



Jayaguru

America Saraswata Sangha, Efland, NC, USA

Minutes of the 759th Sangha Puja, March 21, 2021

Palia (Hosts): Jemu Maa and Bijoy Bhai

Saturday, March 20th (6:45 PM - 8 PM EST)

Adhibasa Puja was held at Nigama Smruti Mandira (NSM) on Saturday March 20th, the evening prior to Sangha Puja. The Puja was held jointly with NC Pathachakra. Gyan Bhai invited Thakura and all members of the Sangha for the regular weekly sangha puja the day next.

Sunday, March 21st (7:15 AM - 11:45 AM EST)

Prathikshya (song of anticipation) prayers were sung by Udita Maa followed by Gyana Bhai entreating Thakura to join our Sangha Puja. Meanwhile members joined the sangha puja which started at 7:30 with Sanujit Bhai offering Arati to Thakura followed by Bandana and Strota bandana sung by Gyana Bhai. All others joined in reciting the prayers to Thakura. Gyana Bhai also led our special reading of Parichaya Patra (affirmation of our unique identity as members) and special prayer to Thakura requesting his presence and support for two of our annual sammelani pujas, seeking his blessings to allow us to offer daily puja at NSM and also to save us from the devastating consequences of the raging pandemic caused by COVID virus. Prabhakara Bhai read select passages from Sangha Sebaka, 24th year, Volume 3, Bandana, Prayer and advice to prayerful disciples. The selected section from Sangha Sebaka focused on ways to establish a connection with Thakura, to fill our life with ecstasy and realization of the divine. We also learned about the divine acts of Sri Radha and Sri Krishna and how the power of chanting Jayaguru mantra allows us to keep our Guru in the forefront always and live life directed by Him.

Thakur Bhai read Sloka 32 from Guru Gita. Bijoy Bhai next invited our Thakura for Balya Bhoga (early morning offerings to the divine) and members present at NSM to partake Balya Prasada (blessed food). He also invited Thakura and others to join the upcoming session at 10:00 am.

10:00 am: After the abahana prayers (songs of invocation and invitation) by Debashis Bhai and Amrita Maa our Thakura Maharaj assumed his holy seat at NSM and all others joined for the next session. Smita Bai Maa sang the Bandana in praise of the divine followed by a reading from Nigama Upadesha (Teachings of Thakura Nigamanada), pages 56 and 57, dealing with

monism. Sonalisa Maa presented the minutes of the prior sangha puja and Biswa bhai followed with reading pages 230-234 from Premika Guru with focus on Bairagya. We learned that Bairagya is essential for our salvation. This happens when we turn our minds inwards, practice distancing ourselves from worldly attachments, which includes desire. This path leading to detachment is made attainable through the study of our scriptures, through righteous association with likeminded individuals who are also committed to the discovery and sustenance of truth. We learned that purification of mind will lead to devotion, that only through Bairagya (or conscious detachment) we can free ourselves from the bondage of the body, and be on the path towards salvation.

Gyana Bhai lead the discussion about what we had read about Bairagya. He further emphasized that to attain salvation we have to practice bairagya and expanded on the methods we had just read in the selected section of Premika Guru. His discussion was followed by a soulful rendition of a prayer song by Suknya Maa entreating our Thakura to pay heed to our request and to our prayers.

Sisir Bhai read a selection from Samsara Patha, Part 1, Chapter 17. Braja Bhai led the question-and-answer session. We further learned that devotion cannot be sustained without true knowledge, faith and acceptance of God in our lives.

The Young Aspirant session started with Saraswat singing a song of prayer. Bhakti Maa lead by welcoming the YAs, taking attendance and by asking Saraswat to explain the meaning of the prayer he had sung. Bhakti Maa in the YA session focused on the upcoming Hindu festival of Holi. We learned that Holi is a celebration of color signifying the renewal of life. This day also celebrates the birthday of Lord Chaitanya or at times referred as Gourngadeba. This session of the YAs emphasized the need for, and benefit of, (1) Sadhusanga or association with spiritually uplifted individuals, (2) the regular chanting of Jayaguru mantra (3) reading of scriptures, (4) Brajabasa is similar to the experience of living with and praying to Thakura both at home and at our ashram and (5) Krushna seba or offering service to these in need, in pain, and generally being helpful to other living beings. Many of the YAs answered the questions posed by Bhakti Maa and expanded on their faith in Thakura and their association with sangha, plus the five principles discussed earlier.

Jemu Maa and Bijoy Bhai offered Bhaba Binimaya seba where they shared their sincere feelings in the form of testimonials. Jemu Maa reported that her second semester at school has been hard on her. She also shared that the regular chanting of Thakura's name blesses her to remain calm and allows her on a path of progress to be her best. Bijoy Bhai narrated how blessed he is to be offering seba with Jemu Maa who was not even born when our sangha started in Minneapolis. He reflected on end of life that may happen without notice, at any time, and went to expand on how he feels fortunate, blessed with such abundance and a sense of fulfillment, all due to Thakura and association with Sangha.

Naitik and Deba Bhai invited Thakura and members for our next Sangha Puja. Bijoy Bhai invited Thakura for midday Bhoga and rest thereafter. He invited others to partake a blessed meal at NSM or at their Gruhasana. He further sought forgiveness for mistakes committed during the puja, known and unknown. Bruandabana Bhai led in the singing of the last prayer that led to the extended chanting of Jayaguru mantra and the drawing of curtains signaling the end of the session.

Gyana Bhai took attendance.

Sri Sri Thakuracharanasrita,

Bijoy Bhai