

Pujya Swamiji's Birthday and Independence Day celebrations at AVG Anaikatti, Coimbatore

The day began with a Panchopara Puja performed by Acharya Swami Sadatmananda Saraswati at Guru Tirtha. This was accompanied by the chanting led by Swamini Saradananda Saraswati and Swamini Vedartananda Saraswati. After the puja and chanting, everyone did pradakshina of the Guru Tirtha.

Everyone moved to the ground for the next program of the day - hoisting of national flag.

Acharya Swami Sadatmanandaji hoisted the national flag and addressed the gathering of inmates, employees, students and acharya from the Swami Dayananda Saraswati Veda Pathashala, one year course and three months course students, and devotees - visitors.

During his Independence Day address, Swami Sadatmanandaji said:

Today we are celebrating the 78th Independence Day of this country. On this day we remember with gratitude, all those freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives, underwent many hardships, so that we can enjoy this independence of our country. We have received this freedom with a lot of struggle. Let us preserve it by our contribution, alertness and nationalism. Today, also happens to be the birthday of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati whom we fondly call Pujya Swamiji . He helped us to discover our inner freedom. On 15th August 1947, we got political freedom. So while we are celebrating political freedom, we pursue inner freedom by the method shown by Pujya Swamiji and other teachers. Thus we can enjoy both freedoms. We pray to Pujya Swamiji to bless us in our pursuit of inner freedom while enjoying external freedom.

After the Independence Day address by Acharyaji, National Anthem was sung followed by Sweets distribution to all by Acharyaji.

Following the Independence Day celebrations, all assembled in the Dakshinamurti temple and Satsang Mantapam for the Mula-mantra Japa. Lamps for Puja were organized in both Dakshinamurti temple and Satsang Mantapam.

Swamijis, Swaminis and devotees participated in the performance. All devotees chanted the Mula mantra along with Acharyaji, Swamijis and Swaminis.

A bhajan by Acharyaji was followed by his address:

Today we are celebrating the starting of the 95th birthday of Pujya Swamiji. Today also happens to be the Independence day of this country. We cannot say swamiji was born on Independence day. India got independence on Pujya Swamiji's birthday, since Pujya Swa-

miji 's birthday was first. So we can say the gift of independence was his birthday gift to us.

As the bhajan says- *apAra mahima guru mahima* - the glory of Pujya Swamiji is endless. But some of his glory we will remember today, to get inspiration.

In the well-known Dayananda Pancakam, in the 2nd stanza several words are used to describe Pujya Swamijs glory-

परब्रह्मनिष्ठम् , स्वतो धर्मनिष्ठम् - Pujya Swamiji was abiding in the limitless reality called Brahman. The abidance was expressed in the form of his fullness and love and compassion for all. But at the same time when it comes to transaction, he was abiding in dharma and he was spreading the message of our Vedic dharma. (Today the condition of our Hindu dharma in some places is not good. We can offer this mulamantra archana which we did to the removal or reduction of the plight of Hindu people suffering in Bangladesh and other places.) Pujya Swamiji spread dharma throughout his life and through his teaching.

अहिंसैकनिष्ठम् , स्वशिष्यैः सुजुष्टम् - *ahimsa paramo dharmah* - He was an embodiment of ahimsa. One Swamiji was telling that when he was staying in Rishikesh with Pujya Swamiji in sixties , that time his duty was to carefully take out all the insects where Swamiji was taking bath. Pujya Swamiji was very mindful that the insects should not be killed. Infact he never liked to kill mosquitoes. He used to say that he was a mosquito repellent for others because all mosquitoes come to him. All others are saved. Pujya Swamiji was loved by his students. He created a lot of students in his life who became teachers. He was always surrounded by his devoted students.

यतीनाम् वरिष्ठम् , गुरुणाङ्गरिष्ठम् - He was the greatest among all sanyasis. More important to us, he was the greatest among all teachers. As he used to say, that the teaching is to make the student see what you are seeing. That is the best teaching. Pujya Swamiji was great in this art of communication . What he was seeing, he could make others see. Another aspect of his greatness as a teacher was that he was a holistic teacher. He will help the student all the way. Whatever is bothering the student , he is ready to help. He did not have any boundaries. There are some teachers who have areas of teaching. You have a question, then you ask and it will be answered, but no more. Whereas Pujya Swamiji did not have any boundaries. He could keep the student relaxed.

Like when he took a long term course in Sandeepany he told the students, don't worry what will happen to you in future. "If you require a job I will get you a job, now focus on study". He will help the person to grow in various ways from wherever he/she is. When he teaches in front of an audience, his teaching was such that whether it is Brahma sutra or Upanishad, or a public talk, every person would get some prasada of his teaching, de-

pending on his or her level. There is always something for everybody. That is why he was the greatest teacher. We are very fortunate that we were benefitted by his teaching directly or indirectly. We pray to Pujya Swamiji who is one with Isvara, that he bless us in our pursuit of inner freedom on this occasion.

Om Tat Sat

After the address, Maha naivedyam and Mangala Arati were performed followed by chanting of Dayananda Panchakam by Swamini Saradanandaji and Swamini Vedartanandaji.

The function ended with distribution of Maha prasadam to more than 350 people who participated in the celebrations and Mula-mantra japa on the occasion of Pujya Swamiji's 95th birthday.

- Report by Mr. Venkatasubramanian and Ms. Padma

