

[Himalayan Academy Holds Week-Long Student Gathering](#)

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Week Divided Into Two Groups - Beginning And Advanced Students

From December 30th, 1980 to January 5th, 1981, thirty-five Himalayan Academy students from all parts of the mainland U.S.A. and Hawaii gathered in San Francisco for special Academy seminars, enjoying special classes and satsang honoring our Gurudeva's Jayanthi, January 5th. Students of Book One, Saivism, of the San Marga Master Course came for the first three days of the seminar and those in Book Four, the first Book of the School of Meditation, came for the second three days. Thanks to the generosity of the Hindu Businessmen's Association, which paid for his travel to the mainland, Gurudeva was present throughout the week.

Activities were scheduled each day from 8 A.M. until 9:30 P.M., beginning with a morning class taught by the Saiva Yogis, followed by a talk by Gurudeva at ten. In the afternoon there were pujas, personal interviews, special classes, group activities and in the evening a second talk by Gurudeva to close the day. As they have thought the years, Himalayan Academy's seminars provide an opportunity for students to meet Gurudeva in person, get to know the Academy staff, intensify their Master Course studies and firm up their decisions about future study with the Academy. Academy seminars aren't strictly educational. There is plenty of time for friendly fellowship and group devotions. During the week the students performed hours of bhajan singing at Gurudeva's talks and the spirit of sacred satsang at the feet of the Guru filled each day.

Among the classes presented by the Saiva Yogis were an overview of the history of Saivism, instruction in puja, the Hindu form of worship and a careful review of the points presented by Gurudeva in his talks. One very special activity provided for both groups of students was a trip to the Asian Art Museum to view the famous Avery Brundage collection. Most significant for Himalayan Academy students were the items in the India collection, where many murthis of the Deities were on display, most of them from South India. There was a very large Nandi, many temple poses of Siva and Parvati and a strikingly beautiful, finely carved image of Lord Ganesha. The Jade Room was also a great inspiration, displaying the incredible

craftmanship of the Chinese, as was the Japanese collection, outstanding for its refinement and delicate aura of cultured living. From the museum everyone enjoyed a stroll through the peaceful Japanese Tea Gardens in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park and stayed for cups of hot jasmine tea. The visit immersed the students for a short while in the high-mindedness of Asian culture. Dining together often at nearby restaurants, the students got to know one another personally, a rare opportunity for the Himalayan Academy student body, so widely dispersed throughout the world.

The highlight of the gathering was Gurudeva's presence and his twice-daily talks to the whole group. During these satsangs everyone brought gifts to him for his Jayanthi. This year nearly 2,300 copies of Saiva Dharma: A Catechism for Saivite Hinduism were purchased and presented to him, which he will distribute freely around the world. To the Book One students, during the first three days, Gurudeva spoke about satsang, the path of San Marga and understanding our own beliefs. He explained that for those just beginning the Master Course, the main emphasis in practice should be satsang - fellowship with other devotees and chanting the names of the Gods. He pointed out that meditation fits into the path of San Marga at the level of yoga, that meditation for the Saivite comes as a natural result of following dharma through chariya and kriya. He stressed the importance of fully and consciously understanding our inmost beliefs in order to free ourselves of subconscious confusion as we step onto the religious path of our choice. He described at length the nature of God Siva in His three perfections, and read from his Inspired Talk, The Self God, inspiring everyone with the age-old truth that, "God Siva is within you at this very moment!"

During the three days for School of Meditation students Gurudev talked about pilgrimage, since most of those present were going on the 1981 India Odyssey. He explained that during pilgrimage we tear ourselves away from the entanglements of daily life, dropping off attachments of the way, carrying all our problems to the Feet of the Deity. In doing so, the way is open to be uplifted into higher chakras, to experience, even for a moment, the Satchidananda state and return from pilgrimage with renewed spiritual power for a positive religious life in the year to come - until the next pilgrimage. He spoke spontaneously of the perennial Vedic Truths - the Self, Parasivam, and Siva's Divine Mind, Satchidananda.

The second three-day session ended January 4th with a royal banquet at the Carnelian Room restaurant atop the Bank of America building, sponsored by the Hindu Businessmen's Association in honor of Gurudeva's Jayanthi and as a joyous send-off to all the Inner-search pilgrims. The next day, Jayanthi, everyone was up

early to attend a traditional Guru Puja at 5:30 A.M. after which all the pilgrims left for the airport, on their way to the Feet of the Gods in the Holy Land of South India.

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