

## Two-Weeks Vedanta Course Report



A two-weeks Vedanta Course Retreat was held from the 23rd of September to the 5<sup>th</sup> of October at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg PA. As many as 80 students attended the camp.

Pujya Swami Dayananada Saraswati taught Chapter I and II of Sri Sankara's Upadesa Sahasri. Sri Swami Tattvavidananda Sarswati taught Chapter VIII to X of Narda Bhakti Sutra. Sri Suddhatmaji conducted chanting classes and Sri Mukesh Desaiji taught the Indian classical Music. Sri Kapalesh taught Sanskrit classes. Mr. Mark Hertel conducted Yoga classes during the camp at the Yoga Studio.

Pujya Sri Swami Dayanandji taught Sankara's Upadesa Sahasri starting from Advaya Prakaran, Chapter II. The Sahssri 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 discover the infinite Brahman. Swamiji highlighted the fact that time or space does not have any effect on Self. The Self 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. Pujya Swamiji gave several illustrations to bring out this fact in Vedanta.

Swami Tattvavidananda taught verses 74 to 84 from Narad Bhakti Sutra. In his teaching Swamiji emphasized the fact that Bhakti is love for Iswara. Desire is becoming. It creates a conflict between

what you are and what you want to be. This is why desirelessness is essential. Love of all is love of Iswara and it is Bhakti Yoga. Ahimsa is love for all. One needs to look at sukha and dukha with samatwam. For all conflicts love is the solution. Chinta (worry) is hindrance to love and it should be removed. Sharanagati (self surrender) to Iswara requires giving up all controls, giving up fears, and giving up the responsibility which means giving up all illusions. As for the future one should let it unfold itself, respect it and be happy with it. Swamiji described various forms of Shaktis and that these should be properly understood in order to live a good religious life. Proper Shravana and Manana are also essential for understanding the Sutras. Thus as Narada says devotion is the greatest path and it is also the easiest path to Moksha.

On 27<sup>th</sup> of September Prodosha Puja was performed at the temple. This is an auspicious Puja for Lord Dakshinamutri, which includes Abhisheka and chanting of Mantras.

On 29<sup>th</sup> of September Rajeswari Satish presented a concert in Carnatic Music. She was accompanied on violin by Radha Mani and on Mridungam by Akshay Anantapadmanabhan. It was delightful classical music and everyone enjoyed it.

On 1<sup>st</sup> of October, Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi presented Violin Concert at the temple. She was accompanied by Bangalore V. Praveen on mridagam. Praveenji has the distinction of accompanying in concert the famous Carnatic Music stalwarts M. S. Subbulakshmi and Dr. Balamuralikrishna. Vijayalakshmi is daughter of India's famous musician Lalgudi Jayaraman. The concert was absolutely enthralling. It was

a masterful rendering of South Indian Music on Violin.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of October, the students had an opportunity to attend a seminar on 'Temple Art and Culture' presented by Dr. R. Nagaswamy, former Director of Archeology and Vice Chancellor of Kanchi University. Dr. Nagaswamy related the long struggle he was involved in getting back a lost Nataraja image during the British Raj in India. He showed beautiful slides of the old temples from Tamilnadu, Orissa, Kerala, Karnataka Gujarat and other parts of India. Some of these temples were carved in the hills while other were built by various emperors in India. Dr. Nagaswamy described the temple as not only a place of worship but it is also a center of learning, poetry, music and dance. Dr. Nagaswamy continued the valuable and beautiful presentations at the Gurukulam even after the camp was over.

Sri Ravichandran and Sri Ganesan, priests performed pujas regularly. The Kitchen staff provided good meals on time for the large gathering.

Suddhatmaji and the staff, teachers and volunteers worked hard to make the camp successful.

Although there were many regular students who attended the camp, there were many new students in this camp also. It was a camp with full of valuable teaching and a wealth of information about the Indian Culture. It was full of entertainment as well. The students enjoyed it.

The camp ended on 5<sup>th</sup> of October, 2012.

*Reported by Arvind Bagal*