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# January 2015 Newsletter

Brahman is that basic principle of reality responsible for the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe.

- Jagadguru Sri Chandrashekhara Bharati Mahaswamigal

## New Year's Day January 01, 2015

With Devi Sharadamba adorned as shown below, the year 2015 was welcomed with grandeur at SVBF. Approximately 600 devotees participated in this event.



## January 3, 2015 Sampoorna Gita Parayanam

The regular monthly full Srimad Bhagavadgita chanting took place on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015. On the first Saturday of every month, Srimad Bhagavadgita recitation occurs. All devotees are welcome to attend and participate in this event.

Letter sent out by SVBF board of trustees to devotees

*Dear Fellow Devotees:*

*Greetings and Happy New Year / Sankranti to you and family.*

*As you are aware, this is the 25<sup>th</sup> year of ascension to the spiritual throne of Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri, by His Holiness Jagadguru Sankaracharya Sri Sri Bharati Teertha Mahaswamiji, Coinciding with the Silver Jubilee celebrations in Sringeri on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of January, His Holiness made the announcement of His successor-designate to adorn the Peetham.*

*As a mark of devotion to His Holiness and to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Board of Trustees of SVBF plans to submit a contribution of Rs. 25 lakhs (~ \$40,000) or more, at the lotus feet of His Holiness. The submission will be made during the Vardhanti celebrations during March, 2015 in Sringeri.*

*We know that every one of our devotees would like to participate in this effort. Please send your tax-deductible contribution in favor of SVBF to the temple at Stroudsburg or to the registered address.*

*May the Grace of Sharadamba and the blessings of His Holiness be with you and family always.*

*Board of Trustees,*

*SVBF Inc., USA.*

Daylight and darkness dusk and dawn, winter and springtime come and go. Time plays and life ebbs away. But the current of desire never leaves.

- Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada

**Shloka to be chanted  
while feeding a cow  
with grass**

**saubhēyaḥ sarvāhitāḥ  
sarvāpāpaprāṇāśinaḥ |  
pratigr̥hṇantu me gr̥saṃ  
gāvaḥ trailokya mātarāḥ ||**

सौरभेयः सर्वहितः  
सर्वपापप्रणाशनिः ।  
प्रतग्रिहणन्तु मे ग्रासं  
गावः त्रैलोक्य मातरः ॥



Please go and see the cow (Lakshmi) and the calf (Sharada) at the SVBF temple Goshala. Enquire at temple front desk for the Goshala timings.

## Makara Sankaramanam, Uttarayana Punyakalam January 14, 2015

**Jan 13 2015 - Bhogi, Jan 14 2015 - Pongal, Jan 15 2015 - Mattu Pongal**

An auspicious Hindu festival, Makara Sankranti is celebrated throughout India in myriad cultural forms, marked with gaiety, devotion, and prayer. Signifying the onset of the sun's northern journey, it also marks the start of auspicious Uttarayana. The sun moves from Makara Rasi (Capricorn) to Karkataka Rasi (Cancer) on this day.

As per the Vedas, *Uttarayana* is a holy period when our departed elders return to earth to bless their kith and kin, and return to *Punya Loka* at the beginning of *Dakshinayana* (July 16th). This is an auspicious period to undertake meritorious deeds like *Annadanam*, *Vastradanam* as well as *samskaras* such as *Upanayana* etc. It is also the start of the Hindu wedding season.

Lakhs of people take a dip in places like Ganga Sagar (West Bengal) and throughout the Indo-Gangetic plain. In Prayag (Allahabad), the famous Magha Mela commences on this day by the banks of the Triveni Sangam. In Punjab, this festival is celebrated as Lohri, a bonfire festival marked with singing folk songs and feasting. In Maharashtra, a mixture of sesame seeds with jaggery is exchanged with the intention of speaking pleasing words and maintaining lasting friendship. In Gujarat, colorful kites adorn the sky; and in Karnataka, people exchange pieces of sugarcane as well as a mixture of roasted sesame, jaggery pieces, dry coconut pieces, peanuts, and fried gram.

The significance being that sweetness should prevail in all exchanges. A similar exchange is made in Andhra Pradesh; however, the harvest festivity is extended over four days, namely Bhogi, Sankranti, Kanuma, and Mukkanuma.

In Tamilnadu, this time is very special as they celebrate the *Pongal* festival. The first day is celebrated as *Bhogi* in honor of Lord Indra, the celestial king and ruler of the clouds that enable us to enjoy a rich harvest with plenty of rain.

On *Pongal* day, devotees perform the puja at home. They boil rice and milk in a pot to the point of overflow, and then symbolically offer this preparation to the sun-god along with other oblations. All people wear traditional dress and nice clothes.

The following day is known as Mattu Pongal, a special day for the cows. They are decorated with beads and tinkling bells, as well as worshipped and fed Pongal. Finally, Kanu is celebrated. The ladies wash a banana leaf and place it on the ground. The leftover sweet Pongal and other rice items are served on the leaf with betel leaves and nuts for cows.

The women perform this ritual before their bath, and ask for blessings for their families as well as longevity for their brothers. Arati is performed for the brothers, and the water is sprinkled on the *Rangoli* adorning the house entrance.



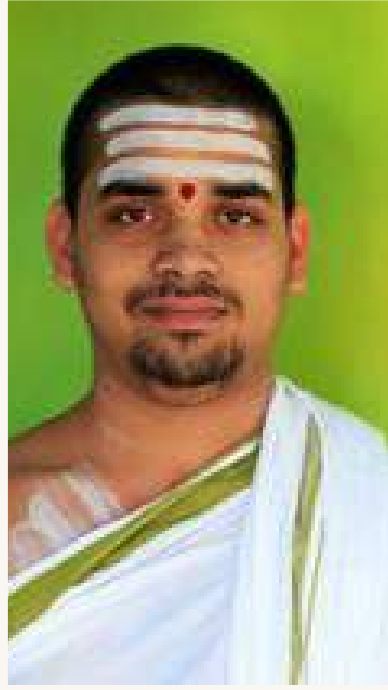


SVBF  
Stroudsburg  
Jan 10,  
2015

Commemorating the silver  
jubilee celebrations of the  
*Peetharohana* of  
Jagadguru  
Shankaracharya Sri Sri  
Bharati Theertha  
Mahaswamiji

The commemorating occasion of the silver jubilee celebrations of Peetharohana of Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Bharati Theertha Mahaswamiji was conducted at SVBF, Stroudsburg, PA on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The program started with *Athavaseersha prokta Mahaganapati Homam* (with 108 modakas) followed by paduka puja and abhishekam to His Holiness's padukas, and concluded with a ceremonial procession.

Shanthi mantras were chanted and the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Bhagavadgita was recited by children and youth. SVBF Chairman Dharmatma Sri. S.Yegnasubramanian shared his experience of his Sringeri visit to participate in the silver jubilee celebrations that took place in Sringeri on January 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> of 2015. He specifically elaborated on how His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sri Bharati Theertha Mahaswamiji made the Shishya Sweekara announcement on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015. As always, the program concluded with *mahamangala arti and mahaprasadam*.



**Excerpts from Press Release:  
Announcement of Shishya Sweekara**

January 6, 2015

Jagadguru Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha the Mahaswamiji, the 36<sup>th</sup> Jagadguru Shankaracharya of the unbroken lineage of Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham Sringeri, has announced His divinely ordained decision to nominate Brahmachari Sri Kuppa Venkateshwara Prasada Sharma as His successor-designate.

In a public function organised in Sringeri on January 4, 2015, the Jagadguru expressed that with the divine will of Goddess Sharada, He would initiate Brahmachari Venkateshwara Prasad Sharma into Sannyasa on Jan 23, 2015, to continue the Guru Parampara of the 1200 year old unbroken lineage that stretches directly back to Sri Adi Shankaracharya.

Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji, the presiding Acharya of the Peetham and the thirty-sixth in the Guru Parampara, is a scholar nonpareil. Since becoming the Peethadhipati in 1989, the Jagadguru has propagated and spread the tenets of Sanatana Dharma and the

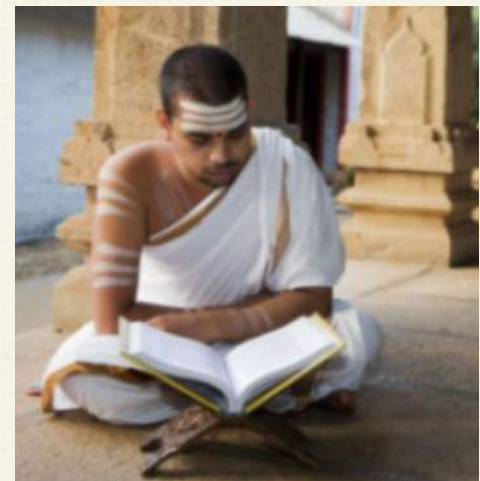
# Jagadguru announces Shishya Sweekara

Brahmachari  
Sri Kuppa Venkateshwara  
Prasada Sharma

Vedanta philosophy. The Jagadguru has consecrated many new temples and renovated dilapidated ones. The Jagadguru has fostered Vedic learning by establishing traditional Pathashalas. With Amidst His various duties as a Peethadhipati, the Jagadguru has upheld His Sannyasa Dharma like His illustrious predecessors.

On January 4, 2015, devotees assembled in large numbers in Sringeri to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Jagadguru's Peetharohanam. During this historic event, the Jagadguru announced His decision, as divinely ordained by Goddess Sharadamba, to accept Brahmachari Sri Kuppa Venkateshwara Prasada Sharma as His successor-designate.

The Shishya Sweekara ceremony will take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2015 at Sringeri. The Jagadguru will initiate the Brahmachari into Sannyasa on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2015.





# Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sringeri Anoints His Successor

## Preserving the Oldest Unbroken Heritage of Sanatana Dharma

**Excerpts from Sringeri Press Release: Jan 23, 2015**

Just as in this body, the embodied one passes through boyhood, youth old age, so does one pass into another body. With reference to this (birth, aging and death), the wise man is not disturbed. - *Bhagavan Sri Krishna*

Today, on January 23, 2015, continuing this unbroken Guru-Shisya lineage that stretches directly back to Sri Adi Shankaracharya, the 36th Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham, Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji anointed His successor. In a traditional ceremony, the Jagadguru initiated Brahmachari Sri Kuppa Venkateshwara Prasada Sharma into Sannyasa and bestowed upon him the Yoga Patta (monastic name) of Sri Sri Vidhushek-hara Bharati.

### Pre-monastic life of the Successor -Designate Sri Sri Vidhushek-hara Bharati

Sri Sri Vidhushek-hara Bharati Swamiji was born as Sri Kuppa Venkateshwara Prasada Sharma on the auspicious Naga Panchami day - July 24, 1993 in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. Born as the second son of Sri Kuppa Shivasubrahmanya Avadhani and Smt.Seetha Nagalakshmi, He belonged to the Kaundinya Gotra and is a native of Anantavaram, Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh. His family has a long lineage of illustrious Vedic Pandits who were all ardent disciples of the Sringeri Jagadgurus.

### Childhood

From a young age, Sri Prasada Sharma developed a deep devotion towards Lord Krishna and visited the Krishna temple near his home, every day. Seeing his son's devotion, Sri Shivasubrahmanya Avadhani performed his Upanayana (sacred thread ceremony) at the age of five. His first lessons in Krishna Yajurveda were taught by his grandfather, Sri Kuppa Ramagopala Vajapeya-Yaaji. Showing rapid progress, Sri Prasada Sharma continued his studies up to Krishna Yajur Veda Krama under his father. He grew up in an environment steeped in devotion to God and adherence to a vedic way of

living. Hamsaladeevi is a holy place in Andhra Pradesh where the Krishna river meets the ocean. There, on the banks of the river, is a beautiful temple dedicated to Venugopala Swamy. For the last 95 years, without a break, his family has conducted an annual Bhagavata Saptaha at this temple. Sri Prasada Sharma attended this sacred event from an early age. He also accompanied his father on pilgrimages to holy places such as Ayodhya, Haridwar, Hrishikesh, Kashi, Kalady, Madurai, Mathura, Pashupathinath (in Nepal), Rameswaram and Ujjain.

### Education in Sringeri

Starting in 2006, when he was 13 years old, Sri Prasada Sharma began to accompany his father and grandfather who were participating in the Dharmic events at Sringeri Sharada Peetham. During his first visit, the Darshan of the present Jagadguru, Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji had a profound impact on him. He visited Sringeri again in 2008, and during his subsequent visit in early 2009, he expressed to the Jagadguru his desire to study Shastras under Him. Touched by the young boy's sincerity and impressed with his intelligence, the Jagadguru blessed him and Sri Prasada Sharma took refuge under the Lotus Feet of the Jagadguru in June 2009. Under the guidance of the Jagadguru, he rapidly gained mastery in written and spoken Sanskrit. Sringeri Vidwan Sri Tangirala Shivakumara Sharma taught him Sanskrit poetry and literature. He also learned the basics of Vyakarana Shastra under Sringeri Vidwan Sri Krishnaraja Bhat.

Observing his Guru Bhakti, humility, intelligence and dedicated application to his studies, the Jagadguru was pleased and decided to personally teach him the Shastras. The Jagadguru began to teach him the Tarka Shastra in 2011. Sri Prasada Sharma grasped the teachings quickly and the lessons moved at an intense pace. Even during the hectic Vijaya Yatra of 2012-13, the Jagadguru continued to teach him without missing even a single day. The Jagadguru soon transformed him into a great Tarka scholar. When he spoke at Sringeri Sharada Peetham's prestigious Ganapati Vakhyartha Vidwat Sadas, an annual conference

of the nation's foremost Shastric Pandits, the attendees were taken by surprise at the young man's scholarship. Under the guidance of the Jagadguru, Sri Prasada Sharma also studied Mimamsa Shastra. He regularly attended the nightly Chandramouliswara Puja performed by the Jagadguru. During this Puja, he also chanted the entire Krishna Yajur Veda Moola and the entire Yajur Veda Krama. Sri Prasada Sharma always had a pleasing and helpful demeanor. Stories about his intelligence and learning capabilities spread quickly. Soon, other students started seeking his help. While pursuing his own learning, he also began teaching the Vedas, Sanskrit literature and Tarka Shastra to other students. He subsequently began his studies in Vedanta under the Jagadguru.

Through these five and half years of intense study (2009-15) under the direct tutelage of the Jagadguru, Sri Prasada Sharma became steeped in the Vedic tradition and blossomed in many ways as a student, scholar, teacher and devotee. The Jagadguru was pleased by his Guru Bhakti, devotion to God, deep immersion in his studies, scholarship and respect towards elders. He was beloved by all and had developed a strong inner core of dispassion and discrimination for pursuing a spiritual path.

### Conclusion

The Sringeri Guru Parampara lineage has been central to the preservation and growth of Sanatana Dharma. The induction of Sri Sri Vidhushek-hara Bharati Swamiji is therefore an event of historic importance to followers of Sanatana Dharma throughout the world.



To err is human. Accepting one's error and correcting oneself is a mark of nobility. Humility is the primary path to achieving nobility.

- Jagadguru Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamigal



## Vasanta Panchami January 24, 2015

*Vasanta Pancami* is a Hindu festival commemorating the spring season. *Vasanta* means spring and *Pancami* refers to the fifth day of the lunar month, Magha. Vasanta Pancami is also referred to as Lalita Pancami. The festival is celebrated enthusiastically as it marks the birthday of Goddess Sarasvati. As the embodiment of purity and giver of spiritual knowledge, Sarasvati is worshipped with devotional fervor. Spring time heralds renewal and rejuvenation, and therefore, by extension, creation! Incidentally, the celebration day this year was more akin to a spring rather than a winter day. Several devotees sponsored *Aksharabhyasa* so as to initiate their children into developing their writing skills with *Devi's* grace.

## Ratha Saptami January 24, 2015

This festival falls on the seventh day of the bright half of the month of Magha. It is celebrated as *Surya Jayanti* or Surya's birthday. This is also regarded as the day when the sun's chariot turns northward. This chariot is said to be drawn by seven white horses. The seven horses and the seventh day of the month are perhaps a reference to the seven colors of the rainbow and the seven suns – *Aroga, Bhraja, Pathara, Patanga, Svarnara, Jyotisiman and Vibhasa*. In Hindu numerology, seven is a significant number as there are seven Rishis, seven oceans, seven islands, seven books of the Ramayana etc. *RathaSaptami* is dedicated to Surya Bhagavan, and the Lord is worshipped for good health and wellbeing. This day is marked by the recitation of *Aruna Prashnam* with *Namaskarams* at the end of each anuvakam (section.) The temple conducted a special puja with the chanting of *Aruna Prashnam, Navagraha and Naksatra Suktams*.



Rathasapthami event at SVBF temple

## February 2015

### Calendar of Events

#### Feb 03, 2015

- Maha Maghi
- Thai Poosam

#### Feb 17, 2015

Maha Sivaratri  
(see SVBF web page for detailed program)