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Chinmaya International Foundation

Academia for Sanskrit Research and Indic Studies

NEWSLETTER

2023-2024

Editorial

Prof. Gauri Mahulikar
Academic Director



Bilhaṇa, the renowned 11th-century Kashmiri poet, calls the ocean 'ratnākara' meaning 'a mine or treasure of jewels'. It is said, 'अद्यापि रत्नाकर एव सिन्धुः' meaning, the ocean continues to be a treasure house of jewels, despite its jewels being taken away year after year. Similarly, mahātmās remain unfathomable and unaffected though hundreds and thousands of people benefit from them over the years. They possess an inexhaustible treasure of knowledge. CIF was founded by one such mahātmā, the visionary Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, in 1989. We at CIF, are blessed by his grace that ensures a ceaseless paramparā of Swāmins, Brahmacārins and householders motivated to disseminate the ancient wisdom.

The vision of CIF is to be a bridge between the past and the present, the East and the West, science and spirituality, and the pundit and the public. To actualise this vision, CIF regularly conducts Home Study Courses (HSC), webinars and on-site camps. Besides, CIF and CIF Shodha Sansthan publish books on various subjects related to Sanskrit and Indic studies.

This year, Adi Sankara Nilayam experienced an enormous footfall during Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda's camp in November 2023 and again during Chinmaya Sankaram celebrations held from 8–12 May 2024. This year, being the 108th Jayanti of Gurudev, numerous events were held at CIF and Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth's new campus in Onakkoor.

Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati facilitated a Puja Vidhanam Course on two levels, Shakti Upasana Camp during Navarātri, Saundarya Lahari Camp and a Gita Saram Camp. Academic talks on temple architecture during the Puja Vidhanam courses threw light on the scientific flavour of the ritual aspect of worship. An Advaita Vedanta Immersive on the Brahmasūtras was convened by Swami Advayananda.

International Yoga Day was jointly celebrated by CIF, CIFSS, and Krishnamacarya Yoga Mandiram (KYM), Chennai, by organising a national conference on 'Yoga as Embedded in Indian Culture'. It was inaugurated by Hon'ble Sri Arif Mohammad Khan, the Governor of Kerala. The inauguration alone drew over 150 participants.

Spoken Sanskrit classes, a Sanskrit Fest with 500 student participants, a national conference on 'Kerala's Contribution to Vedanta' tradition sponsored by ICPR, New Delhi, a camp by Prof. V. N. Jha on Indian Materialism, an onsite workshop on Lexicography, and an online course on manuscriptology by CIFSS, were some of the other academic events. Webinars by Prof. Gauri Mahulikar on Dvandvadevatā Sūktas (Dual Divinities) and Pañcamahābhūta Sūktas from the R̥gveda, and Sanskrit Launchpad were well received by Indian and overseas participants. The Home Study Courses Department launched nine new courses and as many as 38 webinars between June 2023 and May 2024. This helped connect many new people with CIF.

An online Hindu Spiritual Care Certificate programme of 24 credits, recognised by the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) in the USA, was launched by CIF. The programme was coordinated by Smt. Vilasini Balkrishnan and had 65 seekers enrolled. Br. Ved Chaitanya was the main faculty from CIF, along with Prof. Ramesh Pattni (Professor Emeritus, CVV), Madhu Sharma and others.

CIF conceptualised numerous book projects in the past year. A few have been published while the rest are in the pipeline. The CIF publication team remains continuously occupied with the printing and reprinting of books to cater to the demand. The aim is also to have an e-version of every printed book.

Apart from the various activities, festivals like Onam, Janmashtami, Ganesha Chaturthi, Diwali, Lakshmi Narayana Puja, Maha Shivaratri and so on were celebrated at CIF with games, havana, fun and food validating the Sanskrit saying, 'उत्सवप्रियो हि मनुष्यः'. The campus truly reverberated with activities and festivities, for which we are grateful to the gods and gurus.





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Academic Camps

3-day National Conference on Yoga as an Embodied Culture of Bharata

Date: 30 June to 2 July 2023

Mode: Hybrid – Residential and Online

No. of Participants: 60

Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF), CIF Shodha Sansthan (CIFSS) and Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM) collaborated to conduct a 3-day National Conference on Yoga as an Embodied Culture of Bharata at CIF. The goal was to show how Indian culture and ethos subsumed yoga in all its facets spanning all the religious and socio-cultural activities. It also aimed to break the general misconception that yoga is simply about āsanas and prāṇāyāma practised by certain classes of society.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by the Hon'ble Governor of Kerala, Sri Arif Mohammed Khan. Following a grand welcome, he was given a guided tour of the illom, the ancient maternal birth home of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, by Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati. The Hon'ble Governor performed ārati in the birth room of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and was honoured with token gifts.

The other dignitaries present at the inaugural function were Swami Viviktaṇanda Saraswati (Head, Chinmaya Mission, Kerala), Adv. Anoop Jacob (MLA from Piravom), Prof. Shrinivasa Varakhedi (Vice Chancellor, Central Sanskrit University, New Delhi), Dr Latha Satish (Research Head, KYM), Prof. Ajay Kapoor (Vice Chancellor, Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth), Prof. K. T. Madhavan (Chairman, CIFSS), and Prof. Gauri Mahulikar (Academic Director, CIF). Attended by over 150 people, the inaugural event was widely covered by the print and online media. The event was streamed live on CIF's YouTube channel. The conference had six invited speakers who covered various topics related to yoga. The keynote address by Dr Nagaraj Paturi, Director of Indic Academy, unravelled the theme of the conference 'Yoga as an Embodied Culture of Bharata', emphasising the importance of recognition of yoga in all its facets in our daily lives. Dr Latha Satish, Head of research, KYM, elaborated upon 'Yoga—The Psychology of Mindfulness', highlighting the inherent characteristics of mindfulness as popularly understood and its correlation in yogic practices, the factors that affect the process of being mindful and the impact of lack of mindfulness.

The talk on 'Yoga and Nātya—Meeting Points' delivered by Smt. Nrithya Jagannathan, Director, KYM, explored the core principles of yoga as detailed in the Yogasūtras, mapping them to corresponding concepts in the Nātyaśāstra and the Abhinavabhāratī with specific emphasis given to nātyotpatti, the siddhis and the concept of rasotpatti and sahṛdayatvam.

Dr Veena Londhe, Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Mumbai University, in her presentation on 'Yoga as a Cultural String of India', referred to the Bhagavad-gītā and Yogasūtras while speaking on sense control, cultivation of focussed attention, samatva, sādhāraṇa-dharma which is yama-niyama of Patañjalī yoga, Law of Karma, and Bhakti Yoga. With a focus on these topics, Dr Londhe showed how yoga acts as a cultural bond across India.

Prof. Krishna Sharma, Chairman, Department of Human Consciousness and Yogic Sciences, Mangalore University, in his talk on Yoga as Traditional Therapy expounded on the yogic concept that diseases originate in 'cittavikṣepa' and controlling which diseases can be controlled. But such control needs a regulated lifestyle involving food, sleep, work and so on.

Through her presentation on 'Nāma-saṅkīrtanam—The Yoga of Devotional Singing', Smt. Devasena Bhavanani showed how singing kīrtanas and bhajans makes the mind calm and peaceful leading to yoga. She sang a few bhajans and kīrtanas creating an environment of calmness which her talk emphasised. Smt. Devasena Bhavanani is the General Secretary and Head of the Department of Sanskrit and Dance at ICYER, Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry.

Along with the lectures of guest speakers, there were 37 paper presentations. The presenters were from diverse backgrounds—academic and research scholars, yoga experts, artists of music, dance, martial arts, and so on—from various regions of India. Over 60% of the paper presenters were below the age of 35 years which showed that the youth of India are striving towards upholding traditional and cultural roots and taking them forward into the next decade.

The chief guest at the valedictory function was Dr A. Radhakrishnan, President of Patanjali Yoga Training and Research Centre, Thrissur, who emphasised the role of yoga in everyone's life. He talked about a proper diet and sādhanā for the overall well-being of the body, mind and soul.

The conference was attended by over 60 people both online and offline. The feedback from the participants showed that the conference achieved its stated objectives of instilling confidence and a sense of pride in yoga and culture among the young participants. Conferences such as these bring people from different fields onto a common platform to show that although their fields of work are diverse, the commonality of yoga and culture binds them all together. The paper presentations will shortly be published as a proceeding of the conference.



Spoken Sanskrit Evening Classes

Date: 19 to 28 July 2023

Mode: Residential

Facilitator: Dr P. K. Sankaranarayanan from Samskrita Bharati

No. of Participants: 40

To promote the usage and vocabulary of Devabhāṣā Sanskrit among the residents of the CIF campus, evening classes on Spoken Sanskrit were conducted under the guidance of Dr P. K. Sankaranarayanan from Samskrita Bharati, for 8 days at CIF.

The special programme was inaugurated by Swami Sharadananda and Prof. Gauri Mahulikar. The 40 participants included the staff of CIF and CIFSS, along with residents from nearby areas and children.

Dr P. N. Sudarsanan (Director, CIFSS) welcomed the participants, while Dr G. Rajashekha Reddy (Deputy Director, CIFSS) delivered the vote of thanks.

Dr P. K. Sankaranarayanan conducted the sessions enthusiastically, prompting and guiding everyone in a fun way to converse in Sanskrit. Gradually, all the participants were effortlessly using Sanskrit words in their daily conversations and enjoying doing so!

The training sessions concluded with a valedictory ceremony presided over by Swami Advayananda (President, CIF) and Dr P. N. Sudarsanan. The participants shared their experiences and demonstrated their insights through recitations and performances. Swami Advayananda emphasised the many benefits of knowing Sanskrit and encouraged everyone to continue conversing in Sanskrit to perfect their skills.



Sanskrit Fest 2023

Date: 11 to 12 September 2023

Mode: Residential

No. of Participants: 500

The CIF Shodha Sansthan organised a Sanskrit Fest where a plethora of competitive events were hosted and every event was well-attended, bringing together 500 students from 30 schools in Kerala over two days. The inaugural event was graced by Swami Advayananda. Dr P. N. Sudarshan welcomed the participants, and Dr V. R. Manoj (Deputy Director CIFSS) proposed the vote of thanks.

The panel of judges consisted of eminent personalities from the field of Sanskrit including Dr C. N. Ratnam (Retd. Professor, Maharaja's College, Ernakulam), Prof. Jyotsana Gangadharan (Associate Professor, Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura), Dr Sarita Maheswaran (Associate Professor, Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura), Dr Vinod Kumar K. P. (Assistant Professor, Department of Sahitya, Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura) and Sri Anil Narayanan (Assistant Professor, Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth).

The participants competed in various events in Sanskrit including Bhagavad-gītā chanting, poem recitation, essay writing, elocution, storytelling, akṣara-śloka (poetic quatrains) and group song. The festival celebrated Sanskrit language and culture, encouraging the continued use of the language and its appreciation among the youth.



On the second day, the winners and participants were honoured at a grand prize distribution ceremony. Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati delivered the benedictory address and Prof. Gauri Mahulikar presided over the event as the Chief Guest. Dr L. Sampath Kumar (Head, School of Linguistics and Literature Studies, CVV) presented the certificates and trophies to the winners. Bhavans Varuna Vidyalaya, Ernakulam, won the championship, and Chinmaya Vidyalaya, Kolazhy, was the runner-up.

Conference on Kerala's Contribution to Vedanta

Date: 2 to 4 February 2024

Mode: Hybrid—Residential and Online

No. of participants: 111

CIF and CVV jointly conducted a 3-day Hybrid National Conference on 'Kerala's Contribution to Vedanta' at Adi Sankara Nilayam, Veliyanad, with financial support from the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) where various eminent academicians presented papers on the contribution of prominent spiritual leaders from Kerala towards Vedānta.

72 participants attended the conference on-site (residential) while 39 participants attended it online. Presentations were made in multiple languages—30 in English, 7 in Sanskrit and 3 in Malayalam. There were 33 on-site presentations and 7 online presentations. Among the presenters, 9 were invited speakers, 19 were faculty/research scholars and 12 were students.

The conference had a three-tier structure: invited speakers, faculty/research scholars and students. The invited speakers were allotted 45 minutes each, while the faculty/research scholars were allotted 15 minutes each and the students 10 minutes each.

The presenters and attendees on campus were from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh and the online presenters were from Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Singapore and Sweden. The conference was jointly hosted by Prof. Gauri Mahulikar and Dr Sunitha Grandhee (Dean, Lifelong Learning and Wellness, and Director of the Centre for Applied Indian Knowledge Systems at CVV), representing CIF and CVV respectively. Prof. Sachidananda Mishra (ICPR) was present on-site to deliver the keynote address during the inauguration.

The conference was inaugurated in a spiritual setting—the lighting of lamps accompanied by the chanting of hymns by Swami Adityananda of Chinmaya Mission, Mandya, Swami Swatmananda of Chinmaya Mission, Mumbai, Prof. Sachidananda Mishra, Member Secretary of ICPR, Prof. Sunitha Grandhee from CVV and Prof. Gauri Mahulikar. Many distinguished scholars, sannyāsins, ācāryas and academic luminaries were also present.

Prof. Gauri Mahulikar welcomed the gathering and thanked Prof. Sachidananda Mishra whose efforts made the conference possible. In his inaugural address, Swami Swatmananda reminded the audience that Bharata was and still is, a knowledge power. Prof. Sachidananda Mishra, who is a renowned scholar, academician and the recipient of the Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman, (Presidential award) expressed his pleasure on being at Adi Sankara Nilayam, the birth home of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkara and the seat of CIF. While acknowledging Kerala's contribution to Vedānta, he reminded the audience that Vedānta is not just Advaita alone but also includes other schools of thought by sages and eminent ācāryas of other Vedic traditions.

At the valedictory function, two student participants reflected on their experience at the conference and the transformation it had kindled in them. In his valedictory address, Swami Narasimhananda, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kozhikode, encouraged the audience to consider what should be the follow-up to the conference and Vedānta studies in general.

Prof. Gauri Mahulikar thanked all those who had contributed directly and indirectly to the conference and the participants for sharing their wisdom, knowledge and expertise through the respective topics they covered as a conference paper or through their speeches. Prof. Mahulikar expressed gratitude to ICPR for supporting the conference. She offered humble praṇāms to Swami Narasimhananda for participating in the entire conference sharing his Vedāntic knowledge and offering his guidance to one and all who were fortunate to have his satsaṅg.



A Workshop on Indian Materialism

Date: 17 to 24 February 2024

Mode: Residential

No. of Participants: 50

A workshop on Indian materialism, the darśana of the materialists called Cārvākas, was conducted by Prof. V. N. Jha at Adi Sankara Nilayam.

Prof. Jha is the former director of the Centre for Advanced Studies in Sanskrit (CASS), Pune. Currently, he presides over Rishi Rina Trust (RRT), Pune, a non-profit educational organisation. The Trust disseminates lessons and teachings on a broad range of Indian darśanas.

The Indian darśanas (often translated as schools of philosophy) are broadly divided into āstika and nāstika—darśanas that recognise the authority of the Vedas and those that do not, respectively.

There are traditionally considered to be six āstika and three nāstika darśanas. Rishi Rina Trust has already offered sessions that have covered the basics of all āstika darśanas. This workshop on the darśana of the Cārvākas is the first in a series of presentations on the nāstika darśanas. Workshops on the darśana of the Bauddhas and the Jainas are to follow.

Close to 50 students of all ages and backgrounds and from all over India, including a group of students from Manipal University, Karnataka, attended the workshop. The participants enjoyed the pleasant and green environs of the CIF campus and the serenity of Adi Sankara Nilayam.

The camp was inaugurated by Prof. Jha. Professor from BHU Dr Rajiv Ranjan Sinha and Prof. Gauri Mahulikar were also present. Sri Ananta Basudev Nanda, Curator of the Manuscripts Section at CIFSS, conducted the opening proceedings.

Prof. Jha taught from a portion of a text on the Cārvākas preserved in a work called the Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha authored by Sri Madhusudana Saraswati. He elucidated how the Cārvākas engaged proponents of various other darśanas, like those of the Nyāya-darśana. There were stimulating rounds of exchanges between the darśanas based on the validity of a means of knowing other than perception. The Cārvākas advanced ingenious arguments that attempted to undermine the grounds for other means of knowing.

As Prof. Jha stressed, the text demonstrated the spirit of vibrant, penetrating, and often humorous modes of intellectual conversation that flourished between the various darśanas in pursuit of the search for the Truth. He contrasted this with the acrimonious and senseless debates that dominate much of modern-day discourse, especially in public media. The students found time towards the end of the course duration to stage a cultural evening. Poetry, songs and a tabla rendition marked the rich evening.

A convocation ceremony on the final day of the workshop witnessed valedictory addresses by Prof. Gauri Mahulikar and Prof. Jha. Prof. Mahulikar expressed hope that CIF would be able to host many more such workshops in the future. The students, thrilled by the intellectual stimulation of the workshop, returned home with new knowledge and wisdom to reflect upon.



Svādhyāya and Sādhanā Camps

Puja Vidhanam Course (Preliminary Level)

Date: 12 August to 10 September 2023

Mode: Residential

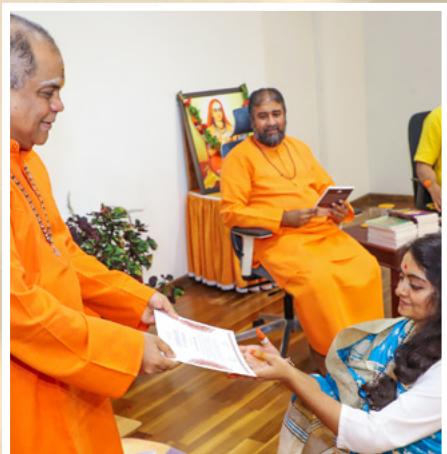
Facilitators: Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati and Br. Mukund Chaitanya

Number of Participants: 35

The Puja Vidhanam Course (Preliminary Level) is a flagship programme of CIF conducted under the expert guidance and tutelage of Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati at the sacred and serene Adi Sankara Nilayam.

The course was inaugurated by Prof. Sundareswaran (Professor of Sanskrit, University of Calicut). The chanting of basic sūktas preparation and performance of pūjās and havanas, the philosophy behind the rituals and so on are some of the topics covered in the course. The Gāyatrī Havana every Sunday provided an added practical and blissful experience for the participants. By the end of the course, the participants happily committed to the pracāra of the knowledge which they had gained.

The course concluded with a valedictory address by Swami Advayananda.



Shakti Upasana

Date: 15 to 24 October 2023

Mode: Residential

Facilitator: Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati

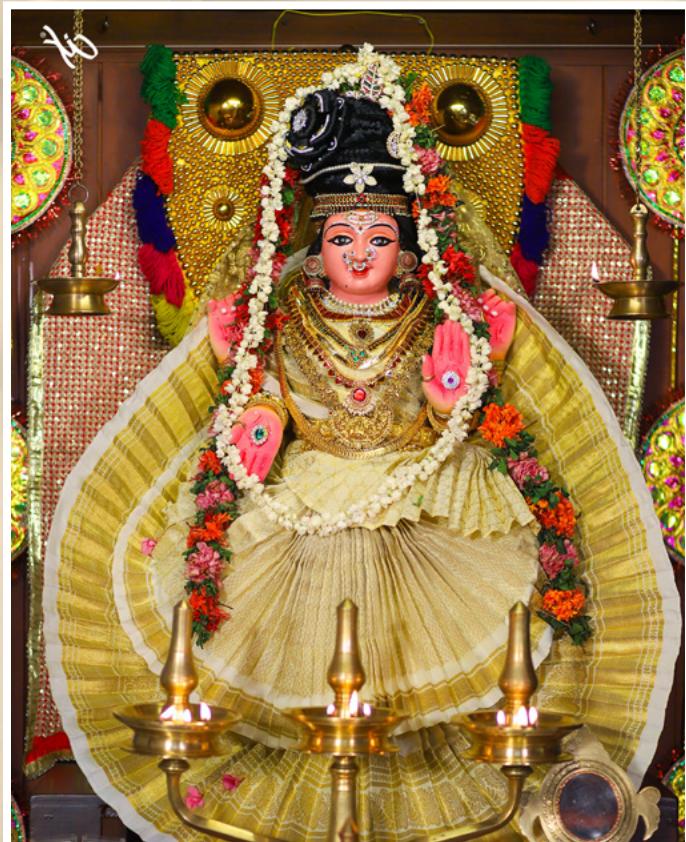
Over nine sacred days, the participants of the Shakti Upasana Camp, who had travelled from different parts of the world, experienced the grace of the Devī in all her avatāras with reverential offerings of pūjās and havanas led by Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati.

Each day was a deeply spiritual experience, marked by a series of rituals and practices devoted to the different forms of the Devī starting with Śailaputrī, Brahmacāriṇī, Candraghaṇḍā, Kūṣmāṇḍā, Skandamātā, Kātyāyanī, the fierce Kālarātrī, Mahāgaurī on Aṣṭamī, and finally the gracious Siddhidātrī on the ninth day.

The day would begin with the Devī being awakened at 6 a.m. with the Uthāna-ārati and the singing of the Lalitā-suprabhātam. The mid-morning activities included Gaṇapati Havana, Pañcāyatana-pūjā, Laghu Caṇḍikā-havana, and Mahālakṣmī pūjā, invoking the divine blessings. Swami Sharadananda's discourses on Śrī Ādi Śaṅkara's 'Mantramāṭkā-puṣpamālā-stavam' enriched the spiritual understanding, followed by the chanting of the Lalitā-sahasranāmam.

Special pūjās like Navakanyā-pūjā and Sumanāgalī-pūjā on Aṣṭamī and the grand Mahā Caṇḍikā-havana on Navamī further deepened the spiritual experience. The daily rājopacāra of vādyam, gītam, and nr̥tyam offered to the Devī Bhagavatī by the students of CVV was delightful. The entire atmosphere was rendered divine, with these daily rituals easing the participants into serene peace.

The camp concluded on Vijayadaśamī, that is 24 October 2023, with a Sarasvatī-pūjā. On the occasion, 15 children were initiated into study with a Vidyārambham ceremony.



Vedanta Unveiled

Date: 23 to 29 November 2023

Mode: Residential

Facilitators: Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, Swamini Vimalananda and Swami Advayananda

Text: *Bhagavad-gītā Chapter 15, Puruṣavidhabrāhmaṇa of Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad and*

Svarūpānusandhānam

No. of participants: 220

The Vedanta Unveiled Camp unfolded over seven enlightening days serving as a transformative odyssey for seekers diving deep into the realms of spiritual wisdom and self-realisation at Adi Sankara Nilayam. The camp opened with inaugural blessings and soul-nourishing discourses by Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda centring on the profound teachings from chapter 15 of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

The participants embarked on a journey of insight, delving into the depths of knowledge with teachings from learned teachers such as Swamini Vimalananda (Chinmaya Mission, Coimbatore) on the intricacies of *Puruṣavidhabrāhmaṇa*, a section from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, and Swami Advayananda shedding light on *Svarūpānusandhānam*, a composition of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Engaging in group discussions and the daily Guru Pāduka-pūjā further enriched the exploration of śraddhā, bhakti and jñāna.

220 participants from various corners of the globe converged for this spiritual immersion. The vibrant ambience of Adi Sankara Nilayam reached its zenith during these seven days with the palpable presence of Śrī Śaṅkara permeating the sacred surroundings of his birth home, offering a profound experience to all attendees. The camp drew to a close on 29 November 2023, leaving participants enriched, enlightened, and inspired on their spiritual journeys.



Gita Saram (Malayalam)

Date: 8 to 12 December 2023

Mode: Residential

Facilitators: Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati, Br. Sudheer Chaitanya

Text: Bhagavad-gītā

No. of participants: 29

Mother Gītā resides in the heart of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda. She keeps flowing to the world through His devotees. The 18th chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* which is considered the consolidation of all the 18 chapters was the prime focus of study and discussion during the five-day residential camp held at Adi Sankara Nilayam.

Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati expounded in-depth on the 18th chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* in Malayalam. In the evenings the participants soaked in Bhakti through satsaṅg with Br. Sudheer Chaitanya on *Navadhā Bhakti Sūtras*.

Śravaṇam during the sessions, mananam during the group discussions and nididhyāsanam when on their own, evoked devotion, knowledge and purity in action in all the seekers. Adi Sankara Nilayam embraced the participants with the affection of a mother.



Laghu Vakya Vritti

Date: 20 to 22 December 2023

Mode: Residential

Facilitator: Br. Ved Chaitanya

Text: Laghu-vākya-vṛtti

No. of Participants: 48

Br. Ved Chaitanya explained the text *Laghu-vākya-vṛtti* in his simple inimitable style. The word 'laghu' stands for short or condensed. The verses in this text focus on the practice of the mahāvākya 'aham brahmāsmi'. The early morning meditation sessions led by Br. Ved supported the study of the text. The informal post-dinner Q&A sessions in the courtyard of the Adi Sankara Nilayam helped the participants dive deeper into the text.

The camp concluded with a valedictory ceremony where a few participants shared their experiences.

Swami Sharadananda said Adi Sankara Nilayam is a 'tīrtha-kṣetram'. He further added that it is like our mother's house where we are always welcome to come and stay whenever we feel like it and that the outer world we live in is like our in-law's house.

Br. Ved expressed his gratitude to Pūjya Gurudev and the entire guru-paramparā without whose grace this camp would not have been possible. Every participant felt blessed and inspired as they left for their homes.

The moments of learning and introspection lingered as the participants celebrated Gītā Jayantī the next day, 23 December 2024. Participants from all over the world attended the camp.



Advaita Vedanta Immersive 2023

Date: 25 to 31 December 2023

Mode: Residential

Facilitator: Swami Advayananda

Text: Brahmasūtra

No. of Participants: 80

The Advaita Vedanta Immersive 2023 (AVI 2023) unfolded a sacred journey into the very heart of Vedāntic wisdom. Focussed on the second sūtra of the Brahmasūtras—'janmādyasya yataḥ' (Janmādyadhikaraṇa), this intensive study marked the continuation of the first two Advaita Vedanta Immersive programmes (AVI 2017 & 2018) that centred around Adhyāsabhbāṣya and the first Brahmasūtra.

Rooted in the wisdom of the Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtras, and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, seekers delved into the principles of Advaita Vedānta under the guidance of Swami Advayananda ably assisted by Brni. Shubani Chaitanya, Brni. Bharati Chaitanya, Br. Ved Chaitanya, Brni. Devaki Chaitanya, Brni. Taarini Chaitanya, Sri Arunachalam, and Smt. Priya Arunachalam.

The study included detailed discourses on Śāṅkarabhāṣya, group discussions, Q&A sessions, meditation and daily reflections. This holistic blend of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana forms the essence of the Advaita Vedanta Immersive.

This immersive exploration took place at the birth home of Śrī Ādi Śāṅkarācārya, adding a spiritual resonance to the entire experience. A total of 80 participants from diverse corners of the world came together on this journey, elevating their understanding and realigning their lives toward the supreme reality.

As this camp concluded, it left behind minds inspired and hearts carrying the immortal seed of Janmādyadhikaraṇa for further contemplation and spiritual evolution.



Saundarya Lahari 2024

Date: 21 to 25 March 2024

Mode: Residential

Facilitator: Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati

Saundarya-laharī (Waves of Beauty) is a collection of one hundred holy hymns composed by Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya in Sanskrit. It extols the virtues, beauty and grace of the Divine Mother, Goddess Tripura-sundarī as Pārvatī, and truly awakens the devotion within.

Under the expert guidance of Swami Sharadananda, a five-day residential camp on Saundarya Lahari was held at Adi Sankara Nilayam. The camp was focussed on learning the essence of the verses and their significance and benefits.

The detailed discourse, followed by training in chanting **Saundarya-laharī** provided great peace, serenity and spiritual elevation. The students also participated in the Utram Mahotsavam at Chinmaya Swayambhu Ayyappa Temple at the CIF campus.





HOME STUDY COURSES

Course and Webinar
Releases 2023-24

CIF offers various online courses and webinars through the Department of Home Study. Webinars are offered regularly and nearly four to five webinars are conducted every month. Listed below are the new courses and webinars released in 2023-24.

Svādhyāya Series

| Course Name | Facilitator |
|---|------------------------------|
| <i>Kaivalya-upaniṣad</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Natural Phenomena as the Rgvedic Deities</i> | Prof. Gauri Mahulikar |
| <i>Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad</i> | Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati |
| <i>Upanishad Ganga</i> | Swami Tejomayananda |
| <i>Karṇābharam</i> | Prof. Gauri Mahulikar |
| <i>Madhyama-vyāyoga</i> | Prof. Gauri Mahulikar |

Courses

| Course Name | Facilitator |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Master Gita Master Life in Tamil | Swamini Sampratishtthananda |
| Foundation Vedanta Course in Chinese | Translation by Lizhen Xu |
| Puja Vidhanam Level 1 | Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati |

Webinar Releases

| Webinar Name | Facilitator |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Nārāyaṇīyam Chanting</i> | Brni. Devaki Chaitanya |
| <i>Bhagavad-gītā Chanting</i> | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| <i>Ātmabodha</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Dvandvadevatā Sūktas</i> | Prof. Gauri Mahulikar |
| <i>Kaṭhopaniṣad</i> | Sri Anant Sarma |

| Webinar Name | Facilitator |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <i>Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (with Śaṅkara Bhāṣya)</i> | Br. Ved Chaitanya |
| <i>Bhikṣu Gītā</i> | Smt. Shanthi Rammohan |
| <i>Dṛg-Dṛṣya-Viveka</i> | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| <i>Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Adoration of the Mother</i> | Swami Sharadananda |
| <i>The Bhagavad-gītā for Modern Business, Leadership and Management</i> | CIF-CVV collaboration |
| <i>Nārada Bhakti Sūtra</i> | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| <i>Maṇīṣā Pañcakam</i> | Br. Ved Chaitanya |
| <i>Pañcadaśī Chapter 10 – Nāṭaka-dīpa-prakaraṇa</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Bhaja Govindam</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Thiruppongazh Series</i> | V. Arunachalam |
| <i>Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa – Yuddha Kāṇḍa</i> | Swami Ramakrishnananda |
| <i>Śrīmad Bhāgavata Māhātmya</i> | Swami Sharadananda |
| <i>Bhagavad-gītā – Modern Problems, Timeless Solutions</i> | Br. Ved Chaitanya |
| <i>Pañca Mahābhūta Sūktas</i> | Prof. Gauri Mahulikar |
| <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad – Chapter 6</i> | Sri S. Rammohan |
| <i>Svarūpānusandhānam</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad</i> | Br. Ved Chaitanya |
| <i>Śrīmad Bhāgavatam Canto 1</i> | Swami Sharadananda |
| <i>Abhijñānaśākuntalam</i> | Prof. Gauri Mahulikar |
| <i>Śivānanda Laharī</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Maṇaḥ Śodhanam</i> | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| <i>O My Mind</i> | Br. Ved Chaitanya |
| <i>Aparokṣānubhūti</i> | Sri Anant Sarma |
| <i>Bhagavad-gītā – An Introduction</i> | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| <i>Kandapurāṇam</i> | Sri Arunachalam Viswanathan |
| <i>Bhāgavatam Chanting, Canto 2</i> | Brni. Devaki Chaitanya |
| <i>Bhagavad-gītā – Chapter 2</i> | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| <i>Saundarya Laharī, Part II</i> | Swami Sharadananda |
| <i>Vedānta Vijñāna Course</i> | Swami Advayananda |
| <i>Vairāgya Śatakam</i> | Smt. Shanthi Rammohan |
| <i>Laghu Vākyā Vṛtti</i> | Br. Ved Chaitanya |
| <i>Sanskrit Launch Pad</i> | Prof. Gauri Mahulikar |

Hindu Spiritual Care Programme (HSC)

CIF has a new offering, mainly for the Hindu diaspora in the form of a training programme for Hindu Spiritual Care Providers (Hindu Chaplains) to serve the Hindu community around the world. Chaplains of all religions are in great demand in the West, and provide spiritual services in secular environments, such as in universities, hospitals, hospices, government, and the military. Whereas Christians, Jews, Muslims, and even Buddhists are well represented by their chaplains, there have been relatively few Hindu Chaplains globally to date.

The vision and inspiration for this programme come entirely from Pūjya Gurudev. With the blessings and guidance of Pūjya Swami Swaroopananda and the support of Swami Advayananda and Br. Ved Chaitanya, CIF has developed an online Certificate in Hindu Spiritual Care (CHSC) programme of 24 graduate credits. Smt. Vilasini Balakrishnan, MS, LCPC, oversees the CHSC as its programme director. The courses are taught over three semesters of part-time study by Hindu academics, chaplains, and swamins including Dr Ramesh Pattni, Dr Madhu Sharma, and Br. Ved Chaitanya. The courses are recognised by the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) in the US toward becoming a Board-Certified Chaplain.

Currently, 65 students are enrolled in the CHSC. The students are mainly from North America, and some from India. Also, while most are from Chinmaya Mission, several are from other Hindu sampradāyas. Eleven students completed the 24-credit programme in June 2024, and another 50 students are in process. A new batch will begin in January 2025. For more information, visit <https://www.chinfo.org/hinduspiritualcare>.

News stories from the 12 June 2024 edition of the local Indian weekly newspaper India Herald in Houston, Texas, USA

Ravi Iyer, the first Hindu Chaplain in Houston

CIF held the first graduation ceremony for the Certificate in Hindu Spiritual Care programme on 5 June 2024. The programme celebrated the milestone with the graduation of its inaugural cohort of 11 students.

The ceremony was held virtually during the final session of the Rites, Rituals, and Vedanta course taught by Br. Ved Chaitanya. The graduates were congratulated for their hard work in this first-of-its-kind comprehensive training programme in Hindu Spiritual Care (Chaplaincy). The graduates from across the US and Canada included Ashlesh Dani and Bina Dani (Poughkeepsie, NY), Hema Ramanathan (Plymouth-Canton, MI), Indira Palekar (Cleveland), Meenakshi Venkataramani (Boston), Pradeep Solanki (Toronto), Rakhi Khanna (Chicago), Ravi Iyer (Houston), Sangamesh Konaraddi (Frederick, MD), Sonali Dave (Dallas), and Sowmya Kesari (Acton, MA).

Students undertook coursework in Hindu spiritual traditions, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Vedānta* philosophy, Indian psychology, Hindu rites and rituals and *sādhanās*, ethical principles and competencies of chaplaincy, and communication skills. They concluded their studies with chaplaincy practicums at healthcare and other facilities. Guest speaker Swami Shantananda, President of Chinmaya Mission West, praised the graduates for their commitment to serving communities through spiritual caregiving.

"By blending ancient wisdom with modern healthcare needs, you are ambassadors lighting the way for Hindu spiritual care to be integrated into diverse settings," he stated.

"We are extremely proud of this pioneering group of graduates," said Br. Ved, from CIF.

"Their dedication to providing compassionate spiritual support while representing Hindu values in a professional clinical setting is truly inspiring."

Vilasini Balakrishnan, Programme Director of CHSC, credited Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda as the visionary and inspiration behind this programme.

Gurudev founded CIF in 1989 to be a bridge between East and West, science and spirituality, and Hindu chaplaincy is helping to fulfil this role. The graduates expressed gratitude to their outstanding instructors and for the opportunity to be part of this groundbreaking educational initiative. They look forward to careers in Hindu Spiritual Care as volunteers or as professionals in healthcare, colleges, the military and the community.

The Certificate in Hindu Spiritual Care plans to offer the 18-month part-time online course annually, helping to meet a growing demand for Hindu chaplains able to offer Hindu religious and philosophical perspectives to assist those navigating life's challenges.

For more information, visit <https://chinfo.org/hinduspiritualcare> or www.Chinfo.org/all-courses/hindu-spiritual-care/

By Sujata Seth

(Editor: The first batch of 50 students started in January 2022, followed by a second batch of 50 students in January 2024. The third batch is scheduled to start in January 2025. The Hindu Faith Endorsement by a Hindu Religious Institution is a must to serve as a Hindu Chaplain, says Ravi Iyer. See the course information at right.)

Vedanta Vijnana Course

On 5 May 2024, Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda inaugurated the Vedanta Vijnana Course at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai. The course is facilitated by Swami Advayananda, the Resident Acharya of the Vedānta Course. This enriching 88-week course, jointly organised by CIF, Chinmaya Mission Mumbai, and Tara Cultural Trust, is designed to explore the essence of Vedānta through the texts Ātmabodha, *Bhagavad-gītā* chapters 2 and 15, the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, concluding with *Bhagavad-gītā* chapter 18.

The online course is designed such that participants can enrol at any time and begin from the first session of any of the texts. Digital Participation Certificates are awarded to those who complete each text. With sessions every Sunday, this course is open to all. It is available both onsite at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. and online via Zoom for all the registered participants.

Swami Advayananda introduced the basics of Vedānta to over 100 students at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya. He guided the students in meditation techniques and emphasised the importance of meditation along with detailed steps as part of the session. After the class, the students were encouraged to participate in group discussions to reflect on the teachings and clear their doubts. The first set of 19 sessions on Ātmabodha concluded on 29 September 2024.

The recorded discourses were streamed via Zoom on Sunday evening for over 200 online students. For the benefit of the online students, fortnightly Q&A sessions were held as part of this course by Brni. Taarini Chaitanya. After each session, the students can go through the optional self-assessment questionnaires made available on their dashboard. Thus, the course is comprehensive in all aspects.

During the concluding session on Ātmabodha, Swami Advayananda clarified the doubts of the participants on-site. In an expression of their gratitude, the students offered flowers at Pūjya Gurudev's altar while chanting the Chinmaya Aṣṭottara-śatanāmāvalī. After offering their guru-dakṣiṇā, each student received a prasāda-pustikā from Swami Advayananda.

The next text in the Vedanta Vijnana Course, from 13 October 2024, is the Essential Bhagavad-gītā (chapters 2 and 15). Those who wish to register can connect with onlinewebinars@chinfo.org for details.

12th HSC Convocation (Śrī Tapovan Mahārāj Jayantī and Gītā Jayantī)

22 December 2023

The 12th convocation for the students of the home study courses was held on Gītā Jayantī and Swami Tapovan Mahārāj's Jayantī at CIF, which was on 22 December 2023. 49 students from different parts of the country and from Kenya, who had completed their Foundation Vedanta, Advanced Vedanta, Bhagavad Gita, Easy Sanskrit and Upanishad Course participated in the function. Most of the students were those who had completed the 'Master Gita, Master Life' English course. The programme started with an invocation prayer led by Brni. Devaki Chaitanya. Sri Arvind Kannan, head of the Home Study Courses Department, welcomed everyone.

Br. Ved in his convocation address highlighted the relevance of the place, the day and the faith and conviction of Pūjya Gurudev and Pūjya Guruji's vision. He touched upon how action or activity and spirituality are connected as outlined in the Home Study Courses.

The traditional convocation oath in the form of Śiṣyānuśāsanam was led by Swami Sharadananda,

followed by the students. The students were then presented certificates by Swami Sharadananda and Br. Ved.

Some of the students shared their experiences and impressions of the various courses. The feedback was mostly an overwhelming appreciation for the support and service from the CIF Home Study Department. The student from Kenya shared how she was inspired and would now spread the word in her country.

Prof. Gauri Mahulikar gave the vote of thanks. Sri Anant Sarma led everyone in reciting the Chinmaya Mission pledge and the chanting of the Śānti-mantra.

The programme was also attended by participants of the three-day Laghu Vakya Vritti camp which started on 20 December 2023 and concluded on the convocation day. Br. Ved Chaitanya graced the occasion.



Monthly Sadhana Day

The Department of Home Study Courses conducts an online Sadhana Day on the last Sunday of every month for its students. Over 100 students attend these online satsaṅg conducted by swamis and brahmacharins.

| Topic | Facilitator |
|--|------------------------------|
| Devi Stuti | Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati |
| Destiny, Free Will and Grace | Br. Ved Chaitanya |
| Mukti | Brni. Devaki Chaitanya |
| Lift yourself by Yourself | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| Sthithaprajna Lakshana (Characteristic of an Enlightened) | Brni. Devaki Chaitanya |
| Lift Yourself The Right Way | Swamini Sampratishtthananda |
| Use it or Lose it! | Brni. Taarini Chaitanya |
| Commandments of Hinduism (Shishyanusanam, Taittiriya Upanishad) Part 1 | Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati |
| Commandments of Hinduism (Shishyanusanam, Taittiriya Upanishad) Part 2 | Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati |

Mentor Programmes

The Mentor Programme is a weekly online programme wherein students are provided access to a facilitator who helps them resolve their doubts and progress through the course. At present, 12 mentors are managing 8 courses with 14 batches, reaching out to 323 students!

| Sr. no | Name of the Course | Number of batches | Number of students |
|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Foundation Vedanta English | 3 | 75 |
| 2 | Advanced Vedanta | 2 | 35 |
| 3 | Easy Sanskrit Level 1 | 2 | 87 |
| 4 | Easy Sanskrit Level 2 | 1 | 27 |
| 5 | Foundation Vedanta Hindi | 2 | 17 |
| 6 | MGML English | 2 | 40 |
| 7 | Upanishad | 1 | 13 |
| 8 | Bhagavad Gita | 1 | 29 |
| Total | 7 | 14 | 323 |

Ancient Indian Mathematics

Vedic Mathrix 2024

18 to 22 April 2024

Mode: Residential

Facilitator: Sri Vinay Nair

No. of Participants: 58

CIF, in association with the School of Vedic Maths, completed the 15th annual residential camp 'Vedic Mathrix' in April 2024.

Of the 58 participants, five were teachers and the rest were mainly high school students. The faculty, Sri Vinay Nair, founder and trainer at the School of Vedic Mathematics, along with his co-teacher, Sri S. Aparajith, a teacher from Agastya Gurukulam, Bengaluru, took the students through various topics like binary mathematics, algorithms, permutations and combinations, and so on, using poetry and music from Chandasāstra, and other texts from the Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The participants were in awe when they saw a smooth blend of art, mathematics, and computer science. Some of the topics discussed included aspects from modern-day number theory, which was discussed as early as 2300 years ago in India.

Apart from the six hours of daily maths sessions, the students also enjoyed outdoor games, informal discussions, village walks, spending time in the library and evening bhajans. Post dinner during

informal discussions, students would come up with topics like 'an ideal school' or 'finding our true calling as a career pursuit'.

The classes were highly engaging and interactive, not just with the faculty, but also amongst the participants. They enjoyed the new structure of the classroom where they were allowed to discuss solutions to problems as a group and then come up with the answers. The participants said that they thoroughly enjoyed the camp and were looking forward to the camp next year as well.



Swami Ramakrishnananda's Sessions in 12 Centres in the USA

The year 2023 was indeed special for US CM centres and CIF as Swami Ramakrishnananda was able to conduct sessions for seekers in the USA in person after a long gap of three years!

He covered 12 centres from 1 September 2024 till mid-November 2024 visiting Washington DC, Philadelphia, Kansas, San Jose, San Mateo, Sacramento, Alpharetta, New Jersey, New York, Ann Arbor, Pittsburgh, and San Diego.

Swamiji took sessions on Glory of Women in the Rāmāyaṇa, Vidura-nīti, Stress Management from Rāmāyaṇa, Vairāgya-śatakam, Dakṣināmūrti Stotram, Know Thyself from Chāndogya-upaniṣad, Life lessons from Mahābhārata, Kṛṣṇa—The Universal Teacher, Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's Contribution to Hinduism, Gītāsāram, U-turn and a session in Tamil on Kaivalya Navanītam. He also presented CIF and CVV at all the centres.

The highlights were:

- Annual fundraiser at Washington DC
- Short one-day visit to San Mateo and Sacramento (first-time visit)
- Balvihar Sevaks training in Kansas
- Youth meet, Balavihar Sevaks, Sanskrit students, and Vanaprastha meet at San Diego
- Vanaprastha meet at Alpharetta
- Diwali celebrations at San Diego

All the centres in the US are already looking forward to Swamiji's next visit!



CIF HOSTS

Chinmaya Prerana, Navi Mumbai Zone

6 to 14 June 2023

Mode: Residential

Br. Ved Chaitanya and Br. Chetan Chaitanya

Text: *Subodha Vedānta, Manīṣāpañcakam and Viṣṇuṣaṭpadī*

No. of Participants: 71

Chinmaya Mission Mumbai, Chinmaya Prerana Zone, Navi Mumbai, had a residential camp at Adi Sankara Nilayam led by Br. Ved Chaitanya and Br. Chetan Chaitanya. They covered texts such as Subodha Vedānta by Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, and Manīṣāpañcakam and Viṣṇuṣaṭpadī composed by Bhagavān Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya.

71 people attended this camp, including sādhakas, not only from India, but we can say it was an international camp. The campers came from countries like Norway, Vietnam, the USA and various cities of India such as Mangaluru, Bengaluru, Mysuru, New Delhi, Gurugram, Pune, Ratnagiri, Chennai, Sagar and so on.

At the end of the camp, the group visited the new campus of Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth in Onakkor combined with a yātrā to the Chottanikkara Devī Temple Vaḍakkunnāthan Śiva temple, Guruvayoor temple, Kalady (paternal home of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya) and Kumarakom (backwaters).



Advaita Awakening Youth Retreat

Date: 15 to 25 June 2023

Mode: Residential

Facilitator: Swami Advayananda Saraswati

Text: Ātmabodha

No. of Participants: 47

Acharya Shankar Sanskritik Ekta Nyas, Bhopal, conducted a residential camp at Adi Sankara Nilayam under the guidance of Swami Advayananda who took classes on Ātmabodha. Prof. Gauri Mahulikar conducted sessions on 'The life and works of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya'.

The participants, aged between 18 to 40 years, from 15 different districts of India, were selected and sponsored by Acharya Shankar Sanskritik Ekta Nyas.

The days would begin with yoga under the guidance of Sri Bhupender Singh Negi. from CIF. Besides attending the classes, the students participated in group discussions with Br. Ved Chaitanya, Brni. Taarini Chaitanya and Sugandha Agnihotri from CIF. The participants were provided time for svādhyāya. They also performed Cuṭṭuvilakku, the lighting of 1008 lamps on the outer wall of the temple. The group visited the Vadakkunnāthan Temple and Kalady. A cultural programme was also organised in which the participants showcased their talent and creativity through dance, singing, skits and recitation of poems.

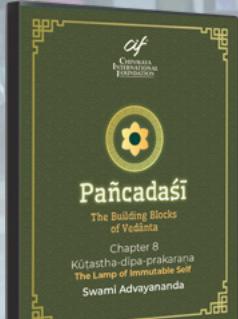
On the concluding day of the camp, the students participated in a havana and pāduka-pūjā facilitated by Br. Sudheer Chaitanya. They also shared their experiences about the camp.



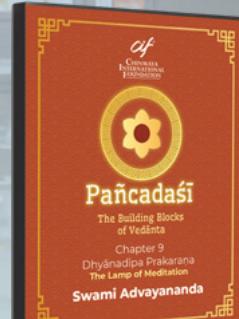
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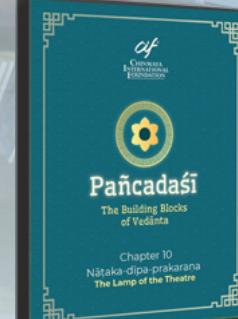
Pendrives



Pañcadaśī – Chapter 8

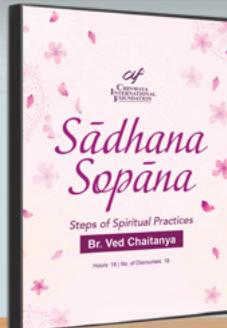


Pañcadaśī – Chapter 9

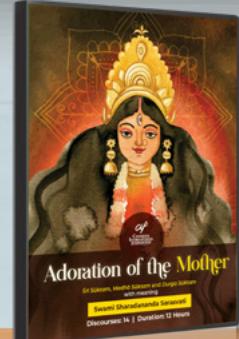


Pañcadaśī – Chapter 10

Pendrives

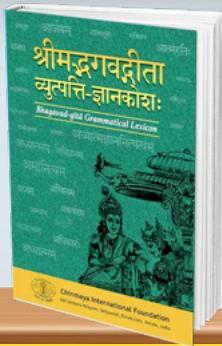


Sādhana Sopāna

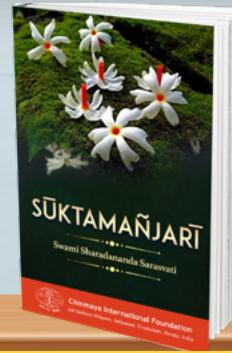


Adoration of the Mother

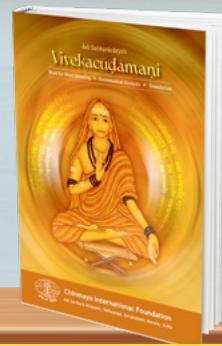
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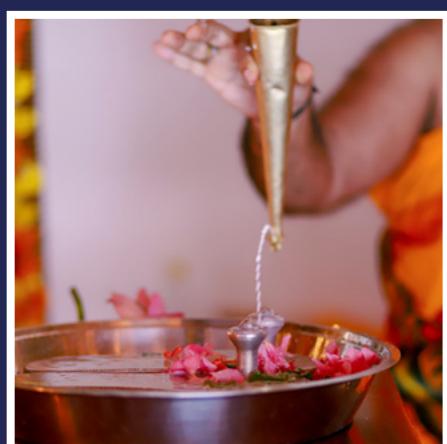
Gurupurnima Celebrations
3 July 2023



On the auspicious day of Gurupūrṇimā, the CIF family as well as devotees from near and far came together at the Adi Sankara Nilayam to express their gratitude and love to the Guru-paramparā.

The day began with a havana followed by a reverential pūjā of Śrī Veda Vyāsa, Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda and the entire Guru-paramparā. The havana and ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā were led beautifully by Swami Sharadananda. It concluded with the chanting of Śrī Veda Vyāsa and Pūjya Gurudev's aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvalī.

The festivities continued in the evening with the lighting of 1008 lamps, the Cuṭṭuvilakku, at the Chinmaya Swayambhu Ayyappa Temple, to symbolise that Guru's wisdom dispels the darkness of ignorance.



30th Chinmaya Aradhana Day

3 August 2023



The auspicious day was a celebration of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's immeasurable, profound vision.

The Gurupāduka-pūjā, led by Swami Sharadananda, was attended by everyone at the CIF campus, including 140 campers from Chinmaya Mission Vizianagaram. This was followed by satsaṅga and the heartfelt rendition of bhajans.

Swami Advayananda, Swami Atmavidananda and Swami Vijayananda also graced the gathering with their presence. 'Sādhana Sopāna', a pendrive by CIF Publications, was launched in honour of the occasion.

The special video message 'Look Within' was played, featuring a beautiful and endearing poem penned by Pūjya Swami Swaroopananda in dedication to Pūjya Gurudev.

This was followed by Swami Advayananda's message conveying how the guru is a special individualised avatāra for each one of us and Pūjya Gurudev is not just a guru, he is a yugapuruṣa—a visionary saint. He went on to say that Ārādhana Day is the celebration of the day when our Guru merged back into Bhagavān, a day from which the Guru has been available to all as Bhagavān.

The event concluded with bhajans that filled the atmosphere with reverential gratitude and positivity.



Independence Day 2023

15 August 2023



The 76th Indian Independence Day was celebrated with great joy and pride at Adi Sankara Nilayam. The festivities commenced with Swami Sharadananda unfurling the glorious tricolour, followed by the singing of the National Anthem.

Addressing the gathering, Swami Sharadananda emphasised the importance of learning from history to correct the mistakes of the past and create a bright future for a united, prosperous India. He said only the strength of communal harmony and dedication to India's integrity will bring about global peace.

The Chinmaya family came together with patriotic fervour, with the Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth (CVV) students leading the National pledge. The ceremony concluded with a melodious rendition of 'Vande Mataram.'

The active participation of staff and sevaks of CIF, CIFSS and CVV, as well as participants of the residential Puja Vidhanam Course, was a showcase of the national pride and united spirit driving our nation forward.



A Royal Welcome to Krishna Lalla on Janmashtami

Date: 6 September 2023



Kṛṣṇa-Janmāṣṭamī at Adi Sankara Nilayam, celebrations began with the *nagara-saṅkīrtana* and *akhaṇḍa-nāma-japa* in the Illom, where devotees chanted the sacred names of the Lord. Swami Sharadananda led the celebrations and proceedings throughout the day.

At dusk, the temple came alive with the lighting of *Cuṭṭuvilakku*, followed by a beautiful procession with kids dressed as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, and a stunning demonstration of *Kalaripayat* in front of the Illom.

The beautiful pūjā at 10 p.m. was accompanied by the recitation of *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma-stotram*. As part of the *śoḍaśopacāra* students of the Puja Vidhanam Course and CVV performed a captivating play portraying Kṛṣṇa's birth and His delightful childhood antics.



The chanting of the Lord's name continued until midnight with increased fervour as the lights dimmed and everyone looked on in wonder as a beautifully decorated cradle was revealed to announce the birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Joyous bhajans that enamoured devotees to dance with joy and singing continued as the *Mahāprasāda* was distributed.

Ganesha Chaturthi

19 September 2023



The Ganeśacaturthī celebrations were a deeply devotional experience. Swami Sharadananda led a detailed Ganeśapūjā that filled hearts with devotion and reverence. All the staff, sevaks of CIF, as well as the students of the Puja Vidhanam Course and CVV, came together to take part in the pūjā.

Everyone invoked the blessings of Lord Gaṇeśa, seeking His grace to remove all obstacles and bestowing the right knowledge on all for their prosperity.



A Delightful Onam Celebration 2023

28 to 31 August 2023



Festivities began on 'Attam', with daily garden-fresh flower arrangements (pūkkalams) enthusiastically put together by the staff.

A special Onakkodi (new outfits) distribution for the entire staff on August 24 reinforced the feelings of togetherness and joy!

The celebrations picked up steam with the entire CIF family, along with students from the residential Puja Vidhanam Course, coming together on August 26 for a cultural showcase. The decorating of a beautiful pūkkalam was followed by the Tiruvātirakali dance and Onappāṭṭu songs by the staff.

The Puja Vidhanam Course and CVV students even enacted a beautiful musical on the Vāmana and Mahābali story depicting the origin of Onam. Everyone was so overwhelmed that they showered the Vāmana-avatāra with flowers and bowed down to him.

This was followed by fun and games such as lemon-and-spoon race, tug-of-war, musical chairs and so on. This brought out sporty competitiveness in all and rejuvenated team spirit and bonding among all present. A sumptuous spread of traditional Onasadyā (feast) completed the festivities!

The celebrations concluded on Tiruonam, with Swami Sharadananda leading a special pūjā for Lord Trkkākkarayappan. CIF's Onam celebration beautifully intertwined tradition, togetherness, and reverence, leaving cherished memories for all.



Celebrating Nine Devotional Nights – Navarātri 2023

15 to 24 October 2023



Chinmaya International Foundation celebrated the Navarātri festival at Adi Sankara Nilayam from 15 to 24 October 2023 led by Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati.

The nine auspicious days of Navarātri were celebrated with utmost pomp and devotion, each day symbolising a particular form of the Goddess. On the ninth night, Swami Sharadananda performed the elaborate Mahā Caṇḍikā-havana invoking the grace and blessings of Mother Durgā for the removal of all kinds of obstacles to gain balance in life and proceed towards the goal of our life.

Special pūjās like Navakanyā-pūjā and Sumaṅgalī-pūjā on the Aṣṭamī day and the grand Mahā Caṇḍikā-havana on the Navamī day further deepened the spiritual experience. The daily rājopacāra offerings of vādyam, gītam, and nṛtyam to Devī Bhagavatī—devotedly performed by students of Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth, were delightful. The entire atmosphere was rendered divine, with these daily rituals easing the participants into serene peace.

On the 10th day following Navarātri, Vijayadaśamī is the dawn of the supreme Knowledge. Mother was worshipped as Śrī Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Knowledge. Vijayadaśamī is also the auspicious day of Vidyārambham or Akṣarābhyāsam when toddlers are initiated into study. Swami Sharadananda initiated some children by holding onto their index finger and drawing the alphabet, in Sanskrit, Malayalam and English, on a plate full of rice. Śrī Durgā and Lalitā Tripurasundarī pūjās (6:00 p.m. IST) and the Navakanyā pūjā, Sumaṅgalī pūjā and Chandika Havan Live streamed through the Chinmaya YouTube Channel.



A Joyous Diwali 2023 Celebration

12 November 2023



In a joyous gathering, devotees, staff, and sevaks united at Adi Sankara Nilayam to celebrate Dīwālī. The evening glowed with the warm light of Dīwālī diyās, symbolising the triumph of light over darkness.

A highlight of the festivities was the Mahālakṣmī pūjā led by Br. Ved Chaitanya inside the Illom at 6:30 p.m. Devotees sought blessings for prosperity, and the pūjā unfolded with deep devotion, invoking divine energies.

The traditional Cuṭṭuvilakku was observed, which infused the temple with sacred radiance. Dīwālī diyās adorned every corner, creating a mesmerising sight.

The night reached its pinnacle with a spectacular fireworks display, symbolising the victory of good over evil. The sky was illuminated with colours, captivating all those who were present. The celebration concluded with sweet moments of sharing and gratitude.

Dīwālī at Adi Sankara Nilayam was more than a festivity; it echoed communal joy and spiritual values, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of all attendees.



Lakshminarayana Puja and Havana

15 January 2023



Makara-saṅkrānti at Adi Sankara Nilayam welcomed the auspicious with the annual Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa pūjā and havana. The festive atmosphere welcomed and brought together families and special guests who travelled to be here on the occasion.

Sri Sathish, assisted by Sri Bhavesh, presided over the elaborate pūjā and havana performed beautifully with great devotion. CVV students led the chanting of the Viṣṇusahasranāmāvalī and other ślokas and bhajans. The yajamānas, guests and all those present were drawn into participating in the chanting and making of offerings into the havana.

A special saṅkalpa was taken invoking the grace and blessings of Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa and Śrī Lakṣmī for the welfare of all and a harmonious year ahead. Devotees all across the globe could witness the pūjā live on the Chinmaya Channel on YouTube.



Republic Day 2024

26 January



The 74th Republic Day was celebrated with great patriotic fervour in Adi Sankara Nilayam by the CIF Family with the students and staff of CVV in the presence of campers from various places in India and overseas. Dr Sunitha Grandhee (Dean, Lifelong Learning and Wellness, and Director of the Centre for Applied Indian Knowledge Systems at CVV), and Swamini Sampratishthananda (Chinmaya Gardens, Siruvani) hoisted the flag. The CVV students led in singing the national anthem, Vande Mataram and other patriotic songs.

In the evening everyone came together to celebrate Vasanta Pañcamī made an offering of the Cuttuvilakku by lighting 1008 lamps around the Chinmaya Swayambhu Ayyappa Temple. It was a delightful conclusion to a glorious day.



Mahasivaratri 2024

8 March



The auspicious Mahāśivarātri was celebrated at Adi Sankara Nilayam, the ancestral maternal birth home of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya on 8 March 2024. The Chinmaya Swayambhu Ayyappa Temple complex was lit with 1008 oil lamps with the offerings of Cuṭṭuvilakku.

Br. Ved Chaitanya began the Cāturyāma-pūjā at 7 p.m at the illom. The seekers present there revelled in the glory of Lord Śiva with the pūjās, chanting of Śrī Rudram, abhiṣekam with 11 dravyas and bhajans throughout the night. Students of Chinmaya Vishwa Vidyapeeth presented dance as part of the śoḍāśopacāra-pūjā and also participated in the chanting and bhajans.

Br. Ved Chaitanya performed the last Yāma-pūjā at 5.30 a.m. IST the next day, after which divine prasāda was served to the devotees.



Adi Sankara Jayanti 2024

12 May 2024



On 12 May 2024, CIF celebrated Ādi Śaṅkara Jayantī, the birth anniversary of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. It was a day filled with reverence and spiritual devotion as homage was paid to the profound wisdom of this spiritual luminary.

The highlight of the day was the Ādi Śaṅkara Janma-pūjā held at Adi Sankara Nilayam, the ancestral maternal birth home of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Swami Sharadananda Sarasvati led the pūjā with utmost devotion and sincerity.

For those unable to join in person, the auspicious ceremony was broadcast live on the CIF YouTube channel, allowing devotees from across the globe to partake in the divine festivities.



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गौरवं प्राप्यते दानात् न तु वित्तस्य संचयात् ।
स्थितिः उच्चैः पयोदानां पयोधीनाम् अधःस्थितिः ॥
(सूक्तिमुक्तावली, ११६.३)

Glory comes with munificence and not by accumulation of wealth. The clouds that give away the water stay high, the ocean that accumulates it stays below. (Sūktimuktāvalī, 116.3)

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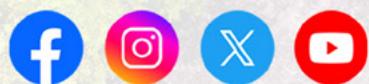


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