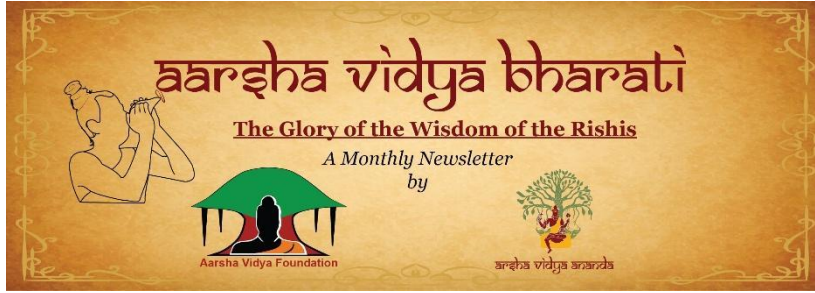

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A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Six months Vedanta course in Rishikesh

By Yoga Chaitanya (also known as Yash Bansdawala)

Śri Gurubhyo Namaḥ

I begin by thanking *Bhagavān Śri Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Pūjya Swami Dayananda ji* by whose grace in the form of his videos my curiosity about Vedanta got converted into a real pursuit, Swamini Brahmaprajnanada ji by whose blessing and teaching I started understanding Vedanta in the right way, laying a solid foundation and Swami Sakshatkritananda ji, our *Ācārya* in the six month course by whose unfolding I started to deeply see what *śāstra* has to say.

They say it is *prārabdha* that one comes to vedanta but it is *puruṣārtha* which helps us go all the way. So, when the opportunity to do the six month course on Vedanta and *saṃskṛtam* at the Rishikesh Ashram came I could not imagine leaving it. The course began from 1st June 2023 and ended on 29th November 2023 which had students from all walks of life. Around fifty of us from eight different countries from the youngest who was 21 to the eldest who was around 80 were truly blessed to attend this six month course conducted at the banks of Gangaji in Rishikesh.

The chief *Ācārya* of the course was Swami Sakshatkrtananda ji who gave an extensive introduction to Vedanta. He gave a detailed explanation on 'what a *pramāṇa* is, means of knowledge, what are the different *pramāṇa*-s and why



Vedanta śāstra is a *pramāṇa*'. Something that I feel is very important to ascertain, only then the way one looks at śāstra is changed. Swamiji then started *Tattvabodha*, an introductory text.

Upaniṣad-s taught in the course by Swamiji were *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, *Kena Upaniṣad* and *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*. Swamini Svatmavidyananda taught us *Bhagavad Gītā*. *Samskṛtam* classes were taken by Swami Parabrahmananda ji. Vedic chanting was taught by Ācārya Gopal ji and *stotra* chanting by Swamini Vimuktananda ji. Swamini Agamananda ji taught us the meaning of Vishnu *sahasranāma* in *satsang*-s. Besides that we had occasional question-answer sessions and regular meditation classes. We also had the opportunity to hear a few classes from various other Ācārya-s of the parampara like Swami Veditamananda ji, Swami Satswarupananda ji.

The day begins with the temple *Pūjā* that starts at 5.30 am followed by *Ārti* at 6.30 am. The next was guided meditation from 7.00 am to 7.30 am followed by breakfast at 8.00 am. The first Vedanta class was at 8.15 am to 9.15 am which was taken by Swami Sakshatkritananda ji. This was followed by Sanskrit from 9.30 am to 10.15 am. 10.30 am we had Vedic chanting for half-hour followed by *stotra* chanting for another half-hour at 11.30 am. We had lunch at 12.30 pm. Then we had *seva* for 1/2 hours. The next class was *Bhagavad Gītā* from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm. Post that there were optional yoga classes. Dinner was served after the temple *Pūjā* and Ganga *Ārti* at 7.30 pm and the day ends after the *satsang* at 8.00 to 9.15pm. We had weekly holidays on Wednesdays.

Life in Ashram is simple, efficient and revolves around teaching; *Śravaṇam*, *mananam* and *nididhyāsanam* to gain maximum out of what the śāstra has to offer. It is ideal for gaining *adhikāritvam*. It is ideal to have a deeper understanding. The course is designed in such a way that each person wherever they may be in terms of their growth they will gain something, whether it is *adhikāritvam* or growing clarity. Although the structure of the course is intense it is yet ideal for one to stay with the subject matter.

For me personally, the six-month course has been the most profound. I find myself having a deeper understanding. Even before the course I had been attending more than two Vedanta classes in a week and I've attended many different Vedanta camps but the six month long exposure to śāstra is very different. Just like any journey there were ups and downs but most of it was wonderful.

The most beneficial thing about the course I find is that the mind is constantly with the subject matter, which is not possible otherwise. This helped in clarity. Another benefit of the course is that most of the people have the same goal. Fellow students become an important part of the course, the discussions we had, helped in resolving doubts, deepening understanding and thus helped in overall clarity.

During our course, I was blessed to receive *dīkṣa* from Swamiji. He also gave me a new name- Yoga Chaitanya. This course has been very transformative and this was one of the special moments in the course for me. This course laid a solid foundation in my journey and now I see the value of intensive learning in a *Gurukulam*.

A *gurukulam* is a must for any serious seeker and I would like to encourage fellow students to take part in such courses and also contribute towards building the *gurukulam* in Bombay so that all fellow students, friends and everyone else can be blessed by this wonderful knowledge.