

## The Seven-Week Vedanta Retreat



The Seven-Week Vedanta Retreat has begun at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam.

The 7 week Vedanta retreat of 2014 has begun with its characteristic thoroughness on October 7, 2014 at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam - Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania. About 60 + students arrived from many parts of USA and the world to be immersed in the teaching of Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswathi (known with affectionate respect as Swami TV to his students).

There are two main topic areas being taught by Swami TV in this camp, which include BhagavadGita Chapter 13 with Sri Sankara Bhashya and selected verses from

Mumukshu Prakaranam of the scripture Yogavasishta.

This extraordinary learning opportunity for the students is best illustrated by describing the typical day of a sincere student. The day starts at 5:45 am with attendance of a daily event of Abhishekam and Puja of Lord Dakshnamurthy and takes about an hour. The students begin the day engrossed in the precise and majestic Vedic chants by Sri Sudhatma along with the priests and devotees.

Swami TV is known to start all his classes on time with legendary precision within few seconds of the scheduled time. Sharply



at 7 am, Swami TV begins his guided meditation class with methods derived from the course topics to ensure students are able to directly begin the practical application of the concepts and ensure their effort is supported by purification and quieting of the mind.

Gurukulam serves a generous, sumptuous and Satvic breakfast, lunch dinner. Breakfast begins after the meditation class at 7:30 am. This is followed on most days with students learning to chant Mantras with precision from Sri Sudhatma who has started to teach the Shanti Mantras and other verses as requested by students. The class ends shortly after 8:45 am

Swami TV teaching begins sharply at 9 am with his own Sampradaya of developing the subject matter with rigor and clarity supported by enormous number of well-chosen metaphors and anecdotes. At 10 am

sharply he ends while students continue to be spell bound wanting to hear more.

At 10:15 Sri Kalpesh Jaspara begins his advanced Sanskrit class. Though the topic areas like Samasa are advanced, Kalpesh makes the class very interesting and teaches with enthusiasm, clarity and consideration for the beginners. Most beginners are able to enjoy the classes and are simply amazed at the inherent beauty and precision of Sanskrit while being enthralled by the command of the language by Kalpesh who is able to bring this to the student's level regardless of their background. Incidentally Kalpesh continues to have a full time job and the student are grateful that he is able to find time to come to the Gurukulam without fail to teach everyday.

At 11:20 am Swami TV starts his second lecture of the day on the topic of Bhagavad Gita which goes till 12:20 PM at which time the Noon aarati begins for Lord

Dakshinamurthi. This is followed by Satvic and tasty lunch.

At 1:15 pm Terry Coe teaches Sanskrit class for beginners and makes the topic interesting for both beginners and advanced students. Many have chosen to attend both Sanskrit classes since Terry's class reinforces many concepts assumed in Kalpesh's class. Terry's class finishes at 2 pm.

Some students go for a nice walk on this 1 mile trail within the Ashram's campus which is a special treat. Others may choose to visit the Gym or visit the one-of-a-kind bookstore.

On most days the Yoga class with Lance Davis starts at 3 pm and goes till 4:15 pm. This is followed by afternoon tea time before the 5 PM class by Swami TV on Yogavasishtam verses. The class ends at 6 pm when the evening Aarati for Lord Dakshinamurthi begins. It concludes at 6:30 pm with widespread audience participation chanting tribute to Ganga Mata.

Once again students are treated to a tasty and satvic dinner from 6:30 pm. Students try to finish their dinner as soon as possible so that they can write their questions for Swamiji. The Q&A session and Satsang with

Swami TV begins promptly at 7:30 pm who answers not just the questions but goes the extra mile to remove the confusion that gave rise to the question. The day ends at 8:30 pm with melodious rendering of Nirvana Shatakam by Mrs Bharathi Badrinath.

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 13 has begun with detailed unfolding of the concepts of Kshetra and Kshetragnya during the first week. Every line of the Bhashyakara's commentary is analyzed by Swami TV in depth. The first week has covered only the first verse in full. This provides a glimpse at the rigor and details involved in the class.

While Valmiki Ramayanam has about 24000 verses, Yogavasishtam which is now presented as a separate scriptures has about 30000 verses and represents teaching of Sage Vasishtha to Sri Rama. The topic area is broken into sections (called Prakaranam) which includes many stories within stories to illustrate Vedantic concepts.

In the Mumukshu Prakaranam Swami TV has personally gone through the entire section and has provided a rigorous abbreviation as part of the text for the class.

Summary of class notes will be provided at the end of the camp.

*Page sponsored by:*

**Sri Ramachandra Trust, N.Ramachandran,**  
5, Devadi Steet, Mylapore, Chennai 400004