

## Tamil Vedanta Retreat by Swamini Brahmaleenananda

For those of us, yearning for a sound introduction to Vedanta, the retreat arranged by Arsha Vidya Gurukulam at Anaikkatti between 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019 was truly a blessing. About 40 students attended the retreat. The retreat which was a real treat to us all, was brilliantly conducted by Swamini Brahmaleenananda in such a simple manner that made us all wonder how one could ever make a subject like Vedanta, so easy and interesting to follow.



The camp took off with a puja to Pujya Swamiji's padukas at the Guru Tirtha, seeking his anugraha for the camp. The days were nicely planned to make them interesting and meaningful. Nitya pujas conducted at the Dakshinamurti and Subrahmanya temples, and the daily meditations served to enhance the receptiveness during the Vedanta classes. Everybody enjoyed the melodious chanting of Ganga and Margabandhu Stotrams taught by Swaminis Vedarthananda and Sharadananda. In addition, for those interested, Brahmachari Lakshminarayanan conducted

classes on Sanskrit Vyakaranam - Vowel Sandhi as per Panini's sutras, stimulating a desire to learn Panini further.

Swamini Brahmaleenanda's classes were based on the text "Sadhana Bodhini" of Swami Sadatmananda. She explained in her own inimitable style, the various purusharthas and how Moksha is the parama-purushartha of man. She elucidated that the apurnatvam felt by man is his basic problem. Hence his main goal is to become purna, limitless. Citing relevant slokas from the Bhagavad Gita and the various Upanishads, she explained that the intrinsic nature of the Self is the same as the intrinsic nature of Isvara. That one does not realise this, is due to one's ignorance. This ignorance can be removed only with the help of a learned and competent Guru. In order to get these instructions, one must first get the adhikaratvam by a life of karma yoga - by doing one's duties as Isvaraarpanam and receiving the fruits of action as Isvara prasadam. Thus one gets chitta shuddhi. She stressed that bhakti yoga is not entirely different from karma yoga, because both involve actions and devotion to Isvara. Special actions that invoke a devotee role in one, is referred to as bhakti yoga. Only when the tatkalika bhakta becomes a Nitya bhakta one can be truly a karma yogi. This should be followed by working for Sadhana chatustayam

One should approach a learned and competent Guru, who will instruct the Tattvam as revealed by the Upanishadic Mahavakyas. Sravanam and Mananam of this teaching, followed by Nididhyasanam will help the Mumukshu in understanding his own true self. This alone can release man from all sorts of bondage and make him realise his Purnatvam. In all her lectures, Swamini also emphasised the importance of Bhakti in this journey to freedom and how Vedanta does not work without Bhakti and Karma Yoga.

We were blessed to have a short satsang with Swami Sadatmananda, the chief acharya of the Gurukulam and the author of this text. He explained the circumstances that brought about the writing of this text and beautifully highlighted the difference between a samsari and a mumukshu. The last day being Sri Rama navami the camp concluded with a puja. The clear chanting and orderly performance of the puja made the ending memorable.

Looking back at the week at Anaikkatti, we feel a sense of meaningfulness has been generated in our lives by Swamini Brahmaleenanda. We all owe a sense of deep gratitude to her and all the members of the Gurukulam who made this happen.

**A report by campers.**