

## Residential Course in Vedanta and Sanskrit in Rishikesh

With the blessing of Pujya Swamiji, Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh, was pleased to host a 90-day residential course in Vedanta and Sanskrit from the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2011. As many as 60 applications from India and abroad were received and 26 students were selected, including 11 from Canada, France, Japan, and the United States.

Swami Santatmananda Saraswati, Resident Acharya of the Ashram, guided the students through the course, which featured a busy schedule. The day started at 5 a.m. with temple arati, followed by meditation and a Vedanta class. After breakfast, students gathered for Sanskrit, Chanting and the second Vedanta class. Students then had lunch and some rest or homework. Afternoon tea was followed by Bhagavad Gita class, Yoga practice, evening arati and dinner. Alternate evenings featured satsanga.

The course syllabus featured Swami Santatmanandaji teaching Katha Upanishad, Tattva Bodha, Bhaja Govindam, Sanskrit (15 lessons of Antoine – Part I), and Chanting (Vishnu Sahasranama, Shiva Mahimna Stotram, Bhagavad Gita Chapters I, II and XV, Dakshinamurti stotram, Ganga stotram and other temple stotras). He also delivered the satsangas.



Swami Paravidyanandaji taught Upadesa Saram and Vedic chanting including Medha Suktam, shanti mantras, and Aditya hrdayam. Ashok Chhabraji guided the morning meditation. Later, Swami Brahavidyanandaji arrived to continue the meditations, and taught Bhagavad Gita Chapters I & II. All the participants received a puja set and were taught shodasha upacara puja.

Br. Gopalji conducted yogasana and pranayama sessions. He was complemented by Anusha Meenakshi Raman of Mumbai and Iyengar teacher Nanda Kumar, visiting from Malaysia. Swami Aparokshanandaji and Swamini Divyatmanandaji contributed to the success of the camp as well.

Students faced wintry mornings and howling winds, but were not deterred from

attending class and temple aratis. The Ashram organized a Ganga arati every evening. The group was fortunate to experience Gita Jayanti puja when the entire text was chanted. Makar Sankranti was celebrated on the banks of Ganga, with puja and chanting of Aditya Hridayam. In spite of overcast skies, the Sun came out briefly to grace the occasion.

There were some guest performances, featuring bhajans and Indian classical music. Kanchi Kamakoti Natyalaya presented their rendition of Dashavataram and Adi Shankara. Students watched video talks from Pujya Swamiji's Indian Heritage Series, such as 'Conformity to Dharma' and 'Strengthening Free Will'. Towards the end

of the course a few students presented their understanding of a Katha Upanishad mantra.

The course concluded on 19 Feb 2012 with a valedictory function in which students shared their experiences of the past few months and were given a Certificate of completion. Pujya Swamiji was garlanded and pada puja performed. He delivered an anugraha talk and blessed the students with guruprasadam. With the blessings of Haimavati and Gangadharesvara, the course was a success. Students and Acharyas express their gratitude to Swami Suddhanandaji for providing the facilities and being a support throughout.

