

Family Retreat II for the year 2012

Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati's Message

Love yourself unconditionally. Love and happiness is one and the same thing. The fact that we love our self unconditionally means that we are happy unconditionally. No one loves unhappiness. We all want to be happy. I love myself unconditionally means I am unconditionally happy.

The Second Family Retreat was held at the Arsh Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg PA from July 29 to August 4, 2012. Approximately 70 adults and 40 plus boys and girls of ages between 6 to 16 attended the retreat. It was remarkable that several regular students who have been taking courses at the Gurukulam for long time were present for this camp.

Registration was completed July 29th followed by orientation in the evening. Suddhatmaji explained the course schedule and gave all information regarding the other facilities at the Gurukulam.

Swami Vidadatmanananda Saraswati taught the adult classes. The topics were Isavasyopanisad and Bhagavad Gita Chapter IV. The two morning classes were dedicated to the Upanisad and the evening class was for teaching the Bhagavad Gita. Savithriji Mani and Lance Daniels coordinated the children's classes. Swamiiji's Satsang was held later in the evening every day.



In the study of the Upanisad, Swamiiji stated at the beginning of the class that the most important knowledge was the knowledge of the self. And Isavasyopanisad deals with that subject. Swamiiji explained the caste system and the reasons it was in existence in olden times. Swamiiji expounded the concept of fullness and completeness implied in the first shanti mantra with a discussion on Jiwa and atma and their interaction. He pointed out the habitual identification with the body mind complex and the improper superimposition of the worldly things on the self-made it difficult to understand the real self. Swamiiji talked about the real happiness as love for the self and that self-love and happiness are one and the same. Therefore the one who loves the self is always happy. He dwelt upon the attitude of being helpful as an essential thing for spiritual growth. Swamiiji said that by understanding "sat. Chit and

anand “we understand ourselves and the Iswara.

In the Bagdad Gita classes Swamiji quickly summarized the first seventeen verses and then started detailed study from the eighteenth verse. The topic involved the incorrect notion of I am the Karta and the sense of doer ship and how it blocks the attainment of the supreme knowledge. Swami said that holding a personal agenda and striving to achieve it creates pressure that affects the performance of Karma.

Sudhamtmaji gave an overview of chanting. He specifically motioned the Akshar Shudhi, the matra shudhi and the Swar Shudhi and the proper understanding of the mantra. Suddhatmaji introduced a Kshama Prarthana, prayer for the forgiveness in case mistakes were made during the chanting. Chanting was performed every alternate day along with the classical music classes taught by Pundit Mukeshji.

Pandit Mukeshji taught classical music on alternate days and presented bhajans every evening. One day he rendered raga Darabar so exquisitely that the listeners were simply spell bound. Rarely do you have an opportunity like this to hear a piece of music from the master.

Savithriji had a big gathering of children. Some 80 children divided in three groups of 6 to 10, 11 to 12 and 12 to 16 were all ready to get on the stage. Savithri Auntie dedicated this show to Gordon of house maintenance. Gordon made fabulous props. His creation of a railway compartment was unique and so much true to a real railway compartment. Senior

children made it a part of their play ‘the constant companion’. The Girls created orchestra using kitchen utensils. Panch Pandavas, a play was staged by the juniors. The teens depicted a Swami Viditatmanandji’s favorite story of the tenth man. Then a play followed that showed how counting Ram Nam 3 times is the same as counting it one thousand times. Prema Mudita sang a Bhajan. Pandit Mukekesh Desaiji’s student presented Shri Ramchandra’s Bhajan.

On July 30th the Pradosh Puja dedicated to Lord Dakshinamurti was performed in the Gurukulam temple by priests Sri Ravichandran and Sri Ganesan. It was a big gathering of the students and visitors for the Puja and chanting at the Gurukulam.

On August 1st Raksha Bandhan was celebrated by many students in the temple hall. Twenty Four individuals became new brothers and sisters. It was a beautiful gathering full of affection and a beginning of everlasting bondage.

The accommodation at the Gurukulam was very good. The food was fine and served on time. The kitchen service was very good.

Suddhatmaji and the gurukulam staff worked hard during the camp so did the volunteers and teachers.

It was really an enjoyable gathering for the young and the old.

The camp ended on the 4th of August 2012.