

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## JAGADGURU SHANKARACHARYA OF SRINGERI ANOINTS HIS SUCCESSOR

### Preserving the oldest unbroken heritage of Sanatana Dharma

Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham  
Sringeri, Karnataka, India.  
January 23, 2015, 12:30 hours

#### Main Story

Sri Adi Shankaracharya, India's greatest philosopher-saint who revived Sanatana Dharma (or Hinduism as it is called today) and the Upanishadic philosophy of Vedanta, established His first (of four) and foremost center of learning — Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham at Sringeri — in the 8th century CE.

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 Vidhushekhara Bharati**.

Over 40,000 people from all corners of the country and abroad, descended upon the sacred town of Sringeri to witness this rare event. Several dignitaries from all walks of life also attended this occasion.

The elaborate Shishya-Sweekara ceremony began yesterday on Jan 22. The successor-designate, Brahmachari, performed Homas, fasted all day and stayed awake throughout the night.

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Today, the ceremony began at 7:30AM with the Brahmachari performing the Purusha Sookta Homa and Virajaa Homa at the Samadhi Shrines of the previous Jagadgurus. At 9AM the Brahmachari proceeded to the banks of the Tunga river and performed Preshochaarana and Sarva-bhoota-abhaya Pradhana — signifying a vow of non-violence towards all beings. He then discarded his clothes, sacred thread and tuft. As he rose from the Tunga river, Jagadguru Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji blessed Him with Kashya Vasthram (saffron monastic robes), Dandam and Kamandalu. The Guru and Shishya Swamiji then proceeded to the Samadhi Shrine of Jagadguru Sri Sri Abhinava Vidya Tirtha Mahaswamiji. There, as per the ancient tradition established by Sri Shankaracharya, the Jagadguru then gave the Shisya Swamiji the Pranava Upadesha and Mahavakya Upadesha. Thereafter, the Jagadguru and the Shisya Swamiji crossed the Tunga river and proceeded towards the Goddess Sharada Temple. Then, the Shisya Swamiji performed the Paryanka Shaucha ceremony on the northern side of the river. After completing this ceremony, He entered the Goddess Sharada temple.

It may be remembered here that when establishing this Peetham about 1200 years ago in Sringeri, Sri Adi Shankaracharya consecrated the idol of Goddess Sharada (the Goddess of Learning and Knowledge) and invoked Her divine presence and blessings to ever preside over this Peetham. Since then, the Jagadguru Shankaracharyas of Sringeri have always announced their successor only after Goddess Sharada's divinely ordained-will is revealed to them. So, the Yoga Patta bestowment ceremony is aptly held in the presence of the divine Mother, Goddess Sharada.

At the temple, the Jagadguru seated the Shishya Swamiji on the Vyaakhyaana Simhasana (throne of Transcendental Wisdom), placed a Saligrama on His head and worshipped it. The Jagadguru then blessed Him with the Yogapatta of Sri Sri Vidhushekhara Bharati. Afterwards, the Jagadguru adorned the Vyaakhyaana Simhasana and the Shishya Swamiji performed Puja to the Lotus Feet of the Jagadguru. Thereafter, both Sri Mahasannidhanam and Sri Sannidhanam had Darshan of Goddess Sharada and accepted a collective offering from the devotees. Representatives from various state governments, important temples, Mathadipathis and erstwhile Maharajas also submitted their offerings.

Sri Mahasannidhanam and Sri Sannidhanam then emerged from the Goddess Sharada Temple to bless an over joyous and overflowing crowd of devotees, and had Darshan at all the temples of the Math. Later, they returned to Narasimha Vana on the southern side of the river.

The evening programmes will begin with a Sabha where Sri Mahasannidhanam and Sri Sannidhanam are expected to grace the devotees with a Anugraha Bhashanam (Dharmic discourse). Many dignitaries and Mathadipathis are expected to attend this programme. Thereafter, at about 9 PM, the “Pallaki Utsava” of Sri Mahasannidhanam and Sri Sannidhanam will take place. This will conclude the Shishya Sweekara ceremony and usher a new chapter that continues this glorious Guru Parampara tradition to foster and renew Sanatana Dharma.

### **About Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamji**

Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji is the presiding and the 36th Acharya of the Dakshinamnaya Sharada Peetham, Sringeri. A realized Sage of the highest order and known for His profound scholarship in Vedic literature, the Jagadguru is revered by all as an incarnation of Goddess Sharada. Since His coronation as Peethadipathi in 1989, the Mahaswamiji has relentlessly worked to foster and rejuvenate Sanatana Dharma. He has undertaken many Vijaya Yatras across the country spreading Dharma, consecrating and renovating temples, and establishing other Dharmic centres. He has also fostered Vedic learning by establishing traditional Pathashalas throughout the country. Known for His ease in giving discourses in many languages, the Jagadguru has been expounding Dharma in a simple, yet profound manner. With His blessings and guidance, the Peetham has undertaken a number of social causes in the fields of Education and Healthcare. Along with His various duties as a Peethadhipati, the Jagadguru has also strictly adhered to the rigors of His Sannyasa Dharma like His illustrious predecessors. Even though thousands of people seek His Darshan every day, the Jagadguru makes time to connect heart-to-heart with every single person and transforms their lives with His boundless compassion and blessings.

## **Pre-Monastic Life of the Successor-Designate, Sri Sri Vidhushekhara Bharati Swamiji**

Sri Sri Vidhushekhara 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.

### *Family Background*

In 1961, when the 35th Jagadguru of Sringeri, Sri Abhinava Vidya Tirtha Mahaswamiji visited the Anantavaram village, the Sri Prasada Sharma's grandfather's elder brother, Sri Bhairagi Shastri welcomed the Jagadguru with sincere devotion, performed Pada Puja and received His blessings. In 1985, Sri Shastri also had the good fortune of welcoming and serving the present Jagadguru of Sringeri. Sri Prasada Sharma's grandfather's elder brother, Sri Kuppa Venkatachalapati Yaaji, embraced Sannyasa in 2002 with the permission of the Sringeri Jagadguru.

Sri Prasada Sharma's grandfather, Sri Kuppa Ramagopala Vajapeya-Yaaji is an eminent Vedic Pandit of the Krishna Yajur Veda and has performed the Shrauta Yaga of Vaajapeya. Deeply devoted to the Jagadgurus of Sringeri, Sri Vajapeya-Yaaji has participated in many Vedic ceremonies at Sringeri Sharada Peetham.

Sri Prasada Sharma's father, Sri Kuppa Shivasubrahmanya Avadhani studied at the Jagadguru Abhinava Vidya Tirtha Shastra Samvardhini Pathashala in Hyderabad, that was established by Jagadguru Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji. He became an eminent Pandit in Veda and Veda Bhashya with great devotion to the Jagadgurus of Sringeri. He is presently the Principal of the TTD Veda Vigjnana Peetham in Tirumala and Project Officer, S.V. Institute of Higher Vedic Studies, TTD.

### *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 Vidhushekhara Bharati Swamiji is therefore an event of historic importance to followers of Sanatana Dharma throughout the world.

**Photographs**

Press quality photographs of the ceremony may be downloaded at the following url:  
<http://www.sringeri.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/shishyasweekaraimages.zip>

**Contact Information**

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