

SADHANA CAMP

Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh April 5 to April 11, 2017

Swami Omkaranandaji from the Swami Chidbhananda Ashram, Theni conducted a 7-day Sadhana Camp at Swami Dayananda Ashram in Rishikesh. The text taught in Tamil by Swamiji was the second chapter of Taittiriya Upanishad – Bramhananda Valli. About 175 students primarily from various parts of Tamilnadu were in attendance.



The camp started with an orientation session on the 4th evening with details regarding the camp and the ashram.

The days were packed with classes and other activities from 5:00 am to 9:30 pm. The daily routine began at 5 o'clock in the morning with abhishekam and puja at the Gangadhariswarar Temple. The accompanying vedic chants of Sri Rudram, Chamakam, and Sukthams on the banks of the Ganga and Himalayan foothills were an exhilarating experience.

That was followed by 30 minutes of meditation conducted by Swamiji, followed by breakfast.

The sequence of programs, thereafter were three Upanishad Classes by Swamiji, interspersed with chanting of Lalitha Sahasranaman, Vishnu Sahasranaman, and Bhagavad Gita. There were daily evening pujas at the temple and in the Adhistanam of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswatiji. The day's activities came to a close after dinner with a Satsang session consisting of Bhajans and a Q&A session with Swamiji.

A highlight at this camp was on the 7th when Swamiji performed an elaborate Rudrabhishekam starting with Mahanyasam followed by Ekadasi Rudram at the Adhistanam.



There were several other significant events. On the occasion of Sri Rama Navami on the 5th, Swamiji performed a special puja in the prayer hall.

A dip in the sacred Ganga is a major objective and attraction for all devotees. At this camp it was made even more special when Swami Brahmavidayanandaji administered an elaborate mass Sankalpam on the 8th prior to the first Ganga Snanam of this trip for most of the students.

Bhandara is a traditional event of Annadhanam or offering of Biksha to the many Sadhus who live and move about the area. Interestingly, there were four such Bhandaras in the short of span of seven days of the camp, which must have been a record of sorts. One such Bhandara, on the 9th, was organized by Swamiji's students.



Another popular event on the banks of the Ganga from Rishikesh to Varanasi is the Ganga Aarathi. A special Ganga Puja and Aarathi was performed on the 10th by Swamiji and Shri Parasuramji on behalf of all the students.



Meals at the Ashram - Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner consisted of simple and nutritional items. Several of these Bikshas were sponsored by students.

Also impressive for this student who is visiting Rishikesh after several years are the additional features and improvements in the environment. One could spot a WiFi antenna; and the traditional chanting of Gita's 15th chapter prior to lunch and dinner is now led by an amplified recorded version!

Just outside the rear gate of the Ashram flows the Ganga. This area was frequently eroded and damaged during floods. The local municipal administration has done a wonderful job of building fenced retaining walls, and has converted the whole stretch into a promenade. One can walk along this area for quite a distance with the beautiful river and mountains on one side and a series of Ashrams on the other.

A wonderful and invigorating 7-day Vedanta camp came to an end of the 11th with Guru Vandanam. Many thanks are due to the administration and staff of Swami Dayananda Ashram for making this a memorable experience.

We also thank Shri Parasuramji and his team at the Theni Ashram for all their assistance and arrangements.

Hari Om.

Vijay Raghavan, Chennai

April 15, 2017