



Tiruvannamalai Sadhana Retreat 2016

With the Blessings of The **Lord Arunachaleshwara**, the devotees successfully completed an eight day Sadhana Retreat during 3-10 September 2016 in the divine presence of Pujya Acharya Sri Prem Siddharth ji at the holy temple town, Tiruvannamalai.

The Sadhana Retreat sessions

The Sadhana Retreat began on the evening of Saturday 3rd September 2016 with more than 70 sadhakas assembling from different parts of the country. After a brief orientation session, Sri Acharya welcomed the participants after announcing brief guidelines of the following seven day retreat. Marking the holy occasion of Ganesha Chaturthi during the retreat duration, Pujya Acharya blessed the devotees with the topic of the discourse-“**Sri Ganesh Pancharatna Stotram**”. One of the highlights of this sadhana retreat was the **Guided Meditation sessions** each morning and evening taken by Sri Swamiji which was very beneficial to all the devotees. The typical day used to start with a quick morning beverage at sunrise followed by **Japa, Chantings of Ganapathi stotras, Arunachala Pancharatna Storam and meditation session** lasting for two hours.



After recharging with a delicious breakfast, the sadhakas would assemble for the Vedanta class on "Sri Ganesh Pancharatna Stotram." The Lunch session and due rest later, the evening session used to start after having Evening Tea & snacks.



Every evening session started with a two hour elaborate meditation session followed by the Vedanta class. After dinner, the day would be concluded with the chanting of Sri Hanuman

Chalisa & Bhajans followed by Namaskaram to Pujya Acharya and being blessed with a fruit prasadam. Thus, a typical day was packed with different activities and lot of energy in all aspects!

Guided Meditation

Many unique concepts of meditation were introduced to the participants that were quite rare and Pujya Acharya taught meditation in his own lucid style segregating it into five topics for better understanding and practice. They are - **Relaxation (Prashantata), Concentration (Ekagrata), Expansion (Viradupasana), Values (Imbibing values into ones'self) and Vedantic (Nidhidhyasanam) meditation.** Each day the morning session started with an introduction and practice of one of the above mentioned meditation techniques. The evening session was dedicated to the elaborate Sadhana of the same method. Thus, the participants got the opportunity to understand the concept better for practice of the same later.

The Vedanta class on "Sri Ganesh Pancharatna Stotram"

Beginning at the very meaning of the term "Stotra" followed by the description given to the title of the stotra was highly informative. Introducing the term – **Stotra**, Pujya Swamiji elaborated that any stotra contains two parts – **Prayer and Praise**; it is a form of devotion and an expression of devotion.





Pujya Swamiji explained that a stotra will always contain the six characteristics - **Salutation [Namaskara]**, **Blessing [Asis]**, **the Upanishadic teachings [Siddhantokti]**, **Praising exploits [Parakrama]**, **Glory [Vibhuti]**, **Prayer for Prosperity [Prarthana]**.

Further elaborating on devotion, Sri Swamiji also spoke upon the **trividha bhakti** and **navavidha bhakti** elaborately. In each class, Pujya Acharya taught about each and every visheshana of Lord Ganesh along with the tatvardha of the Pancharatna stotra. The explanation of the Lord holding modaka in his hand based on the Vedantic teaching is highly enlightening. In similar terms, Pujya Acharya unfolded the

hidden upadesha that is present as Lord Ganesh in symbolic form as Tat Tvam Asi Mahavakya. One must listen to all these classes with utmost shraddha and be blessed with the true understanding of "Sri Ganesh Pancharatna Stotram".

Holy Events during the Retreat



The **holy festival of Ganesh Chaturthi** was celebrated on the **5th September 2016**. Under the blessings and guidance of Pujya Swamiji, **Sri Ganapathi homam** and **Sri Rudra Abhisekham** was performed in the wee hours of the day by Vedic Scholar Sri Senthil and group in a most beautiful way as prescribed by the shastras. This was followed by Ganapathi puja during the morning session. This is another rare occasion to all devotees to be part of the homam taking the blessings of the Lord Ganesh.



Another important festival during the retreat was “**Sri Radha Ashtami**” on Friday 9th



September. Fresh memories of “Sri Krishna Janmastami” celebrations that were held few days ago at Hyderabad under the holy presence of Pujya Acharya, were recollected along with the teachings of Pujya Acharya on that occasion. On this auspicious occasion of “Sri Radhastami”, Pujya Swamiji also blessed the participants with a brief discourse touching upon the tatwa of Sri Radha Devi. This was followed by visit to

Sri Ramana Ashramam. The Ashram lovingly received the devotees and invited for the Prasadam at noon.

Being present at the sacred Arunachala kshetra, devotees went for **Giri Pradakshina** as instructed by Pujya Swamiji. The 14+ KM long Giri pradakshina was performed effortlessly by the devotees in 7 hours with the instant energy constantly supplied by Sri “Sankeerthana” Srinivasji throughout the pradakshina with his devotion filled bhajans and keerthans. Pujya Acharya Himself served prasadam to the devotees when halfway break was taken and joined everyone on foot for the rest of the pradakshina renewing the energy and enthusiasm of everyone with His divine presence.



One of the mornings, a visit to **Sri Skanda Ashram** and **Virupaksh Guha** (where Sri Ramana Maharshi spent more than 15 years doing tapasya) upon the holy Arunagiri was under taken amidst chanting of suktams and singing bhajans all the way up and back with enthusiasm. The view of the Holy Arunachala temple and its surroundings is beautiful from the hill.

The organizers under the guidance of Pujya Acharya gave all devotees (dressed in their traditional best) an opportunity to visit the **ancient holy temple of Sri Arunachaleshwara** where the Lord in form of **Agni Linga** dwells along with his consort, the Holy Mother **Sri Apeetakuchaambika Devi**. This rare occasion that is a confluence of the holy presence of our dearest Lord Sri Arunachaleshwara and Acharya is truly a treat to all.



On the evening of 10th September marking the conclusion of the retreat, the devotees offered **Purnahuti** to the Sadhana Retreat followed by Sri Guru vandanam. This gave everyone a great opportunity to offer prayers and thankfulness to Pujya Swamiji and Pujya Mataji on the occasion while taking their blessings.

The Lord blessed all the devotees by turning the weather so pleasant and cool all throughout the retreat which is very unusual in this part of the country and showered His blessings in the form of rain on Purnahuti day! Apart from such valuable teachings and memoirs from the Sadhana Retreat, the delicious food is of notable mention. The food served was full of variety, delicious and healthy! The well planned and effectively organized Tiruvannamalai Sadhana Retreat 2016 was concluded with all the sadhakas turning their hearts to mirrors carrying The Lord Arunachaleshwara in their heart and returning to their destinations from the morning of Sunday 11th September 2016.

Harih Om!