

Completion of 6 month Vedanta & Sanskrit course



A 6 month intensive and fully residential course in Vedanta & Sanskrit concluded at Swami Chidbhavananda Ashram, Theni on May 23, 2015. Pujya Swamiji inaugurated the course in December 2014. The course concluded with the blessings and talks by Sri Swami Paramarthananda, Sri Swami Omkarananda and Sri Swami Satswarupananda. The medium of instruction was completely English. Male students, between 28 & 45 years of age, successfully completed the course. Students included 8 from around India, 2 Indian origin students from Sri Lanka & Malaysia and 1 from Romania.

Swami Sarvananda, disciple of Pujya Swamiji & Swamini Brahmaprakasananda, handled Vedanta, Sanskrit and Satsang sessions. The Vedanta classes, spread over 6 months, covered Bhaja Govindam, Sadhana Panchakam, Tattva bodha and the whole of the Bhagavad Gita verse by verse. In Sanskrit the aim was to mainly give the students a good grasp of the language. The topics covered were verbs & nouns, karakas, vowel & consonant sandhis, detailed overview of samasas, fundamentals of Panini (in the last one month) and recorded audio classes on Panini sutras for later self-study. Sanskrit classes were supplemented



by a lot of exercises as homework. Mahabharata sessions during Satsang covered stories and incidents from Adi parva, sabha parva, vana parva, relevant portions of moksha dharma parva, ashwamedhika parva and the last 4 chapters. Emphasis was on attitudes, life style, value structure, relationships, duties and priorities of people (especially rishis) in that society with regard to their relevance and benefit to today's individual and society.

Swami Prajnanananda, disciple of Swami Paramarthananda, handled sessions on character for excellence & inner transformation. The classes based on the Gita & teachings of mahatmas like Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati of Kanchi, Ramana Maharshi & Sri Ramakrishna, focussed on enquiry into mind, world and Ishvara. The classes were complemented by workshops and group discussions on achieving one's potential, understanding individual and universal laws, study of

teachings of mahatmas mentioned above, as a tool to gain emotional maturity. The vedanta text vakya vritti by Sankaracharya was also taught at the end.

Swami Adhyatmananda, disciple of Pujya Swamiji in the last Anaikatti course, handled the chanting classes, an additional Sanskrit class for a few students in the afternoon and Satsang sessions on a couple of days every week. The students were taught to chant some stotras, Bhagavad Gita and a few suktas. His Satsang sessions were used to explain the meaning of some stotras and some santi mantras.

Yoga classes were conducted by one of the students Sri. Sanjeet Prasad.

The feedback from the course participants was very encouraging and satisfying.

Congratulating the participants and the Acharyas, Sri Swami Paramarthananda in his anugraha bhashanam mentioned the importance of Bhagavad Gita as the first

text a seeker should be exposed to. Gita is an extract of teachings from the Upanishads. The next step, Swamiji said, is to start learning the Upanishads.

Swamiji gave a glimpse into the Upanishads, using a portion from the Kathopanishad. The Upanishad teaches important disciplines for a spiritual seeker, using the imagery of a chariot. Swamiji enumerated four important points brought out in this imagery.

The first point is that, the success of a traveller depends on the fitness of the vehicle used and its accessories. Citing the chariot as analogy, the Upanishad explains how Jivatma (the individual) is the traveller in the journey of life. The vehicle given by God for the travel is the human body; the horses are the five sense organs; mind that has to manage the sense organs, is the reins; the informed intellect, which has the clarity purpose, is the charioteer. To ensure that this vehicle is well equipped and good for use the following need to be taken care of. Physical health; health of sense organs – they should work in obedience to the mind; mental health – a mind that is obedient and can concentrate without any pre-occupation; intellectual health – an intellect that can think rationally and knows its limitations of reasoning, are all necessary. All this should work in co-ordination and be fit to reach the goal. Karma Yoga, Upasana Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga – all these make one fit and travel worthy.

The second point Sri Swamiji mentioned was about the variety of goals one can choose. The scriptures classify all the possible goals into two – one is perishable, finite goals which will be lost in time; and

the other is the permanent, infinite goal. The goals usually that one works for – name, fame, money, status, etc – are finite goals, that have no end, are called Anatma. The infinite goal, is called Paramatma which itself is an end.

The third point is that, when Anatma (finite) is chosen as the goal, the person is materialistic, and is on an outward journey. When Paramatma (infinite) is chosen as the goal, the person is a spiritual seeker and is on an inward journey. This journey is not a physical but a figurative one, from a wrong understanding to a right understanding about oneself. One needs to keep asking “Who am I?” to correct the wrong understanding. It will make one understand that the body, mind, sense organs and intellect are only instruments I use but not me. I need them and only use them, but I am not them. The Jivatma learns to dis-identify from the body-mind-sense complex, by understanding oneself as the Paramatma. The destination or goal is not away from me but it IS Me. This is the liberating knowledge.

The fourth point is the importance of a Guru. Just as one needs a guide for an outward journey, a guide is needed for the internal journey also. Scriptures cannot be understood correctly without a Guru. When one keeps praying to God for a good guide he will bless a Guru, at the right time.

Sri Swamiji also mentioned how blessed the participants were in learning the scriptures the traditional way. They have to continue the shraavanam (listen to the scriptures), proceed with mananam (removal of doubts) and nididhyasanam (contemplate and assimilate), due to which the spiritual journey will be successful.