

## Thanksgiving Vedanta Retreat 2013 at Saylorburg Gurukulam



*“People roam all around in search of a shrine or river that could purify them. But they do not realize that the greatest shrine of all is Kasi shining in the heart as Atman.”*

**Swami Tattvavidanananda Sarawati**

This camp traditionally is for families to get together at the Ashram over the Thanksgiving week end. 175 adults and 90 children from ages 6 to 13 and above attended the camp. On November 28<sup>th</sup>, registration was completed during the day. Orientation was done in the evening by Suddhatmaji. He explained the course schedule and gave information regarding the facilities at the Gurukulam. It is especially a nice time of the year for the children. Accordingly, the children had many activities planned for them during their stay at the Gurukulam. The children were grouped according to their ages as the Juniors group 6 to 9, the Seniors group 10 to 13 and the Teens group 13 and above. Each group had its own activities such as Vedic chanting, yoga, Sanskrit study, drama practice, arts and crafts, Vedic Heritage, aarati and camp fires administered by the staff and the volunteers. Lance Daniels, Malathi Aunty, Usha Aunty, Savithri Aunty



and Divya participated in the children's programs.

For the adults, Swamiji Tattvavidananandaji conducted classes in meditation. Suddhatmaji taught chanting and Mrs. Chaya Rajaram conducted Yoga classes.

Swamiji had selected verses on OM from the Kathopanisad, the Bhagavad Gita, the Mandukyopanisad and the Mandukya Karika. Swamiji explained the importance of OM in Vedanta and its meaning. OM is the Cosmic sound. The three aspects of the mind namely the physical, the psychological and the spiritual are fragmented. They





should be united. A calm and quite mind is necessary for healthy living. OM is silence and sound. Mind resolves in the silence, Om is the link between a devotee and God. In chanting OM the Ahankara (ego) is surrendered and it is sacrificed in Atmadyana. There are several mantras which start with OM. Om connects the individual to prana (breathe). It is Soham. 'So' is in inhale and 'ham' is in exhale.

At the end of every lecture Swamiji conducted a small meditation on OM. It was very useful.

On November 30<sup>th</sup> under the direction of Savthriji the children presented a cultural program. The Junior students sang a song of Lord Ganesa and enacted a play 'Gopal Bhaiya'. The senior students performed a beautiful Lezim Folk Dance in colorful costumes. This is a very popular dance in the State of Maharashtra. They also presented a play 'Caring and Sharing'. The Teen students presented a Fashion Show and a play 'Yaksha Prashna'. The program concluded with a song 'Thank you Amma' performed by all the students.

The kitchen staff worked hard to accommodate the needs of this big gathering. The priests Sri Ganesan and Sri Ravichandran performed the pujas regularly and on time. Suddhatmaji, the staff and the volunteers worked hard during the camp to make it a success.

Thanks giving camps are fun and entertainment for all. The children enjoyed it. The adults learned the meditating with OM. They also learned some good Yoga practices and chanting. It was a very nice camp. The camp ended on December 1, 2013

*Reported by Arvind Bagal*