

Vedanta camp in Rishikesh

Vedanta camp in Rishikesh by Swami Brahmavidananda and Swamini Brahma-prajnananda (20th – 24th February, 2023)

The blessings of Ganga ji, the blessings of Pujya Swami Dayananda ji and the teachings of the Rishis flowed in full measure in our recent Vedanta camp. We were delighted to return to Rishikesh to conduct our biannual camp after six years especially with many first timers.

Participants were able to live 'the gurukulam life' with an intensive yet relaxed lifestyle including Pujas in the temple, Puja at Pujya Swami ji's adhishtanam, Vedanta classes, Meditation, Satsanga, Sadhu bhandara, Sacred dips in the Ganga, animated discussions and laughter, river-rafting for some and much more! Smiles became wider, steps became lighter, hearts became bigger!

Swami Brahmavidananda ji unfolded Advaita Makaranda by Lakshmidhara Kavi and Swamini Brahma-prajnananda ji unfolded Sri Rudram

The Advaita Makaranda or 'Nectar of Non-Duality' by Lakshmidhara Kavi talks about how 'you' are but a witness, 'Sakshi' to your ego and proceeds to prompt thinking as to whether you really are the witness, or you just are one, without a second? This nectar of non-duality says; 'स्वरूपमेव मे ज्ञानं' - 'consciousness alone is my nature' and 'अहमेव सुखं नान्यद्', 'happiness alone is my nature'; emphasizing that consciousness and happiness are not 'attributes' but simply 'oneself' – the limitless consciousness.

For me, hearing that 'happiness is not an experience, we sometimes put conditions to our happiness and say – "I will be happy when" – only to realize that you ARE!' is something I will spend a lot of time thinking about before I am able to grasp it fully.

Sri Rudram was unfolded by Swamini Brahma-prajnananda ji. Divided into 11 'Anuvakas' or 'sections', it is a prayer to the all-encompassing Lord Shiva. The opening anuvaka is a supplication to Lord Rudra, requesting for his compassion and generosity. The subsequent anuvakas, spanning from the second to the ninth, comprise of salutations to Lord Rudra in his various forms - as the essence of all existence, the sustainer of inner order and the master of the universe. [The word 'namah' is used three hundred times in the first nine sections of the Rudram]

The tenth anuvaka involves prayers addressed to the Lord, while the eleventh anuvaka invokes the Lord in the forms of numerous devatās, responsible for diverse domains of human experience.

We were blessed to be a part of Pujya Swamiji's 'Adhishtana Puja' and also be a part of a 'bhandara' organized for 100 sadhus as well as the Ganga puja.

For some, an important highlight was going river rafting! Overall, the setting of the ash-

ram, by the Ganga, in a place where we were making no decisions, enabled us to focus on our learning.

Some more takeaways from other participants –

I learnt how much the identities I had created around my likes and dislikes as well as roles I play, were making me feel alienated plus fearing rejection.

Letting those identities drop off is giving me an abiding sense of connection and freedom.

All of the various forms in which we learnt to see Bhagawan while studying Sri Rudram is really helping me to deal with every day situations with a whole new perspective and ease. – Shilpi Banerjee, Delhi

Being an online student from UK, I wanted to have an in-person immersive experience & no better place than Pujya Swamiji's ashram being the fountainhead of knowledge in Rishikesh in the lap of mother Ganga.

Studying Advaita Makaranda & Sri Rudram, interacting & bonding with my fellow classmates & long-time students in the ashram was a transformative experience.

My Gratitude to Swamiji & Swaminiji for organizing this camp with every little attention to detail. - Nirmala Iyer, UK

By slowly going along with the words of Advaita Makaranda and recalling the unfolding, contemplating on the same, I can see systematically and logically, what I am (by negating what i am not)

By seeing the details of this beautiful prayer of Sri Rudram, I am inspired to be more awareful of all things, persons, circumstances in my life and of my life, and see each and every minute detail as Bhagavan and The Divine Order..which makes me infinitely more accepting of everything and everyone..dulls the 'sting' of my papa karma – Bharati Chandiramani, Mahabaleshwar

Immersive camp in which Rudram unfolded the auspiciousness of Shiva. 2. Advaita makaranda clarified doubts, 3. One drops roles, even that of the seeker 4. The ashram with its purity and grace helped to contemplate. 5. Everything was comfortable and taken care of. Enjoyed the ride. – Dr Bina Nangia, Delhi

I am so blessed that my dream of gaining knowledge on the banks of Ma Ganga by my Gurus came true. Got some drops of Jnanaganga as well as tirtha from Ma Ganga which will purify my mind and body. It was amazing. Thank you Swamiji and Swaminiji for giving this opportunity and grace to all of us – Sanjeevani, Mumbai

Om Tat Sat