

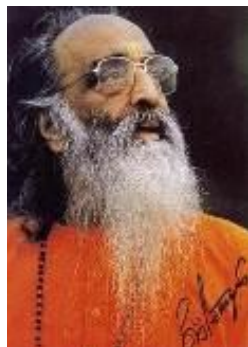


Chinmaya Pradipika

CMSD Quarterly Newsletter



Apr 2013, No. 6



The Master Speaks:

*To give love is true freedom;
To demand love is pure slavery.*

Swami Chinmayananda

In this issue of Chinmaya Pradīpikā

The CMSD 12th anniversary celebration was graced by **Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya's** week-long *Gītā jñāna yajña* followed by a banquet on Feb 2nd. Bala Vihar *sevak-s* & *sevika-s* talk about their on their visit to *Samskr̥ti Nilayam* at Chinmaya Jyoti on March 24th.

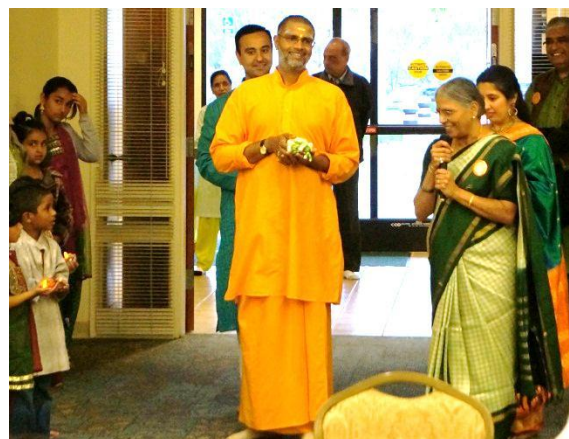
Tattva Bodah study group members share their thoughts in a special series of essays. On MLK day, our Yuva Sevaks took part in a special Interfaith Park Cleanup. We have reports on that event, the *Śivarātrī pūjā* and the Hindi class presentations – our first article in Hindi. We conclude this issue with delightful articles and artwork by our children.

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CMSD 12th anniversary celebration and banquet

Addressing the gathering on Feb 2nd at the Encinitas Senior Center, **Brahmachari Girish Chaitanya** remarked how people in India were then congregating at the *Kumbha Melā* after of 12 years of *sāadhanā*, for a purifying dip in Mother Ganga. Likewise, he said CMSD members were gathered at the banquet after 12 years of *tapas*, at the cusp of inaugurating the holy ashram at Chinmaya Jyoti. He exhorted all to donate liberally in time and money to this noble cause. The ashram will in time become a site that will be visited by CM members worldwide, for **Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda** attained *mahāsamādhi* in San Diego. We present reports on the anniversary celebration from some of our members.



Sacred *Bhūmi*-Sacred Center by Dorian Kunch

A sea of green to honor Mother *Bhumi*.

A fidgety flock of beautiful children waving flags decorated with messages.



A sadhu enters the room, **Br. Girish Chaitanya**. Like a peaceful breeze he passes between the pennants. His grace is seated.



Praise to Mother *Bhūmi* for offering this land and allowing us to make manifest a beautiful new *mandir* of Vedic Culture. With singing and chanting and an amazing Mother *Bhūmi* cake we offer praise to Her and this space in Poway as the beginning of many years of Vedic teaching and service to the community.

To assure a timely fulfillment of our new Cultural Center, Br. Girish Chaitanya reminds us of the need to give *dakshina* in the name of our founding *ācārya*. It was Swami Shantananda's hope that a Vedic Center would open in San Diego someday, and that day is in sight!

The program ends with a wonderful feast and anticipation for the inauguration of the center later this year.

The Children's performance by Sumathi Iyengar:

...Reverence for Mother Earth and living in *yajña* spirit were conveyed beautifully in several ways: Vedic chanting of the *samvanana sūktam*, description of ecological steps taken at Chinmaya Jyoti, and in music and dances performed by Bala Vihar children. ... The children's performance was especially memorable for me. The younger children beautifully enacted the "*Samudra Vasane Devi*" as mountains and rivers and saluting Goddess Earth. The middle and high school children depicted the sun, moon, sky and fire, and paid homage to *Guru* and *Ātman* in a graceful depiction of *Bhūmi Maṅgalam*.



***Bhūmi Vandanam* by Amit Chakradeo**

The theme of this year's celebration was "*Bhūmi Vandanam*," or Tribute to Mother Earth in appreciation of the many activities going on at the Chinmaya Jyoti site. CMSD members and invitees were dressed up in green according to the theme of the evening.

The highlight of the evening was the video presentation about Chinmaya Jyoti, which began with

Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji's announcement in 2006 at the 5th anniversary of CMSD.

Guruji said: "The light of spiritual knowledge given by our *Pujya Gurudev* has reached here and it should be kept glowing forever. We will call the new center that will come up here - Chinmaya Jyoti". The video then chronicled the important milestones in recent years - land acquisition in Jan 2009, *bhūmi pūjā* in June 2009, *Japa-thon* in January 2010 and *Pujya Guruji* blessing the bricks for the foundation in June 2012.

It then described in detail the way the center is being designed to minimize its ecological footprint. Soil erosion will be prevented using landscaping methods and rain-water runoff captured with bio-retention tanks. Careful attention is being paid to minimize disturbance to existing trees. This is not unlike the reverence our ancestors had for Mother Earth. The ecological sensitivity to all the five elements, and the special reverence for trees in our ancient scriptures was described. We treat Mother Earth not as inanimate matter to be exploited, but as manifestation of the Force of Consciousness. We revere Her and in turn receive Her blessings. We were then shown the picture of visits by different *ācārya* -s and *swami*-s and current progress with the construction work.

Watching the grand vision of the center, the massive amount of planning, the attention to detail and sheer amount of hard work that has gone so far into the development of the center by the **Sukumars** and the dedicated team of volunteers, I was struck by awe and inspiration. I am sure others in the audience felt the same way. San Diego is a special place for Chinmaya Mission as our *Pujya Gurudev* attained *mahāsamādhi* here. Our center will be a big attraction for all Chinmaya Mission members across the world and it is our duty to fully support it. We can, we must, and we will!



Samvanana sūktam by Vedic Chanting team

...Br. Girish Chaitanya concluded the program with a moving message to practice friendship. He asked us to give up unnecessary competition and instead practice the art of giving.





An inspiring field trip for Bala Vihar Teachers

On Sunday, March 24th, after Bala Vihar classes in RB High School, all the teacher *sevak*s and *sevik*as were led by **Lakshmi** and **Sukumar** on a memorable visit to the Chinmaya Jyoti site in Poway. Even though all had seen the site before, yet, for many of us this was the first visit after the paving of the driveway, and the completion of the framed structure. Until now, we had only seen the plans on paper and powerpoint models, but standing within the actual structure was an altogether exhilarating experience. On a clear sunny afternoon, with the backdrop of Tapovan Giri to the west, and splendid green vistas to the east and south, Lakshmi and Sukumar led us slowly through the courtyard, the meditation/lecture hall and each of the classrooms, explaining every feature that had been painstakingly planned. Full-wall white-boards, generous storage and counter space, audio-visual capabilities and ample ambient light will fill each classroom. Below, some of the teachers recount their experience from the visit.



The Spot that Refreshes by Sujata Kulkarni



Standing in front of Chinmaya Jyoti, feeling the cool breeze of *pavana devata* and watching Tapovan Giri encircling us, was a peaceful experience. It gave me the feeling of going under a BIG shade-giving tree which refreshes after a long journey. Looking at the glow of happiness and enthusiasm on the faces of Lakshmi aunty and Sukumar uncle during the tour filled my heart with joy. Soon Chinmaya Jyoti will be filled with small Jyotis and Bala Vihar prayers. I am very much looking forward to that day.

What a Feeling! by Rangarajan Sampath

When I was in college, the song that was the rage was Irene Cara's "What a Feeling"- I didn't fully appreciate the sentiments until this past Sunday when we set foot onto what will be our new home at Chinmaya Jyoti. Lakshmi and Sukumar gave a detailed guided tour of the facility that left us stunned. The magnitude of what had been accomplished in just a short period of time is incomprehensible. The architect appropriately translated the Vision into a plan and the builder and his crew have executed the plan to perfection in a true display of *yajna* spirit. Each did the best at what they can do well and the result is for all to appreciate! From the majestic views of the mountain that provided the backdrop to the spectacular vastness of the valley around us, Chinmaya Jyoti will truly be a masterpiece in Poway!



Simple Elegance by Shalini Manika

...The ashram has a simple elegance. The lecture hall is graced by Lord *Gaṇeśa*, Goddess *Lakṣmī* and Goddess *Sarasvatī*. A skylight brings natural light pouring over Lord *Gaṇeśa*. Every room in the ashram seems to humbly take in the gift of light, natural sceneries and fresh air that Mother Nature has to offer... I can picture the smiling children coming through the courtyard filled with light, looking forward to be in their respective classrooms to learn and have fun.

Spiritual Learning by Amarnath Puttur

...The lecture/ meditation hall on the 1st floor is named *Praṇava Nilayam*. Also on the 1st floor are *Śrī* (office), *Vyāsa* (Teacher's lounge), *Annapūrṇa* (kitchen), and the Pre-K, K, 1st and 2nd grade classrooms. Grades 3 through 12 are on the 2nd floor. As Lakshmi described each room, I visualized the building full of spiritual activities and lots of smiling children. Every room is carefully planned and has plenty of natural light and beautiful views. Bala Vihar children are truly blessed to learn spiritual values and grow in this environment.



Inspiration and transformation by Padma Bhat

... It was an exciting as well an inspiring field trip. With the lush green *Tapovana Giri* as the background, our ashram, *Saṁskṛti Nilayam* looked glorious. With Sukumarji and Lakshmi as our guides we were able to envision how the classrooms would look and feel. In time all of us will have the opportunity to visit our *Saṁskṛti Nilayam*, a sanctuary where both inspiration and transformation can take place.



Threefold Faith - Discourses on *Gīta* by *Brahmachari* Girish Chaitanya

In the last week of January, CMSD members had the privilege of listening to **Br. Girish Chaitanya's** lectures on the 17th chapter of *Srimad Bhagavad Gītā*. During his five-day *jñāna yajña*, Br. Girishji explained the three types of faith and how they are connected to our temperament and to our spiritual evolution. His discussions provided a better understanding of our own spiritual path and what one can do in our everyday actions that would help our growth. Two of our members share their thoughts on the *yajña*:



Faith and Action by Padma Bhat

... Br. Girishji explained that proper *śraddhā* is present when *śāstra-s* are understood, absorbed as one's noble ideals, and integrated at all times in the actions one does. It may be a simple activity such as eating a meal (*āhāra*), or dedicated activities (*yajña*), austerity (*tapas*), or charity (*dāna*). When all these deeds are done with the right *śraddhā*, one will be brought closer to one's inner self. However, the faith of an individual can vary depending on one's *guṇa-s* or temperaments, which can impede or benefit his or her spiritual progress. The *guṇa-s* that dictate our thoughts and behaviors can be *tāmasic* (dull, lazy, dark), *rājasic* (passionate, overactive) and *sāttvic* (pure, serene, calm).

The action of a *tāmasic* individual is performed with little regard to the consequences, while the action of a *rājasic* individual is implemented in the spirit of personal gain. On the contrary, action of a *sāttvic* individual is always done with a higher ideal in mind. Girishji explained that depending on one's *guṇa-s*, one's activities can be based on instinct, intellect or intuition. Irrespective how much spiritual undertaking or charity one has done, if it is not done with the right *śraddhā*, there can be no mental purification for spiritual progress.

Therefore, Br. Girishji asked us to be mindful in all our actions and to use our intellect to discriminate between what are essential and non-essential activities. Finally, we should have the discipline to let go of the non-essential and faithfully dedicate the essential activities and their fruits to the Lord.

Sāttvic Śraddhā by Anu Rajasekaran

...what struck me particularly was the explanation of how the *sthūla*, *madhyama* & *sūkṣma* portions of the food we eat influences our body, mind & intellect. ...That the source, quantity, quality of food & attitude while cooking and eating play a role in the *jīva*'s makeup. To acknowledge the contribution of God's creation – the rain, soil, seeds, worms, farmer, and to be grateful to Him at the time of meals, is an expression of *sāttvic śraddhā*.

Similarly, the *sāttvic* expression of *dānam*, or charity, was an eye-opener to me. It would include: sharing wealth, time, support in thought and words, pure acceptance, forgiveness, patience, unconditional love, sharing ideas and expertise or even a simple smile!

CMSD On-Going Events

60th Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇa

by Rangarajan Sampath



CMSD has completed five years of observing monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa pārāyaṇa* with the 60th such *pārāyaṇa* held at the residence of **Seema and Bala Chintamneedi** on March 23rd. The first such event was held on April 12, 2008 at *Chinmaya Nivas*, with a *saṅkalpa* to continue chanting the beautiful verses from *Rāmāyaṇa* every month to bring us blessings for the construction of Chinmaya Jyoti...



Smt. Lakshmi Sukumar initiated the

pārāyaṇa with an invocation of Lord Hanuman. About 60-70 attendees witnessed a beautiful puja followed by complete chanting of *Sundarakāṇḍa* from *Tulasi Rāmāyaṇa*, and then the *Hanumān Chalisa*. Children and adults participated eagerly in keeping the beat and singing along. This was followed by a soulful *bhajan* on *Śrī Rāma* by Lakshmi, to commemorate **Sri Srinivas Sukumar's** birthday which coincided with this special day. At the end of it, Sukumarji updated the gathering on the final phases of construction at Chinmaya Jyoti with the target date of Aug 3 for the inauguration. All in all it was a memorable evening of blessings for CMSD members and other attendees.

Host families for the monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa pārāyaṇa* in this quarter were:

January 2013- *Vasanthi and Divesh Anireddy*

February 2013- *Sridevi and Sudarshan Akkala*

March 2013- *Seema and Bala Chintamneedi*



CMSD Śivarātri celebration

by Sujata Kulkarni and Amarnath Puttur

On the night of Sunday, March 10th, we observed Śivarātri at the home of Swaroopa and Raja Reddy Kalva. The altar of Lord Śiva was beautifully decorated and garlanded with lovely flowers. The first hour was bathed with meditative Śiva stotrams like Śiva-mānasa-pūjā, Śiva-śaḍakṣara-stotram, Śrī mārgabandhu-stotram, Śiva pañcākṣara-stotram, Liṅgāṣṭakam, Śivāparādha-kṣamāpaṇa-stotram, Śiva prārthanā and Mahāmṛtyuñjaya-mantraḥ. It filled the whole atmosphere with bhāva.



The second hour was dedicated to bhajans and songs on Lord Śiva led enthusiastically by Aditi Puttur and Nikita Akkala along with other members of Chinmaya Dhvani. Among the songs were: Śaṅkara bholā bhālā, Hoī prasanna karu dāyā, Śambho śambho śaṅkara and Nandi-vāhana nāga-bhūṣaṇa. The bhajan-s ended with the very meditative sām̐ba-sadāśiva song followed by Om namah Śivāya chanting and then complete silence for 10 minutes. The event concluded at 10 pm with āratī and prasādam. It was a peaceful and serene experience for all.

Bala Vihar presentations for Śivarātri

by Meera Nichani

On March 10th, students of grades 2 and 9 made beautiful presentations this year on the significance of Śivarātri and the glory of Lord Śiva.



Grade 2 presented two stories. First was the story of the hunter who was blessed by Śiva even though he offered bilva leaves involuntarily to the linga on the night of Mahā Śivarātri. This story emphasized the auspiciousness of Śivarātri.

The second story about the fight between Brahmā & Viṣṇu that was resolved by Śiva appearing as a pillar of light brought out the divinity and magnificence of Lord Śiva.

Students of Grade 9 then explained the symbolism of Lord Śiva's physical and mental features. Śiva was viewed from the Absolute, Cosmic, Departmental and Incarnate perspectives as the "Auspicious One".

River Ganga representing the flow of knowledge

from Śiva, the guru to the student also impresses the need to have a cool head and calm personality. The flaws of the crescent moon fade when worshipped with Śiva. His blue throat, Nīlakaṇṭha, holds poison preventing it from polluting the mind and stinging the heart. His three eyes represent knowledge guiding love and justice in pursuit of the ultimate Truth. The snake adorning Śiva's neck displays his mastery over fear, time and the mind itself. The ashes on Śiva's body remind us that the body is made of dead matter and it is the Lord that illuminates life in us. Reflections on the divine aspects of Śiva's personality constitute meditation in itself. Gurudev practiced this as a child, concentrating on forming a mental picture of the Lord. Through His grace, may we follow His lead to find Śiva, our inner peace and truth. Hariḥ Om!



Hindi pāṭhaśālā

by Mohit Prasad

The Hindi classes have been a big hit since they were offered to our members. Clearly the kids have fun and learn a lot at the *pāṭhaśālā* - a fact that was underscored in the recent thespian gala at the JCC.

Over a period of two Sundays we had the best of the Hindi plays presented by the students in the different Hindi classes. Levels 1-4 at the *pāṭhaśālā*, each divided into sections A and B, paired off as needed or went solo into 6 different groups. Three of these groups presented on the first Sunday (March 17th) and the other three followed up two weeks later. The difficulty of plays increased progressively from one presentation to the next.

The following 3 items were featured on March 17, 2013:

Heena Panchal's Level 1B students kicked off the drama-fest with the play titled “Hindi *Pāṭhaśālā* kī Kavita Lekhan Sammelan” or “A Poetry Writing Conference at the Hindi School.” The group of brightly dressed kids portrayed a poets’ conference – the ‘*kavi sammelan*’. They started with ‘*Mummy ki roti gol-gol, Saari duniya gol gol*’ and went through a series of poems they had learned in class.



their dialogs in clipped Hindi sentences. What had the audience in peals of laughter were the emphatic and enthusiastic ‘ha, ha, haa’ from the character that played *Rāvaṇa*.

Poonam Bhatia's students in Level 3A enacted the events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* beginning with *Kaikeyi* asking for King *Dāśaratha* for the two boons he had granted her long ago. The play followed the familiar lines of *Rām-jī*'s ‘*vana-vāsa*’, *Sītā-jī*'s ‘*apaharaṇ*’ by *Rāvaṇa*, the Lanka War and the eventual triumphant return to Ayodhya after the war. The children delivered

Alok Gupta's Level 3B students enacted a two part play – a skit followed by an original Hindi poem. The first portion of the presentation was a hilarious predicament that Hindi speakers with American accents get into when talking to native Hindi speakers. The children acted out the story of two siblings visiting their aunt in India and trying to impress them with their Hindi. Varun wants to go to the roof (‘*chat*’) and asks for an umbrella (‘*chātā*’) but end up asking to go to the ‘*chaṭa*’ and asks for a ‘*chāṇṭa*’ (slap).

Despite pronunciations being mangled in the very story about mangled pronunciation this was a funny skit that everyone could relate to. The skit was followed by a very moving original poem written by Alok Gupta titled ‘*Hamem Acchā Lagtā Hai*’ (‘What We Like’). It described the sights and sound of India and the beauty that surrounds them. Grandparent’s love and CMSD Bala Vihar topped the list amid enthusiastic applause from the audience.

हिन्दी कक्षा प्रदर्शन

मोनिका वर्मा

मार्च ३१/२०१३ को चिन्मय मिशन सेन-डिएगो में हिंदी पाठशाला के छात्र एवम छात्राओं ने प्रत्येक स्तर को बहुत प्यार से दर्शाया।



स्तर 1 A के बच्चों ने अनु इसरानी व शीतल गाँधी द्वारा सिखाई गई कविता कह कर सबका मन मोह लिया! बादल दादा को बुला कर और मोर को नचा कर फिर स्वर ज्ञान कराया।

"अ"से अनार के दाने लाल,खा कर डब्बू हुआ निहाल!

"आ"से आम फलो का राजा कितना मीठा कितना ताज़ा

इसके बाद

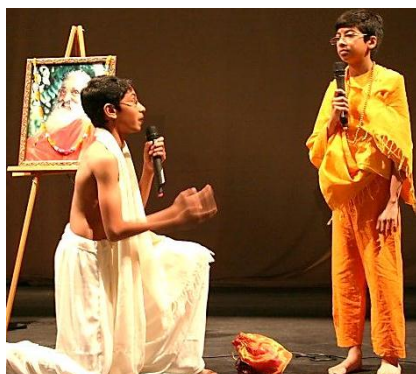
स्तर-२ A व २ B सेविका पूजा लुम्बा एवं सेवक अशोक भाटिया द्वारा संयुक्त कक्षा का प्रदर्शन,जिसका शीर्षक था "एक डाकिया की कहानी"। यह कहानी सत्य घटना पर आधारित है। १९४५ के करीब की बात है "किशन" नामक डाकिया के मन में पाठशाला खोलने का विचार आया! उसने अपनी मेहनत और लगन से,पाई -पाई जोड़ कर पाठशाला बनाई ! उसने पाठशाला बनाने के लिए अपनी बखशीश की भी परवाह नहीं की,वह एक निष्कर्म योगी की तरह कार्यरत रहा! और उस पर उसकी की ये सोच कि, "मैं संसार को तो नहीं बदल सकता,परन्तु मैं अपने आप को अवश्य बदल सकता हूँ" ! अपने अप को एकाग्रचित कर उसने अपना हिंदी पाठशाला का स्वप्न पूरा कर दिखाया!



डाकिए ये प्रयास R K production तक पहुंचे और पृथ्वी राज कपूर ने स्वयं पत्र लिख कर आश्वासन दिया कि वे हिंदी साहित्य के प्रचार,प्रसार में डाकिये की सहायता करेंगे!

जब वह पत्र डाकिए के पास जाता है तो डाकिया अपनेआप ही पत्र नहीं पढ़ पाता है! इसी कारण से वह पाठशाला के निर्माण पर ज़ोर डाल रहा है ,क्योंकि जो वह अपने लिए नहीं कर सका,वही जन कल्याण के लिए करने में लगनशील है !

आज उल्लास नगर का एक विद्यालय और मुंबई का झुनझुनवाला विद्यालय आज उसी मेहनत का साक्षात प्रमाण है!



अंत में स्तर ४, सेवक राजेश अगर्वाल द्वारा संचालित कक्षा का प्रदर्शन अति सराहनीय था! इसी कहानी पर सबसे पहली हिंदी चलचित्र का निर्माण हुआ। गाँधी जी ने इस कहानी से सत्य और अहिंसा का सन्देश दिया। यह कहानी एक सत्यपरायण, वचन और धर्मपालक "राजा हरिश्चन्द्र" की थी ! एक ब्राह्मण (विश्वामित्र) के सपने में आया कि राजा ने अपना राज्य उसी ब्राह्मण को दान में दे

दिया ,किस प्रकार वह वचन
वास्तविकता में, एक कर्तव्यनिष्ठ राजा
उसे पूरा करता है !भले ही वह स्वप्न क्यों
न हो उनके उस कर्तव्य को निभाने में
उनकी धरमपत्नी शैल्या व् पुत्र भी आड़े
नहीं आते बल्कि राजा हरिश्चन्द्र का ही
साथ देते हैं!

कार्यक्रम के बाद सभी दर्शकों ने करतल
ध्वनि से सभी बच्चों और सेवक,
सेविकाओं व् कल्पना गिडवानी को बहुत
सराहा ।



हमारे बीच उपस्थित कवि "श्री मान रंगा जी" द्वारा एक कविता प्रस्तुत की गयी:

आये थे हम बाल-विहार,
सोचा था करेंगे वेद, उपनिषद्, और गीता पर विचार ।
देखकर हरिश्चन्द्र, डाकिये एवं हिंदी स्वरमाला का प्रसार,
दिल कहता है होगा इन बच्चों का भविष्य शानदार ॥

CMSD in the Community

Hinduism in Middle School

by Faith Prasad

Did you know that all 6th graders in California learn the basic ideas of Hinduism in social studies? The California Social Studies curriculum in this grade covers ancient civilizations, and as part of the children's studies they also learn how religion has influenced those societies. A short section in 6th grade may be all that an average child might learn about Hinduism in their school years.

I was concerned that the information in the text book in my son's 6th grade class was not accurately or thoughtfully presented. Thankfully, **Lakshmiji** was able to visit my son's class at the Black Mountain Academy and share some important aspects of Hinduism. (Lakshmiji has visited local area schools for many years at the request of parents and teachers to clarify this very topic.) The time was very short, but she did a beautiful job explaining in simple words some of the terms they were learning. Thank you Lakshmiji!

Interfaith Cleanup at Balboa Park on Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

The CMSD group at the cleanup was led by our enthusiastic CHYKS Akil and Dhiraj, who share their thoughts:

Great Turnout by Akil Rajaratnam:

The CMSD Yuva Sevaks participated in the 5th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Interfaith Service, an event where people of all faiths across the San Diego area came together to help clean up our community. The event had at least one hundred people of all ages coming together to help clean San Diego's prized Balboa Park. Not only did the event have a huge turnout from the community, but also this is perhaps the most successful Yuva Sevak event we have had in years. There were about twenty of our high schoolers, a handful of younger Bala Vihar students whose interest and enthusiasm was inspiring and a few parents came to help out as well. The event was great fun and we hope to see the rest of our CMSD family join us in all of our *seva* events in the future!

Serve and Introspect by Dhiraj Navani:

...When I came across what looked like a homeless person's dwelling, it really hit me how people live in such unimaginably terrible and difficult conditions. I realized the contrast between my recurrently carefree attitude when I receive a hearty meal on a plate and sleep at night under a roof on a comfortable bed every single day and this person who struggles to hang on to the bare minimum essentials of life. Aside from the serious issue of poverty around the world, this experience provided a beautiful natural backdrop and a social setting to help me gain a renewed enthusiasm and motivation behind wanting to help out.

Yuva Sevaks feedback:

- Krishna C** - ...This was my first service project with CMSD. It was a lot of fun....
- Kunal** - ...Humbled to be able to ease Mother Earth's pain...
- Sarath** - ...It was a great experience to work with people of other faiths...
- Divya** - ...Enjoyed the messages at the orientation from so many different religious organizations....
- Akash** - ...Great to see so many different faiths come together for a good cause...
- Avinash** - ...True gratification of service can be obtained only when it is selfless...
- Shivali** - ... So many different people joined together (to make a difference for the community)...
- Mallika** - ...Eye opening to the poverty around us! I recommend this kind of Seva for everyone...
- Gopika** - ...A humbling experience. Really altered my view of my own fortunate life...
- Priya G** - ... I like helping the community, but I felt bad for the people living in the canyons...
- Radhika** - ...I didn't realize that the smallest thing could be so important to a (poor) person..
- Meghan** - ...Grateful to participate on MLK day, since he embodied the spirit of giving...



Reflections on *Tattva Bodhaḥ*



The *Tattva Bodhaḥ* study group which met every Tuesday evening at Chinmaya Nivas under the guidance of **Smt. Lakshmi Sukumar**, concluded their study of the text in February. At the end, almost the entire class shared their individual notes, thoughts and experiences. Some salient extracts are reproduced below.

Logical Treatment by **Amit Chakradeo:**

...*Tattva Bodhaḥ* by *Ādi Saṅkarācārya* is an introductory text written to explain the terminology used in *Advaita Vedānta* texts. Though it is said to be introductory, there are a lot of deep *Vedantic* concepts in the short text. The text is written as a question/answer dialogue. What is really striking is the very structured and methodical way in which a concept is introduced and each of the terms that are then explained with precise definitions. This highly structured treatment is not different from the modern scholarly scientific journals, where initially an abstract is presented, then the subject matter is explained in detail with formulae and diagrams and in the end is the conclusion. As an example, in defining the *adhikārī* in the *anubandha catuṣṭaya* the four qualities of the seeker (*mumukṣu*) are mentioned - *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *śad-sampatti* and *Mumukṣutva*. In the *śloka-s* after that, each of these qualities are defined in a very concise way. These qualities can be thought to be equivalent of “the 7 Habits of Highly Successful People”!...

The Swiss Watch by **Sanjay Bapat:**

... I would equate this text to a fine Swiss watch. Just as a Swiss watch is simple, functional, elegant, precise, uncluttered, and completely focuses on conveying time, this book maintains a laser focus on educating a beginner like myself on the nature of the Self.

...As a beginner *sādhaka*, I am always struggling to find tangible sub-goals for me to strive for and also along with that how to evaluate if I am making progress in the right direction. The *Sādhana catuṣṭaya* provided me with the right road signs. Before reading this text, I thought I understood what *viveka* meant but the idea was still fuzzy. Reading this definition in *Tattva Bodhaḥ* was akin to putting on glasses for the first time and seeing things sharper than I had ever experienced before. *Vairāgya* was conveyed in small simple sentence – lack of desire for enjoyment here or in heaven. Can't get simpler than this and conveys the meaning fully...

Unity in Diversity by **Indu Manickam:**

...The world seems so small when I think of it only as comprising sound, touch, form, taste and smell.

...Now, looking at it through the lens of *Tattva Bodhaḥ*, I am filled with wonder as I learn to appreciate how I am connected to the universe.

...We desire selfishly when we feel the otherness, but in unity with rest of the world, we give love to others effortlessly and spontaneously. The sun shines liberally on everyone alike. The rose blooms for all to enjoy.

Removing each layer of ignorance/ personality we sense the subtle center in ourselves and others. Thus we can feel how we are all connected through one Consciousness...

Connections by Shalini Manika:

...In *Tattva Bodha*, *San̄kara* has given definition of the *Ātman* or Self and definitions for all the other things we perceive as being real, but which truly are not so. I really enjoyed learning about the cause and creation of the Universe and moving on to the ingredients that we are made of, from the most subtle to the gross. That helped me understand the unity among all living and non-living beings in the Universe. I can also appreciate better how this world is intricately connected. For example, even a simple activity like drinking a glass of water is not due to the effort of just one individual, but due to the grace of many. This brings about humility and gratitude for everything, and keeps me on the path to understand Him who enlivens everything and without whom nothing exists.

Earnest Seeker by Rajasekar Vaidyanathan:

...The reader is naturally inclined to calibrate himself against the many qualities of a true seeker described in the text. I found the definition of "*uparama*" - one of the six wealths (*ṣad sampatti*)- to be especially revealing. *Uparama* is the mental state when the mind and senses are naturally withdrawn from changeable things. It seems to be a tall order to reach this state of mind. But *San̄kara* says - "Doing one's duty is *uparama*". How direct, and simple! If we can only do our enjoined duties promptly and cheerfully, a peaceful mind is ours. Also important is the intensity of desire for liberation. *Guruji* writes that one must feel this desire as intensely as the person who is drowning and gasping for air, or the one who seeks water when his clothes are on fire. So it is not a matter of time, but the earnestness of search, which will lead the seeker to the goal. May we be blessed with that earnestness!...

Enduring Experience by Padma Bhat:

... *San̄karācārya* begins slowly and systematically revealing all the misapprehensions we have of our body, mind and intellect and show us that the truth, the pure self, is beyond the sheaths, beyond the body, mind and intellect. It is that which remains unchanged, enlivens all and is the essence of absolute fulfillment and bliss. This infinite truth when it wields the body, mind and intellect is called *jīva*, the individual. One's past actions, karmas are the cause for *jīva*, and the *jīva* generally acts in the world on the basis that happiness lies in an external source and not within. On the other hand, *San̄karācārya* says, when one lives fully knowing that one is beyond the body, mind and intellect and that he is existence-consciousness-bliss, then such a one becomes *jīvanmuktaḥ*, liberated while living. At that point, his knowledge is no longer an intellectual concept, *parokṣa jñāna*, but is an enduring experience, *aparokṣānubhūti*.

Notes and Quotes from Class by Dorian Kunch

...I want to be happy, I look for happiness, but, I AM happiness....

...What I am looking for is not a thing, but a way of Being. I look for that knowledge that liberates. But it is not a state of doing, it is a state of Being... Why do something efficiently that doesn't need to be done at all?!

...The key to this knowledge is in the hands of the guru. His knowledge is passed down, it has no authorship.

Of the Fourfold Qualifications, *mumukṣutvam*, desire for liberation is the most important. *Viveka*, discrimination, is between the permanent and the impermanent. *Viveka* is at the intellectual level – one cannot discriminate if one has forgotten (the teaching); "It is all about remembering." *Śama*, mind control, is to hold well the mind. The agitated mind, the emotional mind, is at the level of the animal; stop the drama. *Dama*, sense control, is the process of training the five horses (senses). *Uparama* is the strict observance of our duties; follow my *dharma* for happiness. *Titikṣā*, cheerful endurance; maintain equanimity. *Śraddhā*, faith – in the guru and scripture. Faith is always of the unknown. Develop *Guru Bhakti* ...

What is Loving God?

Fifth Grade students provide the answer-

Loving God is using everything he gave you respectfully. It is doing Puja and chanting his name over and over. It is thanking Him for everything he has given or done to you good or bad. It is seeing Him in everything. It is respecting and taking care of all living things. Loving God is doing your best in everything no matter what.

– Reshini Umesh

Loving God is when you are always thinking of him. He is always there - in your food, in you, and everywhere. Whatever you touch - Anything! It is like Meerabai, she loved God from the age of five. He was everything for her, no matter what she was always thinking of Him.

– Yooitha Shastri

God is in everyone and in you; so be kind to yourself by eating healthy and praying daily in the morning is showing that you love God. You pray not to get things, but so that God will keep you purified and healthy.

– Priyanka Babu

God is in all creatures, so Loving God is to see him in everything, everywhere. We should find good in everything that may feel good or bad. God is also in each and every one of us. We should take care of ourselves and each other to show our gratitude.

Loving God is not for gain because all we could possibly have, he has already given. He helps us live, and he also gives us food, water and air. And that is not just to us, he gives these things to every living being in the universe. So when you close your eyes to pray to God, think of Him as a friend, it will help you calm down, relax, and Love Him even more.

– Avika Patel

Loving God is seeing him anytime, anyplace. To have devotion, one must have unconditional love for God. That means to pray without expecting something and to have faith in God when things are going good or bad. Loving God is also respecting everything and everyone.

– Pavan Navani



Fourth Grade Art Project



Prashasth Katukojwala

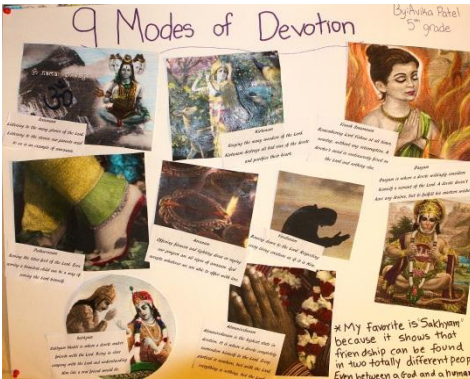


Soha Bapat

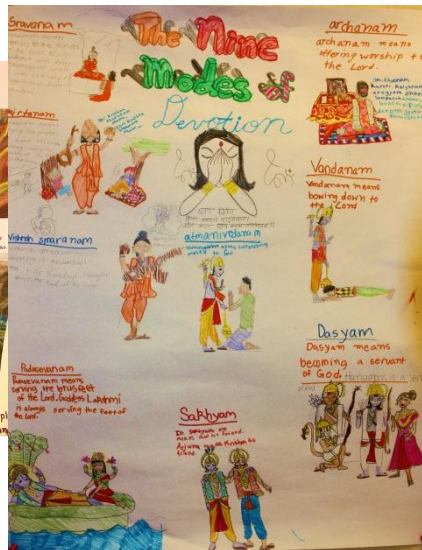


Sanjana Sambhwani

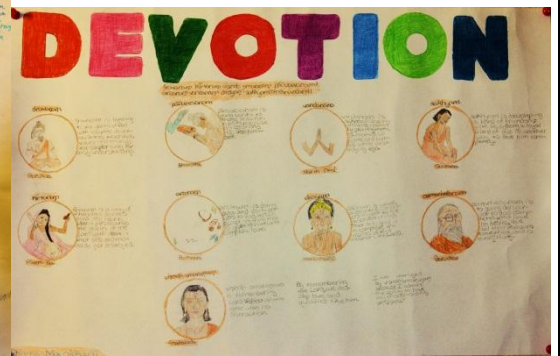
Fifth Grade - Nine Modes of Devotion



Avika Patel



Rachna Halker



Dhivya Manickam

Fifth Grade- Avatar Descent



Commentary on weekly 'Food for thought' quotes from Gurudev

Our high school students provide their perspectives:

"Not to do what you feel like doing is freedom"

Not Free for Football by Jash Babla, Grade 9:

..this quote is easier to understand if you read it as "not to do what you feel like *leads* to freedom".

For example, I love to watch football on Sunday. But I also have all of my weekend homework to do on Sunday. So if I watch football for 6 hours and then eat dinner, I'll be up until midnight doing homework, which clearly isn't freedom. But if I do all my homework on Saturday, then I'll be *free* of responsibilities and can watch football on Sunday.

We are driven by our desires, which can lead to both good and bad consequences. When my desires are in line with my *dharma*, which is to be a good student, there are no problems...

Conscious Right Action by Sanak Miriyala, Grade 9:

...Since freedom is usually taken to mean that a person can do whatever he wants, one may feel that he should always fulfill his desires. But such desires and temptations may not always be good for him; in fact they can be to his detriment.

When a person allows himself to be controlled by such desires, is he not a slave to them? Is that a free person? He has to realize that following his *dharma* comes first, and everything else is secondary. Therefore, to discriminate right from wrong, and act consciously by not doing the wrong things, is an expression of freedom. I hope I can live my own life with this understanding.

Dharma First by Sarika Karra, Grade 9:

...One question one should ask with regard to freedom is "Am I in control of my desires or are they in control of me?" In our day to day lives, people usually do what is more convenient for them and aim for lower ideals instead of higher ones. ... Not doing one's appropriate responsibilities and ignoring all forms of structure is not *dharma* (righteousness). Everyone must do their *dharma*-or obligatory responsibilities properly...

"Money not spent can be saved, but time not spent cannot be saved"

by Roshan Bhatia, Grade 10

Money will always be there in your pocket; you have control of the money. You can choose when and where you want to use it. If you don't use money, it is still there in your pocket to be used later.

You cannot keep Time in your pocket. Time is always in control, and it is up to you how you use every moment of it. So make the best use of time.

A vision of oneness develops love, a readiness to serve all, and creates an attitude of forgiveness.

Swami Tejomayananda

