



You know what? I attended a Sanskrit Summer Camp!!!

Pramod Chavali

A Samskritam (aka Sanskrit) summer camp? Whatever is it about? Is it a real camp or just a language class? Having gone to such a camp organized by Samskrita Bharati called Prajnaa from July 9 through 13 at Point Bonita in Sausalito, CA, I can tell you that it is a real camp and a great way to learn the Sanskrit language. The camp was very well chosen in an extremely beautiful area near Point Bonita Lighthouse, between the hills and the ocean. Along with hiking, games, and sports, learning a new language was another exciting daily activity of this four day camp. Unlike normal classes, it immersed me in Sanskrit – I went through the whole day, doing a myriad of different activities, and totally speaking in Sanskrit.

The camp was full of unique, captivating fun filled activities, all the while, teaching Sanskrit. We played language games, as well as sports such as basketball, volleyball, and soccer. Throughout it all, we conversed in Sanskrit, and were at home with the language.

Each day, we started off with prayer and yoga. We jogged, learned different breathing techniques, and performed various asanaas. We learned new asanaas each day, such as tiger breathing, pavanamuktaasana and taadaasana. After yoga, we had breakfast and began our day, refreshed and ready for more fun!

We also went hiking every day. The campsite was an old military base, with many fascinating buildings. We ran up the hills and explored old, abandoned forts and batteries, searching through the dark, eerie rooms that housed soldiers and supplies, or served as bomb shelters during times of war. We also hiked to the ocean, and played with jelly fish and crabs scattered across the sandy beach. In short, we did everything we would do in an "ordinary" camp; however, we did it through the medium of Sanskrit. Without even realizing it, we were learning how to speak, even converse in, this ancient and beautiful language.

The teachers were jovial and the classes were interesting. A comfortable, approachable atmosphere permeated the camp. We laughed and played, yet, we learned a lot. We went from the basics, such as "mama naama PramodaH" to more complex concepts; yet, it was all at our own pace. The classes, like the rest of the camp, focused on speaking, and so, were very interactive and engaging. You wouldn't have even guessed we were taking a class!

We ended the day by coming together for the manoranjana karyakrama, or entertainment activities. We witnessed and also participated in various skits, bhajans, and musical performances. Stories from the Bhaagavatam and Panchatantra were reenacted. We even wrote and performed an elaborate skit on Chanakya, entirely in Sanskrit.

Throughout the camp, I was extremely impressed with how quickly I picked up the language. Usually in "traditional" Sanskrit classes, the teaching is very technical, and does not focus on actually speaking the language. The classes at the camp, however, were more effective in getting me speaking phrases, albeit simple ones. In addition, the camp created an immersive experience, and forced me to not only speak but think in Sanskrit. Samskritam is a language that deserves to be far more popular, and I believe if it is approached the way it was taught at Prajnaa youth camp, I bet it will be hip in no time.

Information including online registration for the upcoming labor day weekend Sanskrit family camp Jaahnavii2008 at Edison, NJ is available at <http://www.sanskritabharati.org/sb/jaahnavii>

For general information on Samskrita Bharati visit <http://www.sanskritabharati.org/> or send an email to sanskritabharati@yahoo.com or call Samskrita Bharati Voicemail at 978-268-8406

Pramod Chavali is from Seattle, WA. He will be entering 11th grade in Sep.

Sanskritabharati, 1044 Lancer Drive, San Jose, CA 95129, USA

Sanskritabharati@yahoo.com www.sanskritabharati.org

Tel: 978-268-8406; Fax: 831-301-6972; EIN: 77-0545072;

