

Jnanapravaha, Manjakkudi, Retreat report December 2023

Advaita Bharati conducted a retreat at Jnanapravaha, Manjakkudi from Dec 1st, 2023 to Dec 3rd, 2023. Founder and Acharya of Advaita Bharati, Smt. Suryapriyaji taught Aitareya Upanishad to about 45 vidyarthees who had come to Manjakkudi from all around the world, mostly from Chennai. The day before the camp, on Nov 30th, 2023, there was a Satsang by Acharyaji for the lecturers and teachers of Swami Dayananda college and school on the topic, "Leading a meaningful life". This was a good learning session followed by a very interesting Q&A session.

The retreat was blessed and inaugurated by Swami Ramesvaranandaji and Acharya Shri. Rangaji. Swamiji as always left the students contemplating about the importance of learning vedanta. He also gave a brief about AVRPT and its activities and about Jnanapravaha. Swamiji along with Acharya Shri. Rangaji, Shri. Srinivasan ji and Acharya Smt. Suryapriya ji lit the traditional lamp. Shri. Srinivasanji - Respected Trustee of Swami Dayananda Saraswati Educational Trust also shared his insights with the students during the event. The inauguration event started and ended with Pujya Swamiji's wonderful compositions. This was followed by a Satsang by Acharya Rangaji, as an introduction to studying the Upanishad.

On the second day of the camp Acharya ji and her students performed Dakshinamurthy Puja and on the third day they had a meditation session guided by Acharya ji.

The completion of the Upanishad was followed by the Samarop function. Acharyaji and her students performed puja to the Guru parampara and went on with the samarop function which is a gesture to thank the sampradaya for giving them the greatest knowledge. The entire Upanishad was summarised by the students with parts being assigned on the spot. This was a unique way of presenting it as visioned by our Acharyaji and it was enjoyed by all. Swamiji graced the event by being present during the summary session. The students performed puja to their Guru and received her blessings for continued sastra patanam.

- Report by Swami Rameshvarananda



Arshabodhini conducted their 7th camp at Jnana Pravaha, Manjakkudi from 7th December to 10th December 2023. Even though they are regular visitors of the facilities, this time the 50 vidhyārthis that attended the camp were all new comers, many below the age of 40.

In this camp named "Yoga Pravaha", Guru Lavanyaji taught the 3rd Chapter of Gita, Karma Yoga. Her teaching was concise, clear and simple, enabling the vidhyārthis to take in the complete essence of the teaching.

The camp started with the inauguration function, where HH Swami Rameshvaranandaji, Sri Srinivasanji and Sri Rajagopalanji spoke a few words welcoming the new vidhyārthis. Swamiji, in his anugraha bhāshanam, gave a deep insight into the subject along with his experiences with His Guru, Pujya Swamiji.

Swamiji was also kind enough to have a question and answer session with the vidhyārthis, which was very well received by the vidhyārthis.

Apart from the classes, the vidhyārthis also had other satsang sessions. In a separate satsang, Jananiji, sishya of Guru Lavanyaji, gave a satsang, on the topic, "Role of Guru and Shastras in one's life". Another sishya, Saathvikaji, concluded the camp with a summary of the 3rd Chapter.

On the last day, during the feedback session, the vidhyārthis expressed their gratitude not only to the Guru but also the facility and the organisers, which enabled a smooth learning for them. They were all very happy with the comfort and luxury of the camp facilities. Then, pooja was performed by the vidhyārthis to their Guru Lavanyaji. Swamiji, was again kind enough to grace the occasion and honoured both Ramji and Guru Lavanyaji.

- Report by Swami Rameshvarananda



Shri Uday Acharya conducted a Vedanta retreat camp at Manjakkudi in December from 12th to 16th. The participants were from Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Chennai. Acharyaji took meditation classes and Chandogya Upanishad Chapter 6 in the mornings and Naasadiya Suktam from Rigveda in the afternoon. Other sessions included group activities, cultural quiz, discussions and satsang. Chandogya Upanishad has a father son dialogue about the source and process of creation that begins with Fire, Water and Earth, and how all of creation is rooted in the Self. Many illustrations are provided to clarify the concepts including clay-pot, gold-ornaments, mirror and reflection, salt crystals - salt water, banyan seed and tree, etc. The process of dissolution involves everything going back to the origin for which illustrations like river and sea, nectar drops and honey, and waking-deep sleep are cited. Both ignorant and knower get merged with the Self, but the layperson remains ignorant and bound whereas the knower is liberated. The importance of a teacher is pointed out through the story of the kidnapped person from Gandhara who was tied, blindfolded and left in the forest without a clue as to how to return to Gandhara. He is ultimately successful when he is directed by a forester and follows directions and reaches his destination. The example of the heated axe where the lying thief is burnt and the truly innocent person is unscarred illustrates the result of self knowledge which liberates the knower from birth and death. The Naasadiya suktam from Rigveda speaks of Maya as darkness that covers the darkness represented by Brahman. The devas and others know not the source of creation as they were born later. A question is put as to whether the creator knew the actual process of creation, implying that the process of creation is apparent and not real.

Participants also visited the Vedic Pathashala managed by Swami Dayananda Educational Trust and witnessed the students chant the Taittiriya Upanishad and Vykanasa Agama. The participants came away impressed and contributed to the breakfast cum lunch bhiksha for one day. The concluding day saw the dignitaries like Sheela Balaji, Swami Rameshvarananda, and Pujya Swamiji's brothers Sreenivasan and Dharmarajan participating as honoured guests. The dignitaries handed over mementos to all participants and honoured both Kalpana and Uday Acharya with shawls.

The campers were impressed with the facilities available in Manjakkudi including lecture hall, dining hall, and accommodation that match the best of Western standards. The staff were extremely cordial and went out of the way to make us comfortable. After the valedictory function, when the time had come for departing, saying goodbye was most difficult. All good times come to an end, but the memories of the wonderful time will remain etched in everyone's mind. Pujya Swamiji and his ancestral village will remain in our hearts for ever.

- Report by

Swami Rameshvarananda

