

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Anaikatti - 34th Anniversary Function

The thirty fourth anniversary of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam was celebrated on the 3rd November, 2024 at the Anaikatti Campus. It was well-attended. For the last few years it has been a custom to formally receive Anujna(consent) and Anugraha(blessing) of Pujya Swamiji before any function starts at the Gurukulam. This was done by offering a small puja performed by the Chief Acharya.

The function started with a prayer song by Smt. Shanti Subramaniam, followed by chanting of Veda by our Veda Pathashala students.

Sri Ravi Venkataraman ji, Secretary, Sruti Seva Trust welcomed all. This was followed by a delightful Bharatanatyam dance performance “Nrityanjali” dedicated to Pujya Swamiji, by the mother-daughter duo Smt Rajeswari Aravind and Kumari Amaya Aravind.

Sri Ravi Venkataraman ji, Secretary, Sruti Seva Trust presented the Gurukulam report for the year, which highlighted all the activities and the courses conducted in the Gurukulam. He mentioned the starting of Swami Dayananda Saraswati Veda Pathashala and getting an award from the Vidyatheertha Foundation, Sringeri, for the best Vedanta Institution, as significant milestones during the year.

Sri Vallabesan ji introduced the Chief Guest, Sri B.K.Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, Chairman of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore.

Key note address by Sri B.K.Krishnaraj Vanavarayar:

Sri Vanavarayar, began with his familiarity with Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, comparing the similarities in the contribution of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Arsha Vidya Gurukulam. He suggested that Arsha Vidya Gurukulam should be called a Vidya Peetham now. He acknowledged that his presence in this function was a blessing by Pujya Swamiji and recalled his personal experience with Pujya Swamiji for a long time. He started with the physical transformation of the campus from the day the Gurukulam was started 34 years back – from a desert-like look to a beautiful campus today. Pujya Swamiji, in spite of his charismatic personality and knowledge, versatility with people across all strata and a phenomenal ability to communicate the most complicated subject in a very simple manner to people from rural area, urban area, educated and uneducated alike. He was against marketing himself, rather he never believed in marketing. He described Pujya Swamiji as an ideal monk – no likes, no dislikes; no comforts, no discomforts; can adjust to any situation; he was the same to everyone. He could connect with big scholars as well as rural

mass. He was concerned with the materialism and western onslaught on our culture. He explained that a unique achievement of Pujya Swamiji was the formation of Acharya Sabha, where he brought all the acharyas in India under one umbrella.

He continued with his statement that such Gurukulams are not just meant for old people and that they should encourage participation by youngsters, especially children. He listed the challenges facing the humanity:

Racial discrimination, Religious intolerance and conflicts; Social upheavals; Political tensions; Cultural degradation; Ecological imbalance ; Cut throat competitions; Loss of inner peace in man; Lack of creativity; animalistic tendency overpowering human beings, terrorism and many more.

These maladies every country has, but only India has a remedy for these. Since we have created these problems / maladies, only we have to find the solution. This is where places like our Gurukulam can help – not only teaching Vedanta, but living Vedanta. The greatness of India and the reason the world respects India, is the fact that we not only believed in potential divinity in every human being, but carry this belief even today, in this space age. He went on to explain the greatness of Advaita Vedanta, which is being researched in many western universities. Advaita Vedanta is the most logical, progressive, eternally relevant, extremely practical and capable of standing the test of times. He quoted Swami Vivekananda that Vedanta should reach masses in the slums. Vedanta is not for intellectual extravagance. It is meant for the ordinary man. Pujya Swamiji wanted Vedanta to help in facing national challenges and in nation building. The Chief Guest found the thoughts of Pujya Swamiji and Swami Vivekananda were similar in many respects when it came to facing challenges and nation building. Pujya Swamiji worked for the whole of humanity and not for just a religion or society. Our Gurukulam has done a lot of service to humanity silently – with this appreciation he concluded his speech.

After the key note address, Chief Acharya honored our auditor, Shri Prabhu.

Dr. R. Parthasarathy presented the SDJ Ayurvedalaya Report. He highlighted the participation of 1600 people from more than 40 countries in the last 10 years. This year the celebration of the 10th Anniversary and the initiative of Swarnaprasna were the significant achievements. For the first time, Ayurvedalaya trained a team of doctors from Latin America last year.

Anugraha-bhashanam by Swami Jagadatmananda Saraswati:

With humble pranams to Pujya Swamiji and a quote from Thirumandiram, Swami

Jagadatmanandaji began his Anugrahabhashanam. He thanked Acharya Swami Sadatmanandaji for taking the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam to greater heights, in achieving the vision and mission of Pujya Swamiji. Everyone is searching for something or the other in this world – some wealth, some knowledge, some truth, some liberation etc. He quoted Google as an analogy and people using the search engines to continue searching. The true knowledge seeking is when one stops searching. And the searching ends when one enters the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, thus the Gurukulam helps people coming in with the search for truth and wisdom. Therefore he welcomed everyone to come to the Gurukulam to seek wisdom and end their search. Swamiji asked everyone to visit Gurukulam and be with us in the success of all our endeavors. Swamiji concluded his Anugrahabhashanam by blessing everyone, with a special reference to the one year Vedanta students.

Anugraha-bhashanam by Chief Acharya Swami Sadatmananda Saraswati :

Swamiji began by saying - “It was a mesmerizing talk by the chief guest.. Everybody is blessed with different capacity and everybody is a vibhuti of Bhagavan . I am very happy to see these glories manifesting through different people” He then talked about the Gurukulam, its role and about the scriptural teaching.

This place called Arsha Vidya Gurukulam was founded on 31st October 1990. Today, we are celebrating the 34th anniversary of this place. This place is called Arsha Vidya Gurukulam which our chief guest wants to name as a Pitham. I appreciate and thank him for his love and respect for this institute. Gurukulam literally means guroh kulam= residence of guru. The residence of guru is a place of learning . Learning what? Arsha Vidya.. The knowledge imparted by the rishis which is contained in the vedas and veda-based scriptures. Traditionally we talk about 14 bodies of knowledge - 4 vedas (Rig,yajur, sama, Atharva veda), then 6 vedangas. These are auxiliary disciplines of knowledge to understand the content of vedas. The first two (shiksha & kalpa) are discipline of knowledge related to chanting and performance of rituals, then Grammar (vyakaranam) and etymology of words (niruktam) , prosody (chandasa) and astronomy/astrology (jyotisham) . We have 4 more branches called upanga - Nyaya sastra which deals with the method of how to think in a logical manner. Mimamsa is the analysis of the Vedas..The analysis of the first part of the Veda-purva-bhaga or Karma khanda is called purva mimamsa sastra and analysis of Vedanta called Brahma sutra. These two together is called Mimamsa. Then we have got puranas which is a vast literature to convey the vision of vedas through stories, anecdotes, metaphors. Then we have got dharma sastra like manusmriti, yagnavalkya

smriti. These are the 14 vidya sthanani . Sometimes 4 more are added to it- Ayurveda which is popular discipline of knowledge dealing with health. Dhanurveda dealing with archery and Gandharva veda, the discipline of knowledge dealing with art, music, dance and Arthasastra - dealing with economics. These 4 are called Upavedas. So 4 vedas +6 vedangas +4 upangas and 4 upavedas = total 18. All of them can be called Arsha Vidya.

In this Gurukulam, we are mainly focusing on Vedanta which is a part of vedas , vyakaram and some part of shiksha on how to chant vedas. The main focus here is on Vedanta. The vision of Pujya Swamiji to establish this Gurukulam is : the study of Vedanta is a serious affair. It requires conducive atmosphere for the students. Gurukulam is an attempt to provide that conducive atmosphere to students to study without any worries about anything else. Pujya Swamiji would nicely say that this is the only Gurukulam which does not have any agenda for the students. Come study and you can spread the vision the way you want . If you want some help. We can provide that. But we do not have any agenda that you have to serve the organization in any way. There is no such obligation. The spirit of freedom is complete.

This Vedanta which is the main focus of this Gurukulam is relevant to our life. Many people have this question : how vedanta is relevant to my life ? For that we understand that everybody is seeking satisfaction , self-acceptance . I want to be acceptable to myself and when I am acceptable to myself, the whole world will be acceptable. Whenever I reject anything in this world or whenever I am complaining about this world, its root is in some non-acceptance of oneself. So the more you learn how acceptable you are, the world will be more and more acceptable to you. The vision of Vedanta is: all that is here is Isvara and that Isvara you are. Isvara and you are not different - sarvam brahma. Tat brahma tvam asi = everything is Brahman and that brahman you are. When a person has this vision , then there is a sense of fulfillment , fullness and that fullness will be expressed in the form of love and compassion. When there is love and compassion, then contribution, serving becomes very natural. One need not be even told. There is a life of harmony. A person himself feels fulfilled and his or her presence is a blessing to humanity and he spreads the message of love and compassion . Thus, the teaching and study of Vedanta is time-tested knowledge, relevant for all times. Some people say that I studied Vedanta and it did not work for me. Pujya Swamiji in some context said that to be fully benefitted by Vedanta, one requirement is relative self-love which means I have relative self-acceptance. This will be there when some inhibiting unconscious factors are taken care of . For that appreciating the order of Isvara and seeing oneself in order helps very much.

I will have less complaints about myself. I am kind to myself and I can be kind to others. Then I can see that the teaching of Vedanta is relevant all the time.

For that we talk about the 4 types of grace we require. First grace is the grace of Ishvara (Ishvara-kṛpa) by which alone you can have the desire and the opportunity for getting knowledge. How do you earn this grace? As Pujya Swamiji says by two methods – by reaching out action of being a greater and greater contributor for the well-being of all. The second is prayers, through body in the form of worshipping, thro' speech, chanting, and through the mind, meditation. All of them can help you earn the grace of Ishvara. Third grace we require is the grace of the scriptures (sastra kṛpa). By showing respect and love for the scriptures, protecting it and trying to contribute to spreading its teachings, we earn the grace of the scriptures. Fourth we require the grace of guru (guru kṛpa). This we earn by having reverential approach and love for the guru and serving him. Finally we require the grace of oneself (atma-kṛpa). It means my body is fit, my mind is relatively free from emotional disturbance and I have got relative self-acceptance. I have a relatively healthy self-esteem. If all these factors are there, then Vedanta will definitely work. It has worked for so many and there is no reason it should not work for you. For sharing this vision of Vedanta, this Arsha Vidya Gurukulam was founded by Pujya Swamiji. So we are very, very grateful to Pujya Swamiji that he has founded this place. I look upon the entire Gurukulam as the embodiment of Pujya Swamiji's grace which is manifesting through this place.

I am thankful to all the trustees, all the donors and sponsors, devotees, all the teachers, all the management staff and all other staff and mainly the students. The students are the flowers of the garden of Gurukulam. Without students, there is no Gurukulam. Swamiji thanked everybody for coming for this occasion and expressed a prayer that the grace of Pujya Swamiji continues, so that we can continue the activities of the Gurukulam with the spirit with which the place was founded. Om tat sat.

The function ended with a vote of thanks by Sri Vallabesanji.

After the conclusion of the function, all the guests were served a tasty maha-prasadam lunch.

- Report by Mr. Venkat Subramanian and Ms. Padma Ramaswamy

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