

Teenage Twist on a Tested Technique

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What could an organization that promotes the usage of Sanskrit in daily life, do after having successfully tested and verified its method of teaching over 25 years? "Try it on a more challenging crowd," one might suggest. And that seemingly is what Samskrita-Bharati is all set to do this summer. The voluntary organization whose fun filled camps are popular both in the USA and India, recently announced plans to conduct its first spoken Sanskrit residential camp exclusively for teenagers in the USA.

Set in the scenic location of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, "Shraddhaa", the four-day residential camp will be held from June 23-27th, 2007. Keeping in tune with Samskrita-Bharati's listen-speak-read-write method, teenagers aged 13-18 will spend four days hiking, playing sports, doing yoga and attending classes while speaking only Sanskrit. The teaching will be done by youth who have grown up in the US and chosen to make Sanskrit a part of their daily lives. One amongst them, for instance, is Kartik Shastri, an 11th grader from Boston, who has been attending Samskrita-Bharati family camps since he was 9. Providing the instructors with guidance will be Shri Vasuvaj, a fulltime Samskrita-Bharati volunteer with 20 years of teaching experience.

So the big question: what would attract teens come to a camp like this? Abhinav Kalavar, aged 14, one of the registrants for the camp from Pittsburgh notes, "*I think the camp will be fun because I get to meet new people*". Similar sentiments were expressed by Sonya Dave, a 9th grader from Maryland, when asked about the camp - "*I think this camp is unique in that we will get to meet other kids of similar age and interest in a total Sanskrit environment.*" Teens from as far as Michigan and California have registered for this opportunity. "*We are offering a limited number of travel grants to those who fly in for the camp, so that interested teens from all across the continent can come,*" says Sowmya Joisa, an undergraduate student at University of Pennsylvania, and one of the organizers of the camp.

Online registration for "Shraddhaa" has been set up by the "Samskritam" group at University of Maryland on its website: www.speaksanskrit.org. Information about other Samskrita-Bharati programs, including their annual east and west coast family camps, is available at www.samskrita-bharati.org.

While the Indian youth of North America may not be ready to plunge into the intricateness of Sanskrit grammar, will they reply "chaakalehah" when asked about their favorite type of ice cream?!



The Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, PA where the 4 day residential spoken Sanskrit camp for teenagers is being organized this summer