

### Experience of my students during their Jnanpravaha Retreat, 16-19 November 2023

The bus stopped at Manjakuddi and 26 students stepped out exhausted after a long journey but excited about the time ahead. Their excitement was completely justified. Students were asked to report to the hall at Jnanpravaha after freshening up. As the students entered the Jnanpravaha hall, they were all praises for the stay arrangements as the rooms were spic and span, very comfortable AC rooms, with clean bed linen and fresh towels, hot water and shower facility and a pantry where excellent tea and coffee were available. Each one was allocated a single, double or triple sharing room as per their preference.

The pathway to the Jnanpravaha facility is green and beautiful and covered with betel nut, turmeric, Brahmi trees which lent an air of auspiciousness and many other flowers and trees including the Parijat tree. The serene and positive atmosphere welcomed the students. The hall has modern facilities and there is Pujya Swamiji, in a smiling form, blessing the occupants and with his blessing they feel his presence everywhere. We commenced the introductory session, explaining the schedule for the next three days.

As part of the programme, every day morning chanting the Sri Rudram, Swami Ramesvaranandaji and I, were joined by some of the senior students who are trained in Vedic chanting and also special invitees (students of Swami Brahmavidanandaji.). Thus each day started on an energetic and positive note. In the words of a student "the words and the chants kept echoing in my mind throughout the day."

I also introduced students to the Dayananda Pancakam so that my students have a more detailed understanding of my Guru, Pujya Swamiji Dayananda Saraswati and his outstanding qualities, his compassionate, benevolent and anandamaya nature, his deep study and research of the shastras and his efforts in spreading knowledge of Vedanta by training so many acaryas, Swamis, etc and creating an appropriate infrastructure to allow study of Vedanta continue in future including long term courses.

Next day we sat in the garden near the Sri Dakshinamurti form and understood word by word explanation, and also gave a detailed understanding of Dhyana Shloka of Sri Dakshinamurthi Stotram. With this I am happy that the students would now be well informed of the Guru Parampara.

Students were also explained the word by word meaning of various prayers to be said on waking up, studying, bathing, starting Vedanta classes and also for the overall well being of the entire society. Students gave feedback that with the detailed explanations their understanding of Sarvatmabhava and Brahman has got further reinforced and strengthened.

Students were also taught how to read the Pancangam and informed of the phala of the listening / reading the pancangam.

Swami Ramesvaranandaji taught the students the Pratahsmaranam and shared the deep wisdom of the stotram with the students .

Students visited the vast farms maintained by the Trust and learned that more than 225 varieties of rice, including some very ancient varieties were organically grown there and some varieties were also exported. Efforts made to collect the samples from all over the country were explained to the students and they were inspired by the dedication. Students visited the Gaushala with about 80 cows and also learnt about the probable relocation of the gaushala due to the water consumption requirements, etc. Students also visited the school run by the Educational Trust and the AIM for Seva Girls Hostel at Sembangudi. At the school they were amazed by the scale (the school had students from around 16 nearby villages), the well-kept buildings and grounds, the dedication of the teachers and the magnanimity of the trustees and key donor and the philosophy of Vedanta that was applied by the school authorities in allowing free entry to all students irrespective of the marks secured by them. The students visited the girls' hostel and spent time listening to the girls chanting and playing games with the girls and clicking pictures with them. All the girls were smiling and happy, which was a pleasure to see. The students made donations of clothes, towels, bedsheets, caps, bags etc in kind and also on the spot collected INR 1.25 lakhs and handed the same over to the authorities at the hostel.

All in all, the students had a wonderful experience in serene surroundings, comfortable rooms, tasty sattvic food, listening to Sri Rudram daily and charging themselves, learning more about the Guru Parampara and Sri Dakshinamurthi stotram and other prayers, spending time at the farm, gaushala, school and hostel. It was a blissful stay for them and as they boarded the bus to commence the return journey to the airport, everyone was asking – when do we come back here again?

**- Report by Acharya Falguniben**

