

Valedictory function of the 108 day course at Anaikatti

The 108 day Residential Vedanta and Sanskrit course that commenced on 15th Jan 2024 at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti concluded with a Valedictory ceremony held on 1st May 2024. Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati graced the occasion as the chief guest and blessed all the teachers and the students.

The Teachers

Swami Sadatmananda Saraswati taught Tattvabodha and the entire Bhagavad Gita in these 108 days. Sanskrit was taught in three levels - by Brni. Medha Michika for Level 1, Brni. Arati for Level 2 and Br. Sudeepta Chaitanya for Level 3 students. Swamini Vedarthananda Saraswati and Swamini Saradananda Saraswati taught chanting in two levels.

Preliminary Pujas

The day started early with an auspicious Ganapathi homa and special *abhishekam* and puja performed to Sri Medha Dakshinamurthi and the puja of Puja Swamiji's paduka at Guru Tirtha as an offering of gratitude for the successful completion of the course as well as invoking their blessings for the future.

The Gurupaduka puja was performed by Br. Sudeepta Chaitanya on behalf of all the students. All the students felt grateful and blessed for the opportunity and eagerly participated in the pujas with enthusiasm and devotion.

The main function

The Valedictory ceremony began with the lighting of the lamp by Swami Paramarthanandaji. Smt. Jayalakshmi rendered the invocation song charging the atmosphere with devotion. Sri Karthik Tirupati, who was also the student's coordinator acted as the Master of Ceremonies.

Swami Paramarthananda and all the teachers of the course were welcomed to the ceremony and honoured with garlands and offering of fruit baskets by various students. Swamini Vedarthananda and Swamini Saradananda chanted a section of mantras from Taittiriya Upanishad.

Students's feedback

A few selected students from the course shared their experience and expressed their gratitude as part of the ceremony. Many more students who wished to share their journey in the course were given the opportunity by arranging a pre-valedictory satsang, the previous night.

Shashwat Vats presented the texts and topics covered in the Vedanta classes -

Tattvabodha and Bhagavad Gita, the 12 *darshanas*, Sadhanabodhini, the explanation of the 108 names of Lord Shiva and also how the course has been life-changing, adding a deep sense of profundity and meaning to everyone's life.

Megha Goyal presented the syllabus covered in the Level 1 chanting class and expressed her gratitude to the Swamini Ammas for not only teaching them the chanting of the prayers and patiently correcting them but most importantly showing them that chanting is a way of stringing a connection with Ishvara.

Sri Suriyaprakash presented the chanting syllabus covered in the Level 2 chanting class and expressed his appreciation of how the course had taken care of the holistic wellbeing of the students and how they had come to appreciate that uncompromising discipline that was demanded in the daily schedule of the course is crucial for the learning to create the desired impact.

Smt Prema Rammohan spoke about the topics covered and her learnings in Sanskrit Level 1 class, expressing her immense gratitude and admiration for the dedication and expertise of Brni. Medhaji in their sanskrit learning journey.

Kalim Zappa from Brazil presented the topics covered in Sanskrit Level 2 class and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to learn the ancient knowledge and to Acaryaji for imparting not just the profound knowledge but also for teaching through living by the same vision.

Prachi Patel shared her experience in the course, presenting the topics covered in Sanskrit Level 3 and expressing her gratitude for structured and systematic learning.

Swami Sadatmandaji's Ashirvachanam

Swami Sadatmanandaji then blessed the students with his Ashirvachanam:

[QUOTE]

At the outset I offer my namaskara to the feet of Swami Paramarthanandaji who accepted our invitation to come and bless us on this day when we are completing the 108 day course.

Swamiji has been a great source of inspiration and guidance for me. I am ever grateful to him. I thank Sri Ramachandranji for coordinating Swamiji's visit and for bringing him to the Gurukulam. I offer my pranams to all the devatas of this Gurukulam - Sri Jnana Ganapathy, Sri Medha Dakshinamurti, Narmadeshwarar, Jnaneshwari, Valli-Devasena sameeta Kalyan Subramaniaswamy. With their grace, we have been able to complete this 108 day course on Sanskrit and Vedanta. I offer my namaskara to the feet of Pujya Swamiji

who has founded this place and whose vision alone we are trying to follow. We always feel blessed by his presence in this ashram. I thank all my co-teachers -Swamini Sharadanandaji, Swamini Vedarthanandaji, Medhaji, Aratiji, Br. Sudeeptaji. They are very committed, sincere teachers. I am very fortunate to have them as my co-teachers. They did their work very efficiently and sincerely. I am very grateful to them. My special thanks to Sudeeptaji . He has been there with me from the inception of the course. In the interview process also he has been with me. At this juncture, I remember Smt Padma who was also involved during and after selection process. Sudeeptaji did his job of course-coordinator very well. Everybody is comfortable with him. So I can rely on him because I know he will do it very well, in fact sometimes better than me. So I am grateful to Br. Sudeeptaji and really appreciate his sincerity in whatever he does.

I am thankful to Sw Jagadatmanandaji who came and gave some classes on Indian culture and pancangam. Swamiji is very helpful in admin work and has provided his seva as an advisor to the trust. I thank him and really appreciate his contribution to the Gurukulam. Swamiji is an asset to the Gurukulam.

I thank our chairman Sri Shantaramji and Smt Sunita amma for their guidance and support. They have always been helpful and whenever we need any help, they are available. I really appreciate their love, care and support for the activities of the Gurukulam. I thank all the other trustees for their support.

I also thank the management staff which includes our manager Venkat, our supervisor Muthukumar, our transport and purchase in charge, Ramachandranji, PRO Jagannathanji, Thangamaniiji, Ramaswamiji who all contributed in a very sincere manner to the conduct of this course. I also thank all the workers and other staff members of this Gurukulam. I thank all the sponsors, donors and devotees who support the activities of the Gurukulam.

I also thank all the students because the course can be conducted only when the students are there. All of you are the flowers of the garden of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. I am very thankful to you because all of you have been very cooperative, very sincere and inspiring and that's why I could teach. To maintain the spirit of the Gurukulam of my understanding, sometimes some inconvenience, some discomfort might have been caused. If somebody has been hurt, I am sorry for that, but the intention was always good. I have love and care for all of you and my best wishes and prayers are there for all of you wherever you are. Generally some special valedictory message is expected from the acharya. Even though we have done exhaustive study with 141 classes of Bhagavad Gita, 72 classes of Tattva Bodha, still a parting valedictory message is expected. So I will share a few points

on this occasion.

First of all, let us remain grateful to the tradition of the teachers – Guruparampara. Whenever we get the opportunity to express our gratitude in any manner - by sharing the teaching, by helping in printing the books or helping someone who is teaching. You can serve financially or by providing logistics.. Whatever way we can contribute to the preservation of gurupampara, we do it. So the first thing is to have gratitude and express it appropriately, whenever the occasion arises.

Second thing is, let us maintain some daily routine which consists of some japa, some meditation and some study of sastra. *svAdhyAyAn mA pramadah* — Let there not be laziness to study (sastra regularly). Also in Vakya Vritti, it is said – *aham brahmeti vakyArthah bodho yAvat drdhi bhavet. SamAdisahitastAvat abyaset sravanAdikam.*

Until *aham brahmasmi* understanding becomes very firm, one needs to repeat *sravanam, mananam, nididhyasanam*. Let these three be a part of our routine.

One more thing, in the language of Pujya Swamiji - “Let us bring Isvara in our life”.

Isvara is already there in our life. Let us be aware of the presence of Isvara in our life. You can relate to Isvara as an altar of your surrender, or as the order, or relate to Isvara as the non-dual reality from whom you are not separate. Let there be awareness of the presence of Isvara in any form.

Another thing is: let us not judge ourselves based on our feelings or our external conditions, financial or social status, etc. Let us not make them the basis to judge what I am. Similarly physical health condition, whatever be the age of the body based on that, I do not judge myself. Final objectivity is I do not judge myself even based on the feelings of the mind. Sometimes the mind can be dull, sometimes some unconscious pain can surface. I learn to be as objective as possible. I do not judge myself based on any one of these things. To know who I am, *sastram* alone is *pramanam*. Feelings are not *pramanam*. Physical conditions are not *pramanam*. Objectivity i.e, being non-judgemental is a very important aspect of our *sadhana*. With all this, I am sure you will have a successful spiritual journey culminating into the self- discovery that I am limitless brahman. It was a very joyful experience to share the teaching of this tradition. I am very thankful to all of you. You have been very inspiring. I wish you all the best. My love, care, prayers and blessings are there with you and I am available whenever you need any guidance.

[UNQUOTE]

Swami Paramarthanandaji's Anugraha Bhashanam

Swami Paramarthanandaji blessed the gathering with his Anugraha Bhashanam, starting by congratulating Acaryaji on completing the course as planned and in a perfect manner. Swamiji then proceeded to speak on various topics starting with how Shankaracharyaji in all his introductory *bhashyams* presented the distinction between the *vedapurva* and *vedanta* portions, the need for treating them as two different *shastrams* by showing the distinction in their *anubandhachatushtayam*, the place of *karma shastram* and *brahma shastram* with regard to moksha and the relationship between them, what moksha really is - is it from atma or anatma standpoint, the need to focus on *jnanam* for claiming moksha at atma-level and improving *sadhanachatushtayasampatti* for increasing anatma-level happiness. The transcription of the complete talk can be found as a separate article .

Conclusion

Swamiji then blessed all the teachers and the students of the course by presenting them with a memento in the form of a picture of all the deities gracing the Gurukulam. The ceremony concluded with a course group picture and an eloquent vote of thanks delivered by Srivatsan.

It was a very fulfilling experience for the students, teachers and the guests present.

- Report by Brni. Arati

