

## USA Jñāna Yajña

May 18 – June 16, 2010

– Brni. Namratā Swaroopā

Poojya Swamiji accompanied by Nutan Swamiji and Mā Gurupriyāji arrived in Washington DC on 19 May 2010. Brni. Namratā Swaroopā and Sow. Swati Dagur (of Delhi) were the 2 sevikas traveling with them. They were joined in Virginia by Smt. Lakshmy Prabhakaran of Trichur and Smt. Lakshmy Krishnamoorthy of Mumbai, who had specially scheduled visits to their USA based children in order to be present and serve Poojya Swamiji during the Jñāna Yajña.

The US Jñāna Yajña was organized by Poojya Swamiji's Centre for Inner Resources Development-North America, consisting of a small group of disciples: Anand Krishnan (presently in Dubai), Pankaj & Anuradha Bhatia, Nisha, Bharat and Siddharth Govindani, Balakrishnan (Balu), Rajesh & Soumya Krishnamoorthy. The Jñāna Yajña was conducted in the states of Virginia and Texas.

In Virginia, Poojya Swamiji was hosted in the residence of his disciple Smt. Nisha Govindani who, along with CIRD-NA members, transformed the house into a temporary Ashram, hosting all with warmth and heartiness.

The inaugural Pāda Poojā on 22nd May (Saturday) was performed by Smt. Nisha Govindani and Smt. Lakshmy Prabhakaran. This was followed by programmes of Satsangs and a unique two and half day residential Retreat in the heart of the Virginia Piedmont countryside.

After the Retreat, Poojya Swamiji accompanied by Mā Gurupriyāji, Brni. Namratā Swaroopā, Smt. Lakshmy Prabhakaran and Swati Dagur, traveled to Dallas to conduct a series of discourses and satsangs there, from 3rd to 7th June. The programmes in Dallas were organized by the group associated with Sri Rajamanickam, Poojya Swamiji's disciple, originally from Jamshedpur. These devotees, who were living in Dallas for many years, worked with great dedication and fondness to organize Poojya Swamiji's programmes. *(Detailed reports of the Residential Retreat in Virginia and Dallas programme appear later in this article.)*

During the period when Dallas programme was on, Nutan Swamiji accompanied by Sri Bharat Govindani traveled to Los Angeles (California) where he visited some of the historic Ramakrishna Mission centers set up in the early twentieth century. He was hosted at the residence of Sri Proyag & Smt. Sreya Datta.

After Poojya Swamiji's return to Vienna (Virginia), he conducted evening classes on Vivekachoodamani and morning Satsangs in CIRD-NA from 8th to 13th June. On 11th June, the Kerala Hindus of North America organized a talk by Poojya Swamiji on "*Devotion - its progress and fulfillment*" at the Vienna Community Center. More than 85 seekers from far and near attended this talk.



### **Some unique features of the US visit**

The US being a vast country, Poojya Swamiji's devotees traveled long distances by road or flight, to have darshan of their beloved Gurudev. Many devotees, who had come to know of Poojya Swamiji through his inspiring Malayalam television series on Śreemad Bhāgavatam, 'Muktisudhakaram' (shown daily on Asianet channel), were very happy to learn of his visit to the US. They came from all around United States to attend the Residential Retreat, classes and Satsangs in Virginia, as well as the discourse and Satsang programmes in Dallas.

They had heard Poojya Swamiji speak on television only in Malayalam. Now, hearing him speak in English they became all the more inspired. Many of them expressed that the unique, crystal clear manner in which Poojya Swamiji gave his Universal message in English would be of great relevance for enlightening their children about India's great spiritual and cultural heritage.

Most of the programme participants were seekers of Indian origin. Americans who attended the Retreat and discourses were struck by the clarity and universality of Poojya Swamiji's message.

Both in Dallas and Virginia, all felt that Poojya Swamiji must come to the US at least once a year. Enthusiastic offers of help to organize Poojya Swamiji's programmes in a more broad-based manner and in more number of states, emerged from many who heard Him.

Jai Guru!

## **Retreat in Airlie Center**

*May 28-31, 2010*

- Anuradha Bhatia

With the intent of spreading Poojya Swamiji's message to more and more people around the globe, we at CIRD (NA) had been working relentlessly toward organizing a retreat at the Airlie Center during the Memorial-day weekend (May 28 to 31). An opportunity to listen to a Saint, ask questions, and seek clarifications is a rare and blessed one, indeed, and we felt that providing such an opportunity to people in the US would be greatly beneficial. To this end, the CIRD team began organizing the event about a year ago. It was no small a task and required lot of dedication, perseverance, and hard work to make the event successful.

### **Airlie Center - A place of solitude and natural setting**

The Retreat was organized at the North campus of Airlie Center - a unique location in the country side of Virginia. The North campus is located in the backdrop of scenic lakes, mountains, and lush green trees inhabited by myriads of species of birds whose chirruping can be heard all day. Wild life like tortoise, snake, water birds, rabbits, and deer were spotted by us as we took evening walks or rode on bicycles around the beautiful meadows.

About 50 participants had signed up for the retreat. Several people continued to call even after the booking was closed. Sadly, their request had to be turned down due to space constraints at the retreat center.

### **Inspiring examples of Guru-seva**

Poojya Swamiji's disciples - Smt Lakshmy Prabhakaran from Trichur and Smt. Lakshmi Krishnamoorthy from Mumbai - had decided to visit their sons in the US during this period, so that they could serve Swamiji, specifically, prepare food for him, Mā and Nutan Swamiji. Their dedication and devotion was observed and admired by all as they saw them march everyday toward the kitchen to prepare breakfast and meals for Poojya Swamiji within the short time slots provided by Airlie kitchen department. Brni. Namratā Swaroopā was constantly with them to facilitate their work in that alien circumstance. They were the

only ones who never got an opportunity to attend any of the sessions. Dedicatedly serving their Guru, they seemed content and happy.

In a similar vein, Swati Dagur from Delhi had chosen to accompany Swamiji to avail of the opportunity to serve her Guru. It was inspiring to see her work quietly, unswervingly, and with great fondness.

It is so fortunate to be born in a country like ours where the culture of taking to an ascetic life is extolled, and where people revere sannyasins in a way that is inspiring and exemplary. Devotees leave their families and come to serve their Guru, deriving joy and fulfillment through their very service and association with him - who has dedicated his life to quench the thirst of seekers, to guide the despondent, and to make the world a happier place by imparting pure knowledge.

Devotees feel blessed to serve sannyasins, who, by renouncing, actually extend their boundary of love and compassion from their immediate family to the whole mankind, and in the process, they actually embrace the entire universe. To regard and extol such great Souls who leave their family to embrace the larger family, the world, is naturally looked at with great fondness and considered a blessing by many in our country. To preserve such a great culture of our land, adults, through their service, set an example for the generations to imbibe and follow.

### **The Retreat Begins**

Our car pulled up at the Lakeside cottage we had chosen for Poojya Swamiji, Mā, and Nutan Swamiji to stay. Our selection of the cottage was based on its serene and beautiful surroundings.

Additionally, it was in a secluded place about 3 miles away from our residential block, where our Poojya Gurudeva could stay comfortably,



we thought. However, Poojya Swamiji expressed his wish to stay 'close' to the participants,

in the same block, where the rooms were simpler compared to the cottage and not as secluded. In doing so, Swamiji's all embracing quality and seamless fondness for people surfaced, his fondness for being closer to people, taking a front seat in place of external comforts.

The first evening was used to get to know the participants, their background, and the purpose of their coming. The days that followed were infused with spiritual wisdom that flowed through the words spoken by Poojya Swamiji, Nutan Swamiji, and Mā. Another highlight was Mā's devotional chantings. During her soul touching lecture she chanted ślokas infused with her love and pure devotion.

### Retreat program



The main theme of the two and half day Retreat was "*Achieving inner poise and fulfillment*". Apart from the introductory and concluding sessions, Q & A sessions and Satsangs, the main lecture sessions were: "*Understanding the Mind*", "*Fulfillment - what & how*" and "*Achieving poise*" (by Poojya Swamiji); "*Dealing with the shackles*

*of the Mind*" and "*Beyond conventional notions of work*" (by Nutan Swamiji); and "*Sādhanā in daily life - 1 & 2*" (by Mā).

All in all, the lectures were focused on the application of spiritual knowledge in daily living. Participants fondly listened to and reflected upon the approaches presented. This was evident in the informal discussions that took place in the evening when people gathered for a short while before retiring to bed. Also, the interactive sessions generated questions that were at times based on some points made in the lectures. Nutan Swamiji used power-point presentations to bring home key points illustrating the infinite depth of our personality that has the inexhaustible capacity to sustain and assimilate all kinds of

small and big waves of happiness and suffering that arise in our daily living. The graph used by him was greatly appreciated.

We learn better when things are explained in a simple way. I think we have an affinity for simplicity. Not multiplicity but unity in the whole is what we need to look and aspire for. But then, why do we allow so many unnecessary thoughts to cloud our mind and corrode our thinking? Why do we weave 'cobwebs in our minds,' as Swamiji puts it? Swamiji urged us to 'sweep' and 'dust' the 'cobwebs,' providing insights into the nature of the mind and the thinking process.

The lectures generated fondness in participants, developing a bond, which made them inquisitive about Narayanashrama Tapovanam, the activities held there, and also about other ashramites. I think when we develop fondness for something or someone, we seek to learn more.

### **Participants' Responses**

Taken together, the retreat was planned and organized in a way that evoked responses of appreciation from the participants. One of the participants expressed his amazement at the punctuality and precision with which the activities were executed. A participant expressed, *"I came away very impressed with the organization of the entire event - hats off to all organizers. I think you guys put an awful amount of effort into making sure that things worked with clockwork precision ... I learnt a lot from you on what 'organization' means!"*

As I reminisce about the event, I feel a sense of gratitude that we got this opportunity to organize an event like this with the goal being to spread Poojya Swamiji's message of inner harmony and poise. Interestingly, though we admire orderliness and also seek to achieve it, the inner orderliness is what will more profoundly affect our life and surroundings. I hope we carry, assimilate, and live the message Poojya Swamiji, Mā, and Nutan Swamiji conveyed through their talks.

Jai Guru!

**Jñāna Yajña in Dallas**  
*June 03-07, 2010*

– Swati Dagur

The State of Texas can be best described as vast and expansive, a place befitting Poojya Swamiji's visit. The journey commenced with our plane being stranded on the runway for almost one and half-hour due to an impending storm. Even though our flight landed late at Dallas, the enthusiasm of the nearly 15 devotees who were waiting to welcome Poojya Swamiji and Mā had not dwindled. They offered their praṇāms and even had pictures taken along with Poojya Swamiji.

Poojya Swamiji and Mā were hosted at the residence of Balu and Bindu, the young couple with a 4 year old daughter. They are the son and daughter-in-law of Poojya Swamiji's disciples, Sri Prabhakaran and Smt. Lakshmy of Kolazhy, Trichur. Anticipating Poojya Swamiji's visit, they had shifted to a house large enough to host Poojya Swamiji, Mā and the accompanying 'Ashram' entourage.

The location was quaint and newly constructed. The colony, called 'The Vistas at Waterstone', is in the town of Frisco. The roads were broad, made of concrete. The sidewalks were white and felt cottony. Poojya Swamiji along with Prabhakaranji went for many walks on these sidewalks. The area around us had vast expanse of land with a few lakes. The sky was clear and blue, the sun hot and piercing.

The makeshift ashram (i.e. Balu's house) had a cathedral like high ceiling and big windows making it appear spacious, and welcoming. Poojya Swamiji's and Mā's rooms were on a level above the ground. Their dining area was on the same floor but the kitchen was downstairs. At every meal time, Namratā and Lakshmyji could be seen moving and passing food vessels up and down.

The Dallas programs commenced on June 4th – Satsang was held at the residence attended by nearly 35-40 devotees, the youngest member present was 30 days old. During the Satsang, Poojya Swamiji answered questions posed by the attendees. The topics ranged from practical to philosophical: how to increase self-confidence, understanding life after death, the concept of Karma, etc.

The expression on the face of those present depicted how comforted and blessed they felt in Poojya Swamiji's presence. Mā talked about the Ashram activities, kindling Ashram routines alive in our minds. After the soulful meeting with Swamiji and Mā, the devotees partook of Bhakti bhojan. In the evening, Poojya Swamiji spoke on the "*Significance of Om - A practical means to imbue strength, joy and vigor*" at the Bahai Faith of Plano, Texas. Everyone who attended received the 'Om' Booklet and the Jñāna Prasāda - Moksha-sādhanā.

A unique feature of the Dallas programmes was that all four discourses were telecast live over the internet. This was a historic effort which allowed many devotees around the world to 'attend' Poojya Swamiji's discourses as they took place in far away United States.



June 5th promised to be a busy day. It started with Poojya Swamiji and Mā visiting Rajamanickamji's residence where 'Pāda Pūjā' ceremony was held. The archanā was done by Jayanth and Sita Manickam. After the Pāda Pūjā, Poojya Swamiji spoke on the significance of Śreemad Bhāgavatam in Daily Life. The hall was full with devotees who sat there immersed in the sublime atmosphere created by the soulful chanting of Guru-mantras by Mā.



Bhojan was served to all those who attended. In the evening at the Karya Siddhi Hanuman Temple, Frisco, Texas, Poojya Swamiji spoke on "*Meditation - A definite way to gain inner expanse and enlightenment*" to an audience of nearly 150 who sat in rapt attention.

June 6th began with Poojya Swamiji and Mā traveling to the Dallas Fort Worth Ekta Temple (at Irving, Texas) – nearly 45 minutes away from the residence, to address a group of youngsters. The age group ranged from 8-16 years. It was a delightful sight to see the alert youngsters listening to Swamiji, who narrated stories to make them understand the importance of values in daily life and the potential of their own mind. The youths present were blessed to have such a unique exposure to this traditional knowledge of India, sitting far away in Texas. The session was followed by some sharp questions from the very bright and astute young audience.



6th evening was the culmination of the Dallas visit. Poojya Swamiji delivered an inspiring talk on *“Inner Resources Development – Imbuing ceaseless Inspiration and Motivation”* at the Karya Siddhi Hanuman Temple. The hall was packed. After the lecture Poojya Swamiji stayed on at the temple to

witness the Hanuman ārati. The atmosphere was divine and devotional, the most appropriate end to the Dallas visit.

On June 7th Poojya Swamiji and Mā returned to Virginia carrying with them the love and devotion of all the old and new devotees from Dallas. Poojya Swamiji’s lotus feet have blessed the sidewalks of Frisco, Texas. It remains to be seen if they will be blessed again next year.

Jai Guru!