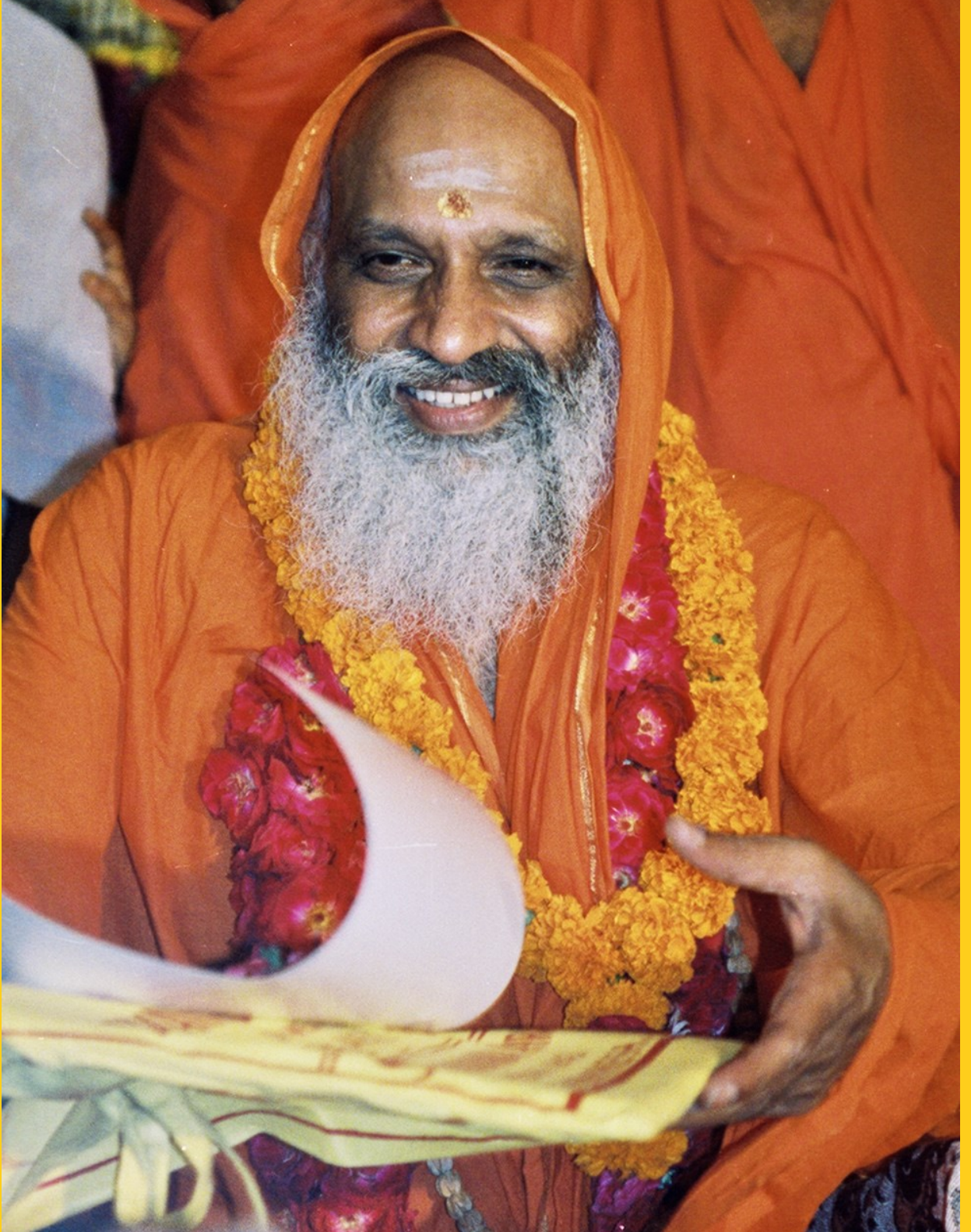




ARSHA VIDYA
MONTHLY JOURNAL



February 2025

Some Glimpses from Gita Jayanti Mahotsav



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25 - 02



Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the forty second part of the serial article, continuation from Jan 2025 edition.

तत्र राजा गुहो नाम रामस्यात्मसमः सखा । निषादजात्यो बलवान् स्थपतिश्चेति विश्रुतः ॥ २-५०-३३

*tatra rājā guho nāma rāmasyātmasamaḥ sakhā ।
niṣādajātyo balavān sthapatīśceti viśrutaḥ ॥ 2-50-33*

Rama and Sita and Lakshmana rode away from their home. Reaching the banks of the Ganges, they met Guha, the leader of the hunters who lived there. Guha and Rama had long known each other and they were great friends. Guha had heard that Rama might come his way. He and his ministers and followers met Rama's chariot and offered their friendship and food. Rama declined food, saying he had bathed in the Ganga and would fast, but he agreed to stay through the night. When Lakshmana told Guha of recent events, Guha offered himself and his realm to Rama. But the prince, saying that it was still too close to Ayodhya, said that the three would move on. Minister and charioteer Sumantra, who had come this far with Rama, was sent back, despite his objections, to Ayodhya. Rama instructed Sumantra to continue to care for Dasharatha as only he knew how, "Tell my father to care for my mother, my dear Kausalya, and tell him that I will be back. Tell Kausalya that things are going well and the forest is pleasant and generous."

Lakshmana spoke up, "Tell Dasharatha that it's all his fault we are here in the forest because of his infatuation to a woman. The forest, thorny and bumpy, is not all that pleasant, and eating roots *et cetera* is not like the palace food."

Sita was silent, her eyes were filled with tears, she could not say anything. For her the forest was an adventure and a challenge, a lot of hiking and no hitch-hiking. She was there with Rama, but she had been brought up as Janaka's princess. Being a gifted child she had been worshipped as a goddess, endeared to all by her conduct, beauty, and wisdom, the joy of all. Here she looked up at her beloved Rama, unable or unwilling to say anything about Kaikeyi or her situation, with tears in her eyes.

Sending him off, Rama said to Sumantra, "If you do not return now to the

palace, Kaikeyi may be suspicious of my father. She may think we are hiding somewhere nearby where we are setting up a new palace against her wishes. My father's words are truthful and should not be doubted by anyone. Go back and convince her that her will is being fulfilled. Tell my father that I honor him as my peerless king and as my dear father. Tell him I worship him and I will again come and hold his feet."

Sumantra headed back to Ayodhya with an empty chariot. As he came to the gates of the city people everywhere strained to see if by chance or by some god's will Rama and Sita were there in the chariot. The white horses and the streaming banners they knew, but there was no sign of their hero and their hope. The chariot was empty and their prayers went unanswered. Sumantra told the king what each of the three had said. He told Kausalya that Rama had asked her to hold steadfast to her daily prayers, for that was all she had to hold on to. He told them all that Rama was sure that he would return.

After crossing river Ganga by boat and offering prayers to the great water, Rama and his fellow travelers walked on from Guha's forest and headed for the Dandaka forest. On the way he came upon sage Bharadvaja's ashram. The great *ṛṣi* told the prince that he had heard of the current events and that he had hoped Rama would come his way. Bharadvaja shared all he had with his visitors and asked Rama to stay on with him. But Rama said it was still too near to Ayodhya and that people would come to know that he was there. He asked Bharadvaja of a good direction to take and a good destination. Bharadvaja told Rama of the place called Citrakuta, sixty miles distant. The trio made their way across the holy Yamuna river and on toward Citrakuta.

The scene shifts back to Ayodhya where Dasharatha's sadness and anger, stirred by Sumantra's report from Rama, caused the king to rave like a madman. Dasharatha insisted he could not stand to be reminded of what had come to pass by living in his part of the palace. He moved to Kausalya's wing, where she could not contain herself and would chide Dasharatha about his attachment to the evil queen Kaikeyi and the weakness that brought on this tragedy. All the results of her own being neglected came forth in Kausalya's treatment of her husband. Kausalya was just doing her best to deal with the absence of Rama and the

knowledge that he and Sita had been placed into a dangerous situation. She could not accept that, and, being a mother-in-law, she could not dispel her thoughts of what King Janaka would think of how his princess was being treated. He had given his divine daughter to a prince, not a to a forest dweller. Taunted and reminded of his questionable decision, Dasharatha felt again wounded and irreparably hurt. With salt thrown on his wounds, he wailed to Kausalya that she was destroying him. With that, Kausalya realized that she was putting pressure on Dasharatha that he could not handle. She fell at her husband's feet and asked his forgiveness and his understanding that she was acting only out of her grief.

Dasharatha calmed a bit and reflected and told Kausalya this story. "Once, as a prince, I went to the forest to hunt. Now, after all these years, the whole picture comes to me and it becomes clear. There, while hunting, I heard the sound of a hidden elephant drinking water." Dasharatha was one who could send an arrow with devastating effect toward a target that he could not see. He had been practicing that skill. "I sent an arrow toward that elephant that I had heard. A cry rang out, and it was a human cry. I hurried to that place where I found a young boy who had been sent to gather water in a pot. The sound the water made in the pot I heard as an elephant. Who would expect a human to be in that part of the forest? I made this grave mistake and pierced this sweet boy, the son of an ascetic. I bent over the boy, but if I had pulled the arrow from his body it might have immediately taken his life. You know there is no greater fault than to take the life of a Brahman. But the boy looked up at me and said, 'No, I am not a Brahman, I am the son of an elderly couple. I came here to fetch water for them. Please go tell them what has happened.' Hoping to save the boy, I gently extracted the arrow, but it was too late, and the boy fell silent and breathed his last."

Dasharatha went on, "I went to the boy's parents, ascetics, great people, and *tapasvins*. These gentle forest dwellers said, 'King Dasharatha, it was not your intention, but you have destroyed us. He was our only son, and there is no way we can live without him. He cared for us tenderly and gave us love and hope. No, you did not know it was a boy that was there; perhaps you could not have known. Now, please take us to see our son.'" The three went, and you can read the words of sincere lamentation and grief here in the verses.

Dasharatha told Kausalya the rest of the story, “The father of the boy said to me, ‘Remember one thing. If what you have done were deliberate, if it were not done in innocence, your head would have already split open because this boy was born of an ascetic. You cannot slay a person like that without losing your head, I need not tell you. Your innocence has saved you, but as a king, beware of any action like this. I am not cursing you, but it will catch you up in time. Something will come that will complete the lesson that you are to learn from this. Near the end of your life, it will be you who laments the loss of a son. You will know our suffering. I do not wish this upon you, but this will happen in your life.’

“O Kausalya, now I remember this well. Blessed with four sons and their worthy wives, now I am bereft of them and their joyful presence. This is the word of the parents of that boy, and now I am here with that and more.” Night fell and sleep came to Dasharatha and Kausalya and Sumitra in their sadness and sorrow.

It is the tradition that the people come to the king’s palace chanting *veda* in the morning, accompanied by musicians singing and the sound of the vina and the flute. With that joyous and peaceful greeting, an auspicious cow, symbol of all fullness, is brought as the first thing the king sees. On this day, coming to wake the king, the people found Dasharatha out, unresponsive to the usual greeting. They touched Dasharatha’s hand - it was cold. They touched his heart, there was no pulse. Alarmed, they gasped, “Oh, the king,” and ran out. The two queens awoke and found what the others already had come to know. The king was dead.

तैलद्रोण्यां तदऽऽमात्याः संवेश्य जगतीपतिम् । राज्ञः सर्वाण्यथादिष्टाश्चक्रुः कर्माण्यनन्तरम् ॥ २-६६-१४

tailadroṇyāṃ tada''mātyāḥ saṃveśya jagatīpatim |

rājñāḥ sarvāṅyathādiṣṭāścakruḥ karmāṅyanantaram || 2-66-14

Kausalya was distraught. Her lord, her husband and king, had left her. The only reason for her to go on had been taken from her. She was beside herself with grief. She made up her mind to follow her husband into death, to place herself in the funeral pyre of her dear Dasharatha. She saw no reason to live. In the story, this part of the chapter is all about the lamentation. The mighty king lay there like a silent mountain. The ministers were concerned that there was no son present who could perform the necessary cremation rituals. This is a great disruption of the Hindu tradition. The ministers agreed to preserve the body until one of the

sons arrived. They had a tank dug in the turf, and they filled it with treated oils. To prevent further decay the body was placed there. A great assembly of the *mahārṣis* and sages and priests and wise men was called. The kingdom should never be without a king, it is like a body without a soul, action must be taken. In England they say, “The king is dead, long live the king.” The death of Dasharatha was officially announced.

नाराजके जनपदे बीजमुष्टिः प्रकीर्यते । नाराजके पितुः पुत्रो भार्या वा वतते वशे ॥ २-६७-१०

अराजके धनं नास्ति नास्ति भार्याप्यराजके । इदमत्याहितं चान्यत् कुतः सत्यमराजके ॥ २-६७-११

नाराजके जनपदे चरत्येकचरो वशी । भावयन्नात्मनाऽऽत्मानं यत्र सायंगृहो मुनिः ॥ २-६७-२३

पुरोहितस्त्वां कुशलं प्राह सर्वे च मन्त्रिणः । त्वरमाणश्च निर्याहि कृत्यमात्ययिकम् त्वया ॥ २-६८-७

मा चास्मै प्रोषितं रामं मा चास्मै पितरं मृतम् । भवन्तः शंसिषुर्गत्वा राघवाणामितः क्षयम् ॥ २-६८-८

nārājake janapade bijamuṣṭiḥ prakīryate |

nārājake pituḥ putro bhāryā vā vartate vaśe || 2-67-10

arājake dhanam nāsti nāsti bhāryāpyarājake |

idamatyāhitam cānyat kutaḥ satyamarājake || 2-67-11

nārājake janapade caratyekacaro vaśī |

bhāvayannātmanā' 'tmānam yatra sāyaṅgrho munīḥ || 2-67-23

purohitastvām kuśalam prāha sarve ca mantriṇaḥ |

tvaramāṇaśca niryāhi kṛtyamātyayikam tvayā || 2-68-7

mā cāsmāi proṣitam rāmaṁ mā cāsmāi pitaram mṛtam |

bhavantaḥ śamsiṣurgatvā rāghavānāmitaḥ kṣayam || 2-68-8

Kingdom without a king there is no cultivation, no growth of wealth, no lawsuit settled, no justice, no woman safe, no peaceful gathering of the people, no seeker of knowledge, and no one to provide protection for *dharmīs*. Vasishtha said a king must be installed. Bharata and Shatrughna were not far away. They would send for him and have him hurry to Ayodhya. The messengers that were sent for Bharata were instructed not to tell him of the death of his father or of his brother having been banished. They took the best horses and were off to the kingdom of Bharata's grandfather. On the very day of his father's death, Bharata awoke uneasy and still tired. He told his family that he was upset because he had a bad dream.

To be continued...

Mahābhārata
As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati

This is the eighteenth part of the serial article, continuation from Jan 2025 edition.

Bakasura could not believe his eyes as he watched from the hillside. He hopped down the hill and charged at this upstart who was eating the food meant for him. He then thought, "It won't matter if this fellow eats something; I will eat him and it will all end up inside of me. It is all the same thing. If this guy wants to taste something I will just taste him." This was Bakasura's thinking.

Bakasura bounded up and caught sight of Bhima, "He is not just eating something, he is eating the cart. This guy is already huge." Then Bakasura started to make all these *rākṣasa* sounds and he said to Bhima, "Hey, what are you doing? I am going to eat you up now."

"Please, just a minute," said Bhima, "let me finish this snack. Please stop shouting, I am not done yet. Just wait. You can try to eat me up when I'm completely finished." Bakasura charged with his mace, and Bhima got up with a groan, "Oh, I ate too much. I do not feel much like fighting. My, that was good. Do you really want to fight?"

Nobody had ever talked to Bakasura like this, and this human certainly did not understand the consequences of his cavalier attitude. "Don't you know I am Bakasura? I will eat you."

"Oh, you are that Baka. You will eat me? Okay, try it," replied Bhima calmly. Looking about, Bhima reached over and uprooted a medium size tree. When Baka saw this human handle a tree like it was a matchstick he had to stop and think. But he was not concerned, he was a *rākṣasa* and he was made to fight. So he fought, and Bhima beat him to a pulp. With the tree Bhima turned Bakasura into a pile of flesh. Bhima put the dead body on the cart, harnessed the bullocks, and drove the cart back to the village. The village was in turmoil when they saw the cart. Usually they went and picked up the empty cart. The cart coming back now meant the *rākṣasa* would soon follow. But Bhima showed them that the pile in the cart was not leftover food, it was the leftovers of Bakasura. Bakasura was dead.

The villagers were incredulous. They thought Bhima had killed somebody else. Bhima lifted the pile and showed them the face of the *rākṣasa*, which he had saved, to convince them. The people looked at the gruesome pile and they looked at Bhima.

Bhima could not give his name because he was a survivor of the waxhouse fire. He said, "I am just a *gandharva*. This is not a big thing." The demons who lived and traveled with Bakasura heard what had happened, and they all came and confronted Bhima. They could not believe their leader was gone. Bhima showed them the remains and warned them that they would suffer the same fate if they did not wise up. He told them, "I don't want to see your faces in this forest. Don't show your face here." That was the last anyone saw of the demons who had terrorized the area.

Someone from the town said, "Hey, our hero looks like Bhima." He did indeed. Some of the suppressed ideas about the missing and presumed dead Pandavas surfaced in the village for some time. But the Pandavas just lived a simple life in Ekachakra until it was obvious it was time to get out. What happened was a Brahmana came and told a story. There were no newspapers. Some Brahmanas were wayfarers who would come to a village and be asked to share whatever news they had of things they had seen and heard as they traveled. That was how people in the villages and towns got their news.

The Brahmana informed them, "Do you know what? There is going to be a *svayamvara* in the Panchala kingdom. The princess Draupadi, who was born as a result of the great *yajña* that her father King Drupada performed, will choose a husband. She will garland one of those eligibles sitting there in hopeful rows." Did Draupadi hope Arjuna would be her husband? Just as in the Ramayana, for Sita's *svayamvara*, there was to be an archery contest to help the princess make up her mind. To win Sita, the great bow had to be lifted and strung. Here in the Mahabharata, the Panchala contest looked as though it was directed right at Arjuna. High on the ceiling of the royal auditorium in the Panchala palace a revolving target fish would be hung. A Kshatriya would have to hit the center of the eye of that spinning fish if he wanted to win Draupadi's hand. The archer had to aim at the

fish-eye by looking at the reflection in a container of water situated on the floor of the auditorium. It seems this test was set up in a way that only Arjuna could accomplish it. Who else could do it? It was not a surprise. Drupada's intention for performing the *yajña* that gave birth to his children had been to get Draupadi and give her to Arjuna. Drupada wanted Arjuna as a son-in-law so that Arjuna could teach Drona a lesson. That was all. It was all planned out. Therefore Drupada set up this test that only Arjuna could accomplish.

The time had come for the Pandavas to leave Ekachakra. Bhima had killed a dangerous *rākṣasa*, and the word would get around. It was not much of a stretch to guess that it was Bhima who had slain Baka and that the five fellows and an older woman might be the Pandavas. The Pandavas were Kshatriyas, they had *yajñopavīta*. They decided they would disappear into the Panchaladesha disguised as Brahmanas and then attend Draupadi's *svayamvara*. All they had to do was to put down their bows and arrows and other signs of military and to change their hairstyle to that worn by Brahmanas.

On the way to Panchaladesha they had to cross Ganga, and when they got to her banks they met a *gandharva*. The *gandharva* Chitraratha told them not to cross the river. He said, "This is my river. Do not come anywhere near. I will fight with you. I will use violence." Then the *gandharva* backed up his words with arrows.

Arjuna said, "The river and the mountainslopes and the ponds do not belong to anyone, they belong to all. This is not your river. Who do you think you are talking to? We can take care of ourselves. You have no right to say these things or to do anything to us. You may want to think twice about those arrows." Arjuna was ready. He fended off the *gandharva's* shots, proclaiming them as soft as cottonwool. "Do you want to see something?" teased Arjuna.

"What could a mortal show me?" asked Chitraratha. Arjuna picked out one of his *agni astras* and drew it and fired. The arrow, charged by its *mantra*, struck the chariot of the *gandharva* and turned it to ashes. The *gandharva* jumped out of the chariot just in time to avoid going up in flames along with it. Seeing the *agni*

astra and the unerring aim, Chitraratha knew Arjuna was no ordinary person.

When Arjuna asked, Chitraratha said, "I was called Angaraparna, the one the color of fire. Now I am Chitraratha. I am very pleased with you and your skills. Now I ask you one thing. I want you to teach me the *mantra* for the use of this *agni astra*. God Agni is the deity for that missile, and I want to know the secret of that. If you teach me, I have something to give you in return."

Chitraratha then fell at the feet of Yudhisthira. He knew how to get things done. He prostrated to the Pandavas and asked them to save him and his family, who were there with him on the banks of Ganga. Yudhisthira forgave Citraratha for his aggressiveness. Then Arjuna agreed to let them be, and he taught Chitraratha the *mantra* for the fire missile. In return Chitraratha's fellow *gandharvas* gave Arjuna a foursome of special celestial horses. They also gave Arjuna the special power to see in his mind all that was going on anywhere in all the three worlds. Arjuna gratefully accepted these gifts, and he asked Chitraratha to keep the distinctive horses until the time when he would call for them. The Pandavas would not need them now because the family members were intent on the *svayamvara*. Once they had slipped into Panchaladesha, Kunti was given a place to stay in a potter's house, and the five brothers headed for King Drupada's palace.

The Mahabharata talks of Dhrstadyumna's birth and Draupadi's birth from the fire burning at the ritual done by their father. Dhrstadyumna appeared first from the sacred flames, in a chariot, at his father's *putrakāmeṣṭi*, and Draupadi followed. She was Drupada's daughter, at first called Kṛṣṇā, and her father intended to marry her to Arjuna. When Drupada came to know that the Pandavas had died in the house of fire, he wondered what would happen to Draupadi. His guru had advised him that the Pandavas were going to be in the picture and that Draupadi would be with Arjuna. Drupada had conflicting information. Because of his faith in his guru, Drupada arranged the archery test to see if Arjuna would surface. The *svayamvara* was announced, the news went around and the Pandavas were indeed there in Panchaladesha.

To be continued...

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti - Residential retreat



Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

(Sruti Seva Trust), Anaikatti

is pleased to announce a
residential retreat cum jnana yajna
from

1st May to 7th May 2025

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
jointly organize the annual jnana yajna

by **Swami Paramarthananda**

at **Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, R S Puram, Coimbatore**

1st - 7th May 2025 - Uddhava Gita (6:30 pm - 7:45 pm)

2nd - 7th May 2025 - Aparokshanubhuti (6:30 - 7:30 am)



Coinciding with the talks, a Residential Retreat is arranged

at **Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti**

from **1st - 7th May 2025**

on the **6th Chapter of the Chandogya Upanishad**

from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm

by **Swami Sadatmananda**

Those who are interested to attend both may register for the retreat.

Note:

- Registration required only if staying at the Gurukulam for the yajna cum retreat.
- Food and accommodation will be arranged at the Gurukulam for the duration of the yajna.
- Suggested donation for the AVG residential retreat: Rs.7000 per person.
- The Gurukulam will facilitate in availing transport to the city for the talks on request, at an extra cost.
- Participation for the retreat is limited to 40 people only. Admission on first come first serve basis.
- Last date for application: 31st March 2025

For registration, kindly visit <https://arshavidya.in/camps-retreats/>

For further details, kindly contact the office through phone or email

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Phone : +91-9442646701 , +91-422-2657001

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti - Ekānte Vedānta retreat

The serene and scenic campus of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam (AVG) ashram at Anaikatti was the venue of Arsha Seva Kendram's (ASK) maiden Ekaante Vedanta Retreat held Jan 23-26 2025. It was a unique, energizing and insightful few days enjoyed equally by about 40 participants - most students over a number of years as well as a handful of registrants who were new to **Vedanta**.

Background

Acharya Dr Jayakumar Ammangudi, trustee of the ASK Coimbatore, has been conducting Advaita Vedanta classes for the last 7 years. Acharya structured the curriculum starting with study of the **Tattvabodhaha** text by Shankaracharya and after it's completion study of **The Bhagvad Gita** commenced in Dec 2019. Teachings and study continued through the global pandemic period and the sacred text was completed after 5 years almost to the day. Study of **Kathopnishad with Shankaracharya bhashyam** was carried out May 2022 till Oct 2024. To reinforce the teachings, Acharya led bi-weekly guided **dhyanam** sessions.

Sessions were conducted in a virtual classroom with students from the Far Eastern region, India, Europe and the UK, US and Canada. Class strength ranged between 30 and 40 throughout.

Other than study classes, students had the opportunity to interact with each other in **satsang** sessions after every class and weekly study group meets.

Needless to say, these have resulted in inter-personal interactions to flower. And after completion of **Bhagvad Gita** study the thought to have an in person interaction was widely shared within the group. The Ekaante Vedanta retreat was designed to provide a forum for course students to meet - in other words an extended **satsanga**. It was also an opportunity for participants to learn the teachings in an ashram-like setting not very different from our ancient rishis times.

Acharya Srinivasan Ji, another trustee of ASK Coimbatore, offers Advaita Vedanta teaching courses as well. Most notably, weekly **Bhagvad Gita Bhashyam** and **Atmabodha** classes. He conducts **Bhagvad Gita moolam** for Kannada speakers, **Nidhidhyasanam** class. In addition he conducts **Yuva shreyo marga** and **Bala shreyo marga** weekly - for youth and children.

Immersion into Vedanta study

Spread over 4 days, the Ekaante Vedanta retreat was a learning experience for all partici-

pants. It provided a glimpse into daily lives of the long term resident students on AVG campus, **pooja** routine followed at **Medha Dakshinamurthy** and **Murugan** temples, impromptu **satsang** with **Swami Sadatmananda ji** and interactions with other AVG functionaries. Other **seva** activities such as dining hall routine and exposure to on-campus sources like library, study room etc.

The retreat had a few core study topics and activities

- ◆ Guided study of **Sādhana Pañcakam** by Acharya Jayakumar ji
- ◆ Series of sessions on “Bringing **Vedanta** into daily awareness” by Acharya Srinivasan Ji.
- ◆ Introduction to **Ayurveda**, misconceptions surrounding it and it’s daily application by Dr Sheershika.
- ◆ Long term students Meera ji and Narayan ji conducted a set of **Yogasana** that helped the participants limber up and stay refreshed even as the day’s proceedings were under way. It was a valuable tool useful in modern busy day-to-day lives.
- ◆ **Arsha Gokulam Mysore** seva activities and talent showcase led by Sunitha Ji.
- ◆ Visit to a Tribal Village in Anaikatti hills under Dr Soundararajan’s guidance.

Retreat **dinacharya** would start with **pooja** at the **Medha Dakshinamurthy** temple. After invoking the Lord’s blessings, series of **Dhyanam** and **satsang** sessions was each day’s proceedings.

Acharyas arranged for an audience with **Swami Sadatmananda ji** for the participants and it was a very illuminating experience with Swamiji’s practical, cheerful and down-to-earth messages shining through.

Another memorable experience was a visit to **Daya Seva Sadan** with Dr Soundararajan. The impressive and amazing activities against mundane odds that the institution carries out left a deep impression on the visitors. To cap it off, a visit to one of the affiliated villages brought home the impact of modern norms on a simple and frugal society struggling with daily grind. Arsha Gokulam students' performances and impressive account of their achievements was another highlight. A bird’s eye view of their **seva** and guiding philosophies was outlined clearly and succinctly. The retreat concluded formally with a participant feedback, vote of thanks and **Guru Dakshina** ceremony, Feedback shared by participants, especially first time attendees was at the same time thought provoking and conveyed the impact the retreat had on them. It was a cheerful occasion tinged with a sense of longing for more to come. Indeed, one of the suggestions was to make the retreat an annual event .

Any residential gathering requires logistical support and the AVG Anaikatti facilities truly exceeded expectations. From the rooming facilities which were neat and well maintained to the sumptuous offerings of the kitchen was a lesson by itself. The tasty victuals - from morning tea, breakfast, lunch, dinner - were healthy , nutritious and wholesome food. They kept the participants energetic and looking forward to all that the retreat had in store.

All this in the enchanting and captivating presence of the AVG campus **mayuras** was a feather in the cap of experience. Literally and figuratively.

Participants departed by late Sunday afternoon after an intimate and brief meeting with **Swami Sadatmananda ji** where Swamiji wished us well in our studies in his characteristic good humor.

The journey continues:

Participants are unanimous that the retreat was an energising event and helped deepen their focus on Vedanta studies. Satsang, group studies, seva and sessions that answered long held questions were felt to be invaluable and an important milestone in knowledge enhancement. Indeed messages from Hema Shakar ji and Bhavani ji among others expressed these sentiments as they summed their personal takeaways from the retreat.

- Report by Anirudha Indurkar



Continuation from Jan 2025 edition of AV Monthly Journal...

Praveśa-śruti

"*Praveśa-śruti*" refers to passages in the *Upaniṣads* that describes how *Ātmā* (the Self) enters into the created world of names and forms. This kind of description is found in many *Upaniṣads* to reinforce the understanding that anything which is cognized and referred to with a name and form is unreal and is not what it appears to be. Instead, the only reality that makes the names and forms shine is *Ātmā* alone. One way to understand this is with a metaphor. If one were to conceive of a fancy gold ornament to be worn on the head, the first step would be to create drawings using computer programs and then refer to it with a name. A mold is then made to create the ornament envisaged in the mind. Until molten gold is poured into the mold there can be no ornament. The pouring of the gold to make an ornament which is otherwise just a name and form is akin to *Ātmā* in the story entering the creation of the cosmic person thereby becoming a *jīva* experiencing 'as though' limitation. *Jīva* is not soul but is rather the power by which the five sense organs, five organs of action and mind are held together in the body. This upholds the expression of life force and is therefore described as '*jīva prāṇadhāraṇe*'. This entry of *Ātmā* into the cosmic person by *vyākaraṇam* means that *Ātmā* is reflected in all life forms. *Ātmā* functions as a *jīva* in these life forms while its *swarupa* is the apparitional cause of all, namely *Brahman*.

In the prior section of *Bṛhatī-sahasra*, it was said, for the purposes of *upāsanā* that *prāṇa-śakti* or life force entered the person through the toes. The life force relates to life of movement and action. *Ātmā*, being superior, entered from the head in the story, fully aware that *Ātmā* is not part of the body and mind of this cosmic person. *Ātmā* is then the *Sakshi*, an illuminating witnessing awareness. *Ātmā* is realized by understanding which is *jñānam* here. In the story understanding which is *jñānam* here is one step ahead of *upāsanā*.

The moment that we look at this body and mind, we create a distance between the body-mind and the truth of who I am. This helps to see the unreal body-mind as false, while simultaneously externalizing any sufferings arising out of wrong identification with the body-mind.

Idandrah

On entering the body of the cosmic person, *Ātmā* looks at the body as *idam*, namely "this body," with the understanding that 'I am' not the body.

Idandraḥ = idaṃ paśyati iti idandraḥ. The noun "*idandra*" means "the one who sees this (body)." Swamiji briefly mentioned the etymology in his class. The step-by-step derivation, covered later in the *Samśkr̥ta* class, is shown below as an example of the depth to which many words in the *Upaniṣad* and *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya* were analyzed in this course.

The word *paśyati* is from *dhatu* (verbal root, often denoted by the symbol √) *dṛś* whose original form (*aupadeśika-swarūpa*) is *√dṛśīr* (= *prekṣaṇe*, to see/to know).

idaṃ paśyati iti idandraḥ [*upapada-tatpuruṣa-samāsa*]

idaṃ + (√dṛśīr + ḍram) [*√dṛśīr* is the *aṅga* and *ḍram* is the *pratyaya* (suffix) for the latter member of the compound]

idaṃ + dṛś-īr + ḍram [PS* 8.3.23 *mo'nuswāraḥ*. When followed by consonant, end-of-the-word *m* is replaced by *anusvāra ṃ*]

idaṃ + dṛś + (ḍ ra m) [*īr*, the *it* marker of the *dhātu*, drops. The *pratyaya* has its own *it* markers *ḍ* and *m*, shown separated here.]

idaṃ + d + (ḍ ra m) [PS 6.4.143 *ṭeḥ*. The *it* letter *ḍ* of the suffix causes *ṭi-lopa* (elision of *ṭi*) in the *aṅga*. PS 1.1.64 *acho'ntyādi ṭi* defines *ṭi* as all letters of the entity starting with the last vowel].

idaṃ + d + ra [Having done the job, the *it* markers of the *pratyaya* drop.]

idan + dra [PS 8.4.58 *anusvārasya yayi parasavarṇaḥ* (*anusvāra ṃ*, when followed by a consonant, is replaced by the nasal letter similar to it, which is *n* here)]

idandra The final form.

*PS = *Pāṇini-Sūtra*

Looking closely is not possible in the superficial conceptual idea of 'I am not this body'. Seeing closely is possible only when the mind has deep sensitivity at its core, resulting in an understanding that is deep within. With such an understanding, the *jīva* is none other than *Isvara* or *Ātmā*. This is within reach here and now for any human being. *Idandra* is shortened as *Indra*, described as *Īśvara* in the *Ṛg-Veda*. *Sākṣī-bhāva* is realizable here and now when there is uninvolved observation without an observer and in deep attention.

There is only one main purpose for this poetic story, and that is to tell the truth of who I am (*Ātmā*), which is none other than *Brahman*, which is cause for the appearance of this cosmos. This was elaborated in the course while delving into the *bhāṣya* in depth, addressing various nuances of the story and their real purport. So long as one is ignorant of this most basic truth of who I am, there is no way to avoid the sufferings of 'hunger and thirst', which lead to the ongoing insecurities of old age, decay, and disintegration of the body. It is possible to realize one's true nature by being *Idandraḥ* and seeing the imper-

sonal 'I am' as the essence of all beings.

“Who Am I?” – Śrī Śaṅkara describes the enquiry that was later popularized by Ramana Maharshi

In the *avatārikā* or introductory *bhāṣya* to chapter 2 of the *Upaniṣad*, Śrī Śaṅkara describes means of self-enquiry, one of which became well-known through the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Śrī Śaṅkara has raised this enquiry of 'who am I' in a verse in *Aparokṣānubūti* as well.

Seeing the body as 'this' raises the question of 'who am I', since by conditioning, the body is taken as 'I'. The truth of *Ātmā* cannot be described by words, and the mind cannot cognize the truth of 'I'. All definition words that follow 'I am' as a description of 'I' are false, and the method is to negate all those by enquiry. The question alone remains, and it is most potent like a seed which can sprout through concrete. The truth of 'I' is in the very longing to know the truth, hence the statement in Brahma Sutras is '*Athāto Brahma-jijñāsā*, not '*Athāto Brahma-jñānam*'.

The *bhāṣya* includes an imagined story of a deluded person who was told by people, "Fie upon you and your cruelty! You are not a human being." This person is confused and approaches a wise person to know who he is. The wise person, seeing the situation, asked him a series of questions to establish that this deluded person is not a tree or animal and whatnot. In the end, he was told, "You are not a non-human." The realization then has to be "I am that I am." Anything that anything that follows 'I' has to be negated, with the truth of who 'I' am becoming evident by being the truth in silence.

In the story, the deluded person must know he is a human being by being human. Similarly, 'who am I' is understood by being *Ātmā* while negating all that 'I am not'.

Was I really born?

Fundamental to all desires and insecurities is the feeling of limitedness due to identification with the body and mind. Birth and death are together; the cause of death is birth and vice versa. As *Ātmā*, which is my only true nature, I am not truly born, and hence there can be no death. What follows is a model of the birth of the food body, solely to create *vairāgya* towards the body and, more importantly, *vairāgya* towards ritualistic beliefs of wanting a son to carry the Vedic debts. The logic in the model is not important; the emphasis is on the spirit of the teachings of *vairāgya* behind the model.

The *Aitareya-Upaniṣad* presents this model about how a *jīva*, a deluded entity, experiences three stages of being in the womb. The first stage involves being in the male semen, which comes from rain and is consumed by a male. If the seed is consumed by a female or is otherwise unviable, it is excreted and returns to the water cycle, eventually becom-

ing part of the rain-bearing clouds again. The second pregnancy occurs when the semen enters the womb of a female and becomes part of her, where it is nourished until a typical birth occurs. In this model, the mother becomes the nourisher of the father as his seed is in her, and he nourishes her, thereby nourishing his own seed-self in her body. They protect each other. There is no need to bring in emotional love, which is egotistic and has the potential to turn into hatred.

This son, who is the father's own seed-self, now grown up, assumes the roles of the father, takes on all his *Vedic* debts, continues as the father's representative, and performs *shrāddha* for the departed father, who then takes the next birth after death. This is the third birth. This model reflects the thinking of ritualists and helps create *vairagya* towards ritual beliefs and processes.

There is no real birth in these descriptions because something unreal cannot become real, nor can the real be born as real. The mere appearance of a false entity in the semen, in the womb, and as a baby is called birth. In another sense, the birth of the ego alone can be called birth, and this happens every morning when one wakes up from deep sleep.

Given such a process involved in the appearance of any child, it is immature to call any child 'my child'. Contemplation can help neutralize the 'me-and-mine' syndrome.

The facts stated in the model were proclaimed by a realized Rishi named *Vamadeva*, who realized his nature in the womb itself before the mind and ego-thoughts were developed. He did not have traditional means of knowledge such as *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* etc and this underscores the importance that realization has nothing to do with any activities associated with all those means of knowledge. *Vāmādeva* contemplated in the heart as both *upāsana* and abiding as the Self leading to realization. Outer *gurus* and *śāstras* can only point one towards the truth. To realize, one must be a light unto oneself. Realization helps transcend mental sufferings associated with old age, decay, and the death of the body. It is therefore best to die to this body, this mind, and this world here and now and come alive to the truth of who I am as *Ātmā*, much like the crucifixion of ego before resurrection.

Prajñānaṁ Brahma

Rṣi Vāmādeva's spoken words are taken as *Śrutivākya* since he had risen beyond body identification and realized his *svarūpa* as *Ānanda-Ātmā*, with all possible desires as though fulfilled. This vision is heard as the realized truth and hence it is *Śruti*. It was true not only for *Rṣi Vāmādeva* but also for all of us here and now. This is not knowledge that gets accumulated in the brain cells. This truth has to be deeply felt and understood without relying on memory. It is like knowing at some point in life that fire burns; this knowledge is not accumulative, but rather understood so deeply that even in a dream

one will know that fire burns the body.

Bṛhatī-sahasra which preceded the *Upaniṣad* describes how *Prāṇa-Ātmā* entered the cosmic person and thereby all living beings via the space between the toes. The *Jñāna-Ātmā*, which is the very light of knowingness, is said to have entered via the head of the same *Puruṣa*. *Prāṇa* causes a lot of activities, and all sense organs and organs of action come alive with activities. Is that the real *Ātmā* or is it the matrix of knowingness?

There is a discussion as to which is superior, *Prāṇa-Ātmā* supported by *karma* and *upāsanā* or *Jñāna-Ātmā*, which is the light of knowingness. The two cannot mix as one. In observing distant stars which is superior: the instrument (telescope) or the eyesight? Is the faculty of sight or the mind that cognizes the form superior? Is the light of knowingness or the mind as an instrument superior?

Śrī Śaṅkara quotes *Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣad*, where the word *Prajñā* is introduced to mean *Prāṇa*. There is a story in *Praśna-Upaniṣad* that illustrates why *Prāṇa* is superior to all sense organs and organs of action. *Ātmā*, on the other hand, is the very knowing element or matrix of knowingness that enables knowledge of particulars for a knower, itself unaware of anything in particular. It is awareness absolute, devoid of pairs of opposites found in the known. This knowingness illuminates the 'outer world', sense organs and organs of action, as well as the 'inner world' in terms of all states of the mind which are enumerated in the *Upaniṣad*.

Human sufferings arise due to forgetfulness of the true nature being this very knowingness. One must, therefore, look inward as an uninvolved witnessing awareness. Among western philosophers, Immanuel Kant was the first to propose a reflexive analysis that can help reveal the truth behind the knower and intellect.

Cognition, which is only about a particular, aided by sense organs or not, can be seen as false. For example, one never really sees a thing outside the eyes. Only light reflected from an object falls on the retina, which creates some sensations leading to cognition in the mind that adds many entities such as space, time, name assigned from past cognition, likes, and dislikes based on imaginations, etc. Similarly, when we touch something, we never touch anything because the experience is only that of sensing the Van der Waals forces between the skin and whatever is 'out there'. Reflexive analysis shows space and time are not in the *Vastu*. They are added and synthesized by the mind, much like making a Gongura chutney involves adding many items to the Gongura leaves.

In the West, reflexive analysis is considered a Copernican revolution in thinking, though well known in *Upaniṣads*. In all, the light of knowingness alone is the truth. *Sākṣī* is not the subject but the very subjectivity not limited to any body or mind. It is *Prajñānam*. Its light alone reflects in an unreal *upādhi* called the mind, revealing the multitudinous and

variegated objects in the universe, all seemingly bounded by unreal space-time. All that appears and disappears is the light of awareness alone. It is absolute awareness since it is spaceless and timeless.

This can be understood by the analogy of a movie scene, for example, wherein an actor is walking towards his enemy on top of a hill. There is only projector light that, on contact with *upādhi* or adjunct called film, moves, introducing movie-space-time in the mind of the watcher. In the scene witnessed, the actor, his enemy, the hill, and even shadows are all nothing but light. If there is no projector light, there cannot be any movie scene.

In the story starting with *brahmāṇḍa-piṇḍa*, the creation of various demi-gods housed in the sense organs and the organs of action, and *Prāṇa-Ātmā*, which is *apara-brahman*, known as God in popular religions, entering through the toes, there is nothing but this absolute light of awareness with different conditioning, just like a movie actor in a scene is projector light conditioned as a person. *Ātmā*, in the story on entering the created names and forms of a cosmic person, became an 'as-though' limited entity of *jīva* and then looked closely only to realize that all this body and mind is unreal. He became *Indra* and realized his nature as awareness absolute and understood that all that appears and disappears in the universe is the light of awareness alone. As *Prajñānam*, which is the awareness absolute or knowingness, there is the realization of being Brahman, the cause of this cosmos. This realization is possible for anyone pursuing the truth of life at all costs to realize that 'I am' that knowingness and hence the center of this appearance called cosmos.

I acknowledge all who voluntarily helped to review this article. This is a limited summary and suggest *jijñāsus* to get the audio or video recordings (from the link given below) to pursue their *sadhana* (<https://courses.avgbbooks.org/product/aitareya-upanishad-2/>)

In the seven weeks of the program, Swamiji due to his total commitment to Veda as a *Pra-*mana, due to his shraddha to the *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya*, and due to his universal love for all listeners to come out of this life of bondage, it was a joy for attendees to be able to commune with the heart of *Śāṅkara* while studying this *Aitareya-Upaniṣad* through the words of Swamiji.

Om Tat Sat

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

AVP Rishikesh - World Humanity Day Celebrations

The serene atmosphere of **Swami Dayanand Saraswati Ashram** in Uttarakhand became a haven for celebrating **World Humanity Day** on 19th January 2025. This significant occasion, dedicated to promoting human values like empathy, compassion, and peace, was marked by the presence of the esteemed Chief Guest, **Sri Anant, Inspector General (IG) of Uttarakhand**, and presided over by our **Head Acharya Swami Sakshatkrtanand Ji**.

The day's proceedings began with a divine **Pooja at Sri Gangadhareshwar Mandir**, where participants sought blessings for global harmony and unity. This was followed by heartfelt **obeisance to Pujya Swami Ji's Samadhi**, a moment of deep reverence for the spiritual legacy of **Pujya Swami Ji**. The ceremonial **flag hoisting** at the Ashram grounds set a tone of unity and pride for humanity, as the gathering resonated with prayers for peace and coexistence.

Humanity Pledge: A Commitment to Compassion

A moment of profound significance was the collective recitation of the **Humanity Pledge**, where all present pledged to embody and spread values of love, respect, and harmony. Together, we vowed:

"I wholeheartedly pledge to behave with everyone in a way I wish them to behave with me. I commit to care for peace and harmony at every level with dedication and devotion. I will make conscious efforts for the development and evolution of human qualities such as empathy, altruism, unconditional love, friendliness, balance, non-violence, and poise. I pledge to radiate this positive thinking across the entire world."

The pledge echoed the shared resolve to become agents of change, fostering a world rooted in compassion and mutual respect.

A Call to Reflect on Humanity

In the opening address, delivered a powerful message on the essence of humanity. This reminded everyone of the importance of living with dignity, kindness, and selflessness, underscoring that humanity is not just a concept but a way of life.

The event was thoughtfully organized by **Br Sarad** and **Br Utkarsh**, dedicated students of the **Ashram's three-year course**, who have been serving the Ashram with unwavering commitment. Their meticulous planning ensured the program's success, and they skillfully led the participants through the **Bhuta Shuddhi Kriya**, a profound practice aimed at cultivating inner peace and mental clarity. This ancient practice, aimed at purifying the body, mind, and spirit, left attendees feeling rejuvenated and aligned with the core principles of humanity. Participants experienced a sense of inner calm and clarity, symbolizing

the path to inner consciousness and collective peace.

Celebrating Human Values

World Humanity Day 2025 served as a reminder that humanity transcends boundaries and definitions. It brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds, united in their commitment to uphold human values. The program emphasized the importance of reconnecting with our fundamental nature and living in harmony with others and the environment.

Addressing the gathering, **Swami Sakshatkritananda Ji** emphasized the need for compassion, mindfulness, and unity to overcome modern challenges. He urged everyone to embrace the values of selfless service and universal brotherhood as a way of life. Chief Guest, **Sri Anant** echoed these sentiments, highlighting the transformative power of spiritual practices in building a society rooted in love and harmony.

The celebration concluded with a heartfelt prayer for global peace and prosperity. The attendees left inspired and rejuvenated, carrying forward the message of universal humanity. The **World Humanity Day event at Swami Dayanand Saraswati Ashram** served as a beautiful reminder of the power of unity and the timeless relevance of spiritual wisdom in creating a compassionate and harmonious world. Om Tat Sat.



AVP Rishikesh — 3-Months Course Inauguration

13 January 2025!

At last, the day we had been waiting for had arrived.

We took the flight from Pune and arrived at the Ashram at 6.15 PM looking forward to the soon-to-be our home, for the next three months. Swami Dayanand Ashram, Rishikesh!

Though late in life, our hearts were made up and longing to get the opportunity of a lifetime to study the Upanishadic teachings. Never too late for Enlightenment!

Coming to Rishikesh with an open mind, we just blended into the Ashram accommodation allocated to us. Without much ado we settled in and as we were just in time for the dinner at 7.00 PM. We were off for the first meal: simple and tasty, to suit all palates.

The winter has been severe this year as per the news reports we have been tracking along with the Australian Open but the additional unexpected factor was the breeze coming from the bank of the Ganges, flowing right next to the Ashram. A moonlit night soon made us forget the overwhelming cold with the clear view of the moon on an auspicious full moon day which was nature's unmatched bonus.

We were ready for the orientation after dinner as the classes were starting the next day. As we gathered at the lecture hall it was amazing to find people from all parts of India as well as foreign nationals: America, Australia, Thailand, Switzerland, Malaysia, Japan; but when introduction started, it was easy to connect. Though from different walks of life and different age groups, we all were "Seekers".

During the Induction, we were welcomed warmly by Swami Sakshatkrtnanda Ji, the Head of the Ashram along with Swamini Swatmavidyanada Ji and other esteemed Faculty. The General Manager Sri Gunanad Ji walked us through the Dos and Don'ts of the Ashram. We students were asked to introduce ourselves briefly and were given the Handouts. We retired for the day.

We were up the next day, 14 January 2025 at 5.30 AM for the morning Puja. For the start of our spiritual learning what can be better than 14 January? Bihu, Lohri, Makara Shankranti, Pongal, many names, one festival - marking the start of the Harvest Season celebrated throughout India. So, our Vedanta Course started on 14th January 2025 with Prayers and Puja and Homage to our dear Guru Swamiji Dayanand Saraswati at the Samadhi

Mandir. The chanting of the mantras and offerings made us feel so special to be in the Guru's presence.

Followed by a lavish breakfast truly enjoyed by one and all.

After that, it was the first and introductory class in Upanishads by Swami Sakshatkrtnanda Ji. It was truly a treat for the mind as Swami Ji began with a prayer, just flowing into the introduction so simple and beautiful that no one need ever be afraid of learning the scriptures.

This was followed soon after with a special puja to the Sun God to invoke His Blessings, given the start of the Course on this auspicious day. It was held in the open, next to the Sri Gangadhareswar Mandir. Makara Shankranti symbolises the start of the harvest season and so during this Puja, rice was cooked with dal in a clay pot, allowing it to boil over, symbolising hopes for abundance of the harvest and prosperity. This rice dish, Pongal was served as Prasad at the end of the Puja. The gentle soothing sound of the Ganga flowing next to us, the bright Sun made us aware of all the elements around us.

This was followed by a Bhandara (feast) for Sandhus who were invited to partake in this Bhandara and bless the occasion and the Ashram. Those who came to its gate never went back without food as Maa Annapurna was there for the asking.

After lunch, we had a break which gave us time to assimilate all that had taken place and of course we couldn't wait to start our first Bhagwat-Gita class after tea break. Dear Swamini Swatmavidyananda Ji gave us these sober teachings in such a humorous way that it kept us alert not knowing what was coming up next. Some students were literally falling off their seats. The closing prayers at the end of the class, as always, was a good way to bring us back to the ground.

We had a short tea break and evening temple Puja. After a break before dinner, a simple dinner was provided which was welcome after such lavish start.

The day ended with Satsang and Question/Answer session.

A glorious beginning of the three months Vedanta Course.

Could it get better?

Let us see.

Photo in cover page #31

Three Months Course #2 in Vedanta and Sanskrit at AVP, Rishikesh

Arsha Vidya Pitham, Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh, is happy to announce the commencement of a three-month residential course #2 in Vedanta & Sanskrit on 1st May, 2025. The course will be conducted by Chief Acharya Sri Swami Sakshatkrtananda Saraswati along with Sri Swamini Svatmavidyananda Saraswati.

The course syllabus comprises meditation, classes on Kathopanisad, Bhagavad Gita chapter 2 (Adi Shankaracharya's commentary), Basic Sanskrit, Chanting of Vedic mantras, stotras, and Satsang.

The course is open to anyone who is interested in gaining insight into Vedanta and also a basic knowledge of Sanskrit. The upper age limit is 60 years. This will be a full-time residential course, without break. Couples can also participate. The accommodation will be strictly on a twin-sharing basis. Participants are expected to contribute a sum of Rs 5000 per head per month to partially meet the running expenses. In exceptional cases (of brahmacharis/brahmacharinis who have no source of income) the same will be waived at the Acharya's discretion. Participants will have to abide by the rules and regulations of the ashram all the time. The Ashram reserves the right to ask any student to leave the course at any time without giving a reason, if in the perception of the ashram, the continuation of the student is not conducive for smooth conduct of the course.

Those who are interested may apply immediately by visiting the link:

<https://forms.gle/hZ2RRFz3RHUghfWcA>

The last date for the submission of the application form is 7th March, 2025. The selected candidates will be informed by 20th March, 2025.

Important Note: Applicants are required to fill the form using a google account. If you do not have a gmail account, please create one and then fill out the form

Gita Jayanti Mahotsav at Bhuj-Kutch

The Bhuj-Kutch region of Gujarat has witnessed a remarkable positive incident in its history as ArshAdhyayan Kendra-Bhuj celebrates 20 years of spreading Indian Vedic knowledge. Under the guidance of Acharya Swami Shri Pradeeptananda Saraswati ji , initiated by the esteemed Padmashri Pujya Swami Shri Dayananda Saraswatij i of the Shankaracharya tradition, this institution has been a beacon of Vedic values, inspiring generations of young and old.

Recently, a groundbreaking initiative was undertaken to foster unity among the Sanatan Hindu Community. On December 24, 2024, a harmonious gathering of leaders from around 40 Hindu caste communities took place at ArshKutir Odhavbagh-2, Madhapar. The leaders honoured one another with Paghdi (Turbans of Kutch) and Sweets, showcasing mutual respect and camaraderie. Women's association presidents also participated in this beautiful exchange. Swami Pradeeptanand ji shared profound insights about the significance of devotion in Hinduism, emphasizing the importance of preserving Sanatan Dharma for future generations. The event concluded with Swami ji and other Sannyasins serving food to each president, further solidifying bonds of unity. A Saint Committee (SantSamiti) was established to guide these communities forward.

Following this, a grand Gita Granth Yatra unfolded on December 8, 2024, from the renowned Ramdhun Mandir of Bhuj to the Town Hall, under the leadership of Swami Pradeeptananda Saraswatiji and Sant Samiti. Approximately 250 women carried the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita on their heads, while 1200 to 1500 young participants, adorned in colorful Paghdis (turbans), celebrated with song and dance, making this journey truly unforgettable. H. H. Swami Shri Paramatmananda Saraswatiji delivered an inspiring MangalUdbodhan on " Shrimad Bhagavad Gita and Sanatan Dharma." The festival culminated with attendees from the 40 communities enjoying Maha-prasad together.

From December 9 to 12, 2024, the evenings were graced with Hanumant Katha by Dr. Mahadevprasad Mehta, followed by inspiring lectures on the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita by Swami Pradeeptananda Saraswati ji. On Gita Jayanti, December 11, 2024, an impressive 800 participants recited all 18 chapters of the Bhagavad Gita from 9 am to 11:30 am.

The spirit of this Gita Jayanti festival resonated far and wide, with thousands joining online to partake in this significant celebration. Around 100 dedicated young Swayam Sevak volunteers volunteered alongside Swami Pradeeptananda Saraswati ji, heightening the impact of the Gita Jayanti Mahotsav.

Photos in cover page #2

Sannyasa Dheeksha

Three Mumukshus are Blessed by Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati Ji into Turiya ashrama Deeksha which is Sannyasa ashrama in Rajahmundry at Gouthami ghat in banks of Godavari river on 1st February 2025

A Journey from Worldly Life to Divine Bliss

In a profound spiritual ceremony steeped in Vedic tradition, three devout disciples of revered guru Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati Ji formally initiated into sannyasa, the ancient Hindu path of renunciation. The event marked a transformative milestone in the lives of Brahmachari Sairam, S. Anjaneyulu and Kottaru Trivikrama Rao, who have now been initiated into monastic life with the names Swami Santananda Saraswati, Swami Pragnanananda Saraswati ji, and Swami Trivikramananda Saraswati Ji, respectively.

The Sacred Transition to Sannyasa

Sannyasa, the final stage of the Hindu ashrama system, symbolizes the renunciation of material attachments to pursue moksha (liberation) and self-realization. Initiated through rituals such as the viraja homa (fire ceremony) and the donning of saffron robes, sannyasis vow to live a life of celibacy, non-possession, and devotion to spiritual knowledge. Their new names, suffixed with "ananda" (bliss), reflect their commitment to embodying divine joy and wisdom.

The Guru's Guidance

Swami Tattvavidananda Ji, a distinguished teacher in the Advaita Vedanta tradition, guided the disciples through this sacred transition. Known for his emphasis on self-inquiry and the Upanishads, his mentorship underscores the guru's role in awakening disciples to their true nature (Atman). The ceremony, attended by devotees and spiritual seekers, highlighted the guru-disciple bond central to Sanatana Dharma.

The Disciples and Their New Identities

Brahmachari Sairam → Swami Santananda: Deriving from santa (peace), his name signifies "bliss of tranquility," reflecting his serene dedication to spiritual service.

S. Anjaneyulu → Swami Pragnanananda: Rooted in prajna (wisdom), his name denotes "bliss of supreme consciousness," aligning with a life anchored in Vedantic wisdom.

Kottaru Trivikrama Rao → Swami Trivikramananda: Inspired by Lord Vishnu's cosmic stride (Trivikrama), his name embodies the "bliss of limitless divinity," symbolizing the transcendence of worldly boundaries.

Conclusion: A Path of Service and Liberation

For the new swamis, sannyasa is not mere asceticism but a vow to serve humanity while immersed in the pursuit of Brahman (the Ultimate Reality). Their journey exemplifies the eternal Hindu ethos of moving from ignorance to enlightenment. As Swami Santananda, Swami Pragnanananda, and Swami Trivikramananda embark on this path, they carry forward a legacy of wisdom, reminding the world of the enduring power of renunciation and divine bliss. *Om Tat Sat*

Photo in cover page #31

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti - Retreats & Courses Calendar



Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti announces the following Residential Retreats & Courses planned in 2025:

Retreat No.	Retreat Start Date	Retreat End Date	Duration	Retreat Name	Conducted By	Language
VE 25-01	25/02/2025	26/02/2025	2 days	Shivaratri Retreat	Swami Sadatmananda	English
VE 25-02	01/05/2025	07/05/2025	7 days	Jnana Yajna Retreat	Swami Sadatmananda	English
VE 25-03	08/06/2025	15/06/2025	8 days	Ashtavakra Gita	Swami Sakshatkrtananda	English
VE 25-04	06/07/2025	10/07/2025	5 days	Gurupurnima Retreat	Swami Sadatmananda	English
VE 25-05	26/10/2025	01/11/2025	7 days	Pancadasi Ch 10	Swami Shuddhabodhananda	English
VE 25-06	02/11/2025	09/11/2025	8 days	Pancadasi Ch 11	Swami Shuddhabodhananda	English

Note: Orientation will start at 8 pm on the previous evening to the Retreat Start Date.

The retreats will be open for submitting application, 3 months before start date.

Please go to our website (<https://arshavidya.in/camps-retreats/>) for details and to apply.

You can contact us at office@arshavidya.in or call our office at +91-9442646701 (9am to 5pm IST).

Course Start Date	Course End Date	Duration	Course Name	Conducted By	Language
17/07/2025	15/08/2025	1 Month	Tamil Vedanta Course	Swami Jagadatmananda	Tamil
27/08/2025	28/08/2026	1 Year	Long Term Vedanta Course	Swami Sadatmananda	English

Note: Please go to our website (<https://arshavidya.in/upcoming-course/>) for course details, contact information and application form.

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3 months course inauguration at AVP, Rishikesh



Sannyasa Deeksha



