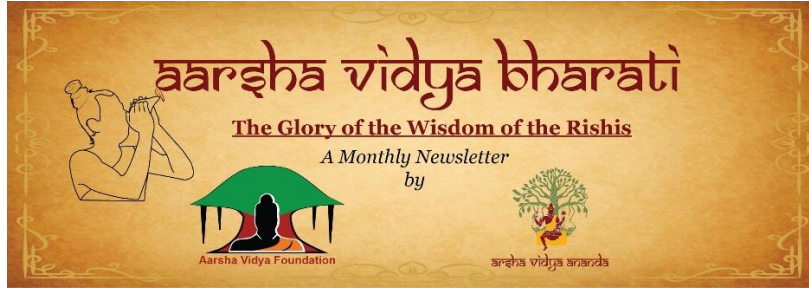


Aarsha Vidya Bharati - January 2023

Pausa - Magha 2079

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Vedic Wisdom Festival – a Report

3rd & 4th Dec 2022.

By Rashmi Kaikini, Mumbai

In the fifth year of the Vedic Wisdom Festival organized by the Aarsha Vidya Foundation, Mumbai, spiritual masters over two full days shared the richness of Vedic Wisdom with 200 participants. The online festival had topics such as *Bhagavad Gītā* – the essence of Vedic Wisdom, Yoga for Self-mastery, Ayurveda and Dinacharya (Daily Living), Temple Tradition and culture according to The power of Vishnu Sahasranama, Insights into traditional Indian music, Mahabharata and self-enquiry, Vedanta and entrepreneurship and much more. The Vedic Wisdom Festival is a small attempt in trying to preserve and perpetuate this Vedic wisdom and sustain it.



As per the tradition, the festival was [inaugurated](#) by **Swami Brahmavidananda Saraswati**, Founder and Trustee, by lighting of the lamp. Mr. Suresh Balakrishna being the event moderator made sure that the audience imbibed and got the most from all sessions.

After his [opening remarks](#), Swami Brahmavidananda Saraswati, a traditional and contemporary teacher of Vedanta spoke on '[Bhagavad Gītā – the essence of Vedic Wisdom](#)'. The first portion, *pūrvabhāga* of the Veda gives some means to enhance our worldly actions so that our *Artha* and *Kāma* pursuits become better with *Dharma*. But inspite of achieving *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma*, the human heart is still empty. This urge for fulfillment, freedom from the sense of limitation as a human being is called *mokṣa*. That is dealt in the last part, *uttarabhāga* of the Veda called the Upanishads. The *Bhagavad Gītā* deals with the

same subject matter. *Sri Ādi Śaṅkarācārya*, introducing the *Gītā*, says there are two *margas* - *pravṛtti*, which is *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *nivṛtti* is *mokṣa*. What is presented in the Upanishad as one or two verses has been elaborated on, in the *Gītā*. Over an hour, on the

auspicious occasion of *Bhagavad Gītā* Jayanti, he spoke on how the *Bhagavad Gītā* is the essence of Vedic Wisdom.

As the festival was on *Bhagavad Gītā* Jayanti, [the 15th chapter of the Gītā was chanted by SHINE children](#) beautifully guided by their teacher, Sonali Ambasankar. The Purpose of SHINE - Spiritual Heritage of India for Next-gen Empowerment is to share the spiritual heritage of India with children (upto 13 years) which establishes the spiritual foundation of their growth and success.

Dr Parthasarathy R, a practicing Ayurveda Vaidya currently heading Swami Dayananda Jayavarthanevelu Ayurvedalaya (SDJ Ayurvedalaya) as a Director & Chief Medical Officer spoke on '[Ayurveda and Dinacharya \(Daily Living\)](#)'. He began by chanting a few shlokas from the Dinacharya chapter of the celebrated book, "*Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdayā*" and said that Ayurveda is explained in such verses. Our ancestors were more connected to nature and followed everything precisely as mentioned in the *śāstra*. Then over an hour, Dr Parthasarathy elaborately explained how a day starts, what happens during the day, how night unfolds, what are the different changes happening around us during the day and night. He took the audience deep into the subject and showed the simplicity of connecting to the nature which gives more freedom to practice Ayurveda naturally.

The post lunch session of the festival was by an [unforgettable video clip by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji on 'The person and the role'](#).

Swamini Satyavrtananda Saraswati, disciple of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Paramarthananda Saraswati has studied Sanskrit, *Nyāya*, *Mimāṃsa*, *Sāṅkya* and yoga under Vedic scholars. [Speaking on Yoga for Self-mastery](#), she said that Yoga is that discipline by practicing which one becomes qualified to know *jīvātmā paramātmā aikyam*. Patanjali Maharishi gave *Aṣṭāṅga* yoga to remove the impurities of the mind. He gave Paninian *Mahābhāṣya*, a commentary of Panini sutras by learning which one gets *vāk śuddhi*, purity in one's speech. He contributed to Ayurveda also through which one can remove the impurities of the body. Quoting the Yoga Vasishtha, Lord Rama once asked sage Vasishtha, what disease is. She then elaborately explained what sage Vasishtha unfolded to Rama on health and how illness develops and Jnana yoga is the only remedy to come out of the cycle of birth and death. Quoting the *Bhagavad Gītā* she gave some practical tips for health and wellbeing.

M.R.Ravi Vaidyanaat Sivachariar, a scholar in *Veda-Āgama śāstra* and *Saiva Āgama* spoke on [Temple tradition and culture from the Āgama śāstra](#). Ours is a land of temples and it constitutes heritage because our culture rests upon the stable base of the temple and is a traditional centre fostering the growth of the civilization. Temple is a sanctified, holy and consecrated place. He started with how a formal temple has been classified by *Āgama śāstra* or any ancient text. It is to ensure an easy and simple way to realise the divine aspect and make our life an instrument of divine. He spoke about the uniqueness of a Hindu temple, its construction, and ways of worship. Our experience of visiting a temple will never be the same again.

Swamini Brahmajnananda, the co-founder of the Vedic Wisdom festival and a Vedanta teacher spoke on '[The power of Vishnu Sahasranāma](#)'. As Sri Bheeshma lay dying on the battlefield, Yudhishtira asked him 'What is the ultimate goal and knowing and worshipping whom, human beings would gain auspiciousness, be free from sorrow? Chanting what can the *jīva* get freedom from bondage of samsara, cycle of birth and death?' In response, Sri Bheeshma gave him (and us) the powerful Vishnu *Sahasranāma* (a thousand names of Vishnu). By worshipping the Lord with bhakti, meditating on him, praising him, bowing to

him, the worshipper goes beyond all sorrow. How I relate to the world depends a lot on what I understand the world to be. I find that I am in harmony with the world when I know what it is about and Vishnu *Sahasranāma* helps us to appreciate that this jagat is really *Bhagavān*. The human heart that longs for connection is at peace when we chant. We connect. We are fulfilled.

Sraboni Chaudhuri, a Sangeet Visharad and a Suramani is one of the leading exponents of thumri and ghazal. She learns Vedanta from Swami Brahmavidananda. She enthralled the audience through the music and lyrics of saints and mystics like Meerabai, Sant Kabir, Surdas and Brahmanand whose contribution to the bhakti movement has been immense. She sang and spoke about how the traditional Indian music forms have been expressions of divinity and devotion.

Expressing our devotion to *Īśvara* is an important part of understanding Vedic wisdom. Puja is one of the most beautiful ways to invoke the devotee in oneself and establish a relationship with *Īśvara*, the Lord. Puja is called *kāyikam karmaḥ*, an action involving one's limbs. It also includes speech and mental action in the form of chanting and thinking of the Lord. **Sonali Ambasankar** navigated the audience through [a simple pancopacāra puja, 5-step puja](#) to understand the what, why and the how of a puja.

Mr. Suresh Balakrishnan spoke about [setting up a gurukulam in Mumbai as per the wishes of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati](#). Aarsha Vidya Foundation is a not-for-profit foundation that shares the timeless teachings from the *Bhagavad Gītā* and Upanishads and carrying forward the Advaita Vedanta *Paramparā*. AVF wishes to set up a Gurukulam – a centre for learning Advaita Vedanta in the outskirts of Mumbai. The foundation has bought 3 acres of land, 80 kms outside Mumbai on the Kalyan-Murbad road (2 ½ hours from the GPO & airport). The purpose is to offer regular 3-year intensive, residential course for full time students who can over time become teachers to carry forward the tradition, conduct Vedanta & spiritual camps and retreats to help people to learn, conduct Spiritual heritage camps for students and children to equip them to face modern challenges of life.

Swamiji Sarvananda, disciple of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati, studied and taught many years at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Coimbatore. He conducts online classes and residential camps on *Bhagavad Gītā*, Upanishads, Sanskrit and *Yoga Sūtra*-s. He spoke about [Mahabharata and Self-Enquiry](#). The other name for Mahabharata is 'Jaya' meaning victory because one reading and learning from the Mahabharata emerges victorious. Victory can be either worldly or in a spiritual sense. Every story in the Mahabharata conveys certain message. So the idea has to be to find out the message. Swamiji helped the audience us to understand how to look into the Mahabharata with primarily this intention and also get an idea of what the Mahabharata offers us including telling some stories.

Ravi Sam is a famous Industrialist and Entrepreneur, representative in many industrial bodies. He administers a Veda Pathashala in a serene gurukulam environment with 50 students in the age group of 7 to 15 years focusing on the propagation of Vedic culture and adopts the traditional *Guru-śiṣya* teaching style. As a passionate philanthropist, he continues to inspire people across society and remains a strong source of inspiration for the next generation. An astute student of Vedanta spoke to the audience about how he [balances daily life and Vedanta](#). He said one thing that really hit him was when Swamiji said "Easy. All *nāma-rūpa*-s are *Īśvara*, Ravi". He said that the very fact that one has an intense desire to learn and put in the necessary effort will definitely make time to learn the *śāstra*, even with a busy lifestyle, when one is able to prioritize things. He spoke fondly of Pujya Swamiji and the audience could feel his love and respect to him.

The event ended with a vote of thanks.

Sharing by Participants:

- 1) *I found all the lectures very topical, relevant and interesting. All the speakers kept us engrossed with their presentation.*
- 2) *I really liked the presentation by Sonaliji. It was very well done and I felt the need of the hour to remove the ignorance and indifference on the importance and benefits of a Puja.*
- 3) *The lecture on Temple tradition was an eye opener. I would welcome this topic being continued to cover more aspects like temple construction, style etc.*

- A Neelakantan, Mumbai

(This report was [first published in the Arsha Vidya Newsletter](#))