



SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY
Creating the Next Future

SRI AUROBINDO FOUNDATION FOR INDIAN CULTURE (SAFIC)

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY, PUDUCHERRY, INDIA

Spandana: Feeling the Pulsation of a Divine Language

Report of the Workshop from 23rd to 30th of January, 2011

Sanskrit, simply defined, is the language of a growing consciousness. The core function of a language lies in the perfect communication of something; and, Sanskrit is just perfection in itself. The learning of Sanskrit is not only an ethereal joy of transformation but a profound feeling of the transcendental beginning of spiritual journey. It is no longer a hidden fact that Sanskrit is the mother of all languages. Moreover, it is something beyond a language can do, or a language can achieve. The superb structural beauty - added to the subtle harmony of the science and the spirit of metre and rhythm - gives the language another name for an elevating divine purity. Absolutely, Sanskrit, considered with all its facets and aspects, is nothing less than a creative vibration that provokes a divine pulsation.

Spandana, a weeklong intensive Sanskrit learning course was organized by Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture [SAFIC] from 23rd to 30th Jan, 2011. The major thrust of the programme was to introduce Sanskrit, in a perfect way, to the awakening of the natural curiosity of the minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards. The creation of a supreme awareness about the Sanskrit language as illumining reality and vitalizing memory was another mission and vision.

All the sessions were planned carefully keeping in mind the relative interest and importance. The course was facilitated by Dr. Sampadananda Mishra who is the director of SAFIC. Every day from morning 6.30 am to evening 5.30 pm the participants were exposed to the knowledge and learning of various aspects of the Sanskrit language including but not limited to grammar, literature, phonetics, vocabulary, metre, rhythm, beauty and appeal. The chanting session- from morning 6.30 to 7.30- was of a special experience of divine pleasure for the participants. In that session the participants were taught the easy

and effective ways of chanting mantras and shlokas from the Vedas and other devotional Sanskrit literature.

Everyday three hours were given for conversational Sanskrit in which the participants were surcharged with the dynamic experience of the spoken Sanskrit from the standpoint of the stimulus-response relationship. The explanation of the vibration quality of each Sanskrit sound and the further clarity as regards the usages marked the value of the session in its own right. Apart from it, there were two different sessions on Sanskrit alphabet in which the scientifically systematic sound arrangement of Sanskrit alphabets was brought into light. There it was also explained how an eternal connection exists between the Sanskrit alphabets and the pranayama.

In the two dynamic sessions concerning the rhythm of Sanskrit metres, the participants grew to know the marvelous beauty of the rhythmic movements of the Sanskrit poetry and the various nuances of Sanskrit metres. In another three sessions on the basics of Sanskrit grammar, attempts were made towards the realization of the systematic yet complex nature of the language. To add to more interest, there were three activity sessions on stories, dialogues and nursery rhymes in which the participants were active in concocting stories in Sanskrit as simply as possible. It is in these sessions that they were made to sing a few nursery rhymes in Sanskrit. It all turned out to be engagingly enjoyable.

There was one insightful session on the Bhagavad Gita by Dr. Mishra himself who explained on its varied contents and concepts in all prolificness. In an informative session - an introduction to Sri Aurobindo Society - Mr. Shiva Kumar described the range of activities of the organization and the purview of its influence.

The course had a great concluding session with Dr. Mishra and Mr. Vijay, member executive, Sri Aurobindo society and. Mr. Vijay addressed the participants and explained to them the significance of the Sanskrit language in the growing resplendence of the Indian culture. He also laid importance on the raising of the collective consciousness for the creation of a luminous future for Sanskrit. On the whole, the course, to a great extent, has been successful in achieving its objectives and inducing a fulfillment to the noble urge of the participants in seeking and aspiring to the divine solace of Sanskrit.

Here is the feedback from the participants:

I came looking for experience in speaking and listening and this purpose was well fulfilled so that I can move forward on my own. Were this to be my only gain that would have satisfied me. However, I encountered something even more valuable due to the cleverness of the conception of the course, namely the human meaning and significance of the language in forming, organizing and expanding consciousness. This has opened new paths for me of personal experience.

Jeffrey Race, USA

As the name (Spandana) suggested – It was a divine experience in itself. Came here with inquisitiveness and enthusiasm, and going back with so much more – many cannot be expressed in words. The most important was the teacher himself – the depth of knowledge, grace and poise was just incredible.

The chanting session left a lasting impression in my mind. The feeling was as if the entire system got harmonized and there was blessing from divine. I learnt Sanskrit grammar in a very innovative way. I would say my journey with the divine language has just begun but certainly is not going to stop here.

Seema Singh, Mumbai

Indeed one cannot remain without being impressed by the manner in which Sanskrit and its richness, beauty and the depth is presented by the profoundly learned teacher Dr. Sampadananda Mishra. All the facets of the language, like the grammar, chants, easily spoken Sanskrit etc. are touched. On the whole it was a very highly satisfying experience... The frequency of such workshops should be increased.

Madhava Rao, Pondicherry

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this course. I have truly enjoyed the lessons and am confident that I now have the tools to learn the language. The teaching was top class and the course is well suited to all levels of beginners.

Chitra V Pothula, UK

The introductory session and the session on the alphabet and Panini were very inspiring and only served to increase my love and enthusiasm of Sanskrit. This was a fantastic course and Dr. Mishra a fantastic teacher.

I wanted to say thank you again for such a wonderful course. I came home with many things to think about and eager to learn more Sanskrit. I was particularly interested in the sessions on sound, the origins of words, their meanings and significance (and power) and how this could all relate to a single language behind all other languages. I hope to be able to look further into this in the future. For now, I am keen to get a good grip on Panini which continues to fascinate me.

I have attended several other Sanskrit courses, but this one was particularly special because of this aspect and was thus a rich and valuable experience.

Venetia Ansell, UK

The course was nice and very much useful. The various sessions covered several aspects of Sanskrit and catered multi-sided development of the knowledge of Sanskrit and its usage. And the core of each session designed on the spiritual basis was helping to progress. It also opened various aspects of beauty and greatness of the language.

G. Viswanathan, Chennai

It was beyond description. Each session in itself was complete, enriching and left us with deep respect and love for the language of the Gods – Samskritam. The usage of practical examples from our daily life, the light jokes, connection with our inner self, chanting of the Mantras in the morning, each and every event, has had a very deep impact on all of us. I am truly inspired to go even deeper into learning the language thoroughly, tracing it to the very origin, and learning to speak, read and write Sanskrit fluently.

Megha Balani, Mumbai

This was a thoroughly planned and wonderfully conducted workshop. All details of the programme were very well taken care of...The content of the workshop was absolutely amazing, and really facilitated some deep moments of transformative learning and contemplation. Dr. Mishra is a master teacher and he made learning Sanskrit so much fun and easy...The first session on Sanskrit as the language of integral perfection set the stage for the experience to follow. The session on Srimadbhagavad Gita was deeply touching. All these sessions made us love the Indian culture even more...

Beloo Mehra, Pondicherry

SAFIC with Dr. Sampadananda Mishra resonates in every level with Sri Aurobindo's own light in bringing Sanskrit to all in its beautiful form.

Amrit Raghavan, Chennai

I would say a new door opened in me that is to be kept open for ever.

Y. Rathnakar, Kakinada

Very well structured and organized workshop...classes were interactive and created very good learning atmosphere.

Sainath Bharadwaj, Bangalore

I enjoyed the workshop very much. Since morning 6.30 to evening 5.30 I felt as if I was in another world. Learned a lot about grammar as well as chanting of the Veda Mantras with their meanings. Nursery rhymes and stories impressed me a lot. I learned the pronunciation of vowels and consonants of Sanskrit in a wonderful way. I look forward to more such sessions.

G Lalitha, Chennai

All the sessions on speaking Sanskrit touched me most. I felt as if I am playing on a divine instrument which gave a sweet feeling or ananda to my heart. I would like to participate every year if this takes place.

Harikrishna Pradhana, Nabaranga Pur, Orissa

All sessions were very nice. It showed the depth and beauty of Sanskrit. I got here which I was in search of. Thanks a lot.

Sumanta Jain, Nabaranga Pur, Orissa

This workshop gave me perspective of Sanskrit and Indian culture which was an eye-opener and truly heartening. I am going from here with a sense of motivation and interest in pursuing Sanskrit learning further... Would also prefer to have an advanced course.

Puneet Singhal, Mumbai

Overall the workshop was good and well designed. Dr. Sampadananda Mishra did his level best to give us the taste of various flavors of the Sanskrit language. The sessions on grammar and spoken Sanskrit gave us confidence that not only we can read and write but we can also speak Sanskrit.

Hitesh Sharma, Ahmedabad

The morning chanting sessions, stories dialogues and nursery rhymes, spoken Sanskrit – all these sessions were very well done. I have no words to express my feelings.

Hansa M. Katharia, Surat

The workshop was superb. It was very simple yet very subtle and has inspired me to continue learning Sanskrit. A very well planned workshop and everything was beautiful. The two sessions on the Rhythms of Sanskrit metres touched me deeply. Understanding the metres was made crystal clear.

Jaymala Joshi, Mumbai

The course was very fine and helped me to understand the scientific basis of the alphabet which will help me even to understand my own language (Tamil). I really enjoyed all sessions, especially story telling, nursery rhymes and spoken Sanskrit. As I am a Yoga instructor, now I am able to spell and pronounce all terms clearly and properly. I feel there should be more such workshops. It is really creating the Next Future.

Karpagam Shankaran

Our teacher Dr. Sampadananda Mishra has taken great pains to organize this workshop and all the four daily sessions of about half an hour each were so fascinating that “what next ” curiosity prevailed amongst all, for all the times. Nuances of grammar were brought to our understanding for the first time in this workshop which enhanced our joy of gaining knowledge.

Gurudas V Hasabnis, Mumbai

It is evident that a lot of work has gone into the preparation of this course. The aspect of the workshop I will continue to enshrine in my mind is the novel approach by Dr. Sampadananda Mishra. His simplicity and the dedication to the language is indescribable. A brief outline of the workshop would have immensely helped us to condition ourselves and prepare a little for the course.

Vishva Shan, Chennai

The chanting session, first thing in the morning set the pace for the day. Knowledge about Sanskrit language, its rhythms and metres, its alphabet system provided me with information that I was trying to find since I started learning Sanskrit. Story building, nursery rhymes gave me some ideas on how to teach Sanskrit interestingly. All in all it was very interesting and informative.

Uma Minaxi, Mumbai

Learning devabhasha, a spiritual language at a spiritual abode is quite amazing. There was a spandan of liveliness in this workshop. Chanting session gave us a different level of experience. Speak Sanskrit sessions and the sessions on grammar made us feel more free and fluent with the language.

Manoj Bhavasar, Mumbai

I learnt to speak and read Sanskrit from this workshop. Though I was not spontaneous in answering the questions like others, yet I understood what you taught us...I liked the method of teaching and was able to absorb much. I liked most the chanting session.

Asha Radhakrishnan, Coimbatore

It is not easy to learn Sanskrit in six days time. But all the participants will agree with me that at the end we were able to express ourselves in Sanskrit, may be poorly at first go. There lies the success of this workshop. I felt happy and contented. All the aspects of the workshop enthralled me. Among all the chanting session, the lectures on the Sanskrit metres and alphabet touched me most. The subject of Metre was explained very lucidly and skillfully.

Kamalesh De, Kolkata

I was happy to enjoy this Sanskrit workshop. It brought me inexplicable joy. The language was enjoyed and understood. It also made me feel that the knowledge of Sanskrit is essential for our inner growth and progress. My understanding was awakened to the language by the method it was taught.

Lily De, Kolkata

In a nutshell – it was a fantastic experience. We were simply knowing that Sanskrit is a very old and ancient religious language and our Rishis, Munis, Saints used to speak Sanskrit and so one ought to have some elementary knowledge of Sanskrit. But after attending this workshop I could become aware that Sanskrit is practically a treasure house. There are so much in it that if any one tries to accumulate wealth out of it even throughout one's life, there would be still many things left behind. I have developed this impression that Sanskrit may mould our life to divine heights and by learning this language one can easily approach the Divine or rather it becomes easy to tread the path of yoga...

Paramananda Sarkar Banarji, Agartala

The workshop was totally an experience of its kind. Sessions on nursery rhymes helped me to read Sanskrit words quickly and Sampadananda ji made it very interesting and joyful. Although I could hardly make proper sentence in the spoken Sanskrit class yet I enjoyed as others spoke almost fluently. This motivated me to learn it thoroughly and speak fluently one day.

Nandini, Srilanka

It was unique and wonderful experience. In my dream also I could not imagine I would ever get such a knowledgeable mastermind to teach me... A vast portion was covered; everything was precise and to the point; time was valued tremendously; point to point whole planned portion was done without we getting the pressure; and everything I wanted know about Sanskrit was answered...The workshop has opened many gates of knowledge for us. The whole programme was perfectly designed.

Shanti Gupta, Mumbai

It was a wonderful experience to be a part of this workshop. The classes were very well structured and had a good mix of conversational and theory classes. I consider it to be a brilliant introduction to the world of Sanskrit.

Trupti Doshi, Pondicherry