

## Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti - New Year 2025 Puja

New year at the Gurukulam is a great way to start the year! Many sadhakas who have discovered this, come regularly every year to the Gurukulam to celebrate the New Year. This year about 400 people participated in the program, starting 2025 in a very auspicious manner. Those who could not come for some reason, watched it live on the AVG, Anaikatti YouTube channel.

Like every New Year, Jan 1st, 2025, started with a short meditation by Acharyaji on the time principle and on resolving the old year and welcoming the New Year with prayerfulness. This was followed by a class on Upanishad, marking an auspicious beginning with the study of scripture.

After this uplifting start and a festive sponsored breakfast, everyone went to the main temple of Lord Dakshinamurti at 10 am, where there was a special kala-abhisekha with 11 dravyas to the chanting of Rudram and other suktas. The tirtham from the abhisekham was sprinkled by Acharyaji blessing each and everyone one present. It gave the feeling of being blessed by Lord Dakshinamurti on this day. This was followed by a talk by Acharyaji, Sw Sadatmanandaji.

New Year Talk by Sw Sadatmanandaji -

At the outset I wish you a very happy, healthy, prosperous, peaceful New Year 2025. Every year when this New Year day is going to come near, in the WhatsApp groups this discussion starts whether we should celebrate this New Year day or not. Somebody sent a poem in Hindi – “This New Year is not accepted by us. This is not our celebrations”.

But I had heard a beautiful sloka in this context which I share with you -

न भारतीयो नववत्सरोऽयम्. तथापि सर्वस्य शिवप्रदः स्यात्।

यतो धरित्री निखिलैव माता ततः कुटुम्बायितमेव विश्वम्।

*“Even though it is not an Indian New Year day, let it be a source of blessings for everybody. Since the entire earth is our mother, therefore the entire world is our family.”*

Therefore, if we have one more day to celebrate New Year day by worshipping the Lord, then it is one more day for us to express our gratitude to Bhagavan. For us every activity is supposed to be centered on Isvara because the vision of Vedanta is - All that is here is Isvara - which is the idea conveyed by - ईशावास्यम् इदम् सर्वम् let everything be pervaded by ishvara . But that awareness does not happen right away. We start relating to Isvara in a gradual manner. If we see a typical association with the Lord of a young person born in

this culture who starts praying to Bhagavan to help in his difficult exams. Or if we start something new and we want to be successful in that particular endeavor, then we pray to Bhagavan. So we start our relation to Bhagavan as Arta bhakta and arthArti bhakta – bhakta in distress and bhakta who wants some material gain. So I look upon Bhagavan as Arthihara- remover of my afflictions and arthapradAtha- giver of my desired end. That is how we start our association with the Lord.

Later on we come to know that Isvara is creator of this world and I am creature. This is accepted in most of the religions that God has created this world. Pujya Swamiji prefers to use the word Isvara because the word God has certain connotations which doesn't match with what we mean by the word Ishvara. Isvara is creator and I am a part of the creation. Then Isvara continues to be the alter of my prayer, surrender. This type of relationship of seeing Isvara as creator and myself as created, is very useful . But at this juncture, we may be thinking that Isvara is a person who has created this world. In the beginning sastra does not interfere with this idea. It lets us accept Isvara as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva who created this world. Later on, sastra gives us the understanding that for any creation not only nimitta Karanam is required, but upadana karanam is also required. So if Isvara is nimitta karanam, then who is the upadana karanam? Sastra itself gives the answer that Isvara is not only nimitta Karanam (intelligent cause), but also upadana Karanam (material cause). Like for pot, clay is the material cause and pot maker is nimitta karanam. Generally, the maker and the material are different. But sometimes we see like in the case of spider, the maker and material cause are one and the same. Better example is : for my dream, I alone am the intelligent cause since my knowledge alone is used and I alone am the material cause for the dream. Based on that, sastra derives the corollary that since Isvara is the material cause, Isvara pervades the entire creation like clay being material cause pervades all pots. That is why it is said that - All that is here is Isvara - because Isvara is the material cause. This is how Isvara is revealed by sastra as the material cause. As Pujya Swamiji says, for us Isvara is not a matter of belief, but a matter of understanding. Sastra reveals the vision of Isvara being material cause pervades everything.

Now the question is - how do we appreciate Isvara being everywhere?

I see wall, mike, pillar, etc - the world of objects and people. I don't see Isvara, that can be a doubt..

One beautiful way of appreciating Isvara is - as the order. You appreciate Isvara In the form of various types of order - physical, biological, physiological order. Order is that which makes things the way they are. The way things happen is because of order. Like if

this watch is released, then it will fall down. That is physical order. If I eat very spicy thing, there will be acidity. That is order. Thus, there are various orders. This order is manifestation of Isvara's knowledge ie, All knowledge which is Isvara. Now I can appreciate Isvara everywhere because nothing is bereft of order. Anything which happens is pervaded by order.

One more important order is psychological order. If a person has a certain background, he will behave in a certain manner, this is because of psychological order. If a person has a lot of pain, he will have tendency to get angry. So this anger is because of unprocessed pain. This is psychological order. When I appreciate this psychological order, then I can have a healthy response to different situations.

Pujya Swamiji talks about 2 step response. This is a very beautiful idea which we can see and implement in our life. What is that?

Generally, when somebody gets angry, we have a one step response. He got angry and shouted, so I got angry and shouted more loudly. That is one step response coming from this ego jiva who feels hurt, persecuted. But when we bring Isvara in our life, we don't stop with one step. Somebody shouted at me, then I got angry. Before I respond, I take one more step. I try to understand that person is angry because of his pain. There is helplessness. There is order behind the angry behavior of this person. Therefore, that person's behavior is in order. That order is Isvara. When I appreciate Isvara behind the behavior of that person, then I will be responding to that situation objectively. It will be an action and not a reaction. Thus, everytime there is a 2 step response - First step is the natural reaction of the jiva in the form of anger at mental level and the second step is I appreciate the order and then respond to the situation. Thus, by appreciating the psychological order, I can reduce my reactions. This is how we appreciate Isvara everywhere in all situations.

Later on, sastra goes one step further to reveal that Isvara is nothing but Satyam-Jnanam-Anantam Brahma- Existence, Conciousness which is limitless. Finally I appreciate that Satcit Brahman alone is my true nature – आत्मरूपः ईशवरः

So the steps to appreciate Isvara -

- First, we talk about Isvara as the altar of prayer in the form of remover of pain and giver of desired ends
- Then, we talk about Isvara as creator .

- After that, we talk about Isvara as the all-pervasive order.
- Finally, I appreciate Isvara as myself. I and Isvara are one and the same consciousness. Thus, finally I appreciate my oneness with Isvara.

With that appreciation, my cognitive spiritual journey is completed and there is a sense of fulfilment. That is the purpose of life. That particular discovery of oneness happens when I have already brought Isvara in my life by seeing Isvara in the form of order.

So we pray to Bhagavan that may we have awareness of Isvara in the form of order and finally we discover our oneness with Isvara and fulfill the purpose of life. Om Tat Sat.

Swamiji's talk was enlivening food for the mind. Now it was time for some food for the hungry body. A sumptuous New Year day mahaprasadam lunch sponsored by several devotees was served to everyone present. All left satisfied and feeling blessed with a confidence and strength to face the New Year.

