

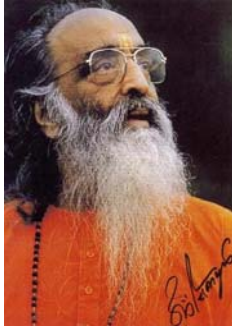


Chinmaya Pradipika

CMSD Quarterly Newsletter



Jan 2013, No. 5



The Master Speaks:

Lord! With your help, may we live a nobler life of greater undertakings in your sevā, all through the coming year.

Swami Chinmayananda

From the Team of Chinmaya Pradīpikā

We begin this issue with an article describing the ceremony on Nov. 27th, when the bricks sanctified by **Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji** earlier this summer were installed at the Chinmaya Jyoti site.

The annual CMSD *Dīpāvalī* celebration and *Akhaṇḍa Hanumāna Cālīsā* were two important events this quarter. Descriptions of the Hinduism workshop, *Navarātrī* skits, and articles and artwork from many children are also featured in this issue.

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Hallowed foundation

by **Bhuvana Garcia**

“One small step for man - one giant leap for mankind.” The famous quote from Neil Armstrong kept going through my mind, as I stood there and watched the four holy bricks being honored and ceremoniously laid to their proper resting place--the foundation of Chinmaya Jyoti--right under the spot where Lord *Gaṇeśa* will be installed.

These are the same 4 bricks blessed by **Pujya Swami Tejomayanandaji** this past June. Upon these 4 bricks an ashram will be built!





Sukumarji carefully carried the bricks on a tray, as he walked down the hill and entered the construction site. **Lakshmi** had thought of every detail, and she drew on the wet cement exactly where each brick was to be placed. A hibiscus bloom was placed on each brick. Mantras and prayers were chanted. Owen watched all of this patiently. He was as excited as we were! Ever so lovingly, each brick was placed on the wet cement by the Sukumars. Owen, with his tool, smoothed the cement, and pushed down each brick. The bricks slowly sank into the cement and disappeared. They are now invisible, yet they will always be there, and they will hold up our ashram! My eyes were damp. I quickly hid behind the camera. I stole a glance around and saw that others were also wiping their eyes. The dream of Chinmaya Jyoti has become a reality!

I flash back to the last 12 years. I remember the first meeting at the Nagarajan's home on Benchley Road, to discuss the possibility of starting a mission in San Diego. Then the first few meeting places-upstairs at the Shiva Vishnu temple, then UCSD, then Copy Club and finally, for the past several years, the JCC. Initially in the rehearsal room, then as the mission grew, in the auditorium. While the JCC is nice, it is not home. This is home - Chinmaya Jyoti!



In 2009 we had the *Bhūmi pūjā* graced by *Pūjya* Swami Tejomayanandaji. This land has changed so much in the past 3 years. I cannot believe this is actually happening! The CMSD graduating class of 2014--next year's graduating class--will have their graduation in Chinmaya Jyoti! The first class to go from grade Pre-K to 12 with Chinmaya Mission. Wow!

I feel so special to be a part of this. This is history in the making. Twelve years ago, I had never even heard of Swami Chinmayananda. Now, he is such a big part of our lives. My mother once told me when your guru calls you will be pulled--there is no way you cannot go. Lakshmi often talks about the power and compassion of the guru. I may not have completely believed them then, yet, here, watching the laying of these 4 bricks--I feel the power of our Gurudev! Chinmaya Jyoti is here and is real! No more talk of "when we have our ashram". It is here! This is Chinmaya Jyoti!

Hari Om!

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami blesses Chinmaya Jyoti

by Srinivas Sukumar

On December 24th 2012, we had the pleasure and privilege of having **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami** from Kauai, Hawaii at the Chinmaya Jyoti site. **Senthilnathaswami** accompanied him.



It was a rainy morning and we were not sure it would be a good idea to have him at a soggy and slippery site. But, Sheela Visswanathan, who was hosting him later that day, reassured us that the *Sadguru* was used to this kind of weather and was familiar with construction sites.

Swamiji arrived at Chinmaya Jyoti at 10 AM and was welcome with *Purnakumbha* by CMSD members. Sukumar gave him a quick tour of the site and described the plans for the first building, *Samskr̥ti Nilayam*. He also pointed out all the unique characteristics of the site including *Tapovana Giri*. The various requirements for water management such as bio-retention tanks were also described. Swamiji was very impressed. He blessed the site and promised to come back later in 2013 after we inaugurate the Center.



About 40 devotees, both from CMSD and the Hindu Heritage Society were there, walking with the swamis through the falling rain and braving the elements with umbrellas and caps. Since they could not interact easily with Swamiji at the Pomerado Elementary School parking lot, we invited him to Chinmaya Nivas for *satsanga*. He spent more than an hour there speaking to the group about his views on Hinduism and how students are coming out of college less inclined to follow the religion than when they went in. He praised college based service projects that keep the youth engaged in service as well as learning about Hinduism and its practical applications.

We thus ended the last part of December with a wonderful surprise blessing of the Chinmaya Jyoti site by two swamis and also learned some new perspectives on Hinduism.



2012 *Dīpavālī* celebrations

We present below articles from two new members of the Chinmaya family.

"*dīpa jaleṃ maṅgala ke āja O maiyā lakṣmi mere ghara lā o khuṣiyān....*"

Lamps were lit, songs sung, blessings of goddess *Lakṣmi* invoked, *Garbā* and *Dāṇḍiyā* danced and Lord *Rāma* welcomed!

On November 11th, the Encinitas Adult and Senior center opened to a colorful and happy Indian community gathered for one purpose, celebrating a grand *Dīpavālī*. Rows of lamps led to an altar adorned with pictures of

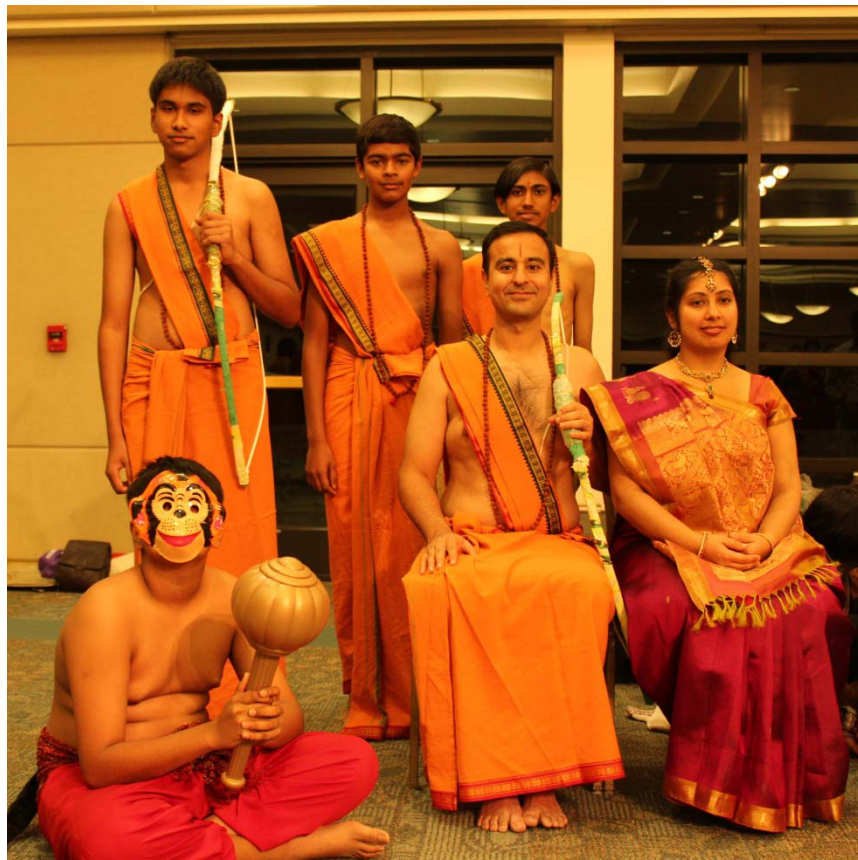


Lord *Gaṇeśa*, Goddess *Lakṣmī* and of our beloved Gurudev. Eager kids and adults seated on either side of the lamps were treated to a beautiful sequenced program of bhajans, *Lakṣmī pūjā*, performance and a surprise.

Chinmaya Dhvani group's melodious renditions of bhajans on Lord *Gaṇeśa*, Goddess *Lakṣmī*, Lord Rama and *Dīpavālī* songs were intermingled with the *pūjā*, a 7th grade performance on the story of *Narakāsura* and chanting of *Kanakadhārā stotram* by the Devi group. *Lakṣmī pūjā* was ceremoniously performed by Lakshmi aunty and Sukumar uncle with apt explanation of the rituals. With this understanding the children, teenagers and their parents repeated the *śloka-s* and the rituals with devotion.



And then, it was time for the grand surprise.



All eyes turned towards the door, awaiting eagerly. The door opened to a joyous Hanuman roaring "*Jaya Śrī Rāma*" followed by Lord *Rāma*, *Sitā* and *Lakṣmana* walking between the lights to take their seats near the stage.

The celebration concluded with a scrumptious dinner prepared and seconds served at the table by volunteers. New members were pampered by the graciousness of other members. Indeed a Grand *Dīpavali* celebration!

by **Nandini Umesh**

Growing up in India, *Dīpavali* was the time for prayer, lighting lamps, distributing sweets, and sharing happiness and cheer with everyone we met. CMSD created a very similar atmosphere this *Dīpavali*. I was thrilled to see the enthusiasm in kids and adults alike, coming together and celebrating with a true spirit of oneness and brotherhood. The love and warmth with which CMSD welcomed their new members, cooking and serving them dinner, touched our hearts. Even more than before, it was clear on this day how CMSD epitomizes the CM pledge objective of standing as one family bound to each other with love and respect.



I feel truly feel blessed to be welcomed into this family and look forward to learning and serving.



A true honor, this *Dīpavali*, was when Siddharth and I played the role of *Rāma* & *Sitā* for the CMSD event. In this role my mind was happy, peaceful and completely content. To my surprise this joyous state of mind lasted for a couple of days. We thank Lakshmi Aunty and the mission for this opportunity and feel blessed to revel in the glory of the Lord himself.

by **Meera Mulchandani**

Akhaṇḍa Hanumāna Cālīsā

by **Siddharth Mulchandani**

Hanumāna Cālīsā instills faith and gives one the courage to face all difficulties in life. I personally chant it anytime I am in doubt or emotionally confused and am surprised how every single time it succeeds in setting my mind at ease, enabling intelligent action. Hence, I was thrilled to hear that on November 10th, the Yuva Sevaks were coordinating an *Akhaṇḍa Hanumāna Cālīsā* program (chanting 108 times) here in Chinmaya Nivas for the trouble-free construction of Chinmaya Jyoti. It was truly commendable how many *devi-s* and *sevak-s* coordinate the program to ensure that people chanted all day. Some sang fast, some slow, but the *bhakti*



was apparent in every voice that chanted His name. It is said that *Hanumānji* comes to listen to the *Cālīsā* being chanted and I truly believe he was there at Chinmaya Nivas to bless us all that day. *hariḥ om!*



CMSD On-Going Events

Sundarakānda Pārāyana

Host families for the monthly *Sundarakānda pārāyana* were:

October 2012- *Sheetal and Nikhil Gandhi*

November 2012- *Usha and Hanumanth Rao Pathuri*

December 2012- *Deepa and Susheel Rungta*



Chinmaya Ślokāñjali

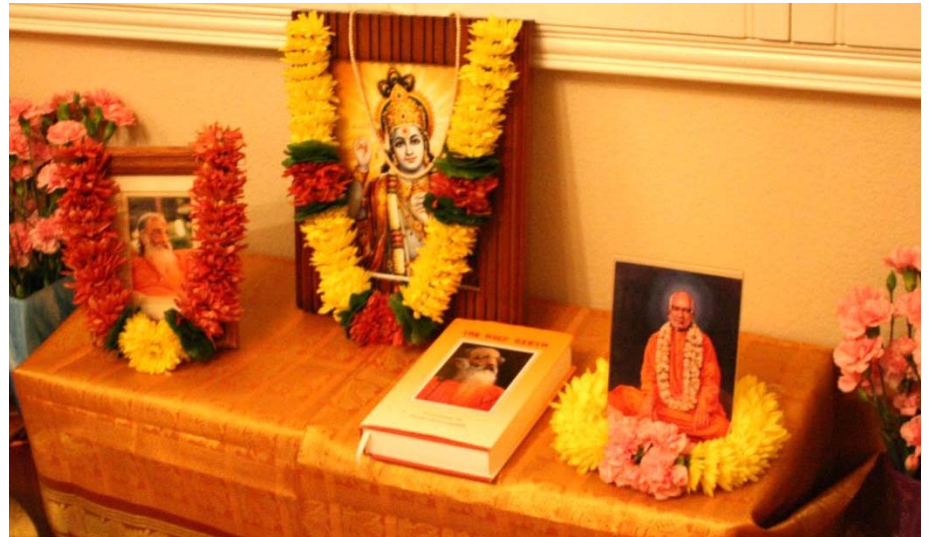
Hearty congratulations to **Ketki Chakradeo**, **Aditi Puttur** and **Amogh Kaushik** who passed Level 2 of Ślokāñjali on Dec. 8th. Ślokāñjali is a self-paced Ślokā-chanting competition that was started last year. Many other children are participating regularly in this event.



Tapovana Jayanti and Gītā Jayanti

Every year we remember with reverence the blessings in our life that we have received from *Swami Tapovanam* and *Srīmad Bhagavad Gītā*.

This year we gathered at the residence of *Swaroopa and Raja Reddy Kalva* on December 23rd to celebrate *Tapovana Jayanti* and *Gītā Jayanti*.



Sukumarji led the gathering in chanting *Tapovana ṣaḍkam*, followed by the entire 18 chapters of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The event concluded with *ārati* and *prasādam*.

The Legend of *Mahiṣāsura-Mardini*

by Alok Gupta

CMSD fifth graders performed a skit on Goddess *Durgā-Mahiṣāsura Mardini* on Sunday October 14 to mark the beginning of *Navarātrī*. The warmth and the brightness of the splendid morning sun made the outdoor assembly at the JCC courtyard a special event.

The play started with *Mahiṣā*, a great demon (*asura*), involved in extraordinary austerities (*tapas*) that enabled him to get a boon from Lord Brahma. The boon was that he could not be slayed by any god or man. Endowed with vast power and blinded by wicked desire, *Mahiṣāsura* and his army proceeded to conquer the three worlds defeating the *deva-s* in the process and thus throwing the Cosmic order into disarray. The role of the evil *Mahiṣāsura* and his armies with their shiny weapons were depicted with energy and animation by the 5th grade boys.



Then came the manifestation of the magnificent Goddess *Durgā*. The details of Her empowerment by various *devas*, each contributing his own unique strength and weapon, were very beautifully narrated and acted out. The pinnacle of the skit was depiction of the great war between Goddess *Durgā* and *Mahiṣāsura* and his armies and finally the slaying of the demon by the Goddess. Following the skit, with goddess *Durgā* standing in majesty, the whole courtyard reverberated with the chanting of *Mahiṣāsura Mardini Stotram* led by the melodious voice of Smt. Lakshmi Sukumar.

In spite of the announcement before the skit that the focus was not so much on costumes or props but the main message of *Navarātrī*, that is the victory of good over evil, the colorful costumes and the creative props used were very impressive. It was another wonderful performance by the Bala Vihar Children.

The following Sunday, on October 21st, tenth graders came up to the stage and spoke eloquently on the symbolism behind the slaying of *Mahiṣāsura*, and the significance of *Navarātrī* in general.

The many points brought out by them demonstrated how our Hindu festival observances bring joy and meaning to children as well as adults, pointing us towards the divine at all stages of life.



CMSD in the community

Workshop on Hinduism and Hindu Culture by Rajasekar Vaidyanathan

Smt. Lakshmi Sukumar conducted an introductory seminar on Hinduism at the Poway Community Church on Saturday Dec 1st for CMSD members, school teachers and people of other faiths. The goal of this seminar was to introduce and clarify the many aspects of Hinduism, some of which are not well understood by Hindus themselves. Most attendees for this session were CMSD members but we had a few non-members as well.



It was striking to see how Lakshmiiji was able to introduce and elaborate upon so many different topics in the short time that we had. At the end, almost everyone felt that they had learned something new.



The topics covered included: the history of Hinduism, the *Veda-s* and *Upaveda-s*, *Śruti*, *Smṛti*, *Itihāsa-s*, *Purāṇa-s*, the four stages of life and the four *puruṣārtha-s*, *sampradāya-s*, God symbolism, vegetarianism, festival observances, caste system, *dharma*, *bindi*, and reverence for the cow. The morning session was primarily delivered as a lecture, assuming no prior knowledge of Hinduism. After lunch, the audience had many questions, which Lakshmiiji answered individually in great detail.

Here are some impressions collected from the audience at the end of the workshop on Hinduism:

It was a wonderful refresher course and very inspiring. This lets us connect back with our basics; attending such seminars makes me more aware of the teachings and re-energizes me to follow them.
- Nagesh

Being a Hindu means much more now after listening to the significance of Hinduism and what it truly means. I am amazed at the lofty universal love and tolerance Hinduism teaches
-Nita

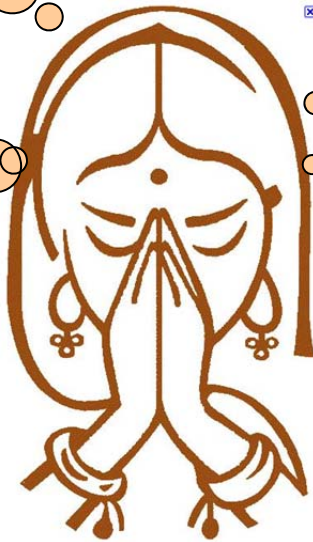
A very humbling experience that opened my eyes to the origin of the Vedas and of Hinduism. We can (now) re-interpret our lives and apply (the concepts learned)

What a wonderful workshop! It was a great way to know our own heritage. The workshop weaved many concepts that I knew and many that I did not, into one beautiful fabric. I hope such workshops would be repeated in the future.

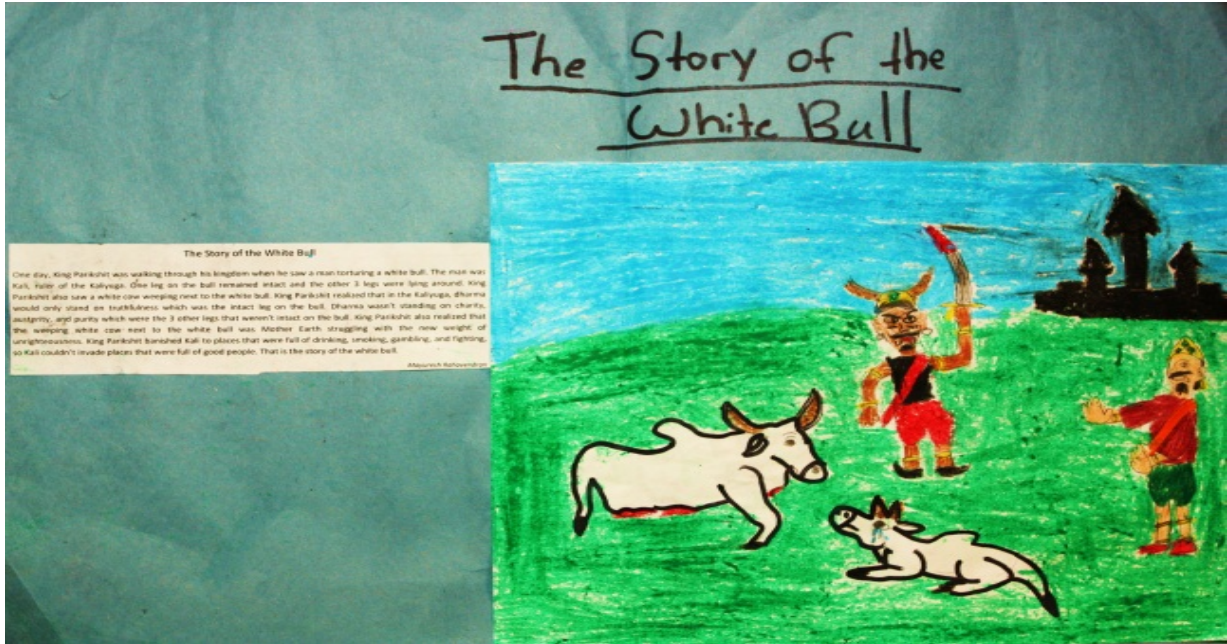
I benefited from the detailed explanation of *purushartha* and *gunas*. It was an eye-opener which explained the many philosophies in Hinduism
-Sumathi

...an intellectually stimulating first-time session. I would attend again
- Jayashree

...I would encourage my friends to take an opportunity to learn about their own religion from the right angle. Thank you for conducting this workshop
- Seema



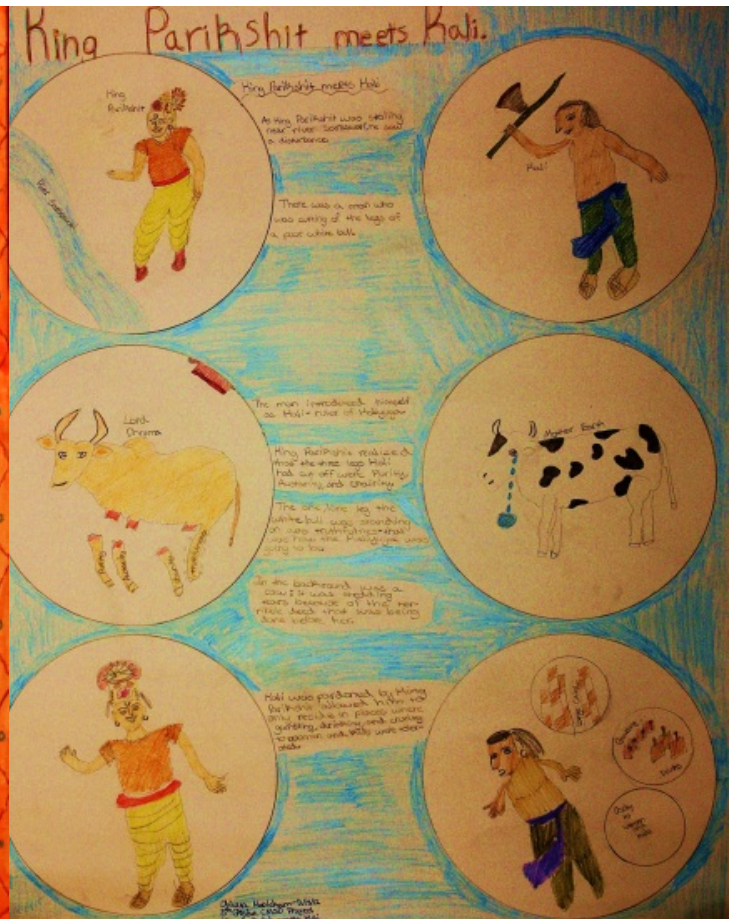
King Parikshit meets Kali -Grade 5 Posters



Rahavendran



Uma Sinha



Dhivya Manickam



Sasya Uppugonduri



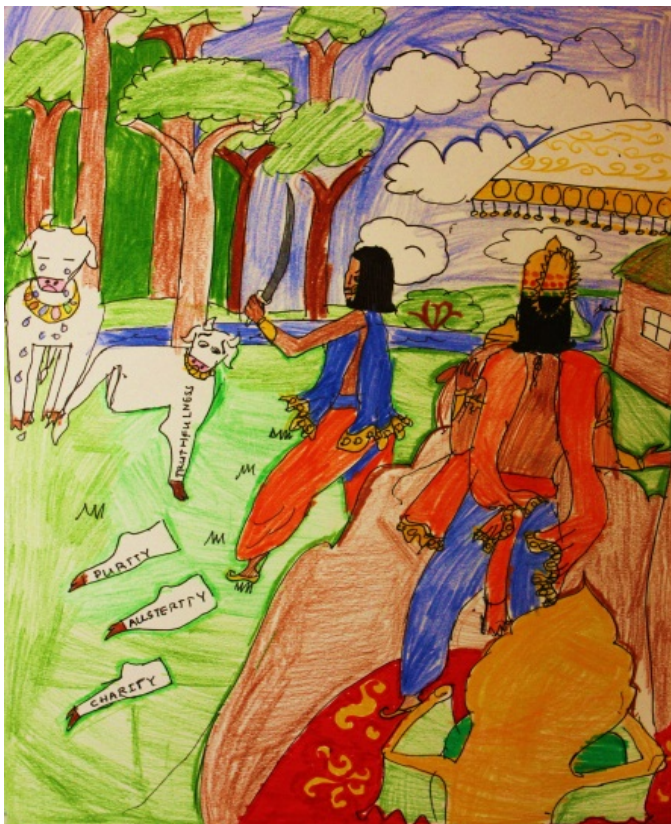
Sanjeev RanganMayuresh



Kishan Pansuria



Smriti Panchal



Rachna Halker



Pavan Navani

Commentary on weekly 'Food for thought' – quotes from *Pujya Gurudev*

Three of our high school students provide their perspectives in these charming essays:

“Do not wish to add years to your life, but add life to the years”

by **Nilay Shah**, Grade 9

“I couldn't wait to go on the Manta. Seaworld had really created a lot of hype about it, and I was expecting an exhilarating ride. 55ft...55ft...55ft...the number kept popping into my head. That's how steep the drop was. It soon came my turn to board the ride. As it started accelerating, I leaned forward expectantly for the drop. A few gentle crests and turns loomed into my vision and soon passed, barely registering in my mind. I was waiting for the drop. 55ft...55ft...55ft! I leaned forward expectantly. Suddenly, the ride began to slow down. We pulled into the bay. It was over.”



Similarly, we wish to be thirteen, so we can finally watch PG-13 movies. Sixteen years of age seems just out of reach, but we anxiously wait for it, since then we will have the ability to drive legally. We do not have the patience to wait for eighteen years to fly by, since we want to go to college. Often times we are rushing through life in anticipation of some big event, we disregard the simple joys of life, and when the event comes to pass, it is oddly dissatisfying.

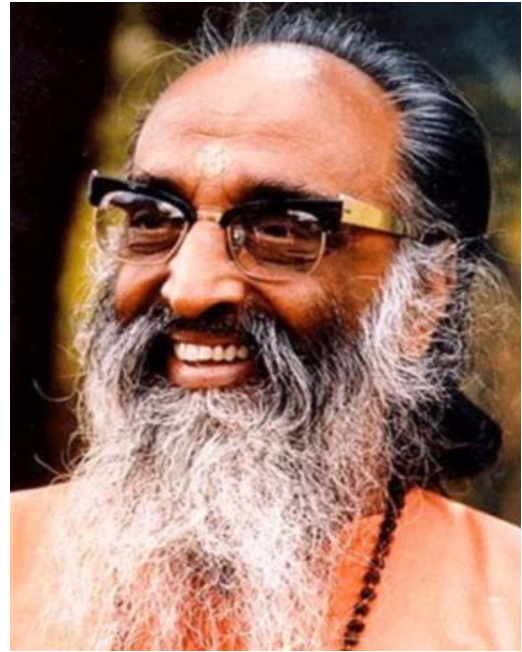
Time is evanescent and the human race tends to worry more about the past and future, and not at all about the present, failing to understand that “yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it is called the present.” If we devote our minds to worrying about the elapsed and forthcoming time, life becomes dull and dead, because we do not revel in the events of the present. The simple pleasures of life like the companionship of family and friends are what make life special and they can only be enjoyed in the present. This lesson is exemplified by the story of the 33 Chilean miners, after an unexpected cave-in entombed them in the earth for 69 grueling days. After his miraculous rescue, one of the miners expressed to ABC News that what everyone could draw from his ordeal is never to take a day for granted. No one knows what tomorrow shall bring, so you have to live in the present and live it to the fullest.

“Give! The greatest joy in life is in giving, in loving, in sacrificing.”

by Ajay Manickam, Grade 9

First, I noted how, in the second sentence, “in loving” and “in sacrificing” seemed to be added on as an afterthought. From that, I deduced that Gurudev was equating giving with loving and sacrificing. Superficially, these concepts seem to be quite dissimilar; however, intuitively, the notion of a relation strikes a chord. People give and sacrifice for that which they unconditionally love. Sacrificing and giving have interrelated meanings—but they have significant differences in connotation.

Giving is an action. All reactions have a consequent reaction—this provides the basis for the concept of karma. In the action of giving, we receive an “equal opposite reaction”—happiness, knowing that we could help another person. Those who think that this reaction is less than the action are those who either do not understand the full impact of what they have given to that other person or look down upon those that they give to, seeing them as lesser people that cannot help them. Those who think that this reaction is more than the action underestimate themselves—they do not understand the impact their good actions have had on who they helped.



Sacrificing is an action as well. One cannot understand the significance of sacrifice if one does not recognize that it involves a different mentality. In giving, we recognize the pervasive field of atman, of which its “excitations” are represented by the animate and inanimate around us—thus, we give, knowing that we are truly serving Bhagavan in his many forms. Sacrificing is directed to Bhagavan, too, but we are instead “giving up” negative qualities within ourselves. This seems counterintuitive, but one must consider that there is no “Law of Conservation of Emotions.” Since the medium of emotional interactions is the mind itself, it is possible to become happy by removing negative qualities without fearing that those negative qualities must necessarily have to exist somewhere simply because we have gotten rid of some. However, the mind still requires a stimulus to remove the negative qualities in the first place, hence the practice of sacrificing negative qualities to an ideal. Thus, we can understand how sacrifice is different from giving.

Love should not be seen as the “third side” of these three concepts. Rather, it should be seen as the reason for any of the above to occur, their structural foundation. Only unconditional and pure love can facilitate sincere giving and genuine sacrifice. In fact, unconditional and pure love is the sole force that can truly be considered love. If giving and sacrificing are different shadows, then love is what creates the shadows.

“Give! The greatest joy in life is in giving, in loving, in sacrificing.”

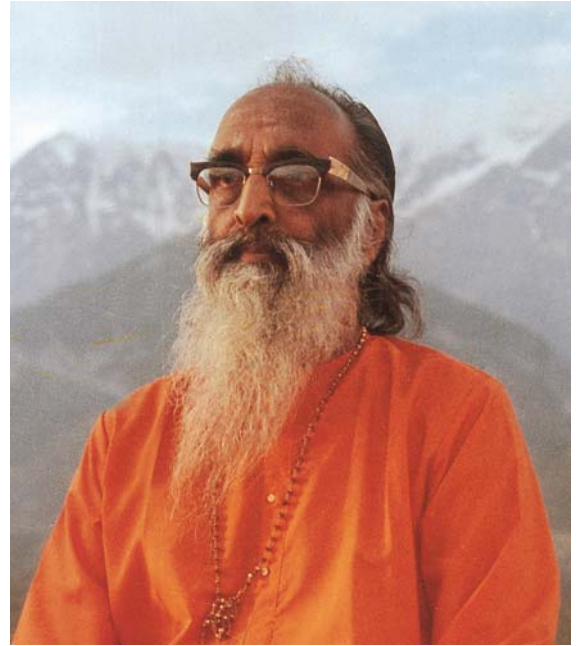
by **Shivali Joshi**, Grade 10

As human beings we all have needs and desires. We wish for the luxuries and comforts in life, sometimes even taking them for granted when we have them. Although we may work hard to gain power, status and friendship, we must also learn how to give. Gurudev tells us that the greatest joy is in giving, in loving, in sacrificing. How can we find joy in giving what we possess? The answer seems to be in the quote, that it is not mere giving, but giving from the heart that gives joy.

We all have more than what we truly need. Giving teaches us to be thankful for what we do have rather than focus on what we don't. Each of us got to where we are through the good circumstances in which we were brought up. Since we live in this world, it is our duty to make the world a better place for those less fortunate than us.

Giving also comes naturally when there is love in the heart. To be happy we must first like who we are and what we do, and be balanced in the face of positives and negatives. Then we can love the world around us, and feel gratitude when we give.

Love is also a powerful emotion that allows one to endure anything, which leads to sacrificing. In our mission pledge we say “..and giving more than what we take..”. Sacrifice rids our mind of ego and selfishness, because we give wholeheartedly and without reservation. By giving, loving and sacrificing, we become spiritually rich and joyous inside, which is what truly matters in the end.



*That which is ever new and fresh,
that alone is Good, Real and Beautiful.
May this New Year bring you ever greater
Goodness, Happiness and Success.*

Swami Tejomayananda

