

Manjakkudi retreats by acaryas Neema Majmudar and Surya Tahora (1-10 and 11-20 December, 2024)

Kaṭhapaniṣad and Bhagavad Gītā

In both the retreats Kaṭhapaniṣad and chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gītā were brilliantly unfolded while in between classes a lot of activities were organized with the help of Swami Ramesvaranandaji, Prasenjit Bhattacharjee, Rajagopalan and the rest of the team. As a student from the lineage of Swami Dayananda it was a dream come true to take part in both retreats and experience the teachings in this unique surroundings. Swamiji's presence is still clearly felt on the Manjakkudi streets and within Jñānapravāha and other buildings.

Jñānapravāha, meaning the 'perennial flow of knowledge' is a perfectly chosen name for the Vedanta Study Centre. The flow with which Neemaji taught us about the brilliant dialogues between Lord Yama & Nachiketā and Kṛṣṇa & Arjuna made it easy for us students to see the timelessness of this unique tradition. By her unique interactive style of teaching, Neemaji herself creates dialogues in her classes and inspires her students to discuss what they have learned with one another outside of the classroom.

In chapter 12 of the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa is teaching us about what a bhakta is. Then in the last class of our retreat we all shared what we had understood. This collective learning experience made everyone involved and created so many different angles to look at what a bhakta exactly is. One person focused on emotions and how a bhakta will align emotions with Īśvara's psychological order instead of denying the presence of this order. Another person brought in that our decision making capacity also needs to be guided by our understanding of Īśvara. This means we need to see as much as possible all the intricacies of our choices in daily life. As we live in an interconnected universe every choice we make will have an effect on our surroundings. To try to choose more wisely every day is what a bhakta will work for.

Suryaji's guided morning meditations helped us to understand and connect with the basic person. The person who can temporarily give up his roles but as an individual cannot give up his connection with the total. To see this clearly invokes naturally the bhakta within us. Similarly, we had a silent morning walk during each retreat through the beautiful nature and rice fields with the idea to see Īśvara everywhere. As all that is here is Īśvara we all passed the exam;).

Swamiji's unique understanding of Īsvara's order expressed in so many initiatives

The birthplace of Swami Dayananda has proven itself to be fertile ground for these teachings to sink in deeper. His understanding and working with Īsvara's order is clearly seen in the village and surrounding area and touched us all. So many things he has done and initiated it is hard to fathom. As a group we visited Swami Dayananda College of Arts & Science which is providing education to students from 80 surrounding villages. We had lovely interactions with the bright students as curiosity and the love for learning was palpable on both sides.

We also visited the house where Swamiji grew up in, we were invited to meet his 93-year old brother Sri. M. G. Srinivasan who filled us with warm stories about their youth and inspired us with a disciplined and healthy lifestyle, Swami Ramesvaranandaji showed us the complete digital archive and together we watched Swamiji's videos on the Spiritual Heritage of India during satsang, he introduced us to Kamalalayam where orphan and semi-orphan girls live together and where the girls chanted and sang beautifully, he showed us the college campus and the new temple which is recently installed.

- Report by Swami Ramesvarananda

