

Learn Sanskrit the easy way!!

Jyotsna M. Kalavar, Ph.D.

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"Can we please go to the Sanskrit family camp during labor day weekend?" One may naturally guess that this request stems from an overzealous Indian parent directed to one's offspring. Instead, would you believe that this was the plea made by two Indian-American teenagers to their mother?

It was in May 2006 that my two teens rather reluctantly signed up for their first ever Sanskrit family camp (Bhaagirathii 2006) along with my mother, husband and I. This initial camp sparked some interest in learning Sanskrit, while a deep enthusiasm for the language accelerated after they attended a spoken Sanskrit camp exclusively for teens called Shraddha that was held in June, 2007. From their hesitant attendance at the first family camp, it was simply delightful to hear them repetitively entreat me to enroll them for the 2007 family camp. And, I was particularly pleased to learn that the plea made by my boys merely echoed the sentiments of many other teenagers who attended Shraddha 2007.

How does one inculcate pride in an ancient language like Sanskrit among American born teenagers of Asian Indian ancestry? Especially, today's teenagers who may respond with characteristic ennui when introduced to new learning.

From apathy to enthusiasm, how did this magical transformation occur? The credit rightfully belongs to Samskrita Bharati, a volunteer, non-profit organization that is dedicated to the cause of reviving Sanskrit as a spoken language. Through their residential camps, Samskrita Bharati focuses on a developmental based approach of acquiring language first through hearing and then speaking.

Shifting away from memorizing incessant declensions, elaborate conjugations, or unending vocabulary lists, the Samskrita Bharati approach models how language is naturally acquired by a youngster within a household.



The growth and continuity of any language rests on the extent of usage among the people. In India and many parts of the world, Samskrita Bharati has successfully rejuvenated the Sanskrit language which had hitherto been dismissed off as a "difficult" or "dead" language. That Samskrita Bharati has inspired Indian children born and raised in the United States to speak Sanskrit is no ordinary feat. Founded in India over a quarter century ago, Samskrita Bharati has reached out to almost 6 million people through its popular spoken Sanskrit workshops. In the United States since the past nine years, Samskrita Bharati has conducted eight residential camps, numerous workshops, and scores of classes in various states. Past camps have featured at varied locations such as New Hampshire, California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

Age is no barrier at the family camps organized by Samskrita Bharati. Last year's east coast camp included more than one hundred attendees representing many different age groups right from elementary school children to septuagenarian seniors. They had come from all over the United States and Canada. All individuals participated in a camp environment marked with

laughter, games, skits, and activities that were inextricably linked. Whether at yoga in the morning, consuming food at meal times, or keeping score during the afternoon games – all you heard was Sanskrit. This immersion experience over a brief period coupled with the opportunity



to learn from Sanskrit enthusiasts unleashed a new brand of confidence and pride in speaking Sanskrit. It has to be experienced to be believed!

Seize the wonderful opportunity for you and family to learn spoken Sanskrit at Camp Jaahnavii. The 2007 Labor Day weekend camp will be held from August 30-September 3 in Edison, New Jersey. Details about Samskrita Bharati's past camps together with the online registration links for this year's residential camp are available on the website www.jaahnavii2007.org

(Jyotsna Kalavar lives in Monroeville, PA with her family. A faculty member at Penn State, she enjoys teaching gerontology, reading Vedanta, and learning Sanskrit.)