

Two Week Vedanta Course 2013 at Saylorsburg Gurukulam



The Two Weeks Vedanta Retreat was held from September 22 to October 5 at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg PA. Approximately 80 students attended the camp.

Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati taught Nishta and Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati taught Bhrgu Valli from Taittiriya Upanisad. Pujya Swamiji left for India on September 26 to continue teaching the ongoing Brahmasutra course. Swami Tattvavidanandaji completed the remaining Upadesa Sahasri. Suddhatmaji conducted the chanting classes and Pandit Mukesh Desaiji taught the Hundustani Classical

Music. Kalpesh Jasapara taught Sanskrit classes. Lance Daniels conducted Yoga classes during the camp at the Yoga Studio.

Pujya Swami Dayanandji continued teaching Nishta from last year's course Prose (Chapter II and III). The Nishta draws from various sources of Vedanta and it is in the form of a dialogue between a Guru and Shishya. It includes the concepts of consciousness, right knowledge and the obstacles in realization of Brahman. It highlights the fact that a finite individual can grow into the infinite Brahman. Swamiji highlighted the fact that time or space does not have any effect on self. This is pure consciousness. Everything

in the Universe is evident to self. Knowledge is evident to self. That self is you. Therefore Self is self evident. Every goal or achievement is Tapas. Tapas are a supreme Sadhana for Moksha. It is changing the way to think about yourself. It is to understand that you are not what you think you are. Tapas (austerity), involves recognizing the contradictions between the Divine and the Samsara and becoming free from the contradictions.

Swami Tattvidanandaji taught the Bhrgu Valli from Taittiriya Upanisad. The chapter is in the form of a dialogue between Bhrgu and his father Varuna. The son asks his father to teach the knowledge of Brahman. With the help of his father Bhrgu reflected on different ideas about Brahman and finally arrived at the conclusion that Brahman is the Supreme Being. The Vedantic knowledge included in this Valli is about the goal of life, the destination of human being and the attainment of Moksha. Swami Tattvidanandaji explained the concept of Kosas (Sheaths) and significance of the Annamaya (the body), Pranamaya (the vital airs) and Manomaya (the mind). The Upanisad stresses vratas to acquire concentration of mind. Vratas related to food are: one should not blame food, one should not reject food, one should produce ample food and one should not refuse food to a visitor or guest. The Pranamaya has five airs vital for life. Manomaya is identified with the mind as the diversity of 'I' and 'You'. It helps processing the knowledge. Swamiji explained various Upasanas. The Upasanas help to control the mind. Japas (reciting mantras) are helpful in Upasana. Homa rituals are performed for pleasing the Gods. Swamiji discussed other Upasanas including that of OM and Akasa.

Suddhatmaji taught Vedic chanting on alternate days. He instructed the students on proper way of chanting the mantras. The chanting included Bhrgu valli from Taittiriya Upanisad and the Purusottamayoga from the Bhagavad Gita. Pandit Mukesh Desaiji taught Hindustani Classical Music during the camp. The teaching included raga Darabari in very popular Bhajani taal. It is a slow night raga. Panditji also taught raga Yaman Kalyan, an evening raga in teen taal, sixteen beats. Additionally, Panditji presented Bhajans every evening before satsangs.

On September 23, a Carnatic Music Concert was presented by Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi and her brother Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishan. They belong to the sixth generation of the famous family. The two artists are worthy of their illustrious father Lalgudi Jayaraman and have received several national and international awards. They played various compositions including those composed by Pujya Swamiji. It was a delightful concert.

On September 26 and October 2, Pradosh Pujas were performed at the temple for Lord Dakshinamurti.

On October 4, on the suggestion of Swami Tattvidanandaji and under the direction of Savithri Maniji, the students presented a play 'Nichiketa' based the dialogue between Nichiketa and lord Yama taken from Kathopanisad. It was nicely done.

The Priests Sri Ravichandran and Sri Ganesan performed Pujas regularly. The Kitchen staff provided excellent meals on time. Suddhatmaji and the staff, teachers and volunteers worked hard to make the camp successful. The camp ended on October 5, 2013.

Reported by Arvind Bagal