk as though you think you can handle him," said Hidimbi.

"I cannot go anywhere," said Bhima, "Look, here is my mother. These are my brothers. There is Yudhisthira, my oldest brother. He is like a god to me. How could I leave them?"

"All right," said Hidimbi, "we'll bring your mother along with us."

"Everything you say is *adharma*," declared Bhima, "You can just forget your weird plan. I'll just wait and see what your brother is up to."

Hidimbi's brother was already there. His sister had not returned, and he was curious about the delay. Seeing the humans had made him hungry. Hidimba approached the pair.

"He may kill you when he gets here; he can you know," proclaimed Hidimbi to Bhima.

"You do not know my strength. He cannot kill me. You will see what these

two hands can do. This forest will be free of this menace. Your brother will be gone," said the Pandava prince.

"All right," said Hidimbi, "after he is gone will you marry me?"

Hidimba had heard everything. He stormed up on his sister and Bhima, "You want to marry my dinner? This fellow is my dinner. First I will eat, then I will deal with you, sister."

The two combatants faced off and the fight began. As the noise and ruckus grew, Bhima said, "Say, would you quiet down a bit, my mother and brothers are sleeping. Don't disturb them." But the family woke up, and they saw Bhima fighting this huge mass of flesh, this *rākṣasa*. They were of course amused at the titanic wrestling match. Then Kunti saw the girl in white standing nearby.

"Who might you be? Are you a celestial? What are you doing here in this forest?" asked Kunti.

"I am this *rākṣasa's* sister, unfortunately," said the *rākṣasī*, "I came by here and saw your son and I was taken by him. Please tell your son to marry me." Yudhisthira and the others laughed out loud when they heard this.

"Bhima, you must be tired after all you have been doing. Why don't you leave this fellow to me? Why not take a rest?" inquired Arjuna.

Bhima said, "No, no, no, I will finish off this guy. I feel fresh after my bath. You just take it easy."

Arjuna advised, "Well, do it now, because the sun is setting and you know these *rākṣasas* gather strength in the nighttime. It becomes very difficult to fight against them. Get it over with, otherwise I will take care of it."

To be continued...

# Kenopanishad Retreat Report - Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti

Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, this pristine campus of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti, has been a cradle of knowledge for seekers from all over the world imparting the teachings of the Vedic Tradition.

On the 7th of December 2024, the Ashrama received over a 100 Vedanta students and aspirants keen on exploring the teachings of Kenopanishad elegantly articulated by Swami Sakshatkrtananda ji, Acharya at Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh. As we dived into the Shankara Bhashyam, Swami ji explained various discussions in the text unfolding its teachings with great lucidity.

Paired with the teachings of Kenopanishad Bhashyam, we were also walked through the summary of Brhadaranyaka Upanishad with a great detail of its structure and content by Swami Sadatmananda ji.

Towards the end of the retreat, Swami Sadatmananda ji also introduced 'how to study Tika (sub-commentary)', with the Ananda Giri's Tika of Kenopanishad.

While the Vedanta classes were insightful and deep, the Chanting sessions covering Medha sukta, Samvada suktam etc., by Swamini Sharadananda ji brought more colour to our retreat. Guided meditation sessions by Swami ji led us to deeper contemplations based on the vision of Vedanta. The campus has resonated with sacred chants offered at the feet of Lord Medha-Dakshinamurti at the temple every morning and evening.

On the 11th of December, we had the utmost fortune of celebrating Shrimad Bhagavat Gita Jayanti in the Ashram with Gita Pooja and parayana of all the 18 chapters.

The evening Satsangha-s were always filled with surprises, spanning from our Acharyas answering our questions, Swami Sadatmananda ji leading heart-warming Bhajans, Swami Jagadatmananda ji's talk on relevance and understanding of Panchangam, to guest speakers and artists, our days always ended with a treat to our minds and hearts.

Our guest speaker, Dr. S. Gurumurthy ji offered us two insightful presentations on Brhadeshvara Kovil in Tanjavur and Nataraja Kovil at Chidambaram.

Kumari Keerthana presented popular carnatic songs gracefully played on her Veena, accompanied by Mrdangam Vidvan Manikanthan.

Students of Veda-Bhrahmashree Jambunatha Ghanapathigal from Perur presented our retreat with a Parayanam of Ghana patha, Pada patha, Jata patha and Varna lakshanam, followed by a Parayanam of Atharva Veda Mantras by students of Swami Dayananda Saraswati Veda Patha Shala, Anaikatti.

In keeping with the spirit of our ancient tradition of offering our gratitude and seeking blessings of Sadhus, a Bhandara was organised on the 19th Dec, where about 35 Sadhus graced us with their presence. Students and campers of the Ashram prayerfully and cheerfully volunteered in their service.

The immersive experience of the last 2-weeks has been indeed a retreat from the busy and stressful lives of cities. The immaculately maintained Gurukulam campus has served as a safe haven not only to cows, peacocks and deer but also to the campers.

We are eternally grateful to our teachers for leading us on the path of Dharma and Moksha. We offer our sincere salutations to Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati Ji for the vision of this Gurukulam which continues to impart this timeless knowledge to seekers around the globe.



Om Shri Gurubhyo Namah.

More pictures in cover page #2

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# Arsha Vidya Gurukulam



(Sruti Seva Trust), Anaikatti Phone: +91-0422-2657001, +91-9442646701

#### is pleased to announce

#### ONE YEAR RESIDENTIAL VEDANTA COURSE ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA & CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD 6<sup>th</sup> CHAPTER (WITH BHASHYAM)

Acharya:	Swami Sadatmananda Saraswati
Course Dates:	27 <sup>th</sup> Aug 2025 – 28 <sup>th</sup> Aug 2026
Language:	English

#### Eligibility:

- Age between 25 to 60 years
- Diploma/Graduate in any discipline
- Conversant in English (reading, writing and speaking)
- Complete uninterrupted availability during the full duration of the course
- Interest in inner growth and self-knowledge under guidance of a teacher
- Physical and mental stamina to attend 6 sessions, 1-hour long seva and temple puja everyday
- Prior knowledge of Vedanta through study of Tattvabodha, Bhagavad Gita mulam and some Upanisads with Bhashyam.
- Knowledge of Sanskrit language and grammar points covered in the study of the book Infant Reader and Gita Sopanam Part – 1

#### Course content:

- Entire Bhagavad Gita with Bhashyam
- 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Chandogya Upanishad with Bhashyam
- Some Prakarana Granthas
- Sanskrit Grammar
- Chanting

#### How to apply:

- The application form for this course will be available from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2025 on our website <u>https://arshavidya.in/upcoming-course</u>
- Last date of application submission: 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2025
- Date of admission confirmation: 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025

#### Please note the following:

- No certificates are awarded after the course completion.
- Selection process includes an interview where student's knowledge of Vedanta and Sanskrit will be assessed.
- The duration of the course may be extended by a month, if required.

For any queries or further information, please email us at avgvedantacourse@gmail.com or

contact Br. Sudeepta Chaitanya at +91 9408133293 (2:30 PM - 3:30 PM IST, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM IST)

# Fall Vedānta Retreat by Swami Tattvavidānanda at AVG Saylorsburg

Continuation from Nov 2024 edition of AV Monthly Journal...

### Aparokşānubhūti – Two-week retreat

Covered in November edition of the Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal <u>Highlights</u>

Abhedagarbha Namaskāraķ

Covered in the November edition of the Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal

What is Aparokṣānubhūti?

Covered in the November edition of the Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal

# <u>Sādhana</u>

Broadly speaking, there are three main classifications of means to Self-realization. These means are not necessarily constrained by space-time causality, as the very act of perceiving them as a process and contemplating the time required introduces false ideas of psychological time, which is a form of bondage. Moreover, a contradiction arises when a timeless reality already within oneself is approached through the prism of a space-time bounded process.

Sādhana consists of Bahiraṅga Sādhana, Antaraṅga Sādhana, and Sākṣāt Sādhana. The latter refers to learning through Śravaṇam, Mananam, and Nidhidhyāsanam. The verses of this text describe the former two. Bahiraṅga Sādhana involves developing an attitude of karma yoga, which goes beyond the mere conception of execution of duties without desire for the results thereof. Even knowing what is one's duty is often not easy because of wrong ideas in the mind. For example, a person taking themselves as a 'grandpa' has really no duty towards 'grandchildren' assuming their parents are there to attend to the children's needs.

To fully comprehend a passing statement by Swamiji on this topic, the following background is provided:

The laws of nature and the second law of thermodynamics reveal that any system moves from order to disorder, with entropy, a precise measure of this process, increasing in any system. Where life forms are present, there is an assertion of negative entropy, though the total entropy of the organism and its environment continues to increase. A blade of grass, through photosynthesis, converts the disorder of dispersive carbon dioxide and water into orderly glucose molecules, a feat exceptionally difficult to replicate in a lab. Similarly, a vulture consuming a carcass gains negative entropy to sustain its life. Thus, there is a continuous struggle at every level of an organism, from single cells to complex life forms, to seek negative entropy, even at the cost of predation. Organisms discriminate in their quest for negative entropy. In humans particularly, the gene pool seemingly provides a mechanism for deceiving the truth of oneness by instilling a sense of separateness from the whole. This intelligence at the genetic level appears necessary for the survival of any life form. The neurons in brain cells, deceived by the truth of oneness, can bind a human being to a false sense of 'me and mine,' governing all thinking and action.

Unlike other life forms, humans are uniquely endowed with the gift of Viveka, the discernment of what is real and what is unreal. Sādhana aims to counteract genetic deception, and in karma yoga, the teaching is to recognize the wisdom of not succumbing to desire for the results of any action. While the sense of doer-ship remains, the sense of enjoyer-ship is relinquished. In the language of bhakti, Hari is pleased with tapas of this kind. Tapas involves the mind's willingness to endure difficulties in the search for truth, fostering an attitude and calmness of mind to face situations with equanimity and endurance.

To do justice to this topic, in addition to listening to these lectures, readers should procure a set of eight lectures given in 2014 by Swamiji on the topic of karma yoga (<u>https://avgbooks.org/shop/yoga-sound-14-mp3karma-yoga/</u>). Additionally, a book (<u>https://avgbooks.org/shop/vision-of-karma-yoga/</u>) based on these lectures, is available at the ashram bookstore and is highly recommended

# Sādhana Catustaya

This is classified as Antaḥkaraṇa Sādhana, involving introspection and self-analysis. It consists of four traits:

- Viveka: Discernment between the timeless and time-bound entities.
- Vairāgya: Dispassion towards sense objects.
- Şat Sampatti: The six-fold inner wealth of gaining quietude of the mind.
- Mumuksutva: A deep longing for freedom from the life of becoming.

Śrī Śańkara compiled this list of sādhana from many Upanişads, such as the Brhadāranyaka Upanişad, and made them available in these verses as well as in his commentary on the first Brahmasūtra. Swamiji has extensively taught this list of sādhana, resulting in a book being available at the ashram bookstore. Here, only a brief description is provided.

Interestingly, these verses in this text begin with Vairāgya, which is dispassion with respect to all sense objects and desires. It asserts that one's interest in sense objects should be like that of interest in bird droppings. A verse in the Bhāgavata 11th Skandha says that if one can conquer the taste buds, then vairāgya towards other sense objects will come under control. Often, the sense of bhoktrtva dictates our food consumption instead of eating for health. The gut bacteria, in trillions and in enormous variety, tend to outnumber our DNA cells by order of magnitude. The 'me and mine' from brain cells often dictate enjoyer-ship over what would be friendly to gut bacteria, leading to lifelong diseases. Such an understanding can help develop an attitude that food is for health alone and not for enjoyment.

When viveka is strong, vairāgya is effortless. Viveka leads to an ascertained understanding. Viveka means discerning wisdom in a given context, such as Ātma-Anātma Viveka, Dharma-Adharma Viveka, and Nitya-Anitya Vastu Viveka, which is knowing what is timebound and subject to destruction versus the timeless entity. In the study of Vedanta, beginners are drawn to the wisdom of cause-effect descriptions, such as how Brahman is both material and efficient cause. The human mind is in the spell of space-time and causality, hence the appeal to the cause-effect origin of the universe. A mind mature in viveka can grasp that this world is my creation and that the waking state is no different from the dream state regarding their nature being false. These are extensively addressed in the Vaitathya Prakaraṇa of the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. Such a mind can also understand that 'Aham' (I) is bliss, while 'Idam' (all else objectified by me) leads to sorrow if there is identification of 'I' with 'idam'.

The sixfold sādhana of the mind is described in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad to achieve quietude. It starts with Śama, which means dousing the fire in the mind. Like an electron stimulated to reach an excited state, the mind gets perturbed and excited. Śama is the quality to bring the mind back to its natural state of quietude. The mind is often plagued by inadequacy, compulsive thoughts, dispersed thinking, and listlessness. A restless mind is incapable of knowing the truth. Tradition and robotic habits can dull the mind; śama is Vāsanā-Tyāga. Vāsanās are not stray thoughts but deep-rooted impressions that cause fire in the mind as situations arise. The antidote is to acknowledge the vāsanā, which requires attention to know what is going on in the mind. This watching and acknowledging is the dawn of wisdom. Surrender to Īśvara can also help develop the quality of śama.

Dama, which involves having command over sensory values, helps build sama if it is weak. The contact of the indrivas and associated sense objects leads to sensations the

mind interprets as likes and dislikes. These go into the Buddhi as vāsanās, leading to delusion about associating pain and pleasure with sense objects. This cycle can be broken at the mind level by śama or by the indriya-level contact to sense objects via dama. Pleasure assigned to sense objects is born out of ignorance and is transient. One must know that happiness lies within, and no happiness is to be found in any sense object of the world. All human beings, from an old woman in a hut living alone with one eye begging for food to a queen in a royal palace, go through the same pain-pleasure cycle. The idea of increasing pleasure and reducing pain itself is the cause of misery.

Holding onto only Nitya and Naimittika karmas while letting go of all others, even those enjoined by the Vedas, is Uparati. This includes total withdrawal from all sense objects and actions motivated by desires and insecurities. There is virtue in abiding in being, not in 'becoming' incessantly throughout life. This is the essence of Vedantic, or true religion, as defined by Mahatmas like Swami Rama Tirtha and Swami Vivekananda.

Titikşā means patient endurance or the ability to endure hardship with resilience. The body and mind represent a flowing phenomenon like a river, not a thing. Human experience appears as a river-like flow bounded by the banks of pain and pleasure. Humans are driven by birthdays and anniversaries, living in past memory-based events, losing all freshness of the present moment. Desire-based actions always end in pain, and all pleasures are bounded by pain. The cause of pain is seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. If this is reversed, by learning not to seek pleasure and to meet pain halfway, the mind will achieve quietude. People celebrate all kinds of events mainly to escape pain. Escapism could extend to many activities, including studying Vedanta, but escapism never works. There is no way to alter the inexorable pain-pleasure cycle. You cannot keep one and not the other. Hence, endurance, namely Titikşā, is key to the quietude of the mind. If someone is no more, understand that it is nature's intelligence at play, and acceptance will be natural.

Śraddhā is not belief or faith. The word 'śraddhā' is understood as follows: Reality is sat, and it is understood provisionally as the other and somewhere remote. In Sanskrit anything which is parokṣa, is indicated by the syllable, ra which is the letter repha. For sat, if you attach repha it becomes śrat because sa becomes śra. So śrat is the reality, sat, taken as the other and parokṣa. Hence 'śrat dadāti iti Śraddhā.' Śraddhā is the right mental attitude, which is the capital in this journey of discovering reality. Swami Vivekananda translated it as intense enthusiasm to know the truth.

Patanjali popularized the term Samādhi, while in Vedanta, the emphasis is on

Samādhāna. To see the contrast, consider this: Samādhi is induced by intense effort that may stun the mind, leading to total silence, but it ends when the external forces cease. Unlike this, when the mind resolves in I AM (Ātmā), that is samādhāna. Concentration is emphasized in Patanjali's system and requires effort to exclude, while in samādhāna, the awareness and observation are without an observer, making it effortless. Watching the mind's movements with full attention without condemnation or judgment allows the mind to quieten by itself and reach its natural state without excluding any sensations in the environment. This leads to the resolution of all thoughts, resulting in the samādhāna of the mind.

Mumukşutvam is an intense commitment and longing for freedom from samsara. It is freedom from artha, kama, and dharma, all primarily driven by desires and insecurities. It also represents freedom from pleasure-pain cycles and birth-death cycles There is no jñānam without jijñāsā, no mokşa without mumukşutvam, and no sādhya without sādhana

### Atma Vicāra

What is emphasized in these teachings is the importance of proper questions, since teaching and the right teacher will emphasize that one is a light unto oneself. Śāstras and teachers only point to the inner guru that ultimately leads to the transcendence from persona. The entire sādhana prepares one to do Self-enquiry, namely Ātma-vicāra. The Sādhya is not separated in space-time bound by causality turning into a process. Paraphrasing a well-known philosopher, it is a timeless journey in a pathless land wherein the destination is already reached but the journey continues. If a guru offers a formula, that is not vicāra, but a preceptor can help with the enquiry itself. In the end, one is a light unto oneself.

Vicāra can lead one to know that one is not bound by cycles of pleasure and sorrow, for they are states of the mind that 'I am' aware of. By examining closely, I realize I am not the mind and hence free of its states. Vicāra, requiring an open mind, enables opportunities to resolve fundamental problems of life, while topical problems are resolved in the wisdom of the resolution of the fundamental problems. Ask "Who am I?" relentlessly at every moment. Do not accept any ready answers because they arise from a mind saturated with rāga and dveşa. Questions lead one to silence. Ask "What am I?" and "What am I up to?" This alone will let you know you do not need to do what you were about to do without proper enquiry. Ask "What is the meaning of life?" and if there is any purpose to this life. Ask "What is time?" and ask why Ramana Maharshi said in Saddarśanam that

what we call past and future are in the present only. How is that possible? Do I have a past or future? There will be realization at a most basic level, not from the mind (which I am not), that there is no past or future for me.

All this striving to become has always been bound by sorrow. What is the reason? Selfenquiry has the capacity to be conducted alone, without the color of rāga-dveşa, prejudices, and fixations of the mind. It can lead one to 'see' the false as false. It is not to be known by the mind. Psychological past and future drop off, and there is freshness in the abidance in the present moment, which is the presence. It all starts with asking "Who am I?" Any conclusion to know the truth being supplied by mind is always wrong, since mind is another name for ignorance. It can only help in knowing all that is false. That is why in all teachings, it is staying with the question with earnestness that liberates. It is as in the first Brahma Sūtra, "Athāto Brahma-jijñāsā," not "Brahma-jñāna," meaning after prerequisites, hereafter, let there be enquiry into Brahman, not get Brahma Jñānam.

# Vyakaranam Example

Swamiji, in his characteristic style of presenting material, often delved into the etymology and Niruktam of many words throughout the entire camp.

He often explained the various steps involved in the construction of a word to provide a crystal-clear meaning. That clarity helped to provide the right context to make sense of the profound message being conveyed.

Here is one example in explaining the word 'I am' or aham. The etymology is simple and is based on Bhagavad Gita verse 2.19. The definitions are:

1. na hanti iti aham – That which doesn't kill/hurt (kartari vyutpatti: **a** obviously is coming from the avyaya nañ, the negative particle, and **ham** from dhātu Vhan

2. na hanyate iti aham – That which cannot be killed/hurt (karmaņi vyutpatti: rest same as above)

Aham has no birth or death and is a non-doer that cannot be acted upon.

# Aitareya Upaniṣad with Bhāshya – Five-week retreat Topics

A summary of the five-week course highlights will be presented in the future editions of the Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal.

### - Report by Sri. T.K. Srinivas, USA

To be continued...

photos in cover page #31

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# Thanks Giving camp at AVG Saylorsburg

The camp started on 28 th November and concluded on 1 st December. This was a family camp. The adults were taught by Swami Muktatmananda on Meditation and Swami Sachidananda taught Discovering love.

The children of the camp were taught by Swamini Ramadhavananda, Swamini Girijatmananda and Mr. Lance and Aoife for Yoga.

The children were taught Chanting, Values, good sayings in the camp. At the end of the camp children presented a spectacular show. They showcased their talent in chanting, action song in Sanskrit rhyme, they also thanked the contributors in kavya literature like Kalidas, Valmiki, Magha, Harsha Bharavi etc. They also chanted Brahma Jnana Vali Mala, and Chapter 6 of Bhagavad Gita connecting to adult classes. Children also presented a skit on Friendship as a value in modern context. Finally, the children presented a Drama on NaraHari bringing out the concept of Advaita philosophy.

- Report by Swamini Ramadhavananda and Swamini Girijatmananda



Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal

# Jnana Pravaha, Manjakudi - Retreat report

Manjakkudi retreats by acaryas Neema Majmudar and Surya Tahora (1-10 and 11-20 December, 2024)

#### Kathopanisad and Bhagavad Gītā

In both the retreats Kaţhopanişad and chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gītā were brilliantly unfolded while in between classes a lot of activities were organized with the help of Swami Ramesvaranandaji, Prasenjit Bhattacherjee, Rajagopalan and the rest of the team. As a student from the lineage of Swami Dayananda it was a dream come true to take part in both retreats and experience the teachings in this unique surroundings. Swamiji's presence is still clearly felt on the Manjakkudi streets and within Jñānapravāha and other buildings.

Jñānapravāha, meaning the 'perennial flow of knowledge' is a perfectly chosen name for the Vedanta Study Centre. The flow with which Neemaji taught us about the brilliant dialogues between Lord Yama & Nachiketā and Kṛṣṇa & Arjuna made it easy for us students to see the timelessness of this unique tradition. By her unique interactive style of teaching, Neemaji herself creates dialogues in her classes and inspires her students to discuss what they have learned with one another outside of the classroom.

In chapter 12 of the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa is teaching us about what a bhakta is. Then in the last class of our retreat we all shared what we had understood. This collective learning experience made everyone involved and created so many different angles to look at what a bhakta exactly is. One person focused on emotions and how a bhakta will align emotions with Īśvara's psychological order instead of denying the presence of this order. Another person brought in that our decision making capacity also needs to be guided by our understanding of Īśvara. This means we need to see as much as possible all the intricacies of our choices in daily life. As we live in an interconnected universe every choice we make will have an effect on our surroundings. To try to choose more wisely every day is what a bhakta will work for.

Suryaji's guided morning meditations helped us to understand and connect with the basic person. The person who can temporarily give up his roles but as an individual cannot give up his connection with the total. To see this clearly invokes naturally the bhakta within us. Similarly, we had a silent morning walk during each retreat through the beautiful nature and rice fields with the idea to see Iśvara everywhere. As all that is here is Iśvara we all passed the exam;).

### Swamiji's unique understanding of Iśvara's order expressed in so many initiatives

The birthplace of Swami Dayananda has proven itself to be fertile ground for these teachings to sink in deeper. His understanding and working with Īśvara's order is clearly seen in the village and surrounding area and touched us all. So many things he has done and initiated it is hard to fathom. As a group we visited Swami Dayananda College of Arts & Science which is providing education to students from 80 surrounding villages. We had lovely interactions with the bright students as curiosity and the love for learning was palpable on both sides.

We also visited the house were Swamiji grew up in, we were invited to meet his 93-year old brother Sri. M. G. Srinivasan who filled us with warm stories about their youth and inspired us with a disciplined and healthy lifestyle, Swami Ramesvaranandaji showed us the complete digital archive and together we watched Swamiji's videos on the Spiritual Heritage of India during satsang, he introduced us to Kamalalayam where orphan and semi-orphan girls live together and where the girls chanted and sang beautifully, he showed us the college campus and the new temple which is recently installed.

- Report by Swami Ramesvarananda



Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal

# Jnana Pravaha, Manjakudi - Retreat report

### Arsha Vidya UK – Manjakkudi Retreat 2024 – with Pujya Swamini Atmaprakashanandaji

It is always a delight to be back in India, a land of cultural forms based upon a vision of reality. These cultural forms take many guises – being expressed in artwork, sculptures, through dance, music, worship and more. As we were to discover during the teaching at the camp, the cultural forms present an opportunity for the mind of the individual to be wholly captured, and oriented towards its subtler basis – the spirit behind the form.

It was therefore a delight and a blessing to spend two weeks in *Manjakkudi*, the birth place of HH Parama Pujya Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati-ji. The grace of Pujya Swamiji is plain to see in this small village. From the schoolchildren who have access to university-level education, to the varieties of rice being preserved by local farmers through traditional farming methods, to the facilities for in-depth Vedanta study, with graceful accommodation and teaching facilities. In the '*Jñānapravāha*' lecture hall is a sculpture of Pujya Swamiji, a form for a teacher of teachers, whose spirit is the source of all spiritual wisdom, the essence to be understood through all *Upanişads*.

The quality of sound in this lecture hall was pristine — only exceeded in clarity by the mind of the teacher whose grace was showered upon all attendees. Pujya Swamini Atmaprakashanandaji began the camp by unfolding the meaning behind the cultural forms presented in the small text of *Kāśī Pañcakam*, composed by *Ādi Śaṅkarācārya*. *Kāśī* is a city of pilgrimage, well-known to all Hindus. In these five verses, *Śaṅkarācārya* encapsulates how *Kāśī* is a symbol for the light of all lights, of one's own nature of consciousness.

The evenings at the camp were spent learning stotras of *Ādi Śaṅkarācārya*: *Vedasāra-śiva -stotram, Lakṣmi-narasimha-karāvalambam,* and others. Pujya Swamini Atmaprakashanandaji explained how in these *stotras, Śaṅkarācārya* shows the student how to pray and what to pray for. The *stotra*s dwell on the Lord in all his forms, and also as the formless. Through this prayer, the minds of all students were well nourished – captured by the beauty of the Sanskrit words, the melodies and their prayerful meaning.

The main teaching at the camp was the text *Advaita Makaranda* – The Nectar of Non-Duality. Pujya Swamini Atmaprakashanandaji masterfully presented an in-depth exposition of this profound text of twenty-eight verses. Within it is an explanation of the nature of the individual, and the Lord, and how there is essentially non-difference between the two. Both being of the nature of existence, consciousness, happiness. This beautiful text granted the attendees the opportunity to discover and dwell upon their own reality, the intended truth behind all cultural forms.

Between classes, numerous trips to various temples and birthplaces of Carnatic musicians (*Saint Tyagaraja Swami, Muthuswami Dikshitar*, and *Syama Sastri*) were untiringly and flawlessly organised by Swaminiji. The area of *Kumbakonam, Thiruvarur* and *Thanjavur* is rich in culture. Although all temples visited were a blessing to all (an opportunity for the accumulation of *puṇya*), temples and *mūrtis* of particular prominence were *Swamimalai Swaminatha Swami* (*Kumbakonam*) and *Bṛhadīśvara* (*Thanjavur*).

In the pursuit of the vision of non-duality, one's mind has to become refined, for which cultural forms are a blessing. The refinement has to be to the degree that sufficient grace permits discovery of the spirit behind the form, the vision permeating expressions of poetry, art, music, dance and songs of devotion. The retreat at *Manjakkudi*, graced by Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Swamini Atmaprakashanandaji, permitted both the resting of the mind with such forms of blessing, and the discovery and dwelling upon the truth behind the forms.

- Report by Tristan Curteis



# Vedanta camp at Jnana Pravaha, Manjakudi

With the blessings of Pujya Swami Dayananda and Swami Rameshwarananda, the Portuguese Vedanta Acarya Paulo Vieira held a Vedanta Camp, from the 6th to the 9th of November, in Jñāna Pravaha, where in he taught the two committed life Styles as presented in the Bhagavadgītā. The students, who were from Portugal and also Brasil, felt very blessed by the stay and felt Pujya Swamiji's holy presence all the way. Swami Rameshwarananda was very kind and received all of us with great joy and care. The students also visited the house where Pujya Swami ji was born and had the opportunity to know the vision of Pujya Swamiji regarding the development of Manjakkudi, through the words of Raja Gopal. The food and accommodation were very good and the students said they want to come back again and study for more time.



Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal (For Private Circulation Only)

*Published by:* **Ravi Venkataraman** Secretary, Sruti Seva Trust, Anaikatti, Coimbatore 641 108

> *Edited by:* **Ramachandran S.N (+91 94879 11949)**

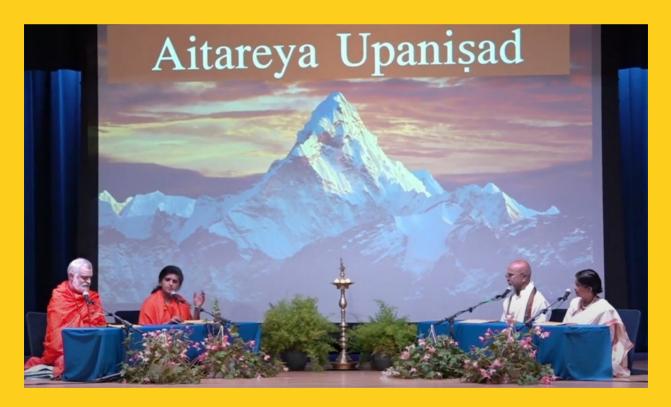
*Printed by:* **B. Rajkumar, Rasi Graphics private Limited** 40, Peters Road, Chennai 600 014 ; Phone - (044) 28132970

Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal

December 2024

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Arsha Vidya Monthly Journal