

Department of Sanskrit and Philosophy
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute
Belur Math, Howrah, 711202
Sanskrit Week Celebration 2026
24–29 August 2026
(A Six-Day Celebration)

1. Overview

The Department of Sanskrit and Philosophy, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI), Belur Math, Howrah, organised a six-day “Sanskrit Week Celebration 2026” from Monday, 24 August to Saturday, 29 August 2026, at the Balaram Bose Hall, Abhedananda Convention Center, Belur Math. The celebration was conceived as an immersive academic and cultural programme intended to deepen student and community engagement with the Vedic corpus, the *Vedāṅgas* (auxiliary disciplines of Vedic learning), classical *stotra* literature, and Sanskrit performative traditions. Each evening session, held between approximately 4.10 PM and 6.35 PM, combined Vedic chanting, scholarly introductions, devotional recitations, narrative story-telling, and dramatic enactments, and concluded with a Vote of Thanks and the *Ārātrikam*.

The celebration drew active participation from undergraduate and Integrated MA students, *Prāk-śāstrī* students, Research Scholars, faculty members, monastic dignitaries of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, invited guests and registered participants from the various sections of the society. Attendance across the six days averaged approximately 150 participants per day, comprising students, faculty, monastic members, and visitors, reflecting sustained and broad-based engagement with the programme.

2. Objectives

- To cultivate familiarity with the four Vedic recensions — *R̥gveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Śukla- and Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda*, and *Atharvaveda* — through live chanting by students.
- To introduce students and the wider audience to the six *Vedāṅgas* (*Śikṣā*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta*, *Jyotiṣa*, *Chandas*, and *Kalpa*) through short expository presentations.
- To provide a platform for students and research scholars to present scholarly introductions to Vedic *sūktas* and to narrate traditional anecdotes drawn from the *Upaniṣads* and the *Mahābhārata*.
- To encourage performative and devotional engagement with Sanskrit literature through group singing of *stotras* and dramatic enactments of Upaniṣadic episodes.
- To felicitate and honour the legacy of scholars through the Premchand Tarkavagisha Memorial Lecture.

3. Day-wise Proceedings

Day 1 — 24 August 2026 (Monday)

- ❖ Chanting of the *R̥gveda* (students of the Department) — 4.10 PM
- ❖ Welcome Address (Dr. Rakesh Das) — 4.20 PM
- ❖ Inaugural Address (Swami Japasiddhanandaji) — 4.25 PM
- ❖ Aṣṭāvadhānam (an eight-fold simultaneous exhibition of scholarly and poetic skill) — 4.55 PM
- ❖ Ārātrikam — 6.15 PM

The celebration opened with Vedic chanting followed by a formal welcome and an inaugural address setting the tone for the week. The highlight of the day was the Aṣṭāvadhānam, a traditional feat of multi-tasking scholarship in which a performer engages simultaneously with several distinct intellectual and poetic challenges, drawing considerable audience interest.

Aṣṭāvadhānam is a classical performing art in which the *Avadhānī* extemporaneously composes poetry on a specified topic and metre while simultaneously responding to eight distinct challenges posed by eight participants. A description of each challenge, together with an account of how it unfolded in this performance, follows below.

1. **Akṣaraniṣedha** (prohibition of a letter)— In this challenge, the participant specifies the topic and metre for the verse. As the *Avadhānī* composes, the challenger interrupts him after each letter is uttered and prohibits the use of a particular letter at the next position. The process continues until the verse is complete, with one quadrant composed in each of the four rounds.

Dr. Sukhdev Bhatt, a grammarian, presided over this challenge. He requested the *Avadhānī* to compose, in the *Vaṃśastha* metre, a verse depicting **Rāma's lament upon beholding the cloud-laden sky during the month of Śrāvaṇa**.

2. **Samasyāpūraṇa** (solving the puzzle)— Here, the challenger supplies a line of poetry that appears incongruous or paradoxical, and the *Avadhānī* must construct a complete verse that resolves it meaningfully.

Dr. Neeraj Kumar Bhargave, another grammarian, posed the line “*putrā vṛddhā mātā kanyā*” (“the sons are aged, while the mother is a young girl”) in the *Vidyunmālā* metre. The *Avadhānī* resolved the problem across the four rounds, completing one quadrant of the verse in each.

3. **Dattapadam** (composition using given words)— In this challenge, the participant specifies a topic and requires the *Avadhānī* to incorporate certain given words into the composition.

Dr. Gopikrishnan Reghu, a grammarian, assigned the topic of “**the cloud**” without specifying a metre, but required the inclusion of four terms drawn from

contemporary social-media usage, particularly associated with Generation Z: *Aura*, *Pooky*, *Yup*, and *Vibe*.

4. **Ālekhyapadya** (describe the image through poetry)— In this challenge, an artist produces a drawing, and the *Avadhānī* must render its content into verse.

Sukamal Mandal, a second-year postgraduate student, presented a depiction of the *Navakuñjara*, a composite figure formed of nine constituent parts: a human hand; three legs of an elephant, a horse, and a tiger; the head of a rooster; the neck of a peacock; the body of a lion bearing the hump of an ox; and a serpent as its tail.

5. **Saṅkhyābandha** — A member of the audience proposes a number between 64 and 1000, and a five-by-five grid is constructed. The challenger directs the *Avadhānī* to fill designated cells at various points during the performance, such that upon completion, the sums of every row, column, and diagonal equal the specified number.

The number for this performance, 523, was proposed by Swami Atmapriyananda Ji, Pro-Chancellor of the University. The challenge was administered by Dr. Tuhin Mandal, Publication and Teaching Assistant in the Department.

6. **Kāvyaavācana** — The challenger recites a verse drawn from a designated epic, hymn, or related text, and the *Avadhānī* is required to identify its source and provide an explanation.

Subhadeep Das, a research scholar in the Department, recited verses from the *Śivānandalahari*, the *Campūrāmāyaṇam*, and the *Kumārasambhavam* across successive rounds. In each instance, the *Avadhānī* correctly identified the source and offered an accurate explication.

7. **Āśukāvya** (extempore poetry) — In each of the four rounds, the challenger specifies a topic and a metre, and the *Avadhānī* composes a verse instantaneously.

Dr. Shantanu Ayachit, himself an accomplished *Avadhānī* and a scholar of Advaita Vedānta, requested a verse describing Śrī Ramakrishna as the Himalaya, in the *Śārdūlavikrīḍita* metre, in the first round, followed by a verse on the theme of *viraha* (separation) in a metre of the *Avadhānī*'s own choosing; the *Avadhānī* selected the *Drutavilambita* metre.

In addition to posing these challenges, Dr. Shantanu showed his miraculous command over the *Bhagavadgītā* through a series of exacting exercises: reciting a verse identified only by chapter and verse number; naming the specific quadrant of a verse given its chapter and verse number; identifying a particular letter within a verse given its chapter, verse, and sequential position; and providing explanations of specified verses.

8. **Aprastuta-prasaṅga** (Digressive Interjection) — This challenger acts as a kind of comic compère, forging a rapport between performers and audience while trying to distract the *Avadhānī* with irrelevant or teasing questions.

This role was performed by Dr. Rakesh Das, who functioned as a mediating presence between the performers and the audience, periodically posing humourous, irrelevant and diverting questions to the *Avadhānī* in order to test his composure and concentration.

Here are the compositions created during the performance:

The central verse:

मनोविधानं नियमावनेरह
विदेवताया गतिरप्यहो विधे ।
विदेहकन्याविरहाग्नितोऽन्वहं
रघुप्रभुश्चापि हतप्रभावकः ॥

(The prohibitions were like this: श prohibited at the first place. Then म → ए, नो → ज, वि → न, धा → य, नं → र, नि → व, य → त, मा → म, व → अ, ने → न, ह → र, वि → न, दे → ह, व → न, ता → क, या → ह, ग → म, ति → क, ता → न, प्य → र, हो → ग, वि → न)

[The challenger did not pose any prohibition in the third and fourth quadrants for a time constraint.]

अहो विधे, विदेवतायाः नियमावनेः गतिः अपि (द्रष्टव्या) अह । अन्वहं विदेहकन्याविरहाग्निः रघुप्रभुः चापि हतप्रभावकः ।

O Lord of the Universe! He who may be compared to the very embodiment of order and discipline (नियमावनि) is now bereft of his sovereignty (विदेवता). His condition is truly pitiable. Day by day, the lord of the *Raghu-kula* is losing his lustre, scorched by the fire of separation from the daughter of Videha (*Sītā*).

Samasyāpūraṇa:

स्वारस्यं तन्मेदिन्यां नो
बाभाल्येवं भूयोदृष्टम् ।
वृद्धाः पद्मा वल्ली नूला
पुत्रा वृद्धा माता कन्या ॥

Here on earth, we often encounter this familiar spectacle: the lotuses wither and grow old, while their stems remain fresh, green, and youthful. It is as though the sons have grown old, while their mother continues to remain young and vibrant.

While the *Avadhānī* solved the puzzle thus, the other two challengers also solved the same puzzle in different way. Here are the verses:

काले ह्यस्मिन् यन्त्रारूढाः
पुत्रा ह्यल्पे क्लेशे क्षीणाः ।
माता क्लेशं कृत्वा स्वस्था

पुत्रा वृद्धा माता कन्या ॥ (composed by Dr. Gopikrishnan Reghu)

Such is the age we live in: sons, excessively dependent on machines, grow weary at the slightest exertion, while the mother, despite her advancing years, remains

healthy and energetic even after strenuous labour. Alas! The sons have grown old, while the mother remains young and vigorous.

मायाच्छत्रां सृष्टिं दृष्ट्वा
भूताधीशः स्मायं स्मायम् ।
स्मृत्वा सृष्टेर्धात्रीं वक्ति

पुत्रा वृद्धा माता कन्या ॥ (composed by Dr. Rakesh Das)

The Lord of all beings (*bhūtas*) gazes upon the creation, veiled in *Māyā*, with a gentle smile upon His face. As He beholds it, He remembers the One who cradles and sustains the entire creation—the *Dhātrī*. Recalling Her, He exclaims with delight, “The sons have grown old, but the Mother remains ever young and virgin.”

Dattapadam:

येऽहोरात्रं वारिवाहा भचित्ताः (Aura → होरा)
सत्पूः कीर्णा तैरमोघप्रधूमैः । (pooky → पूः कि)
इन्दुं तारा यापयन्तो हि नाके (Yup → याप)
सर्वाश्चर्यं तन्वते वैभवेन ॥ (Vibe → वैभ)

Those clouds seem to contemplate the stars day and night. They envelop the beautiful city as though it were covered in smoke. At night, their majestic movement fills everyone with wonder, for as they sweep across the sky, they create the illusion that the moon and stars themselves are speeding across the heavens.

Āśukāvyam:

Sri Ramakrishna being compared to the Himalaya:

हैमादिर्महितोज्ज्वलो भुवितले यो योगिनां सन्ततौ
गङ्गायाः स्थिरतीर्थभूमितनने दिव्याद्रिसम्पालने ।
तद्वच्छ्रीयतिरामकृष्णपदसल्लीलापि जोघुष्यते
सन्यासाश्रमहैमशैलभरणे ब्रह्मातिशायिन्यहो ॥

The Himalaya is glorious and revered by the *Yogīs*, for it gives rise to the *Gaṅgā*, the ever-sacred *tīrtha*, and bears upon itself the divine mountains. Likewise, the *līlā* of the holy feet of Sri Ramakrishna is celebrated for nurturing and sustaining the *Sannyāsāśrama*—the sacred order of monastic renunciation. Thus, the *līlā* of *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa*’s holy feet surpasses even the glory of the *Vedas* (*Brahma*).

Estrangement:

विरहवह्निविदीपितमानसो
नदति शब्दगणेन विनापि सः ।
मनसि शून्यगृहं सुखकारकं
किमु कदाचन भाति कथञ्चन ॥

His mind is burning in the fire of separation. He gives voice to his anguish without uttering a single word. Can this empty house ever, in any way, bring solace to his heart?

Ālekhyakāvya:

आलेख्यविद्धृदयकल्पितचित्रमेतत्
हास्यं भयं गहनभावमपि क्षणेन ।
विन्यस्य वीक्षकमनोनिचयं प्रगृह्य
ब्रह्माणमप्यनुपदं नवधा करोति ॥

This picture, born from the depths of the painter's heart, evokes laughter, fear, and a range of profound emotions. Captivating the minds of the spectators, the painter has, in a sense, assumed the very role of *Brahmā*—the Creator—and brought an entirely new world into being.

The Matrix

101	109	92	105	116
102	118	98	111	94
108	96	104	115	100
117	97	110	93	106
95	103	119	99	107

The Navakuñjara painted by Sukamal Mandal



Day 2 — 25 August 2026 (Tuesday)

- ❖ Chanting of the *Sāmaveda* (Aditya Jha, Integrated MA 2nd year) — 4.10 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Medhā* and *Śraddhā Sūktam* (Sourav Porel, Research Scholar) — 4.20 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Vedāṅgas*: *Śikṣā* and *Vyākaraṇa* (Sri Sayan Das, Integrated MA 5th year) — 4.45 PM
- ❖ *Sāradāṣaṭkam* (sung by students of the Department) — 5.10 PM
- ❖ The Story of *Āruṇi* and *Dhaumya* (narrated by Sri Chandan Bhadra, Integrated MA 5th year) — 5.20 PM
- ❖ *Annapūrṇā Stotram* (sung by students of the Department) — 5.45 PM
- ❖ Dramatic representation of the *Praśnopaniṣad* (students of the Department) — 6.00 PM
- ❖ *Ārātrikam* — 6.30 PM

The second day combined *Sāmaveda* chanting with a scholarly introduction to the *Medhā* and *Śraddhā Sūktam*, an exposition on foundational *Vedāṅgas*, devotional singing, a traditional Upaniṣadic anecdote, and a dramatised rendering of the *Praśnopaniṣad* by the students.

Day 3 — 26 August 2026 (Wednesday)

- ❖ Chanting of the *Śukla-Yajurveda*, *Kāṇva* recension (Shailajnath Panda, Prāk-śāstrī 2nd year) — 4.10 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Puruṣa Sūktam* (Krishnendu Bera, Research Scholar) — 4.20 PM
- ❖ *Govindāṣṭakam* (sung by students of the Department) — 4.45 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Vedāṅga*: *Nirukta* (Sri Raghu Mandal, Integrated MA 2nd year) — 5.00 PM
- ❖ The Story of *Āruṇi* and *Upamanyu* (narrated by Sri Shaswata Jha, Integrated MA 5th year) — 5.20 PM
- ❖ *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotram* (sung by students, with exposition by Sri Subhadeep Das, Research Scholar) — 5.45 PM
- ❖ Dramatic representation of the *Bhṛguvalli* (students of the Department) — 6.10 PM
- ❖ *Ārātrikam* — 6.35 PM

The third day featured the *Kāṇva* recension of the *Śukla-Yajurveda*, an introduction to the *Puruṣa Sūktam*, devotional singing, an exposition of the discipline of *Nirukta* (etymology), a further *Āruṇi* narrative, and a dramatic enactment of the *Bhṛguvalli* section of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.

Day 4 — 27 August 2026 (Thursday)

- ❖ Chanting of the *Śukla-Yajurveda*, *Mādhyandina* recension (Bishal Jha, Integrated MA 1st year) — 4.10 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Nāsadiya Sūktam* (Narayan Chandra Metya, Research Scholar) — 4.20 PM
- ❖ *Gadādhara-stotram* (sung by students of the Department) — 4.50 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Vedāṅga: Jyotiṣa* (Sri Aditya Sarkar, Integrated MA 4th year) — 5.00 PM
- ❖ The Anecdote of *Lakṣmī* (narrated by Sri Pritam Bera, Research Scholar) — 5.20 PM
- ❖ *Sārādā-devī-stotram* (sung by students of the Department) — 5.45 PM
- ❖ Discussion on the *Kanakadhārā-stotram* (Subhajit Jana, Integrated MA 2nd year) — 6.00 PM
- ❖ Dramatic representation of the *Yakṣapraśna* (students of the Department) — 6.15 PM
- ❖ *Ārātrikam* — 6.35 PM

Day four brought the *Mādhyandina* recension of the *Śukla-Yajurveda*, a philosophical introduction to the *Nāsadiya Sūktam* (the celebrated “hymn of creation”), an exposition of *Jyotiṣa*, devotional recitations, an anecdote on the goddess *Lakṣmī*, and a dramatic representation of the *Yakṣapraśna* episode from the *Mahābhārata*.

Day 5 — 28 August 2026 (Friday) — Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda, Chandas, and Guest Lectures

- ❖ Chanting of the *Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda* (students of the Department) — 4.10 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Nārāyaṇa Sūkta* (Gaurav Sharma) — 4.15 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Vedāṅga: Chandas* (Dr. Buddhadev Das) — 4.25 PM
- ❖ *Rāmakṛṣṇadaśakam* (sung by students) — 4.35 PM
- ❖ Premchand Tarkavagisha Memorial Lecture — on the literary genius of Premchand Tarkavagisha (Dr. Tanmay Kumar Bhattacharya) — 4.45 PM
- ❖ Short Speech by the Guest of Honour (Sri Abhijit Chakraborty, Chief Law Officer, Shyamaprasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata) — 5.25 PM
- ❖ Short Speech by the Special Guest (Dr. B. Chattopadhyay) — 5.45 PM
- ❖ *Bhaja Govindam* (sung by students) — 6.10 PM
- ❖ *Ārātrikam* — 6.30 PM

The fifth day was marked by the Premchandra Tarkavagisha Memorial Lecture, an annual commemoration of a distinguished Sanskrit scholar, delivered by Dr. Tanmay Kumar Bhattacharya. He gave an introduction to the stalwart scholar Sri Premchandra Tarkavāgīśa, the teacher of Īśvaracandra Vidyāsāgara. He discussed his works in detail. His lucid language and humorous style of oration fascinated everyone. Dr. B Chattopadhyay gave a brief introduction to the life sketch of Premachandra Tarkavāgīśa. The guest of honour, Sri Abhijit Chakrabarti bewildered the audience by

his bold and inspiring speech in fluent Sanskrit. The session also featured an exposition of Chandas (Sanskrit prosody).

Day 6 — 29 August 2026 (Saturday)

- ❖ Chanting of the *Atharvaveda* (students of the Department) — 4.10 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Hiraṇyagarbha Sūkta* (Avijit Das) — 4.15 PM
- ❖ Introduction to the *Vedāṅga: Kalpa* (Prolay Nandi) — 4.30 PM
- ❖ Short Speech (Swami Namratananda Ji) — 4.45 PM
- ❖ Speech on the rationale of the Sanskrit Week Celebration (Swami Atmapriyananda Ji) — 5.05 PM
- ❖ Benedictory Address (Most Revered Swami Gautamananda Ji, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission) — 5.10 PM
- ❖ Anecdote on the Birth of the Deity of Death (Saikat Mohanta) — 5.25 PM
- ❖ Śaraṇāgati-gadyam — chanting with simple exposition (Swami Buddhidananda Ji) — 5.40 PM
- ❖ Drama: Āruṇi-Śvetaketu-saṁvāda (students of the Department) — 5.55 PM
- ❖ *Devyaparādha-kṣamāpana-stotram* (sung by students of the Department) — 4.55 PM
- ❖ Ārātrikam

The valedictory day concluded the celebration with the *Atharvaveda* and the *Vedāṅga* of *Kalpa*, addresses by senior monastics of the Ramakrishna Order including the Benedictory Address by the Most Revered Swami Gautamananda Ji, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and closed with the traditional dramatic dialogue of *Āruṇi* and *Śvetaketu*, drawn from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.

4. Participation

The programme recorded consistent and enthusiastic participation throughout the week, with an average attendance of approximately 150 persons per day across the six days, drawn from Integrated MA and *Prāk-śāstrī* students, Research Scholars, faculty of the Department, monastic members of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, and invited guests and visitors to the campus.

5. Outcomes and Significance

- Sustained, week-long exposure of students to all four Vedas in their original chanted form, strengthening oral tradition and *svara* (accentual) accuracy.
- Systematic coverage of all six *Vedāṅgas* through student- and faculty-led expositions, reinforcing classroom learning with public presentation experience.
- Active involvement of students across year-levels (*Prāk-śāstrī* and Integrated MA 1st through 5th year) and Research Scholars as presenters, narrators, and performers, fostering pedagogical and platform skills.

- Institutional and community engagement through the participation of senior monastics of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and external guests, situating the Department's academic work within the wider Ramakrishna Mission tradition.
- Continuation of the Premchandra Tarkavagisha Memorial Lecture, preserving the memory and scholarly legacy of a distinguished Sanskrit savant.
- Average daily footfall of approximately 150 participants, indicating strong and consistent engagement across the six-day duration.

6. Conclusion

The Sanskrit Week Celebration 2026, organised by the Department of Sanskrit and Philosophy, RKMVERI, Belur Math, successfully brought together Vedic recitation, scholarly exposition, devotional music, narrative tradition, and dramatic performance over six consecutive evenings. The programme reaffirmed the Department's commitment to the living transmission of Sanskrit learning and Vedic heritage, while providing students meaningful opportunities for scholarly and performative participation. The consistently high attendance and the participation of eminent monastic dignitaries and guests underscore the celebration's success and its value as an annual academic and cultural initiative of the Institute.

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