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## Chennaiites find takers across the globe for Skype lessons on slokas

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*A six-year-old in a tier-2 city in India and a 30-year-old in Africa share a Chennai connection. They are both taught Tamil and Sanskrit by city singer Vidya Subramanian via Skype.*



**Vidya Subramanian, Singer, teacher**

**Chennai:** Be it Vishnu Sahasranamam or Divyaprabandhams, to the more secular verses like Thirukkural to Aathichoodi, technology and the module-based programme has something to offer everyone. Vidya says, "We have those who sign up intrigued by the values and morals they teach to those who want to be able to recite them proficiently."

The learning experience is highly customised and owing to the significance of meaning and the need to get into the depths of the knowledge the verses offer. In this initiative, Vidya is helped by a faculty of teachers who have a deep understanding of the slokas. Says

Vidya, “While for children as young as six-years, the meaning may not be of significance, there are foreigners who have opted for these classes after a brief exposure to Hindu traditions or a visit to a Hindu temple.”

Another teacher in the city, Venkatasubramani Sharma, has been running free classes for those settled all over the world. His classes span from morning till evening for people across time zones, who have restricted access to these lessons in the places they live in. “People sign up for these classes according to their availability. The age group is broad, and they hail from diverse backgrounds. They take a lot of interest in Vishnusahasranamam or Narayaneeyam,” says Venkatasubramani.

Meanwhile, Sriram Srinivasan — an IIT-Kanpur alumnus from Coimbatore who keeps travelling to Chennai — gives lessons on Ramayana between 6.30 am and 7 am conducted via Skype across nine homes in Chennai and Bengaluru.

Speaking about what made him begin the classes, Sriram says, “I wanted to teach my daughter, but I noticed waking up early in the morning for children is a huge task. Therefore, I came up with the idea of group Skype lessons.” From four children in the age group between 5 and 12, the group has grown to nine in a matter of a few months.

Sriram, who does not charge for these classes, says, “There are about 100 slokas in the first chapter of Valmiki Ramayana. Reciting them every day, they learn at least 25 by heart and can learn Sanskrit. I also give them contemporary examples to explain the nature of Rama, like Tendulkar or Kalam, who are humble despite their achievements.” While these are seasoned people, there are young artistes like Maanasa Dhotrekar, a 25-year-old, alumnus from Kalakshetra, who wants to coach those willing to learn. A harikatha exponent and musician, she believes the slokas offers scope for spiritual self-development. “These are unique, and they respond with a lot of interest,” she says.

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