

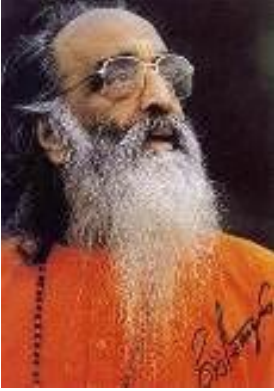


Chinmaya Pradipika



CMSD Quarterly Newsletter

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The Master Speaks:

To be a true worker or '*sevak*' is in itself the greatest '*tapas*' that is known to us. It is the great *Sadhana* (spiritual practice) because you cannot take away your mind from it. There is no other greater '*tapas*' possible.

- **Swami Chinmayananda**

In this issue of *Chinmaya Pradīpikā*

The *Chinmaya Jyoti yātrā*, a historical event for CM and particularly for CMSD, is the highlight of this issue. The *āśrama* was blessed to have the *Chinmaya Jyoti* for a month. There were many events to commemorate this historical event like the Daily *Pādukā Pūjā*, a special *Mahā Śivarātrī* celebration, fun events like Jeopardy and a workshop and *Jñāna yajña* by **Swami Ishwarananda**.

The quarter began with New Year celebrations filling *Samskṛti Nilayam* with an auspicious mood, followed by the Second Annual *Tyāgarāja Ārādhana* day led by **Devesh Vashishtha** and CMSD fifteenth anniversary celebrations presided by CMW's **Pranji Lodhia**.

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New Year Celebrations- 2016

“The New year is never new. Time is a continuous flow. Yet, in time, each of us can renew ourselves.

Thus, New Year arrives when you renew yourself.” -Pujya Gurudev

Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati Puja Navani and Hema Pandya reminisce about their experience of the auspicious New Year day celebrations at *Chinmaya Jyoti*.



“January 1st was a beautiful New Year’s morning at the *āśrama*. Many members including children gathered to celebrate the New Year in the most auspicious manner.

The celebrations began with *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka pūjā* led by Lakshmi Aunty followed by *bhajans* led by Aditi Puttur. Then all the children and youth- guided by Lakshmi Aunty and Ranga Sampath, performed *Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma arcanā*, a Chinmaya Mission tradition in many centers worldwide.”



“As Lakshmi Auntie mentioned, though we recited one thousand names of *Viṣṇu*, remembrance of just one name has the power to catalyze our self-renewal. The potency with which the names were being chanted, filled the air with divinity, and reciting together with everyone in unison felt very peaceful.

“That which is ever fresh and new- moment to moment, that alone is Truth, Beauty and Bliss.”

The New Year song by **Pujya Guruji** inspired all. The celebrations concluded with *ārati* and *prasādam*.

As we closed our 2015 calendar and opened up the new 2016 calendar, it was momentous to use this passage of time as an opportunity to move on from the past year with renewed thoughts, feelings, and goals. The centenary year celebrations, and the *Chinmaya Jyoti arrival* in February 2016, indeed, makes this new year-one for renewing, revitalizing, and re-energizing ourselves. May Lord *Viṣṇu* show us the path and Lord *Vināyaka* clear that path for a better us, and a better new year.” - **Mili Navani**

Second Annual Tyāgarāja Ārādhana Day

- report by Phanindra Kalanadhabhatla, Sheela Visswanathan and Radhachandran Padmanabhan

The beginning of a new year is always exciting looking forward to the *Tyāgarāja Ārādhana* celebrations in *Chinmaya Jyoti*. This year was extra special where we had the opportunity to listen to a melodious rendition of *Tyāgarāja Pañcaratna kṛti*, by a talented Carnatic musical ensemble led by Devesh Vashishtha.

The evening began with a *pūjā* to honor Saint *Tyāgarāja*. After the *pūjā*, there was a brief introduction of Saint *Tyāgarāja* with particular emphasis on his love for Lord *Rāma*. The speaker, Nagesh Nookala, cited *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra* where the *Bhakta* says he cannot be separate from the Lord for even a moment and pointed out that a *Tyāgarāja kṛti*, also says the exact same thing.



The evening program started with the Telugu song, "*Guru leka etuvanti guniki teliyaga bodu*", that means "Even the virtuous cannot know without a Guru". Phanindra exclaims: "I look at a festive looking picture of the Gurudev as I listen to this song, only to realize that he is smiling at me!" A *kīrtana* on Lord *Gaṇeśa*, "*Śrī Gaṇapati Nī*", follows before we enter into the five *pañcaratna kṛti*-s. "*Jagadānanda Kāraka*" is the only Sanskrit *kīrtana* of the five and *Tyāgarāja* is in all praise of Lord *Rāma*. Aditi Puttur, a Balavihar student, joined Devesh in the singing of the second *kṛti*- "*Duduku gala*". "*Kana kana rucirā*" beautifully expresses *Tyāgarāja's* devotion to Lord *Rāma*. The concert came to an end with "*Endaro Mahānubhāvulu, andariki vandanamu*" (Salutations to all the Great ones!).



The range and timbre of Devesh's voice combined with the lyrics of the *kṛti*-s that praise the greatness of *Rāma*, *Kṛṣṇa* and the great saints, evoked and stirred the spiritual core of our being. The excellent accompaniment on the *veṇu*, *veena*, and *mṛdaṅgam* by our favorite artists – Radhakrishnan Ramachandran, Hrishikesh Chary, Naveen Basavanahally and Raamkumar Balamurthi made the whole evening melodious and uplifting.

It was a memorable way to celebrate *Tyāgarāja Ārādhana* and CMSD's fifteenth anniversary.

CMSD Fifteenth Anniversary Celebrations

- report by **Ramesh Rajagoplan, Muralidharan Menon**

January 31st this year marked CMSD's fifteenth anniversary, and Sri Pranji Lodhia, CMW Treasurer and CMSD Board member graced the occasion as the chief guest at the grand celebrations at *Chinmaya Jyoti*.

The auspices started with the *Jyoti Vināyaka ārati*, *puruṣasūkta*, and *Guru Pādūkā Pūjā* performed by the Garcia family under the guidance of Lakshmi Aunty. The children, members, parents, participants, volunteers and guests, while performing their assumed and required roles, were enveloped from above by the firm but watchful and kind eyes of *Pujya Gurudev*.



The *pūjā* was followed by children from the various grades presenting their respective offerings, in the form of a prayer, a short speech about what they learned in Balavihar, their transformation stories, their inward journey to understand the question of "Who am I". CMSD band played a musical piece, all with a touch of confidence and quietness. The whole atmosphere was suffused with peace, despite the rains and the cold weather as if to reaffirm the statement: "Not to do what you feel like doing is freedom."

A short video, introduced prospectively by Sukumarji, was kaleidoscopic and nostalgic. A short film followed that gave us a walk down memory lane of how a seed sown in 1993 has emerged as a full-fledged San Diego Center today. It was a beautiful illustration of how the Guru's grace helps us to grow and be strengthened as a whole. It walked us through the key events in fifteen years of CMSD and children, youth and parents sharing their appreciation of what they received from Chinmaya Mission and how they want to give back **to keep *Chinmaya Jyoti* glowing**.



Chief guests Sri Pranji Lodhia ji and Bose Babu ji expressed about their association and gratitude to Pujya Gurudev, Pujya Guruji and CMSD and their renewed pledge of support for its future success and vision. The program concluded with *ārati* and *prasādam*, which as a six year old commented was "the kind of food you dream of eating".



May the grace and blessings of our Pujya Gurudev and Pujya Guruji be with all of us, and may we continue to offer
UNTO HIM OUR BEST!



Chinmaya Jyoti yātrā comes to Chinmaya Jyoti

“Farther away I am, nearer I will be to you...” these sooth sayings of *Pujya Gurudev* found its full expression on Sunday Feb 28, 2016 on the arrival of the **Chinmaya Jyoti** at *Chinmaya Jyoti* - Chinmaya Mission San Diego (CMSD) center, to merge with the *Jyoti* already present here on HIS leaving the mortal Self.



Mrs. Remani Menon, retired teacher from Chinmaya Mission Thrissur, Kerala, shares her experience of this historic event:

The nature also set the stage ready that morning with the white fog against the backdrop of the mountains creating a feeling as if the soul of *Gurudev* was coming down to join his Chinmaya family. *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka* was decorated in all its gaiety and piety with saffron tapestries, floral garlands and innumerable lit lamps, and to crown it all, the massive portrait of *Gurudev* and *Guruji* created an aura of divinity. The sweet fragrance from the camphor and the sandal created a serene ambience. A joyous moment or a fraction of a second, or an occasion once in a lifetime, right from the toddler to the elder was immersed amidst echoes of bhajans, and chants of "Om *Śrī Cinmaya Sadgurave Namah*". The excitement was palpable as everyone waited for the Jyoti to get to CMSD from Los Angeles, its home for the past month. The retinue proceeded with Sukumarji holding the *Purnakumba* and Rangaji carrying the *Pādukā* -s on his head with full veneration and Lakshmiji and other senior members with garlands. This was followed by a bedecked cart with the live portrait of *Gurudev* seated under a colorful umbrella. The band, the dancers and the *bhajan* group and the devotees meticulously lined up at the *āśrama* gate for the great moment to receive the Jyoti.



The blowing of the sacred conch marked the arrival of the **Chinmaya Jyoti**. Swami Ishwarananda and the enthusiastic devotees from Los Angeles were given a rousing welcome at the gate. Yet another proud milestone to be marked in the history of CMSD – the **Chinmaya Jyoti** was handed over to Sukumarji by Swamiji after being received with *Purnakumba*, Vedic chanting and garlands by Sukumarji, Lakshmiji and a host of devotees.



CMSD band, Chinmaya Dhvani, *sevak-s* and *sevika-s* and members broke into a joyous procession as the *Chinmaya Jyoti*, Gurudev's *Pādukā-s*, Swami Ishwarananda, Acharya Mahadevan and esteemed members of the LA branch of the mission were escorted into CMSD with the hymns of "āo gurudev darshan dījo". The *Chinmaya Jyoti* was then taken to Pranava Nilayam and placed in the sanctum sanctorum. Pranava Nilayam reverberated with *Ganeśa stuti*, *Cinmayāṣṭakam* and *Gurustotram* amidst various ceremonies. *Guru Pādukā Pūjā* was conducted by Swamiji; Sukumarji and Lakshmi performed the *arcanā* and *ārati*.



During Swamiji's benedictory address, he explained the difference between a devotee and a disciple through an anecdote - the devotee searches for a guru whereas the guru chooses the disciple.

The band performed in an elegant note. Everyone enjoyed the highlight of the event - the chanting and dancing to the *prārthanā gītām- tvam hi no netā.....*-, with gestures and steps.

Mrs. Remani Menon read her poem on Gurudev – "Can I do it? And yet flows the Ganges". With prostrations at the lotus feet of *Gurudev*, *Guruji* and *Guruparampara*, members proceeded for the *mahā prasāda* - a well-organized feast that was a great treat to the eyes and the mind.

The *sevak-s* and the *sevika-s* put their heads and hands together to make it a grand event. The devotees left the portals of the Ashram with a spring in their steps and a spark of the *Chinmaya Jyoti* lit in their hearts to follow the untrodden path with the motto to give maximum happiness to maximum people for maximum time...



Meera Nichani adds: "The *pādukā pūjā* was blissful with Gurudev in everyone's minds. My eyes welled up in gratitude to the grace of the divine master that had blessed me, and my dear ones. Chanting His name, singing & listening to the glories of the Guru made my mind happy, peaceful and grateful for the gift of life and the grace of the Guru. I have often wished I had met Gurudev during his lifetime, but through instances such as these, I have felt His presence and am ever grateful to the Guru who reaches out to the disciple whenever he/she seeks Him. Thank You Gurudev! With love"





Mahā Śivarātrī Celebrations with Chinmaya Jyoti at Chinmaya Jyoti

Mahā Śivarātrī celebrations was multi-faceted with Śiva linga making workshop, a skit presentation by the 2nd grade Bala Vihar children and a special puja on the night of Śivarātrī.

The second grade Bala Vihar children presented a story of the hunter who was blessed by Lord Śiva even though he offered *bilva* leaves involuntarily to the *linga* on the night Mahā Śivarātrī. The skit described the significance and auspiciousness of Mahā Śivarātrī. The 9th grade Bala Vihar children shared the divinity and magnificence of Lord Śiva.



On Monday March 7, CMSD members celebrated Śivarātrī in the holy presence of **Chinmaya Jyoti**, making it a particularly auspicious festival for us this year.



Rajasekar Vaidyanathan shares his experience:

“The evening's events started with the *Guru Pādukā Pūjā* performed by Prem, Lavanya and family. This was followed by the *ṣodaśa-upacāra pūjā* for Lord *Uma Maheśwara*. Member families had the pleasure of following the main puja coordinated by **Lakshmi** with **Sukumarji** and **Hinal** performing the *pūjā* to two Śiva lingas.



The hall resonated with the sonorous chant of *Rudram* and *camakam* as *abhiṣekam* was performed to the Lord. During the course of the evening, it was especially satisfying to chant virtually every *stotram* to Lord Śiva from the Chinmaya Book of Hymns. Chinmaya *Dhvani* sang many melodious *bhajans*, which added to the serene atmosphere. The *bhajans* and chanting were followed by guided meditation till midnight, *ārati* and *mahāprasādam*. The evening was truly a divine experience.”

Daily Guru Pādukā Pūjā during the Jyoti Yātrā- Feb. 28-March 31





Every evening, the *cinmaya pādukā pūjā* was performed in the auspicious presence of *Chinmaya Jyoti*, under the guidance of Lakshmi auntie by many CMSD families with great devotion. One of the 108 names of Pujya Gurudev was also especially remembered after each *pūjā* along with its meaning. The *yajaman* families took home a small *Chinmaya Jyoti* lamp that was specially lit at the end of each puja.

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिः चिन्मय ज्योतिः तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति
 jyotiṣāmapi tajjyotiḥ cinmaya jyotiḥ tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṁ vibhāti

The light of all lights is the Light of Consciousness. All else shines in its light.

Swami Ishwarananda-ji's visit to San Diego



CMSD was blessed to host Swami Ishwarananda, Acharya of CM Los Angeles on March 25 and 26. Swamiji conducted a Meditation workshop and *Jñāna yajña* on "Guru Mahimā".

Guru Mahimā - Jñāna yajña – Rajasekar Vaidyanathan

"After a space of several years, San Diego devotees were fortunate to listen to **Swami Ishwarananda** in a *jñāna yajña*. In a sense, Swamiji summarized his reflections even before he formally spoke a single word on the topic! How so? He sang his message!

"*Guru binā ye jñāna kahān..*" was more than an apt preface; it was a melodious *bhajan* containing the main import of the talks, where Swamiji expounded on select verses from the *Guru Stotram*.



In Hindu tradition, the preceptor or *Guru*, is key to Knowledge. Our life's goal is incomplete without true Knowledge. "*jñāna binā ye dhyeya adhurā...*". Book "knowledge" is only information; what is referred to here is ultimate Knowledge, which can only be received by hearing it from a *Guru* established in it, and, who in turn, heard it from his own *Guru*. The entire line of teachers, or *Guru paramparā*, is revered.

Guru is personal, yet he is more than the physical person. He is recognized and revealed as the indweller within the seeker. "*Nitya nirantara antaryāmi, hridaya viraje, mere svāmi..*" How to win the grace of the *Guru* or Lord, who is both the means and the end, who removes the overgrowth of spiritual ignorance, and who reveals the ever-present Knowledge within? "*Hari kamala charana kaise pāuun..??*" "*Kaise paaun, usa Bhagavana ko...??*" Beware of the enemies "*kāma, krodha, mada, lobha, moha mila...ahankāra hai jiva kā dushman...*", and approach Him with devotion, humility, and willingness to serve, "*bhakti vinaya se, sevā bhāva se.*"

Know this to be the Glory of the *Guru*- "*Jāno ye guru mahimā..*"



CMSD member **Hema Pandya** shares her experience on **The Art of Meditation – Workshop**

“It was enriching to hear Swamiji’s lecture on Meditation. Since this was my first Meditation workshop, I was unsure of what to expect. I thought we might spend the lecture sitting quietly, but instead, I was pleasantly surprised to hear Swamiji methodically listing the steps involved in proper Meditation, and how each step offers a different but important benefit.

Swamiji presented some of the concepts from Self Unfoldment and *Tattva Bodha* in a simple way that can be helpful during Meditation. It was also made clear that one should be in the proper setting and time of day for effective Meditation.....It was great to have Swamiji at our Ashram and being in his presence.”



Special CBCC Events by CMSD Youth

A special art and essay contest on Pujya Gurudev's teachings were held in March during the *Jyoti yātrā*

Rachna Halker was recognized for her art on the theme- "**Gurudev, you walked into my heart!**" and **Meghana Garcia** was acknowledged for her essay on: "**What I have is GOD's gift to me; what I do with what I have is my gift to HIM.**"

Mili Navani was commended on the excellent work done as the CBCC CHYK at CMSD in organizing the Jeopardy tournament for high schoolers by CHYK members and a special *Bhajan Sandhya* taking us on a *Jyoti yātrā* musical through the many states of India. CHYK members Dheeraj Navani, Hinal Parikh and Parthu Kalva deserve our congratulations too.



Jyoti yātrā musical

"..The program was organized in a "*musical yātrā*" throughout India and the audience was given clues to guess the state being described. With each state, *bhajans* on that state's most prominent god or goddess were offered and a lamp lit after each offering around the *Chinmaya Jyoti*.."

- **Surabhi Kulkarni- Grade 11**



CMSD Ongoing Events:

Monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa pārāyaṇa*

Phanindra and family

Jayantibhai and family



Ghar Ghar mein Gurudev; Ghar Ghar mein Jyoti

January: Akkala Residence



January: Mahesh Residence



February: Prasad Family Residence



CMSD in the community

CMSD's **Lakshmi Sukumar** was invited by Francis Parker School in Linda Vista to participate in an interfaith panel in celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. King on **Thursday, January 14** for grades 6-12, along with representatives from the Muslim, Methodist, Jewish, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Buddhist religious faith traditions.

After introducing the connection of the faith traditions to the message and life of Dr. King, the panelists answered questions such as: "Can religion and science go hand in hand? Do your religious views impact your political views? & Why is religion used to justify violence in your view?"

The Director of Diversity and Inclusion wrote:

"Dear Friends in Faith,

Thank you so very much for your time and words on Thursday. I cannot emphasize enough how moved the Parker community was by your presence and wisdom. I have received countless emails from faculty, students, and administrators expressing their gratitude for all that you shared. The impact of your presence was great.

Please carry that sentiment with you wherever you go and know that you had a huge impact on Parker last Thursday.

I look forward to the opportunity to see and work with you again!"



As a result of this panel, an interfaith club started within the middle school and the school planned its first-ever Diversity Day on **Friday, March 25th** seeking the participation of these panelists again for this day!

Faith Prasad who attended this event along with CMSD CHYK **Dheeraj Navani** shares her experience:

"Ninth through twelve grade students were invited to ask religious and spiritual questions to a panel of three guests consisting of a Jewish rabbi, a Jesuit priest, and our own Lakshmi. I personally found this very informative and interesting. It was very clear to see the difference in the maturity level of the students because the ninth and tenth graders were feeling shy and had no questions while the eleventh and twelfth graders were starting to think a little deeper about life and asked very nice questions. They asked the panel members things like, have you ever had a time when you questioned your faith? How do you balance spirituality with other things in life? What is your perspective on the religious hatred playing out in current politics? As the panel members replied, I found it interesting that, though each came from a different belief and had something to share from their tradition, the cumulative answer came from a higher spiritual vision. That was the beautiful thing. That though we all see so much diversity among us we are all one in spirit, and as much as we can raise our consciousness to focus on that which is within, the more we can dissolve ignorance and fear and celebrate our oneness in humanity.



The other thing that was very apparent was how much confusion there is in the high school years. Most of the students we met, were raised in a home with religion but many of them did not identify with their religion, whether it was a Jewish home, a Christian home, or a Hindu home. This highlights how very important it is to give our children a proper grounding in their religious tradition. As parents, it is our responsibility to give a complete education to our children. An education that includes both academics and spirituality. How fortunate are we to have our own Chinmaya Mission where we can give our children the proper understanding of their culture and religion."

Father Rev. Peter Gyves, Rabbi Daniel Bortz, Lakshmi, Mrs. Lemoine (facilitator)

CMSD Members Speak about the *Jyoti yātrā*

During the *Pādukā pūjā*, chanting & listening to the meanings & significance of the 108 names of our Pujya Gurudev elevates simple minds to higher possibilities.

-Prem Venkatesan

Jivan *yātrā* Of The Inspirer

Yields A Transformed Ready Actor

-Ranga Samapath

Pujya Gurudev's influence was evident in the special programs by CMSD Yuva Sevaks held during the *Jyoti yātrā* month.

-Amarnath Puttur

The presence of the Jyoti drew me to the ashram--and the daily *Pādukā pūjā* not only helped me understand the pooja better--but deepened my reverence of Guru-Dev.

-Bhuvana Garcia

Very fortunate to have gotten a chance to partake in this epic *yātrā* of Gurudev's Jyoti

-Beena Senthilkumar

We feel blessed to be part of the *Jyoti yātrā* this year and getting the opportunity to attend many *Pādukā pūjā* -s. We also enjoyed the special events like Jeopardy.

-Ramya Mahesh

The highlight of the *Jyoti yātrā* to me was Swami Ishwarananda Ji's Meditation workshop

Removing darkness.....
One Jyoti at a time

-Mili Navani



Like the waters of the river only find rest
when they merge with the ocean,
so too the mind only finds peace
when all its thoughts flow into *Bhagavan*.

-Swami Tejomayananda

