

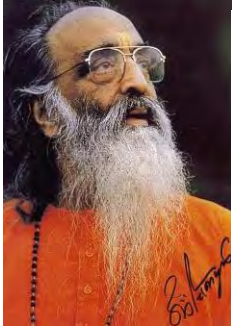


Chinmaya Pradipika

CMSD Quarterly Newsletter



April 2012, No. 2



The Master Speaks:

The universe is a cosmos and not a chaos. There exists a mental affinity; a scientific law; a rhythm of mental relationship in which the entire world is held together in one web of love.

Swami Chinmayananda

From the Team of Chinmaya Pradīpikā

What a lovely start to 2012! We started the year with *Japathon* followed by our Eleventh Anniversary celebrations with Swami Sharanananda gracing the occasion, followed by Acharya Vivek's Youth Workshop and *Jñāna yajña*.

We hope this issue of the *Pradīpikā* will bring back the heart-warming memories from the various activities and celebrations from the first part of this year.

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Welcoming the New Year with a Japathon

Over 200 CMSD members came together to celebrate the New Year on January 1, 2012 at the **Chinmaya Jyoti** site in the annual *Japathon*. It was a perfect, sunny morning with clear skies behind *Tapovana Giri*.



From the youngest, 1 ½ yr **Achintya Puttur**, to the most senior member **Mr. Venugopal**, the participants had a choice of hiking two different trails chanting "*Om Śrī Gaṇeśāya namaḥ*".

The Japathon is a "Walkathon with a Difference". The mantra established a rhythm for walking and chanting the name of the Lord in synchronicity created a great energy at the hallowed land of Chinmaya Jyoti. The Japathon concluded with an Ārati of Tapovana Giri and distribution of prasādam.



“With everyone lifting their minds to higher thoughts, the **Japa-thon** was a reminder of why we come to Chinmaya every Sunday. We get a chance to give thanks for all our blessings in life, and remember that while every year comes and goes, the act of worship together as a united family is a constant,” explains **Akalka Barath**.

“As the years pass, the plot of land will change. Chinmaya Jyoti will grow and develop. We will change too. But we have to keep our eyes on the prize- keep our minds on the goal. We should take the effort to cherish what we have and the ideals that we stand for. And the **Japa-thon** is an important step to show that we are together in that mindset- a mental outlook that we should return to again and again to keep us on the course. Can there be a better way to start the year?”



Eleventh Anniversary banquet celebrates “Our Children, Our Future”



CMSD celebrated its Eleventh Anniversary with a cultural program and a banquet on January 28, 2012 at the JCC in La Jolla. The core activity of CMSD being Bala Vihar, it was quite apt that the theme of this year's program was: "Our Children, Our Future".

The cultural program this year was a cornucopia of songs, dances, skits, speeches, and audio-visual documentaries that were enjoyed by one and all. **Sukumarji** and **Lakshmi** opened the function, and welcomed our honored Chief guest, **Swami Sharanananda**, *ācārya* of CM Chicago. After a beautiful

invocation to Lord *Ganeśa* by **Chinmaya Dhvani**, the Boy Scout Troops led the guests in saluting the American Flag. In celebration of India's Republic Day, we then had a stirring rendition of "*Jayati Jayati Bhārata māṭā*", to honor the birthplace of our *Sanātana Dharma*.

This was followed by a video introduction to our Pujya Gurudev, the pride of *Bhārata māṭā*, describing his life of love and accomplishments for the welfare of humanity. Immediately following, a select group of dancers presented Ādi Sankara's *Gurvaṣṭakam*, a beautifully choreographed piece emphasizing the emptiness of life if left untouched by love for the Lord or *Guru*.

Another video documentary then traced the path of CMSD's beginning. It started from the time Gurudev performed a *Gītā Jñāna Yajña* at UCSD, the giving up of his body in San Diego in 1993, and to **Lakshmi**'s and **Sukumarji**'s shifting to San Diego from the Bay area with the blessings of many CM Swamis. We also got a glimpse of the first Bala Vihar gathering in 2001 in the presence of **Br. Someshwar Chaitanya** (now **Swami Ishwarananda**).

After two more songs, the Yuva Sevaks entertained us with a cleverly made skit "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory." Charlie was the only kid who could achieve his goal with discipline and focus, doing his



duties, and not worrying about winning over the other kids. (Turns out he also went to Bala Vihar!!)

The program then shifted to our goal of realizing the vision of Chinmaya Jyoti. A video message from *Pujya Guruji* was shown from his last visit to San Diego in 2009, where he stressed the importance of donating freely to this noble cause. **Harish Babla** then gave an update on the CMSD financial status and urged the gathering to donate for the sake of our children, our future.

Swami Sharanananda pointed out the example from the *Gītā* of Lord Krishna in his *Viśvarūpa darśana*, where Arjuna saw the *Kaurava* warriors lying dead even before the battle had begun. The Lord then urged Arjuna to be just an instrument to do what He had already accomplished. "Likewise, **consider Chinmaya Jyoti already built!! Use this opportunity to contribute and be an instrument in his hands,**" Swamiji said.



The fundraising scheme was creatively put together to allow for donors in various categories- *Likhita japa*, *Bhūdānam*, *Vṛkṣadānam* and monthly and annual pledges. While **Ravi Kulkarni** and **Mohit Prasad** are trying to attract donors for *Bhūdānam*, **Rajesh Agarwal**, our *Vṛkṣadānam* sevak, is seen here modeling with his poster to convey the idea to our members.



Swamiji then released the inaugural issue of CMSD's quarterly newsletter, *Chinmaya Pradīpika*. The grand finale of the cultural program was a marching band salute of prayer and gratitude to *Pujya Gurudev* by all CMSD sevaks, sevikas, and children in the upper grades "*Tvam hi no netā..*" Everyone loved the finale, and many members of the audience joined in the salute as well.

After Swamiji's inspiring words, the members all went into the banquet area where a sumptuous feast of homemade delicacies was served by the team of volunteers. **Suneethi Uppugonduri** played the role of the auctioneer for selling various different paintings by CMSD artists, **Swaroop Kalva** and **Amarnath Puttur**.





Impressions from members:

Rajesh Agarwal: "...Our 11th anniversary celebrations were an astounding success that brought together dedicated and diligent teamwork, cultural presentations and delicious food for the palate as well as mind. The crowning moment of the evening was the grand finale with an impressive march past. In Chinmaya one family spirit, all Bala Vihar teachers joined the students in saluting Pujya Gurudev. The effort of all the teachers, *sevaks-sevikās*, and parents was impressive, and spoke volumes about their devotion and dedication."

Sujata Kulkarni: "...I am especially grateful to be part of the CMSD family and about how it is helping our children and their future. The whole program inspired me to take part in CMSD activities even more."

Ravi Kulkarni: "...My favorite part was the dance on *Gurvaṣṭakam*, which was simply awesome. In fact, all the items in the program were beautifully interwoven for a lasting memory. It was especially touching to see what Chinmaya Jyoti means for the future generations and why it is everybody's duty to fulfill that dream of ours."

Amarnath Puttur: "...the part that left a lasting impression in me was the grand finale - the *Prārthanā Gītām* march. The strong rhythm of the snare drum and the melody of the brass instruments; the beautiful words of the *Gītām* addressed to our Gurudev; the synchronized and expressive movements of the group; the experience was simply divine."

Padma Bhat: "...Children of all ages demonstrated their talents as announcers, singers, musicians and dancers while paying homage to God and Guru. The *Prārthanā Gītām* at the end sung by *sevaks/sevikās* and children while marching down to the stage reminded me of the influence Guru can have in one's life."

“The Game of Life” Youth Workshop with Acharya Vivek- A Summary

by Akil Rajaratnam

In February, CMSD was blessed with the opportunity of having five days of *satsang* with **Acharya Vivek** of Chinmaya Mission Niagara. Vivekji’s first event here was a one-day workshop with the Yuva Sevaks and California CHYKs entitled “The Game of Life” which happened on Saturday February 5, 2012.



In this workshop, we explored topics such as what makes up a game, what makes life a game, and how we can intelligently play this game. Mainly, we discussed the four factors that make up the game of life: the purpose or goal, the field, the players, and the rules.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this game of life is its purpose. To drive home its importance, Vivekji split the workshop attendees into two groups. Each group would create its own game and then explain it to the other group. As each group tried to play the other’s game, chaos ensued. The biggest problem that plagued

the games was that the end goal was not clear. The participants tried performing the prescribed actions in an attempt to follow the directions, but they did so without fully knowing what they were meant to accomplish. The game began to lose its meaning and, as a result, quickly became frustrating. After we did this activity, it became evident that if the purpose of the game is not clear, then we can’t really play the game successfully. This lesson is especially applicable to the most important game we play. **“Everybody exists. It is only a few who live,”** says Swami Chinmayananda. To actually live, we must give ourselves our purpose. If we go through our lives without a purpose, then what is the purpose of living? After discovering this lesson, we then dissected the fact that the motivation of all of our pursuits is for lasting happiness. Keeping this in mind, we then reflected on both our short term and long term goals before moving on to the next topics.





The next two elements that make up the Game of Life are the Field and the Players. The Field of life is everywhere and it is open all the time. Be it school, work, or home; wherever we happen to be is the field in which Life is to be played. And who is playing on this field is us, the Players. We are the ones who play the Game of Life. While these two aspects of the game are obvious, it is necessary to constantly remember them so that we can keep in mind that the Rules of the game always apply to us.

The final factor of the game is Rules. Like any game, Life has rules which need to be abided by in

order for the game to be fair. If everyone follows the rules, a game goes smoothly and everyone will have enjoyed him or herself, regardless of the outcome.

Succinctly put, the Rules of the Game of Life is *dharma*. If everyone follows his or her own *dharma*, i.e. if people dutifully play their respective roles in Life, then they can happily enjoy the beautiful game that we all have been given the opportunity to play.

Overall, Vivekji's first program in San Diego was a success. Through fun activities and relevant discussions, Acharya Vivekji provided an environment in which all of the participants could learn a lot while having fun. The Yuva Sevaks, local CHYKs and even our extended family from CHYK Los Angeles are all extremely grateful to have had this opportunity.



Impressions on the workshop and “Superbowl Satsang”

Acharya Vivekji's presence in San Diego on the Superbowl Sunday prompted to hold a “Superbowl satsang” for our Youth, which was hosted at Alok Gupta's residence and enjoyed by many of the yuva sevaks.

Kunal Kerai: “.. I really enjoyed the workshop that Vivekji conducted. Right off the bat, the two icebreaker games that we played with him, including a new game I learned called ‘Psychiatrist’, really helped us get into the mood of the workshop. Not only were these activities actually fun, but they also had meaning. Vivekji explained afterwards how in both games represented we had similar obstacles, tasks, etc. as in the game of life.

I also enjoyed the little mini projects we had to do that day. Among the projects, we had to create a quote that we had to abide by on a daily basis; we had to create a skit that demonstrated the “anti-rules” of life; and the most interesting of all was to create our own game with its own set of rules, players, field, etc. Overall I had a blast and can't wait for another camp.”

Dheeraj Navani: "...During the workshop, the way Acharya Vivek integrated games and relevant examples with his message really appealed to me. The next day, several of us got together to watch the Super Bowl with Vivekji. We watched the game through its intense and mundane moments, the highly-anticipated TV ads, and the half time show highlighted by Madonna's performance. Some of us also played table tennis with Vivekji. After the whole program was over, we sat down and talked about some of the interesting things



we noted such as the fact that we were often carried away by the game and felt excited or nervous. This was true especially towards the end of the game, because of a small attachment building up inside of us for either team. Acharya Vivekji also pointed out how some companies, specifically Pepsi and Coca-cola, were advertising such feelings as happiness and joy to entice their customers. Overall, both the workshop and the Superbowl satsang were pleasant and enjoyable learning experiences."

Acharya Vivek conducts *Jñāna yajña* on "Holistic Habits"

by Venu Babla

February 2-6, 2012, Acharya Vivekji conducted a *Jñāna yajña* entitled Holistic Habits, primarily for adults. However, a large contingent of students also came to hear the *ācārya*'s unique style of teaching.



Through selected teachings from *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*'s Chapter 4, Vivekji imparted practical knowledge on how to develop healthy habits in eating, sleeping, working, learning, and living.

Vivekji explained the twelve different *yajña*-s (sacrifices with dedication) that when practiced on a regular basis help to purify the mind (*citta śuddhi*) and prepare oneself for meditation.

The *lakṣaṇa* or pointers are listed below:

1. *Brāhmaṇa Yajña*: Keep a journal of all wonderful things you experience in life
2. *Deva Yajña*: Practice fasting at least once a month to control the sense organs
3. *Brahma Yajña*: Spend time day dreaming to creatively visual the potential within
4. *Indriya Saṁyama Yajña*: Reflect on “Why am I alive today?” to engage the senses and give them a purpose
5. *Ātma Saṁyama Yajña*: Read for 15 minutes each day
6. *Dravya Yajña*: Set aside at least 1% of your income to charity
7. *Tapo Yajña*: Practice discipline to burn weaknesses such as procrastination
8. *Yoga Yajña*: At night, ask yourself, did I connect with another being today? Did I make someone smile?
9. *Svādhyāya Yajña*: Do a self-study of the mind every day; sign up for e-Vedanta course or join a study group
10. *Jñāna Yajña*: Call out to the divine and the answer will come from inside—do japa everyday
11. *Prāna Yajña*: Practice *prāṇāyāma* to withdraw the sense of perception
12. Keep a regulated diet; when eating the stomach should be filled half-way with food, one-quarter with liquid and one-quarter with air.

Vivekji asked each of the audience members to create their own *yajña*, and to consistently practice the various *yajña*-s prescribed in our scriptures.



CMSD On-Going Events

Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇa

Host families for the monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa pārāyaṇa* were:

January 2012- *Rupal and Ghanshyam Patel*

February 2012- *Faith and Mohit Prasad*

March 2012- *Lakshmi and Ravi Tatavarthi*

Chinmaya Ślokāñjali

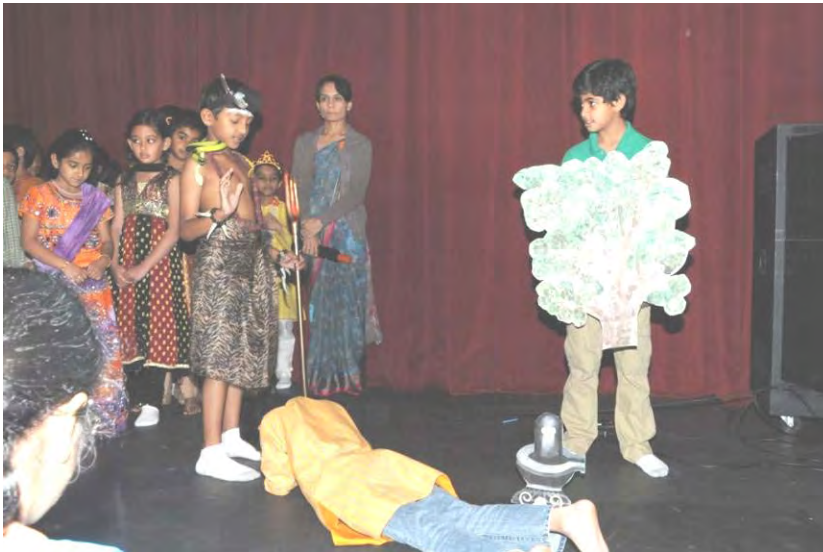
Three students have completed Level 1 thus far: Ketki Chakradeo, Aditi Puttur, Amogh Kaushik

Congratulations!

Śivarātrī celebrations



CMSD Śivarātrī celebrations were held at Chinmaya Nivas on February 20, 2012. An elaborate Śiva puṇā was performed by Sukumarji with *rudrābhiṣekam* and *Śiva aṣṭottaraśata-nāmāvaliḥ* with many CMSD devotees present. This was followed by bhajans and devotional songs by Chinmaya Dhvani. All chanted many hymns on Śiva and concluded at midnight with meditation, *ārati* and *prasādam*.



As part of the Bala Vihar curriculum, students from grade 2 performed the skits on Śivarātrī festival at the Sunday Assembly, on February 19, 2012

Prem Kollu as Lord Śiva and the hunter, played by Aarav Uргаonkar, prostrating to Lord Śiva; Sri Jayanth posing as a tree.

Hindi BV classes Annual Presentation- a very Pleasant Experience

by Mohit K. Prasad

You would not think of Hindi plays to move any needles on the hit charts in San Diego entertainment district, but the items that were presented by our very own thespians on March 12th and 19th at the JCC certainly warmed everyone's heart.

The children of the Hindi Language classes (grades 1-8) of Chinmaya Mission, San Diego presented a host of plays in Hindi over the two Sundays. On March 12, 2012 we had grades 1, 2 & 4 on stage followed by grades 3, 5-6 combined and 7-8 combined on March 19, 2012. Each presentation had a theme and a moral presented in an informative and entertaining manner.

Reena Israni and Sheetal Gandhi's Grade 1 children recited a charming story about a swan that gives away golden feathers. The recipients get greedy and want all of it for themselves. But like the proverbial geese that laid the golden egg, greed kills the very ability of the swan to produce the feathers. The children recited the story from memory in Hindi. It was difficult to believe that for most of the children Hindi, though a national language, is still foreign. The moral of the story – that greed is not good -certainly was very clearly brought out in the recitation.



Shagun Sonthalia and Poonam Bhatia's 2nd Grade presented the story of *Mīrā's* life. Attired in beautiful costumes, the children recounted, in Hindi, *Mīrā's* childhood and her precocious devotion to Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. Her devotion so enraged her enemies that they tried to poison her but the vial of poison turned to nectar when she drank it. Such was her faith in Lord *Kṛṣṇa*. The dialogues seemed very well rehearsed were neatly delivered.



Heena Panchal's students in Grade 3 presented the story of the three fishes – the wise, the impulsive and the lazy one. Each had a different outlook on life and reacts differently to being

caught in the fishermen's net. Ultimately the wise one survives and thrives. The story spoke to the Gurudev's advice - "Speak less, Think more, Act wisely".

Uday Sinha and Monika Verma's 4th Grade class recited chaupai -1, 2, 3 and 5 from Goswami Tulsidas-ji's Ram Charita Manas. Students recited the chaupais in its original form and explained the meaning in Hindi and English. It was great to hear Tulsidas-ji's invocation to his Guru as the start of the Ram Charita Manas. It was an illustration of the deep regard that all our saints have held their Gurus in. To have it explained in Hindi and then in English underscored that respect and devotion that we must continue to have. It was very well presented. There were a few recollection difficulties here and there but an otherwise flawless performance.

Ashok Bhatia and Alok Gupta's combined 5th and 6th blew the roof off the auditorium with an imminently convincing story about two young entrepreneurs who receive a contract for product and have to execute on it to receive funding for their companies. The play was set to the theme of Sant Kabir's doha, "Kal kare so āj kar, Āj kare so ab', i.e. what you should do tomorrow do it today; what you have to today you should do it right away. One team got going on the problem right away and worked hard for the six months leading to the final review. By looking closely at the problem they found that needed the full six months to overcome unexpected problems. Working as a team, with mutual respect and support they were able to win the contract. The other team was cocky about its past achievements, overconfident about its talent and underestimated the problem. They wasted their time in frivolous activities and failed to work as a team. In the end the hardworking team won the very well-deserved contract. Ashok and Alok wrote the script in a very modern delivery of the Hindi language. It was peppered with colloquial English, all well placed, and improved the comprehension of dialogue by the actors and audience alike. The audience gave the play a resounding thumbs-up

The star of all presentations was a very scholarly history of the Hindi language presented by **Rajesh Agarwal's combined 7th and 8th grade.**

The budding Hindi speakers arched across the stage and presented in chaste Hindi the history of the Hindi language and its star poets of the last 1000 years since its founding to the modern day Hindi. The children pronounced the words perfectly despite the enhanced Sanskritization of modern day 'shudhh' Hindi. At first it was surprising to see Hindi words and sentences roll out of the young tongues so effortlessly. It was clear that a lot of effort and practice had gone into making final production as good as it was. The presentation was titled "Hindi Kāvya Yātrā" – A Journey through the Poets and Poetry in Hindi. Like any journey, by the time it was done we had learned a lot.



In all the plays the theme was to teach – a moral, a value or history- in a manner that entertained and educated us at the same time. In sum, a very pleasant experience indeed.

CMSD in the community

Rev. Martin Luther King Interfaith Day Service in Balboa Park

(with contributions from **Akash Rajaratnam, Mallika Prasad and Samhita Palakodeti**)

In recent years, Martin Luther King day has been celebrated in San Diego with an inter-faith service cleanup at Balboa Park. We at CMSD have been honored to be a part of this celebration over the years. This year, the religious groups that participated besides us were: First United Methodist Church of San Diego, Temple Emanu-El, Congregation Beth Israel, Islamic Center of San Diego, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, San Diego First Unitarian Universalist, St. Paul's Cathedral (Episcopal), and First Lutheran Church, Vista.



Monday, January 16, 2012 started cool and cloudy after overnight rain. Yuva Sevaks from CMSD along with some siblings and family members arrived at the designated area in Balboa Park before 9 a.m. The place was already abuzz with people smiling and greeting each other, and excited to talk about the day's activities. Altogether, a crowd of over a hundred people had gathered.

Soon after 9 am, the **Rev. Molly Vetter** of the First United Methodist Church of San Diego welcomed

the gathering and caught everyone's attention with this excerpt from Dr. King about being maladjusted!

"...there are certain things in our nation and in the world which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men of good-will will be maladjusted until the good societies realize. I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, to self-defeating effects of physical violence...."

Following Rev. Vetter, our own **Lakshmiji** prayed for peace by chanting the Vedic *Shanti mantra*, accompanied by **Sukumarji** and **Rajasekar**. **Paul Spring** of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter - day Saints then said a brief prayer. Many of us Yuva Sevaks had a warm feeling in this gathering and praying with other religious groups, because it made us feel part of the larger San Diego community.



After instructions from park personnel, we separated into groups by age, gathered gloves, trash bags and equipment, and then set out onto the trails for the cleanup. Some groups used chainsaws to clear brush and branches, while young children planted garden beds; but most of the people were recruited for clearing trash. A brief spell of rain soon gave way to a nice cloudy day, ideal for working outdoors and making new friends from other like-minded groups in San Diego.

It was amazing the types of trash one could find strewn about in the off-trail areas. After picking mundane items like broken glass, cigarette butts and shoes, we were led by a volunteer to an abandoned camp in the bushes. This area took the longest time to cleanup. We had to remove everything from rugs, toothbrushes and food packaging, to an entire mattress. We then went to other parts of the park looking for trash. By the time we were done before noon, tens of bags of trash were collected in different staging area for trucks to come and pick up.

The whole event was very fun and active; all of the Yuva Sevak classmates worked together, helped each other out, and got to know one another a lot better. The few hours we spent together went by really fast. Each of us felt we would definitely do this again, because it was a great way to help the community, honor Rev. Martin Luther King and spend time with our friends. We hope you can join us next year!

Oak Valley Middle School 6th graders hear about Hinduism

by Suneethi Uppugonduri

On Feb 14, 2012, about 200 6th graders and teachers at Oak Valley Middle School were introduced to Hinduism by Lakshmi aunty, as part of the social studies unit on Indian culture. The one hour presentation started with Hindu invocation prayers and Lakshmi aunty provided details on Hindu Scriptures, Hindu Culture and Symbolism of deities with specific emphasis on Lord *Gaṇeśa* and his qualities and features. She also explained aspects of Hindu culture such as the reasons behind *bindi*, the holy cow etc. She then answered some very intriguing questions from students and teachers.



Lakshmi aunty and Anisha Uppugonduri offering prayers



Oak Valley 6th graders listening to Hinduism presentation

Lakshmi aunty provided some good age-appropriate analogies about the purpose of spirituality and enlightened the audience on how spirituality and religion can enhance one's wisdom and mind. She explained that all religions are like spokes of a wheel and merge in the center leading to the same goal. The class ended again with prayers.

All the children made Valentine cards and sent thank you notes to Lakshmi aunty.

Here is what some of them had to say:

“...My favorite part was the beginning and ending rituals. The hymn was very musical and I thought it was a cool tradition...”-

“...I liked the peace prayer. I also felt kind of peaceful inside too...”- Steven Liu

“.. I am also Indian, but it is amazing how much I didn't know about Hinduism. In fact I had no idea that just one little statue of Ganesha had so much meaning...”- Maya L. Selvaraj

“...who knew there were disciplined mice?...”- Josephine

“...Another thing I liked is that u opened me up to become a better person, thank you...”- Kaleb Crosland

“...I also liked learning why cows are sacred animals, and your explanation made me understand...”- Lillian

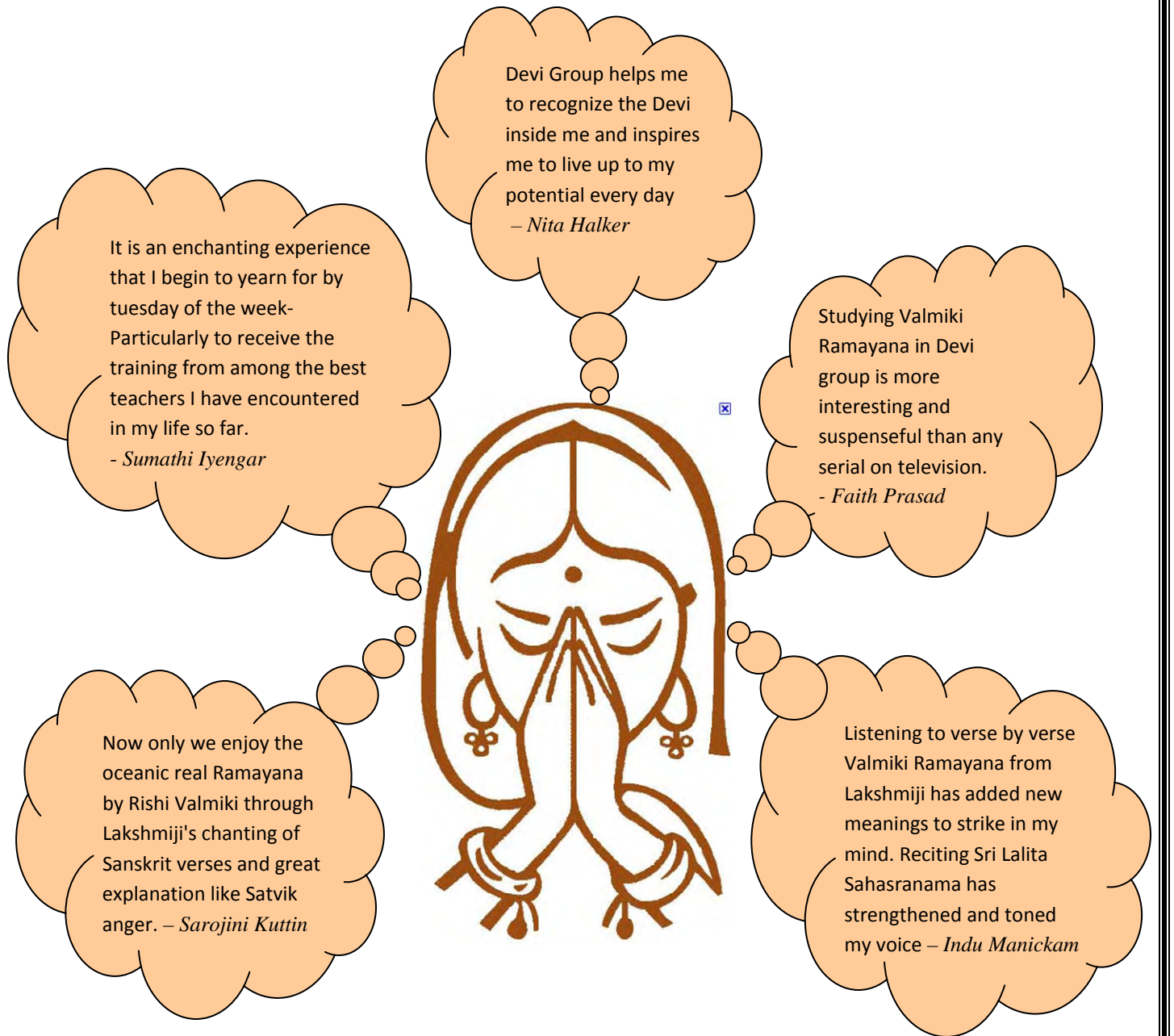
“...The most interesting thing I learned was about the 3rd eye and your divine apparel! I was flabbergasted when I heard that such a magnificent dress was from one piece of cloth (it was lovely fabric, by the way!)...”
- Sophia Zamoyski

Our Devī -s Speak

Chinmaya Mission holds *Devī Groups* exclusively for women. The ladies meet weekly for scriptural study, chanting of hymns, devotional singing and a variety of cultural and social activities. These gatherings also provide an opportunity for women to express themselves, face their challenges, and find solutions through open and honest discussions.

CMSD *Devī* -s meet every Friday to chant the *Kanakadhārā Stotram* and *Sri Lalitā Sahasranāma Stotram*, and study *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.

This is what some of our *Devī* -s say about their experience...



THE ESSENCE OF NĀRADA BHAKTI SŪTRA—APHORISMS ON LOVE

BY DORIAN KUNCH, MARCH 29, 2012

WHAT IS BHAKTI ?

It is:

- the most elevated, pure form of love, love for God
- is eternal by nature, it is our nature, it is our only true nature
- one that obtains perfect peace
- the definition of immortality
- the end of selfish desires
- the end of dualities
- full contentment and experiencing ecstasy
- absence of lust.



And in this *sāadhanā* we may get "mercy of great souls" or "a drop of the Lord's mercy". Therefore, *Nārada* says, "association of pure devotees is very rare, of the Lord and his pure devotees – there is no difference, seek their association at all cost".

THINGS TO AVOID TO ACHIEVE PURE DEVOTION

Intimate dealings with those opposed the path of bhakti or who indulge in sinful habits, as material association causes lust, anger, confusion, forgetfulness, loss of intelligence, and the like.

Abandoning material association, serving the sages, becoming selfless, renouncing desires for profit or gain, one crosses beyond the ocean of illusion. The *Veda*-s themselves must be renounced if they interfere with *bhakti*.

PURE LOVE

- Pure love of God is beyond description.
- The Supreme reveals to those who are qualified. There are secondary forms of this love and are stepping stones to the perfect stage.
- *Bhakti* is a much easier practice to obtain perfection than other processes. It requires no other authority for its validity, itself, the standard of authority. It is the embodiment of peace and supreme ecstasy.

BHAKTI LĪLĀ

We must "patiently endure" until the perfect stage is manifest, and cultivate qualities of nonviolence, honesty, cleanliness, compassion, and faith. The Lord reveals to the *Bhakta*. *Bhakti* is the most precious possession.

The *Bhakta* is attached to:

- the Lord's qualities,
- the Lord's beauty,
- to worshipping the Lord,
- remembering the Lord,
- serving the Lord,
- the Lord as a friend,
- complete surrender to the Lord,
- being absorbed in thoughts the Lord

By:

- Renunciation of social customs and religious rituals if not directly favorable to devotional activities.
- Instead, focusing purely on devotional service fully dedicated, being indifferent to that which stands in the way.
- Offering every act to the Supreme and feeling extreme distress in forgetting the Lord". The *Gopī*-s are example of pure *bhakti*-s. But do not imitate the *Gopī*-s in 'false devotion'; the Lord denounces the proud but is pleased with the humble".

BHAKTI BEGETS BHAKTI

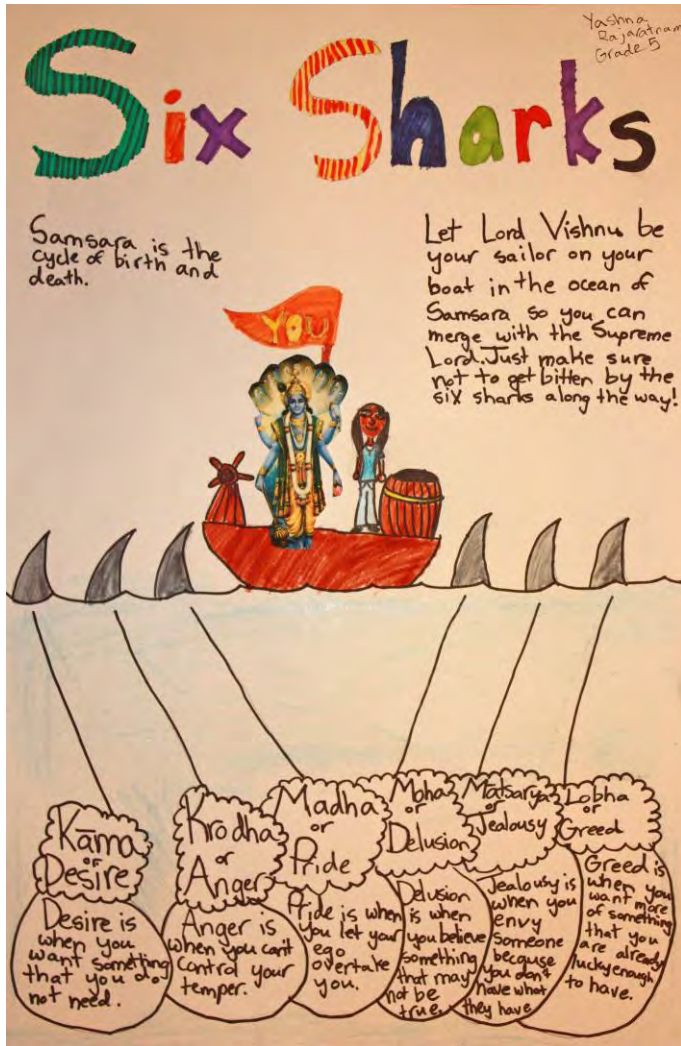
- *Bhakti* is its own fruit and is not dependent on anything else, being complete in itself.

HOW TO OBTAIN BHAKTI

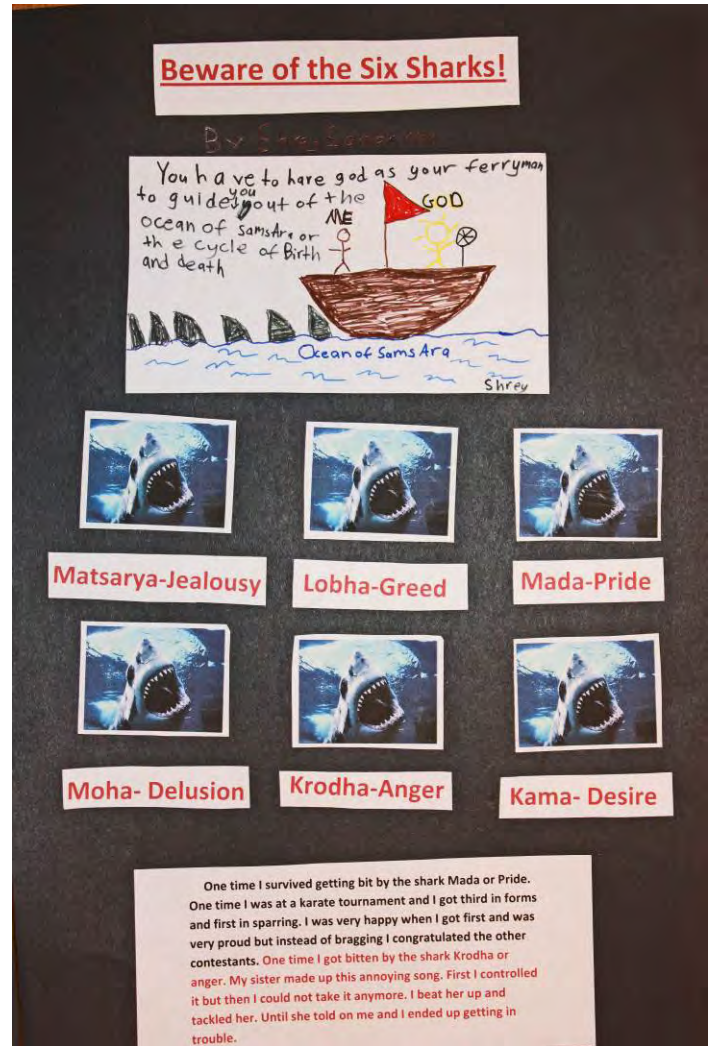
The methods are:

- *Satsaṅga*: Give up worldly pleasures and those who indulge such
- *Sāadhanā*: Worshipping the Supreme Lord continuously
- *Līlā*: Hearing and speaking the Lord's past-times

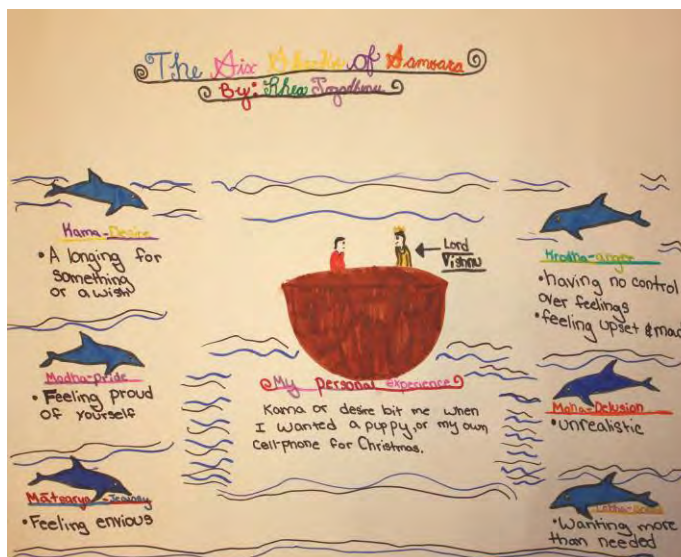
Six Sharks in the Ocean of Life –Posters by BV students in Grade 5



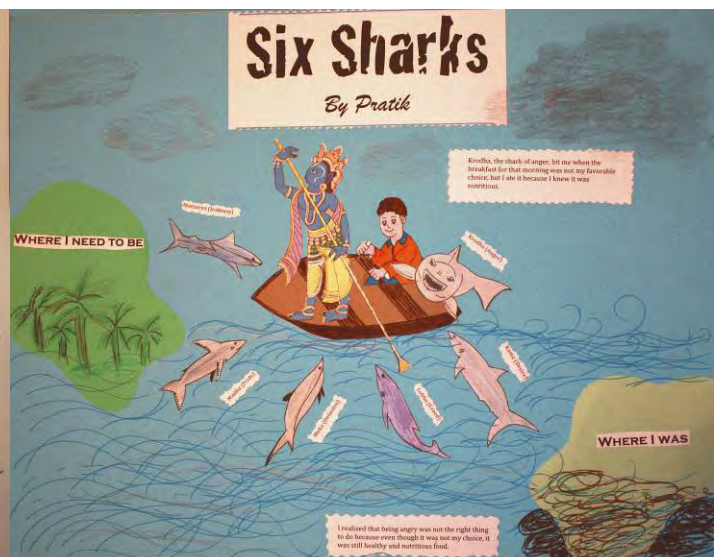
Yashna Rajaratnam



Shrey Sambhwani



Rhea Jogadhenu



Pratik Rungta

What is Loving God?

The weekend before Valentine's Day, Lakshmi Aunty asked the children in the assembly, "What does it mean to love God?" Several Bala Vihar students submitted short essays on this question.

Meghana Garcia, Grade 5:

"Loving God is praying to Him and worshipping Him. Everything you do, you should do it saying Lord's name. The only thing you think about is God. You should see Him in everything. You should not litter or do bad things like popping bubble wrap because it is bad for the ozone layer. You should also never do bad things to people or animals. That is what I think loving God is."

Isha Pasumarthi, Grade 5:

"I love God. I love God because He is the force behind all living things. God helps things live, and He is in charge of the many things that help us live, such as food, water, and air. Loving God is achieved by doing prayers to Him, and loving Him like a friend. When you pray to God, you close your eyes and think of God, which helps you calm down, relax, and love God even more."

Aditi Puttur, Grade 6:

"Loving God is the one way of showing respect and gratitude towards all that God has done and created. You can show this respect and gratitude through the nine modes of devotion: *Śravaṇam*, *Kīrtanam*, *Smaraṇam*, *Pādasevanam*, *Arcanam*, *Vandanam*, *Dāsyam*, *Sakhyam*, and *Ātmanivedanam*. *Śravaṇam* is listening to the praises of the Lord, *Kīrtanam* is singing praises, *Smaraṇam* is mentally dwelling on the Lord, *Pādasevanam* is being a servant at His feet, *Arcanam* is offering worship to Him, *Vandanam* is being obedient to Him, *Dāsyam* is serving others (for He is in everyone), *Sakhyam* is treating him as a friend, and *Ātmanivedanam* is offering one's whole Self to Him. You should also respect your surroundings, because God is really in everything. Don't be mean to anyone or anything. Be nice and respect all. Think of the value of the things and people that surround you. For example, you may think badly of those slimy slippery earthworms, but they help compost and fertilize the soil that is used to plant crops for you and the rest of the world to eat. Remember, this also means respecting and trusting yourself, because by doing something bad and lying to yourself, you really are lying to God.

In conclusion, loving God is truly loving yourself, your surroundings, everybody, your entire world. You are loving and respecting everything in this creation, and appreciating its value. You are showing devotion to everything, because God is everything."

A person who has got the right vision and right knowledge and sees the entire life in the light of that knowledge, he alone enjoys real happiness.

- Swami Tejomayananda

