

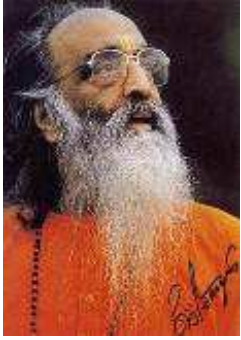


# Chinmaya Pradipika

CMSD Quarterly Newsletter



Apr 2014, No. 10



## The Master Speaks:

*The glory of life is not never-falling.  
The true glory consists in rising each time we fall.*

**Swami Chinmayananda**

## In this issue of *Chinmaya Pradīpikā*

This quarter was all about celebrations at our *āśrama*. From New Year to the Thirteenth anniversary of CMSD followed by *Śivarātrī*, it was sheer joy to celebrate in our own place. We had an open house for our members and also for the local community. A workshop was conducted specially for the CHYKs on “What is My *Dharma*?” The CHYKs also had an opportunity to serve the local community at Balboa Park. Read about all this and more in this issue.

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## New Year celebrations at the New *āśrama*



New Year 2014 celebrations in **Samskrti Nilayam** at Chinmaya Jyoti began with the blowing of the conch followed by a *pūjā* to the presiding deity **Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka** and the chanting of the sacred **Viṣṇu Sahasranāma stotram**. It was a beautiful morning and a beautiful way to start the New Year with the thousand names of the supreme **Lord Viṣṇu**!

Lakshmi led the congregation in singing the New Year song composed by *Pujya Guruji* which translates as “*That which is ever new and fresh, that alone is Good, Real and Beautiful. May this New Year bring you greater goodness, happiness and success.*”

CMSD families were happy to celebrate the New Year in their own *āśrama*. The program concluded with *ārati* and *prasādam*. All members were encouraged to join in *sevā* at our *āśrama*, as a means for our own mental purification.

**- Sumathi Iyengar**

## CMSD celebrates its Thirteenth Anniversary

This year our anniversary celebration coincided with India's Republic day.

**Bhuvana** notes:

One of the many things I love about CMSD is the way we honor not only our Motherland, India, but also our home country, the USA. I have been to many Indian activities, and while we all love our Indian culture and heritage, we often forget to honor our home, America.

On January 26, 2014, the Indian Republic Day, we honored the US national flag as well as the Indian national flag and celebrated our thirteenth anniversary. The event was kicked off with the color guard of Scouts marching with the American flag. **Bhaskar Dutt** ceremoniously called the flag, as we all stood and saluted. The CMSD band played the Star Spangled Banner as we all sang along. Then, our CMSD high school students all dressed in white with sashes of the orange and green representing the Indian flag marched in with **Mallika Prasad** dressed as Mother India carrying the Indian flag. We sang the Indian national anthem, "*Jana Gana Mana*".

The whole ceremony was beautiful and emotional. It was moving to hear both the national anthems being sung by the CMSD family. It has been thirteen years and I have been there for all of them. I also felt a sense of nostalgia. My credit goes to Lakshmi for blending the two cultures on this occasion. Watching the celebration, I felt proud to be an American of Indian origin and a member of CMSD. Happy Anniversary! Here's to many, many more years to come.

**-Bhuvana Garcia**







“Under the leadership and guidance of Shri Sukumar-ji and Smt. Lakshmi-ji and great contributions from the wonderful San Diego community, a glorious āśrama has been built in Poway and named appropriately as

Chinmaya Jyoti where a great master, *Pujya Gurudev’s* guiding light is present eternally. San Diego is indeed a holy land where our *Pujya Gurudev*, **Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati** attained *mahāsamādhi*.

January 26<sup>th</sup> 2014 was a special day for Chinmaya Jyoti as it celebrated its anniversary for the first time in the new āśrama. The **Bala Vihar** children dressed in





Indian tri-colors led *Bhārata Mātā* carrying the Indian national flag into the courtyard.

After the Indian National Anthem, glories of *Bhārata Mātā* were sung by **Chinmaya Dhvani** choir group.

All along Lakshmi-ji was connecting beautifully with the entire Chinmaya family keeping the children and the adults fully engaged with trivia questions on India's heritage and the Chinmaya movement. The tireless efforts of all the volunteers made the program a grand success.



It was heartwarming to notice that it was all about paying homage to the reverend master, **His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati**.

Lakshmi-ji made it known to everyone that everything is *Pujya Gurudev's* grace and we are most fortunate to be under the umbrella of His constant blessings.

The whole celebration was fascinating, blissful and memorable. It was concluded with a grand feast. All the food was prepared by the members of the CMSD family and served by the sevaks and sevikas. The festive mood and *yajna* spirit was vibrant. It is a privilege for all of us to continue to follow the

teachings of *Pujya Gurudev* and continue to be in HIS service.”

- Asha & Venugopal Dayana





**Pandit Ravichandran** performed the *abhiṣekam*, *arcanā* and *ārati* of *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka* on January 28, thirteen years after CMSD was inaugurated with a *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Pūjā* performed by him.

### Chinmaya Jyoti Open House event for CMSD Members

On January 18, CMSD held an open house for the members to visit the classrooms and get a taste of what is being taught to our children. **Akhila Mangesh**, mother of our 1<sup>st</sup> grade BV child, shares her experience:

“My family had the opportunity to attend the open house on a crisp Saturday afternoon. The *āśrama* was quiet and serene, in contrast with the hustle and bustle of the Sunday morning. We started our tour with the *darśana* of *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka* in *Pranava Nilayam*. The fragrance of the incense, the lamps and the *bhajans* in the background were welcoming. We continued our tour by visiting the classrooms, which were decorated with children’s projects and materials. Every classroom had great pictures and quotes of Gurudev among the many works of art collected by Lakshmi Aunty over thirteen years.

The teachers explained the class structure and material covered in each class. It was great to see the progression through the grades. We realized the amount of work put in by the teachers to ensure that the concepts are being taught at the age when the students are ready to receive and understand them, so they become values and not just ancient stories. It was amazing to see the art projects created by the students. They were created with so much detail and it felt like every student had travelled back in time. It was wonderful to see the students in the higher grades explaining the curriculum. They are indeed our next generation of leaders in the making.

So many *sevāks* and *sevikās* have toiled endlessly to make the *āśrama* what it is today, a home away from home for our children. I have heard many times, that it is difficult to comprehend what the kids learn in *Bala Vihar* without actually going through it ourselves. I think I understand that now. The excitement in my child’s eyes is proof for me that Chinmaya Jyoti is glowing. We would like to thank all the *sevaks* and *sevikās* for their endless efforts in making Chinmaya Jyoti a beautiful place for our children to learn and grow.”

- **Akhila Mangesh**



## Chinmaya Jyoti Open House event for Community Members

CMSD opened its doors on March 29 to welcome the larger San Diego Hindu Community. At least 60-70 members of the community including small children came to the āśrama.



Some of the parents said:

“It was very good (the tour). We loved this Ashram, the location and the serenity of the place. Everybody was very courteous and it was a very well guided tour. It was nice to see the meaning, the thought process and behind each room, the naming and the mission of each (classroom) how all of those are put together - the curriculum goals, the teaching goals and the end goals. What I really liked is how there is a process to graduate the kids - from Pre-K through high school.....”

“..... My kids are now 8 & 6; I felt the need that they should understand our Culture and know about

Hinduism. ....To tell you the truth, when I walked inside here I felt something very divine. As soon as I walked in I felt something is making me peaceful. I felt very good. When I was walking through all the classes, I felt Oh! It's nice they teach all these aspects because even as adults we feel- why was Ramayana like this - why did Rama do this and why did Krishna do



everything he did in Mahabharata. When the kids can learn all this, it's a really good thing. I'm really looking forward to it.....”

- Ambika



## Śivarātri Celebrations

This spring marked the first Śivarātri celebration at the āśrama. Amit shares his experience on attending this event:.

The first thing that caught my eyes was the beautiful *pujā* decoration. The program began with *bhajan-s* performed by *Chinmaya Dhvani*, and *Pranava Nilayam* started reverberating with melodious glories of the Lord.

The *pujā* led by **Pandit Srikantha Shastri** was very



detailed and the chanting of the *mantrā-s* by the team was divine. Following the *pujā* and *abhiṣekam*, song and dance *upacāra-s* were offered to Lord Śiva. It made the entire

atmosphere very serene. The meditation at the midnight hour was very peaceful and soothing for the mind. As always the finale was the delicious *prasādam*. I felt truly blessed to be a part of these celebrations.

**-Amit Chakradeo**

## Visit to Chinmaya Jyoti

- Gopal Racherla

My family and I are former members of CMSD. We moved to India a few years back and ever since have been greatly missing the Sunday Bala Vihar, *Vedānta* study groups and other *Satsaṅga*-s as well the love and kindness of *Lakshmi*, *Sukumar* and the entire CMSD family. Whenever I visit San Diego, I do my best to attend the *Satsaṅga*-s and events at CMSD.

It has been a labor of love for the entire CMSD community as well as many well-wishers all over the world to join together to build the beautiful *Chinmaya Jyoti āśrama* set in the very idyllic and picturesque settings in Poway. I was there in San Diego in July 2013 just before the *āśrama* was inaugurated and saw the hectic activities that *Lakshmi* and *Sukumar* and the cadre of volunteers had undertaken to get the *āśrama* ready in time for the opening.

I visited again in February 2014 and was elated to see the *āśrama*'s first phase complete and it being put to full use by the members for various activities and events. The *āśrama* has been planned with a lot of thought to delicately balance the traditional aspects exuding peace and serenity with the modern functionality and aesthetics. The *āśrama* is nestled in serene settings overlooking *Tapovana Giri* and has beautiful walking trails and nice spots to just sit and relax or meditate or discuss the deep existential questions and nuances of the scriptures with other *sādhakas* - whatever one's liking is.

I attended a *Vedānta* study group class on *Sri Ādi Śaṅkara's Ātma Bodha* (Self Knowledge) with fellow friends and *sādhakas*. *Lakshmi* summarized the gist of this great *prakaraṇa grantha* (introductory text) on *Advaita Vedānta*. This treatise explains the essence of the Self (*ātmā*) and its realization using the path of knowledge. *Sri Ādi Śaṅkara* starts with the four-fold requirements of the *sādhaka* and then explains the nature of the world, the indescribable power of the supreme Self (*Māyā*) which appears to veil and superimpose on the reality of the Self. The path of meditation on the *Mahāvākya* "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (I am the Self) to remove one's identification with what is transitory and ephemeral is elucidated which leads one to become attain the state of a *Jīvanamukta* (liberated soul).

Additionally, I had the good fortune to attend the *Mahā Śivaratri* celebrations at *Chinmaya Jyoti* on February 27, 2014. The celebrations were marked by soul stirring and uplifting *bhajans* and *stotrams* in Sanskrit, Hindi and Tamil by the **Chinmaya Dhvani** group and other CMSD members. The *Puja*, *abhishekam*, *archanā* were conducted by **Pandit Srikantha Shastri** amidst *vedic* chanting by his team. **Meenal Chakradeo's** offering to the Lord in the form of a beautifully choreographed dance was widely appreciated. The Tamil rendition of Sri Papanasam Sivan's "*iḍadu padam tūkki āḍum..*" by CMSD's **CHYK Devesh Vashishtha** was melodious. The guided meditation led by *Lakshmi* at the conclusion of the event made my mind calm and serene. Afterwards, the members who had been fasting all day enjoyed the light but tasty *Prasādam*.





On the following Sunday, I attended the Bala Vihar assembly and enjoyed the various skits and speeches by the Bala Vihar students describing the significance of *Mahā Śivarātrī* and the great qualities of Lord *Śiva*. The children focused on the remarkable ability of the Lord who swallowed the poison *hālāhala* during the churning of the fabled milky ocean and kept the poison to himself without spitting it out or getting affected by it. To emulate this divine quality, the children expressed beautifully in their own inimitable way how to not share the poison and pain of one's own sorrow but share happiness with the people and world around them. Very thought provoking indeed!

I enjoyed my nice spiritual sojourn to the Chinmaya Jyoti āśrama and am looking forward to coming back again with my entire family. *Harih Om!*

### Bala Vihar students present the legends and symbolism of *Śivarātrī*



In celebration of *Śivarātrī*, **Grade 2 Bala Vihar class presented the legend from the *Śiva purāṇa*.** In this story, Lord *Brahmā* and Lord *Viṣṇu* are sent to search for the ends of the pillar of light. Lord *Brahmā* goes skywards to find the top of the pillar and Lord *Viṣṇu*, taking the form of a boar, digs into the earth to search for the bottom of the pillar. Lord *Viṣṇu*, unable to reach the bottom stops his search while Lord *Brahmā* with the help of *Ketakī* falsely claimed to have reached the top of the pillar. It was a sight to see the kids dress up and act out this ancient story. This was followed by an **enlightening explanation by Grade 9 BV students on the symbolism of Lord *Śiva*'s form.**



## What is My *Dharma*? – A CHYK Workshop

A person is nothing but his or her priorities. You can very much understand another, as well as oneself, by observing what one does and how one spends one's time. This is because whatever action one engages in is an expression of priorities in the mind.

But while one is still in the stage of maturing, often one's thinking is unclear, and one's priorities become muddled. To help clear these muddled waters, **Chinmaya Yuva Kendra West - San Diego** recently held a workshop entitled **What is my *Dharma*: Shaping My Priorities** on **Feb. 17**.

While many topics were discussed, there are a few points that I really appreciated. Most importantly to me was the nuanced explanation of the different types of *dharma*, and what role they had to one another.

Universal values, or *sāmānya dharma*, are values that are common to all, regardless of time period, environment, circumstance, age, or gender. This would include values such as the intention to not injure another.

Another type of *dharma* is termed specific or particular (*viśeṣa*) *dharma*. This is very much shaped by the culture, age, time, and place one is in. What was right for my father may not necessarily be right for me in my context. What was appropriate hundreds of years ago in India may not be appropriate to us living in present day United States, and vice versa. The appropriateness of what one does is always shaped by the context one is in.

The actions I choose to take according to my nature is termed *svadharma*. This concept, which is at the core of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, can quickly be explained as one's own calling or one's personal nature.

In my eyes, the workshop was a success. With good company and illuminating discussion, not to mention great food, I believe it is safe to say that each participant walked away a bit clearer on the role of *dharma* on one's priorities and in one's life.

- Akil Rajaratnam



The workshop on *dharma* was a powerful experience for me as it helped me put my priorities into context. Lakshmi Aunty and Sukumar Uncle helped me reflect upon my roles as a student, a brother, a son and a friend. I realized that each role demands very unique responsibilities and must be played appropriately. For



example, as a son I show respect and love towards my parents, while as a student I practice diligence with my studies. Perhaps most importantly, I connected my various roles to my highest *dharma* of self-realization. I realized that each role can serve as a field in which to divinize my manifold *vāsanā*-s. I believe now that if I learn to excel in each of these roles, I will naturally come closer to achieving my highest *dharma*.

**-Devesh Vashishtha**

We get caught up in the worldly success and forget our true dharma. At the CHYK workshop, led by Lakshmi Aunty, we learned about our *dharma*. Our *dharma* is according to the stage of life we are in. The Hindu Culture divides our lifetime into four *āśramās* or stages of 25 years each. The first 25 years are the *brahmachārya āśramā*, or student stage. This is a period of education, when one is engaged in the study of the *vedas* and scriptures and in contemplation of *Brahman*. During this stage, we prepare for our professional, family, social, and religious life in the following stages. In this stage of life, our *dharma* is to be a student, practice self-control, and acquire the knowledge that will prepare us for the world and take us towards the Higher.

Practicing our *dharma* prevents us from becoming a burden to society. Parents sometimes force their children to pursue a hobby or profession that they desire. If that desire does not match that child's *svadharma*, it will cause the child to be unhappy, lose productivity and eventually become a burden on society. The concept of *svadharma* is to find and follow the path of one's own being. When a child, who has a *svadharma* of being a teacher, is forced to become a doctor, the society loses a great teacher in exchange for an average doctor. At the physical level, practicing our *svadharma* can enable one to contribute to the world at the highest capacity and efficiency. At the spiritual level, bringing attention to one's natural gifts and inclinations, one can discover the path of *yoga* that further nurtures one's self-understanding eventually leading to realize the divine nature. Pulled by outside forces, environment and culture, we ignore the inherent gifts of our own being. Therefore, turning attention to our *svadharma* is a way of finding tools to help see beyond our limited perception and gaze deeper into our *ātman*.

Performing actions according to *dharma* is performing legitimate actions with legitimate reasons. For example, a student in the *brahmachārya āśramā* should gain knowledge that will help prepare for the following stages of life. Cramming and learning just for the sake of a test is not a legitimate reason. I believe that this is for our own benefit since it reduces stress and sorrow. Gaining the maximum theoretical, practical, and spiritual knowledge in this stage with a clear vision can help us contribute to the best of our ability in the following three stages of life.

At times we have many duties as per our dharma and not enough time. We have no choice but to prioritize some duties over others. Our priorities should be based on our dharma. We must look at the level of urgency and if the task is something that can only be performed by us, then we must prioritize that. Therefore when we fulfill our *dharma*, we perform **Daily Habits Aspiring the Right Mental Attitude**.

This workshop was very helpful and led me to immensely self-reflect. It was a great reminder of my identity, my purpose and my *dharma*. I greatly appreciate Lakshmi Aunty for teaching me this spiritual knowledge that will help me throughout my life in every aspect. I cannot wait for the next workshop.

**-Hinal Parikh**

## Personality Development Workshop for girls- Part Two

After coming home from the first part of the Personality Development Workshop, I was ecstatic to find out



what we would do in Part Two! Would we state the qualities of a good person and list the things we need to improve on? No; at the Part Two held on **March 22**, we started to tell our own experiences with

school bullies, friends, and other hardships or obstacles. In this way, we could learn from our own situations, rather than creating a perfect person to look up to. In addition to this, we played communication games. In the first one, we had to come up with words that related to the first word, Orange. This went on for such a long time, surprising us at the possibilities that had come out of just one word. In the next game, we had to compile a story together. Each of us stated one line or phrase, to which the next person had to add on another line or phrase. The story, by the end, had drastically changed from the beginning, teaching us that we never know where our own communications lead us to. Now, after all the games, we learned to make Zucchini Bajia. We cleaned, cut, and prepared the Zucchini for frying. And, after it was done, we ate up the delicious food that we had helped make! In the end, the workshop in whole was truly more than I had expected of it. If there is a Part Three, then I will definitely be attending it, and hope others will too! - **Aditi Puttur, Grade-8**

I learned that being yourself and not changing others is a big thing while gaining friends. I now know the struggles of attempting to make a movie about the struggles of making movies can be. There are so many things in this physical world that describe oranges and many other wide topics, and how our listening skills have to be a little more tuned and detailed. I also see that our imagination is very vast and how that leads to not understanding conversations to their fullest. I think I gained a lot from this workshop, it was fun but also it addressed the topic nicely. I hope we can do another one of them soon! - **Mitha Senthilkumar, Grade 9**

...I found out that Drama at other people's schools was the same as at mine. I learned "Just Do It.", and to be myself all the time. I also saw how so much could come from a phrase like "There once was a magical elf" and a simple word like "Orange"!! I realized how people's lives could be so similar, yet so different at the same time! - **Dhivya Manickam, Grade 6**

**Uma Sinha, Grade 6**, could not wait to go home and experiment making the Zucchini bajjis herself.





## **CMSD Hindi *pāṭhaśālā* presents the annual program**

On March 23 & 30, the children of the four levels of CMSD's **Hindi *pāṭhaśālā*** presented a glimpse into their learning of the Hindi Language, aligned and integrated with the spiritual teaching of Bala Vihar, through the following skits and presentations:

“A day in Hindi class”, “Hindu festivals”, “Sheikh Chilli ke Sapne”, “Meerabai's devotion” and “Transformation of *Ratnākar*, the dacoit to sage *Vālmiki*”.

The highlight of the presentation was the children's ability to speak Hindi with ease on stage, combined with their singing, acting and dancing talents.

The Hindi language teachers' dedication is commendable.

**-Manisha Sinha**



## **CMSD On-Going Events**

### ***Sundarakāṇḍa pāṛāyaṇa***

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

January 2014 – Anu and Rajasekar

February 2014 – Deepa and Susheel Rungta

March 2014 – Usha and Hanumanth Rao Pathuri

### **Chinmaya Slokanjali**

Several Bala Vihar children participated this quarter in the various levels of **Chinmaya Slokanjali** getting closer to their goal of memorizing the *śloka*-s in that level.

### **CMSD Devi group classes**

Twelve to fourteen *Devī*-s meet every Friday to study *Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa* in depth. They also chant the *Kanakadhārāstotram*, *Sri Lalitā sahasranāmam*, *Sri Rāmaraksāstotram* etc.



The study reveals great insights into our everyday living tuned to *dharma*, communication skills, and synchronicity within the group as a result of a greater vision and clarity.



## Bala Vihar children celebrate their birthdays



Every Sunday, our Bala Vihar children celebrate their birthdays amidst the entire CMSD family who join in singing the special birthday song composed by our Pujya Guruji. Birthday children perform the *ārati* to *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka*, *Pujya Gurudev* and *Ānjaneya*. Then they lead the CM Pledge and receive a special book and the blessings of all.

Families also make offerings to Chinmaya Jyoti on this special occasion.



## Food for Thought

Every Sunday, BV students also share their understanding of Pujya Gurudev's quotes. It is heartwarming to hear the students express in their own words how they internalize the spiritual teachings in Bala Vihar.



## **CMSD in the Community**

### **Annual Martin Luther King Junior day Sevā at Balboa Park**

Serving the community by helping in the cleanup of Balboa Park on Martin Luther King Jr. day has become an annual ritual for the **Yuva Sevaks and CHYKs at CMSD.**

Ten Yuva Sevaks participated in this **annual, interfaith community service event** sponsored by the First United Methodist Church of San Diego. **Raj Parikh, CMSD parent** also joined as the adult chaperone.

The event began with an opening ceremony during which two priests, on behalf of their respective religions, offered a prayer to God in hopes that we may all join in the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr. to serve the community as one, with unity.



After the introductions, the groups split up and headed their ways. There were planting projects for small kids and heavy weeding projects for the stronger ones. We decided to head into the canyon as part of the cleanup project. Balboa Park was filled with the classic chaparral environment of San Diego, so there were lots of shrubs, bushes, and thorny plants in the area. Luckily, it was a nice and sunny day even in the middle of January so we did not have to worry about any kind of adjustments for weather. It took us about 30 minutes to hike to our designated area. Once there, we hiked down the mountain picking up pieces of plastic waste that we found.

It was a little disappointing in the beginning because it seemed like there wasn't a lot of trash in the area and I began to question why I was there. **Then I remembered why I came**, I didn't have a checklist or an agenda to pick up a particular amount of trash and leave. I came to offer, to the best of my ability, whatever hands-on service was needed at that time and place in order to preserve the beauty of the community park. I kept that in mind, as we continued to make our way around the canyon. At this point, we came across the deserted residence of a homeless person; it was saddening to see the conditions that they had to live in. Although not nearly as extreme of in scale, I remember thinking maybe this is a little glimpse into how my mother feels when she walks into my room—which could be kept cleaner.

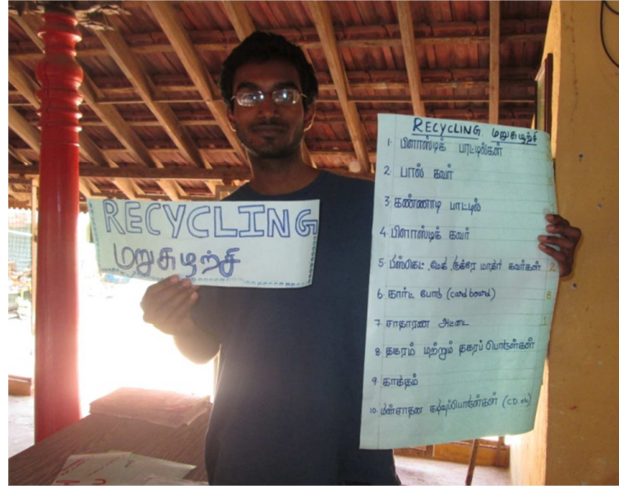
It was definitely an interesting experience, engaging in service along with my friends. I was glad to see everyone participating with so much enthusiasm. I had previously attended this event last year, but this year it felt a little different because I had to assume the role of the group leader in addition. We found a lot of peculiar items in and around the canyon. As is often, our journey was filled with nice conversations. We even sang the *Hanuman Chalisa* along the way. In the end, it was a terrific way to spend my long weekend—a positive experience for a positive goal.

**- Dheeraj Navani, CMSD CHYK**



## Trip to CORD Siruvani

I got the opportunity along with two other University of California, San Diego (UCSD) students to volunteer with **Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development (CORD)** at Siruvani for two weeks during December 2013. This was my first trip to India where I did not stay with my family. We had the freedom to formulate our own schedules, and the tools and resources to survey our surroundings analytically. Moreover, we had the opportunity to connect with those we served at a fundamental and emotional level, a connection that I will never forget and continue to treasure.



An interest in India's social and political issues coupled by a drive to study medicine stimulated my interest in working on development and public health in India. In January 2013, I had founded the university chapter of **CORD USA at UCSD**, and the members of our team were working towards successfully planning our first trip. In preparation for the trip, we constructed baseline surveys, prepared care packages, and planned to heavily document everything we saw, heard, and felt. Little did we know, that we would be constantly readapting once we reached Siruvani. In addition to the constant exercise of intuitively constructing interventions, we realized that it was the relationship that we built with each individual that counted the most.



My most memorable and inspiring experience was briefly acting as a mentor for a few middle school boys that I had met. During an English class run by the other volunteers, a few male students gathered in the back of the room where I sat, asking to use the camera I held in my hand. Realizing that they were uninterested in learning English, I sat down 3-4 of them and briefly spoke to them about the doors that would open to them if they mastered English. I spoke of the adventure that life was and the freedom that would be granted to them if they

were willing to pay their dues in the classroom. As I spilled out my concern for the future of India's youth and the importance of education to self-determination to a few 7th graders, I never expected them to listen to me. However, after I finished, one of the boys got up, went back to his bench, and began reciting the English words on the board louder than the rest.

I would highly recommend volunteering at a CORD site for each and every person reading this. Each CORD site faces a unique set of challenges and always benefit from the energy and ideas of those from all walks of life. I also believe that volunteering at CORD will foster a stronger sense of social responsibility in our generation, empowering us to take upon any task with the *yajna* spirit in mind.

- Parthu Kalva, CMSD CHYK

## BV Students' corner



CMSD children and parents view the “*Rāmāyaṇa*” show put together by one of the California schools, on a school Holiday.

## Fourth Grade Fun and Crafts Day

Saturday March 15, 2014 was fun and crafts day for the fourth grade Bala Vihar class.

“.... The activity was used as a way to review and discuss with student's the values that Lord Hanumān exemplified in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Students also had an opportunity to enjoy the day with mango cupcakes on the front lawn and spend time with their class friends.”

-Faith Prasad, BV 4<sup>th</sup> grade Sevika

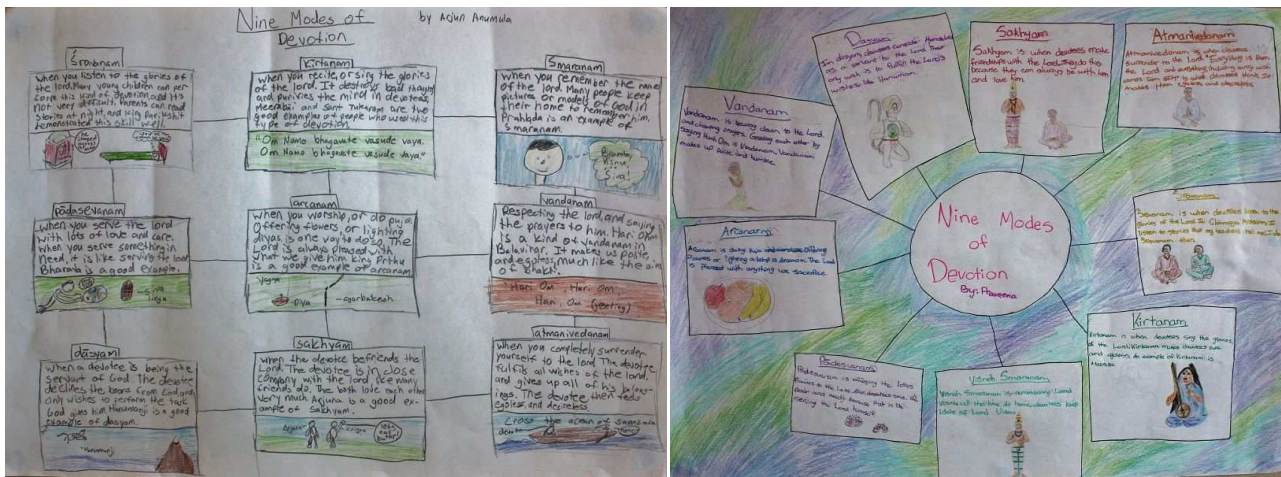


“In fourth grade, we are learning about *Hanumānji*'s values. They are *buddhi*, *balam*, *yaśa*, *dhairyam*, *nirbhayatvam*, *arogatā*, *ajādyam*, and *vākpaṭutvam*. All these values make up the invisible backbone. So, at first, we cut out *Hanumānji*'s tail and head. It was a lot of work cutting out his head because there were a lot of details to cut out. We also cut out all his values in shapes of back bones. We folded his values into small flap books. Next, we wrote what every value meant in every flap book. After that, we taped the flap books onto a strip of paper. After all these steps, it looked like *Hanumānji*! I really liked the idea of our project. While we were doing the project, we sang *Hanumān Cālīsā*. My favorite part was writing what the values meant because it helped me understand them better. I felt really good while doing this because it was fun to sing *Hanumānji*'s praise and write about his values at the same time. I had a LOT of fun!!!

Harih om!!!” - Ketki Chakradeo

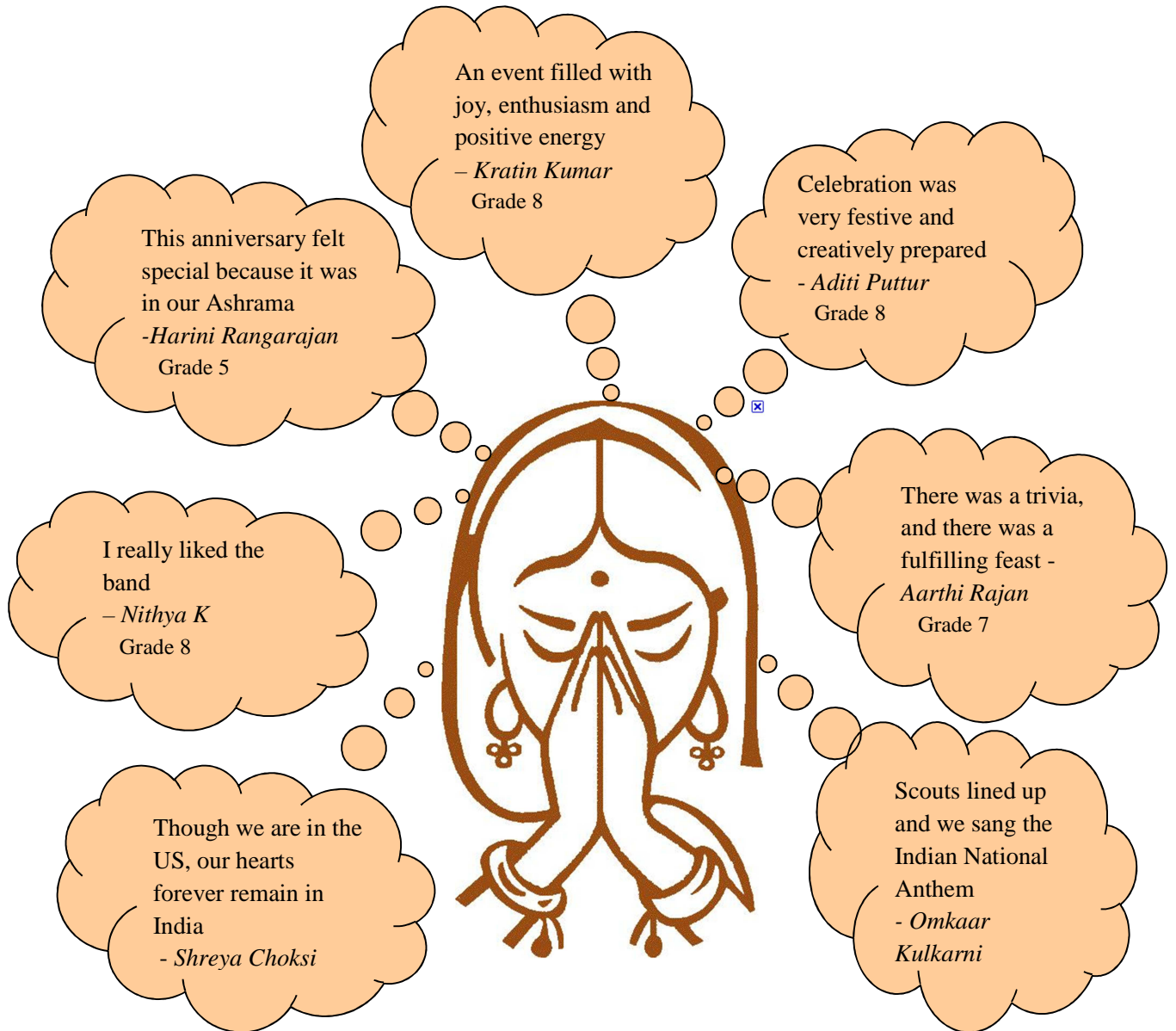




Fifth grade BV students describe the “Nine modes of Devotion” as taught by *bhakta* Prahlaḍa.

## Bala Vihar Children's reflections

We had a festive anniversary celebrations and this is what the children had to say about it



***If you are lost in thoughts, then that is agitation.  
If thoughts are lost in you, then that is meditation***

***Swami Tejomayananda***

