

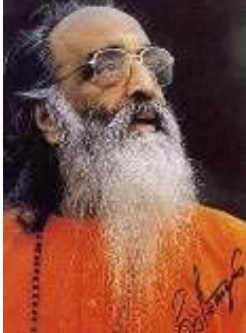


# Chinmaya Pradipika

CMSD Quarterly Newsletter



January 2017, No. 21



## The Master Speaks:

*Forgiveness is the secret beauty in any spiritual seeker's life. Not to forgive is to maintain the passions bottled up in us and then, we are never empty enough to lift ourselves in our soaring meditations.*

- **Swami Chinmayananda**

## In this issue of Chinmaya Pradīpikā

The highlight of this quarter was Swamini Vimalananda-ji's visit to CMSD and her lectures on various topics.

This quarter commenced with *Navarātrī* Celebrations that included the *Sarasvatī Pūjā*, and a special *bhajan sandhyā*.

*Dīpāvalī* was celebrated at Chinmaya Mission San Diego with great pomp and splendor with children performing *Lakṣmī pūjā* under the guidance of Lakshmi Aunty.

The quarter concluded with *Gītā Jayanti* and *Tapovana Jayanti*.

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**CMSD's president- Srinivas Sukumar and Secretary- Ranga Sampath present all the Bala Vihar children with a special commemorative 10-rupee coin released by the Government of India in honor of Pujya Gurudev's birth centenary year.**

On Students performed the *pūjā* to this coin and took it home to keep in their home altar.



## Navarātrī Celebrations

The Navarātrī Celebrations were held this year at *Chinmaya Jyoti* from October 1 through Oct 10. This year we had several events like the presentations from two Bala Vihar classes, *Bhajan Sandhyā* on *Devī* and *Sarasvatī Pūjā*. Every day, two chapters of the *Gītā* were chanted followed by the *Devī āratī*. *Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇa* during the Navarātrī festival was especially significant.

Navarātrī is celebrated to glorify the Self. By turning inward during Navarātrī, and getting in touch with the spirit within, one can overcome the negative tendencies and invoke the positive qualities that are within, thus feeling elevated and renewed.

### Legend of Mahiṣāsura-mardini

On October 2<sup>nd</sup> the fifth-grade class, taught by **Amarnath Puttur** and **Sridevi Akkala** presented the **Legend of Mahiṣāsura-mardini**, illustrating the story of how Goddess *Durgā* defeated the buffalo demon, *Mahiṣāsura*. The play portrayed the demon king *Mahiṣāsura*'s powerful boon, and how he used it to conquer the heavens, and was subsequently defeated at the hands of Mother *Durgā*.



Mother *Durgā* personifies that aspect of *Śaktī* which destroys our negative tendencies. The process of trying to control our senses is akin to a war for the mind, which resists all attempts at control. So, the stories in the *purāṇas* symbolically depict *Devī* in the form of *Durgā*, as waging war and destroying the *asura*-s.

Aditi Puttur enhanced the presentation with keyboard music.





Immediately following Mother *Durgā's* victory, everyone joined in singing the *Mahiṣāsura-mardinī* led by Chinmaya Swaranjali, and dancing together around Mother *Durgā*. It was a splendid celebration with lively atmosphere and true "ātmaranjan".

-Solana Garcia

### ***Bhagavad-Gītā* Chanting during Navarātrī**



At Chinmaya Mission San Diego, the *Navarātrī* celebrations were initiated with the chanting of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* over the nine nights. Towards the end of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as *Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa* spoke about the true spirit of *saṁnyāsa* to *Arjuna*, who now had enough clarity to understand it, as against in the second chapter where *Arjuna* had, in vain, tried to use *Samnyāsa* as a convenient escape route from his Dharma - the wheel had come full circle. What lesson could be learnt

here! Don't we, like Arjuna, constantly run away from distasteful tasks, be it a child avoiding her homework or a manager putting of a conversation with a difficult employee? But true freedom from the burden of work lies not in sidestepping it, but in confronting it with courage, clarity, patience, and a spirit of surrender to the Lord.

Like a true Guru who gives the disciple all he has, but does not, force the disciple to accept anything, Kṛṣṇa, after giving Arjuna this Supreme Knowledge, tells him “*yathechhasi tathā kuru*” - now do as you please. Kṛṣṇa also assures Arjuna that he is unconditionally dear to Him “*priyo'si me*”, and, in the famous verse “*sarva dharmān parityajya...*,” Kṛṣṇa explicitly states that there is no reason to fear at the moment of surrender; He will free Arjuna from all sins. Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa represent Nara *and* Nārāyaṇa, and thus *Kṛṣṇa's* message to Arjuna is His message to us all. What a blessing it is to know that we are ever living in *Bhagavān's* love! And, when we have entangled the string of our life so badly that it is impossible for us to straighten it out, we have only to surrender everything at His feet, and He, like a loving parent, will fix the mess and free us from the bonds of our Karma. How can one resist the longing to worship and serve such a God? Of course, Arjuna, his confusion and despair vanquished, declares to Kṛṣṇa with resolve and joy, “*karishye vacanam tava*” - I will do as you have said. With the conclusion of the 18th chapter and re-reading the very first verse of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, where Dhṛtharāṣṭra asks Sañjaya what had happened in Kurukshetra, it was quite astounding to see how far Arjuna had come. What an incredible transformation had taken place, from the grief-stricken escapist of Chapter 1 to the magnificent, resplendent instrument of *Bhagavān's* work in Chapter 18! Indeed, the chanting of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* was truly a captivating and awe-inspiring experience, leaving one with a strong urge to walk every step of Arjuna's journey, to learn in full what Arjuna had learnt.

- Akshatha Silas

## Sarasvatī pūjā

The Sunday Assembly on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> was an auspicious day of *Sarasvatī pūjā* at *Chinmaya Jyoti*. The whole *āśrama* was beautifully decorated with flowers, *rangoli*, and *diyā-s*. All the children, dressed in Indian attire, were seated on evenly laid out sheets in several rows in the courtyard.

Lakshmi aunty initiated the *Sarasvatī pūjā* and all the children followed her in a very coordinated way, with the *pūjā* plates decorated with flower petals, a cup of *akṣata* and a picture of Goddess *Sarasvatī*.

With the powerful *mantra-s* in the background, the entire ashram depicted a serene atmosphere - perfectly capturing the symbolism of purity and knowledge. What a beautiful, simple and pure way of expressing devotion to Mother *Sarasvatī*!





When it came time to offer the 108 names, the children repeated after Lakshmi Aunty and put a grain of akṣata or a flower petal in front of their own small *Sarasvatī* picture with each name. The meaning of the names flashing through the mind, made it apparent that Devi *Sarasvatī* was present all around, not just in the *mūrti*. She was in the books that were read, in the musical instruments that were played. She Herself was the voice of the mantras that were chanted. She was the beauty of the ashram and its decorations, the compassion in the hearts of the *sevaks* and *sevikas*. She was the rock of the Supreme Knowledge, the Eternal Truth on which all of samsara is projected. The final chant of “*Brahma-Vishnu Śivātmikayai Namah*” revealed that *Devī Sarasvatī* fulfills the role of all three: She creates the seeker in the student, sustains him with the practices of *sādhana* and *svādhyāya*, and finally comes to annihilate the ego and lead him into Pure Bliss.



As offerings to the Goddesses, Chinmaya Dhvani and other Mission members sang bhajans and songs, followed by **Meenal Chakradeo's** graceful Kathak dance offering to Goddess *Sarasvatī*. Thereafter, the tenth grade Balavihar class gave a presentation on the symbolism of *Navarātrī*. At one level, *Navarātrī* signifies the progress of a spiritual aspirant. During this spiritual journey, one must pass three stages personified by Goddess *Durgā* who removes all the negative tendencies, Goddess *Lakṣmī* who bestows spiritual wealth with divine

qualities and Goddess *Sarasvatī* who illumines the Supreme Truth.

The festive mood was enhanced by tabla “*upcārā*” demonstrated by students of **Amarnath Puttur**. Adding onto all that, the twelfth-grade Bharatanatyam students **Solana Garcia** and **Ananya Krishnan** performed a dance honoring the Goddess.





Before concluding the *pūjā*, Lakshmi Aunty formally introduced all the BalaVihar teachers from each grade, who were all dressed in white.

- **Abhijeet, Akshatha and Meghana**



### ***Bhajan Sandhyā on Devī***

A *Bhajan Sandhyā* on October 9<sup>th</sup> featured songs on *Devī* to celebrate the divine power of the *Śakti*. After an invocation prayer to Lord *Gaṇeśa*, various bhajans including many all-time favorites were offered to the Divine Mother. The joyous night ended with “*jai ambe jagadambe*” bhajan, which was performed with great enthusiasm. The whole room reverberated with the good vibrations as everyone sang together.

*Bhajan Sandhyā-s* are a great way to bring the CMSD family together to sing the glories of the Supreme.

-Aditi Puttur



## Vijayadasami and Vidyārambha

The *vidyārambha* or ceremonious beginning was held on October 11<sup>th</sup> in Pranava Nilayam. Many new and current students enrolled in *tabla*, *Chinmaya Dhvani*, CMSD band, *Samskr̥ta Vihar*, *Vedic Chanting* and *Vedanta Study groups* attended the ceremony. All the students and teachers performed the *ārati* to Śrī *Jyoti Vināyaka*, Goddess *Sarasvatī* and *Pujya Gurudev* invoking their blessings. The new students were eager to be initiated on this auspicious day and receive their introductory lessons.



## Sundarakāṇḍa pāṛāyaṇa

This month's *Sundarakāṇḍa pāṛāyaṇa* was truly special because it was during *Navarātrī*. Just by listening to the *Pāṛāyaṇa* and clapping along with others, there was a very powerful and positive energy reverberating throughout the room. The chanting of *Sundarakāṇḍa* was followed by *Hanuman Chalisa* and two more chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and a closure by evening *ārati*. Overall the *Sundarakāṇḍa pāṛāyaṇa* was very uplifting.

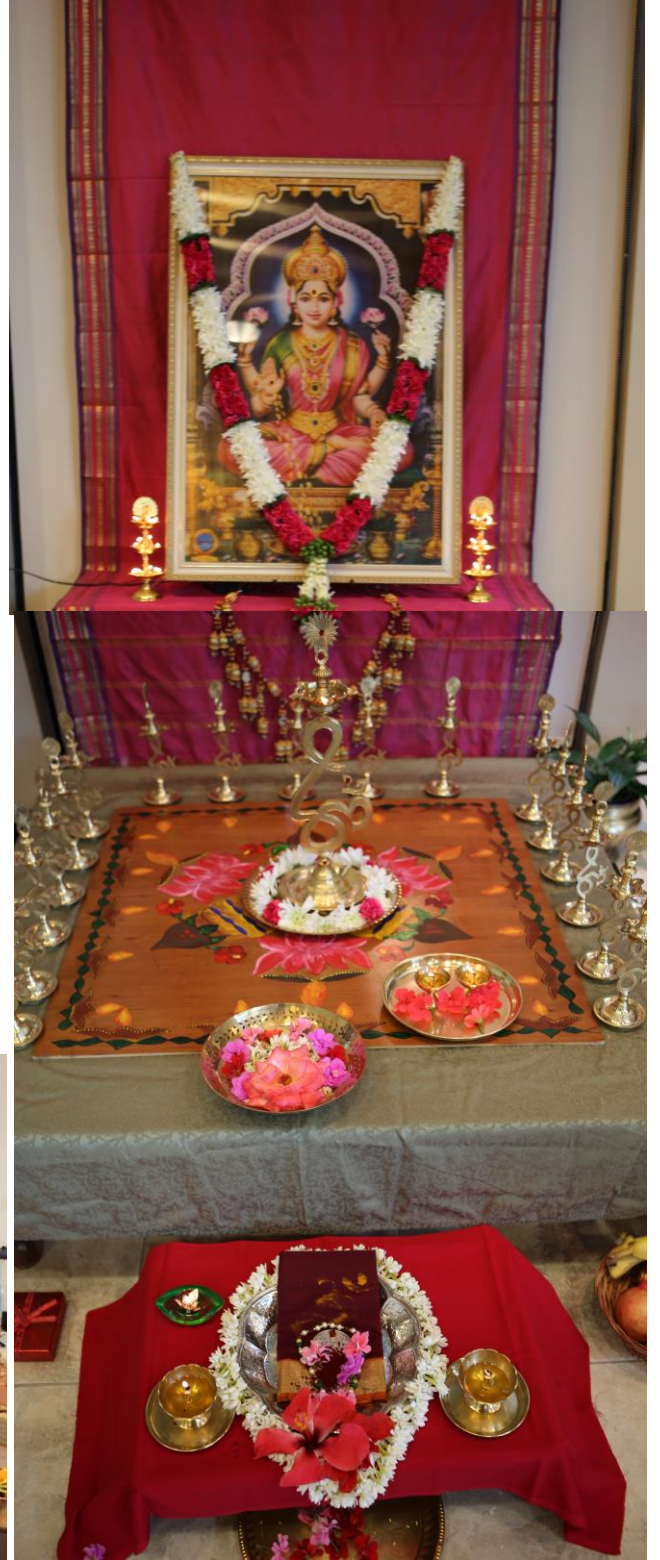
-Sree Koya

## *Dīpāvalī* celebrations at *Chinmaya Jyoti*

On October 30<sup>th</sup> 2016, *Dīpāvalī* was celebrated at Chinmaya Mission San Diego with great pomp and splendor. The joyous occasion occurred on Sunday morning, coinciding with the Sunday Bala Vihar session.

The auspicious morning began with invocation of *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka*, followed by offering of flowers at the holy *pādukā*-s of Puḡya Gurudev along with the chanting of Gurudev's *āṣṭōttaraśatanāmāvaliḥ*. This was followed by *Lakṣmī Pūjā* conducted by Lakshmi Auntie, accompanied by Sukumar Uncle, Maya Sukumar, and three Yajaman families - Parikh family, Ramanathan-Garcia family and Agarwal family.

*Śrī Mahā Lakṣmī Ṣhoḍaśhākṣari Pūjā* was performed wherein *Śrī sūkta* was chanted and *kumkum* was offered while singing the 108 names of *Srī Mahā Lakṣmī* Devī. Flowers and *akṣata* were offered while reciting the *aṅga pūjā* worshipping every limb of the Divine consort of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*. All Bala Vihar children participated by performing *Lakṣmī pūjā* themselves, while being accompanied by their parents.





Seventh grade students enacted the play of *Kṛṣṇa* defeating *Narakāsura* to release 16,000 maidens and presented the symbolism of self-control to take home from this story.



Thereafter, the ninth graders presented the symbolism of *Dīpāvalī*, explaining the rightful approach to wealth where one must focus on *Ādhyātmika* wealth for lasting happiness and not the temporary happiness of *bhautika* wealth of material pleasures.

The morning of celebration was interspersed with mellifluous songs offered by the CMSD *Swaranjali* choir – starting with the joyous “*Dīpāvalī Pandigai Kondādalām*” and followed by several songs such as “*Mahā Lakṣmī Jagannmātā*” and Agastya Muni’s composition “*Jaya Devī Jaya Devī Jaya Mātah Kamale*”. There was also a special musical offering of “*Bhūloka Kumārī*” a composition of Mahakavi Bharathiyar, by **Vasudha Sastry**, her sister and father. The celebration culminated with everyone performing *Rāsa Garbā* accompanied by the singing of *Dīpa jale*, adding a festive ambience.

A festive lunch followed that consisted of delicious home cooked items from across India. There were favorite sweets and savories for children and adults alike. In keeping with the CMSD tradition, lunch was served by continuing member families to new member families to warmly welcome them into the CMSD family. CMSD members share their experiences from the *Dīpāvalī* celebrations.



“.... Much like the opening *Dīpāvalī* song that described celebration across the country, our celebration encapsulated many traditions from all over India - ....”

- Sumathi Iyengar

“.. Following the *pūjā* was a student presentation on *Narakāsura* and a special video appearance by *Pujya Gurudev* on the meaning of *Dīpāvalī*. It was a reminder to all, of the significance behind the celebration of good over evil, not just symbolically with lights and stories, but also in our individual mind. Each student was also presented a 10 Rupees commemorative coin with *Pujya Gurudev’s* silhouette. This was very special for our students, and we thank Lakshmi Auntie and Sukumar Uncle for this thoughtful gift. The *Dīpāvalī* celebration was topped off with a delicious lunch enjoyed by all”

- **Faith Prasad**

“The *Dīpāvalī* celebrations at our CMSD facility were a wonderful and blissful experience. Children and adults alike immersed themselves in performing the Lakshmi *Pūjā*. We were then enthralled by songs offered by the CMSD Swaranjali choir as well as energetic Ras Garba to culminate the auspicious morning. The younger kids were definitely positively influenced by hearing about the significance of *Dīpāvalī* shared by the 9th graders”

- **Priya Venkitaraman**

“Celebrating *Dīpāvalī* at the Chinmaya Jyoti Ashram was a blessed experience for me and my family. Celebrating one of our most important festivals, *Dīpāvalī*, with the community was a truly special way to welcome the New Year.”

- **Avinash**

## Swamini Vimalananda-ji's visit to San Diego

This November, CMSD was blessed to host Swamini Vimalananda, who is presently in charge of Chinmaya Mission Coimbatore. Swamini amma conducted a series of lectures on three topics and all were well-attended. The members share their experience:

### “Resolving Conflicts & Confusions”- by Swamini Vimalananda

This November, we had the unique opportunity to hear **Swamini Vimalananda** speak on Resolving Conflicts & Confusions. It was a fun-filled, interactive and eloquent three-day lecture focused on dispelling our many conflicts, confusions, and contradictions. Swaminiji explained that conflicts and confusions were inherent in life, they were situations not problems; that could not be resolved by running away, or trying to change circumstances outside. Instead, changing ourselves to be better equipped to face the situation, was the key. She elaborated that in the process of dealing with conflicts and confusions, forgiveness may be required either for others or for one's own self.

Swaminiji dispensed very simple advice for forgiveness. Forgiving, she said came in five steps: accepting the mistake totally, fully understanding the consequences, regretting deeply, apologizing sincerely, and compensating.

With her many years of experience, she also wanted to clear a few of the most common confusions that exist among many Hindus. With simple questions for the audience and lots of humor, she made clear that Hindus worship one God in many forms, they worship the ideals behind the idols, and how the caste system was meant to help individuals best use their abilities.



Over the three days of her talks, Swamini Vimalananda explained many aspects of Hinduism, reminded us who the true self was and that when we focused inward to our deepest levels all our problems dissolve. Truly pearls of wisdom and practical advice for daily application. Thank you Amma!

**-Solana Garcia & Faith Prasad**

## Harmony in Relationships

As the world grows more polarized, **Swamini Vimalananda** spoke on a very essential topic, “**Harmony in Relationships**”, during her visit to CMSD, and we were fortunate enough to listen to her. Amma said, two essential facets in every relationship were giving and forgiving. She defined these most logically, with practical steps for their application. She prodded us to think, how any *sambandha* (relationship) based on *bandha* (bondage) could be harmonious.



The Give Get Matrix, was a great pictorial representation that helped the audience gauge where they were in their relationships and provided a goal of where they should be. She encouraged us to give, but not rule, give with love and respect and empower the beneficiary. She stressed the need to give, the giver had the upper hand, was independent.

Forgiveness, she said, was possible only where there was love. She defined revenge as stored hurt. Don't we want a physical wound to heal, why then would we nurture a mental hurt? Forgiveness was forgetting the hurt feeling, if not the situation and taking corrective action to avoid recurrence.



All of us, adults and children, listened intently. She had a beautiful and simple manner of presentation and drove the message in by involving all of us in the discussions.

Thank You Amma!

-Vasanthi Anireddy &  
Meera Mulchandani

## Happy Parenting

We had the blessed opportunity to attend a talk on "Happy Parenting" by **Swamini Vimalananda** during her visit to CMSD this year. It was a great delight to listen to her. Swaminiji emphasized the need for understanding roles and responsibilities associated with parenting at various stages of a child's life and provided instructions from our scriptures to do the same. She encouraged us to make a conscious effort towards building a solid support system for the child, with focus on their values, morals and righteousness.

Swaminiji explained, a parent was like a potter who used inward and outward pressure of both hands to give shape and stability to the pot. Likewise, she emphasized parents had to use the inner hand of love for the child to expand/grow and outer hand of discipline to teach them the constraints. It was their duty to provide children with all the good *samskāra-s* essential for their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual growth. She lovingly pointed out that today we have shifted our focus from living a family centered life to living a child centered life instead, presenting things to our children on a golden platter, thus not empowering them to lead healthy fulfilled lives. She urged we teach our children to take responsibility for their own actions, teach them that we reap what we sow and we shape our destiny with our attitudes, thoughts and actions.



She stressed, we needed to teach them that whatever is mine is a share of everyone else's, and it was their duty to share and give back to the community and to live in harmony with creation. She pointed out that we needed to appreciate goodness more than the smartness as the super structure of greatness lies on the firm foundation of goodness. Children learn best by examples, she said. Therefore, parents had to be role models and demonstrate higher values in daily life. She advised parents to place more emphasis on the things that they did to improve the life of others rather than limiting conversations to their well-being.

Amma said, that it was our responsibility as parents to instill the higher thoughts/values right from childhood so that they set higher goals for themselves and think big right from an early age. Swaminiji emphasized that parents had to teach our culture to their children, especially the language to keep them grounded and benefit from our rich heritage. We thank Amma for imparting such great advice empowering us to be better architects of our children's futures.

- **Bindu Gupta & Srajan Raghuvanshi**

## Gītā Jayanti and Śrī Tapovana Jayanti

Lord Kṛṣṇa declares in the *Bhagavad Gītā* that teaching, studying chanting and even mere listening to the *Bhagavad Gītā* brings great merit to oneself and brings the individual closer to HIM. On December 10, CMSD celebrated *Tapovana Jayanti* and *Gītā Jayanti*.

**Jay Parikh** shares his experience:

“The event started with a *pūjā* for *Tapovana Jayanti* and it was heartwarming to partake in this *pūjā* of my Guru’s Guru. I was filled with a sense of gratitude Tapovana maharaj was Pujya Gurudev’s Guru, and being a part of an event as momentous as this made me realize that so many people like me have been touched by Tapovana maharaj through Pujya Gurudev and Chinmaya Mission.

Following the *pūjā* of Tapovana maharaj, we performed the *pūjā* of the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* as well as chanted the 18 chapters. The *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* is a text that teaches one the ultimate truth and is beloved to our Pujya Gurudev. Chanting the 700 beautiful verses for Gita Jayanti made me feel very peaceful and it seemed as if we all got a little closer to Gurudev. Throughout the chanting I was reminded of the meaning of different verses that I have been taught through many lectures. Being able to decipher a few of the Sanskrit words I was taught at YEP, also made the experience much more memorable because it was as if the knowledge that has been imparted to me is taking root. One thing I found interesting was that we ended the chanting by saying the first verse again to symbolize that our study of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is not over and continues for the rest of our life.

The event ended with everyone reciting the Tapovana Shatkam 3 times. As we all chanted, the atmosphere in the room was of oneness and it was a new and great experience for me. “



## Bala Vihar Corner

Bala Vihar children share their reflections on the “**Food for thought given by Pujya Gurudev**” on Sunday mornings at the Assembly.

### **"Love is not love if it does not serve and sacrifice":**

When I hear this quote, I think of when *Bharata* served his country and his brother by placing Lord *Ramā's* *pādukā-s* on the throne and sacrificed the throne out of love for his brother. To me, serving means doing things to make other people's life better and sacrificing means giving up your ego or material pleasures or time to make someone else happy.

- Ruhi Desai, Grade 7

### **"Tomorrow we will be what we are now, plus what and how we faced life's challenges today. This is the law of cosmic justice":**

The first part of this quote is shown in Guruji's book “**The Game of Life**”. He says that if we sow a seed, we must put in time and effort for it to grow efficiently into a beautiful flower or plant. In the other part of the quote, I learned that true success will only come through effort. All in all, time and effort is required for true success.

- Prerana Kelkar, Grade 8

### **“The day that we take up the policy of giving love rather than demanding it, that day we will have rewritten our entire future destiny”:**

If we demand others to serve and sacrifice for us, then we cannot benefit because we are forcing someone to love us without returning it, so that person's love will not be true, as they'll be unhappy. However, if we choose to give love instead, then we will be happier, as happiness is a trait of love. If we are happier, we tend to be better people. If we are a better person today, then that will affect how we are in the future, thus rewriting our entire future destiny.

- Omkaar Kulkarni, Grade 8



## CMSD in the community

### Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

A group of CMSD *Sevak*-s and *Sevika*-s accompanied Lakshmi Auntie to the 2016 Thanksgiving Meet organized by the Poway Interfaith Team. The event was held on November 16th, 2016 at the Temple Adat Shalom on Pomerado Road, Poway. It was a wonderful experience to meet and celebrate the spirit of Thanksgiving with members from several other faiths - Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i, Christian and Sikh. Lakshmi Auntie shared some thoughts on the significance of Thanksgiving as represented in the Hindu culture following which our own Chinmaya *Swaranjali* Choir presented a song praying for peace and calm in the world.

It was an enlightening experience to be in the company of like-minded people from other faiths and an honor to represent CMSD at the event. **-Ashwin Mohan**



### Food Seva at the Interfaith Shelter

On December 17 2016, CMSD members participated in a service event for the residents of the Interfaith Community Services homeless shelter in Escondido.

The program strives to connect people with the necessary resources to reverse homelessness and is currently home to approximately 30 individuals. Parents of the high school children prepared a homemade Indian meal for the residents. The students went to the cafeteria at the shelter and served them dinner, thus beginning their holidays by giving back to the community.

**-Dheeraj  
Navani,  
CHYK  
Mentor**



## CMSD Adult Members speak

On Sunday mornings for the past few months, CMSD adult members were taught the essence of **Mahabharata in preparation for the study of Srimad Bhagavad Gita.**

The Mahabharata story in simple and very easy to understand language by Lakshmi Aunty gave me clarity of all the events in sequence and characters involved that led to the great war. This allowed me to relate to the Shlokas in the Bhagavad Gita in a much better way.

**-Parag Kelkar**

Lakshmi's synopsis of the Mahabharata has set the stage perfectly for the study of the Bhagavad Gita. She made this epic with its complex web of characters and stories within stories simple and understandable and gave us key learning points. I am inspired to read the Mahabharata.

**-Bhuvana Ramanathan**

The transformation of Arjuna and the gift of the Gita to guide our own inner transformation – this is what comes to my mind as the essence of Mahabharata.

**-Lalitha Kumar**

Mahabharata, in a nutshell, has brought a much deeper meaning and answered some of the myriad questions in my mind without having to ask them

**-Anu Rajasekaran**

Mahabharata: the story of all stories, the story of “*Yato Dharma Tato Jaya*”. It was wonderful to hear the story narrated by Lakshmi highlighting the key elements of righteousness.

**-Radhachandran**

Mahabharata- The story of our life.

**-Minesh Babla**



*Be tender towards the fault of others;  
be strict towards your own.*

**-Swami Tejomayananda**

