

## 22<sup>nd</sup> International Vedanta Congress

On December 27-30, 2015 the Twenty Second International Congress of Vedanta was hosted by the Special Centre for Sanskrit Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, in collaboration with the Institute of Advanced Sciences, Dartmouth, USA and the Center for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

The inauguration session started in the afternoon of first day with Mangalacharan and Lighting of Lamp. Prof. Sukalyan Sengupta, Director, Center for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, USA and Prof. Girish Nath Jha, Special Center for Sanskrit Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University presented Welcome Address. Prof. Bal Ram Singh, Director, Institute of Advanced Sciences, Dartmouth, USA introduced the theme of conference to audience. Prof Anindita Balslev, Nehru Fellow, JNMF, New Delhi presented Inaugural Address on “A Philosophical Appraisal of ‘I-consciousness’ in the Vedantic Discourse”. Prof. Kapil Kapoor, Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha, Former Pro VC, JNU was the keynote speaker of this session. Vote of Thanks was presented by Prof. S.S. Ramarao Pappu, Miami University, Ohio, USA.



### Inaugural Session, 22<sup>nd</sup> International Vedanta Congress

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> Vedanta Congress, a diverse group of topics were discussed, including various schools of Vedantic philosophy (metaphysics, knowledge and hermeneutics) and lifeworld, science and technology In ancient Indian texts, interpretation of key texts of Indian intellectual tradition, digital libraries, electronic access and search for the texts of Vedantic tradition, Yoga and Ayurveda, Vedantic perspective of spirituality and science, interfaith dialogue, the corporate world , public governance, and music, and the Vedantic concept of consciousness, among others.

The International Congress of Vedanta was founded in 1986 by Professor Rama Rao Pappu of Miami University. For nearly three decades, the International Congress of Vedanta has been the

focal point for the meeting of scholars specializing in all aspects of Indian philosophy and religion. The Vedanta Congress continues its tradition of bringing scholars of Indic traditions from India and the West together on a platform regularly.

There were some unique features on display at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Vedanta Congress. These included the organization of panel discussions on topics of current relevance, such as Jyotish, Ayurveda, and modern science, Vedantic basis of social and economic equality, and Sanskrit and current education policy. A total of 66 research papers and 12 posters were presented, in addition to 16 plenary lectures and several keynote and other distinguished lectures.



**Poster Sessions and Section of Audience during Conference**

International scholars from University of Maine, USA; Maharishi University of Management, Iowa; Miami University, Ohio; Elizabeth Town College, USA; Institute of Advanced Studies, Dartmouth, USA, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and Delegates & young researchers from different Indian universities such as Shri Lal Bhadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidhyapeeth, University of Delhi, Sanchi University, Punjab University, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Vanasthali Vidyapeeth, North Bengal University, Pondicherry University, Karnataka Sanskrit University, Allahabad University, Central University of Tripura etc were actively participated in this 4 day International Conference.

The panel discussion on Jyotish, Ayurveda, and Modern Science was in particular, a new initiative. This panel was a continuation of discussion between Prof. Bal Ram Singh and Mr. Jeffrey Armstrong for more than three years. The issue has been whether and how to consider Jyotish as a scientific field. Obviously both served on the panel discussion representing respective fields of training, modern science and Jyotish. The two other panelists – Dr. Rita Singh, a student and practitioner of Jyotish and Dr. S. K. Sharma, an Ayurveda doctor with extensive experience. The panel's consensus view was that the Jyotish may have scientific basis but it can be proven through Ayurveda. Mr. Jeffrey Armstrong has an article in this issue of AJH to explain his ideas very beautifully. Nevertheless, it is a long way from being accepted as a

science. We hope Ayurveda will provide a platform for some testable ideas that can shed further light on this subject.



### **Academic Sessions and Panel Discussions during Conference**

JNU has a culture of highly charged debates. In that light, leftist students on campus raised objections to University inviting a very popular yoga guru, Baba Ramdev, to address the Vedanta Congress. Although Baba Ramdev was invited, he had not confirmed his participation, but that didn't prevent the controversy from playing out. It nevertheless provided the Vedanta Congress with international publicity. The Congress sparked a lot of discussion on the JNU campus and the rest of the country.

There are hundreds of students in JNU who study Sanskrit and philosophy with an interest in Vedanta, Yoga, and Ayurveda. Attending the Congress was a thrilling experience for them. In addition, the students staged a 90 minute long drama, all in Sanskrit, that was an exhilarating experience for the delegates.



**JNU Students performing 'Ratnavali' Drama in Cultural Evening organized during 22<sup>nd</sup> International Vedanta Conference**



The Congress concluded on a very happy note of support from the University's Rector, Professor Prasenjit Sen, in the presence of Professor Ramesh Kumar Pandey, the Vice Chancellor of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Delhi, and the Chairman of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), Professor S. R. Bhatt. Mr. Muktanand Aggarwal, VC, Raj Rishi Bhartrihari Matsya University, Alwar, Rajasthan was the coordinator of this valedictory session.



### **Valedictory Session, 22<sup>nd</sup> International Vedanta Congress**

The Congress was coordinated by Professor Girish Nath Jha of JNU, Professor Sukalyan Sengupta of the Center for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and Professor Bal Ram Singh, Institute of Advanced Sciences. In addition to support from the three above organizing institutions, the Congress was sponsored ICPR, Central Institute of Indian Languages, and Dharma Civilization Foundation.

The Vedanta Congress convenes every two years alternating between the United States and India. The next Congress will be held in the United States in 2017.

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