

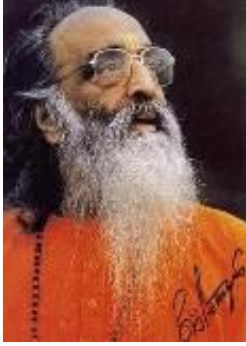


Chinmaya Pradipika

CMSD Quarterly Newsletter



October 2014, No. 12



The Master Speaks:

If you want to take up sincere Sadhana, you will have to redirect your life's flow. Hence the first thing to be renounced is the "blind following" of the patterns of time. Stop living blindly a stamped-blueprint of life.

Swami Chinmayananda

In this issue of *Chinmaya Pradīpikā*

The special feature of this issue is the month-long Bala Vihar summer camp – “**We are going OM!**” at *Chinmaya Jyoti* by Smt. Lakshmi Sukumar assisted by many CMSD sevika-s and sevaka-s.

Each week concluded with a special puja with the month-long camp ending on August 3- **the 21st Mahāsamādhi Ārādhana Day of Pujya Gurudev-** in San Diego.

Also included in the issue are the beginning of the 14th year of Bala Vihar in San Diego with Back to BV Nights for Parents, and *Navarātrī* celebrations which included the *Gītā Jñāna Yajña* by Swamini Gangananda.

Reports from our Study group *sādhaka-s* on Self-Unfoldment are also portrayed. Read about all this and more in this issue.

IN THIS ISSUE

11 th Mahāsamādhi Ārādhana Day	1
CMSD Book Fair	4
Eleventh Summer Youth Camp	5
Samskrta Vihar	13
CMSD on-going events	15
<i>Navarātrī</i> / <i>Gītā Jñāna Yajña</i>	15
BV Students' corner	17
Back to Bala Vihar nights	19
CMSD-how I see it now	20
CMSD-an oasis	21
Study group <i>sādhaka</i> -s report	22
UCSD-CORD at Siruvani	26
CMSD Parents express	27

August 3, 2014 - the 21st Chinmaya Mahāsamādhi Ārādhana Day





Chinmaya Ārādhana day was observed with a Pādukā pūjā by members of CMSD with great śraddhā. All dressed in traditional kerala style and a traditional Kerala meal was prepared for *naivedyam* with great care by our own *sevika* **Sangita Varrier** along with other *sevika*-s. The highlight of the evening was the *upacāra* by our summer camp children who presented the glories of Gurudev from some of the 108 names, followed by the 18-ities song. Many of our members danced in gratitude to the tune of “O Cinmaya terā darśana pāyā.....hama saphala ho gaye..”



“San Diego is a very important place for CM devotees worldwide as our beloved Pujya Gurudev left his *Jyoti* here twenty one years ago on Aug 3, 1993 at 5.45 PM. To honor his work and life, and for the benefit of the community, *Chinmaya Jyoti* was built in Poway in the county of San Diego.



This year's event was the first *Mahāsamādhi* day celebrated at our very own ashram. Pujya Gurudev's *Pādukā-s* were brought into the Ashram in a grand manner led by the CMSD band. Sukumar-ji held the *Pādukā-s* on his turbaned head and a decorative umbrella was held over them. At 5:45 PM sharp, the main *Jyoti* was lit to mark the moment of His *Mahāsamādhi*.

Following this, 108 *jyoti-s* with Gurudev's OM signature were lit by the *sevikā-s* dressed in Kerala sarees and it was a very profound experience. *Guru Pādukā pūjā* was performed with the chanting of the *aṣṭottara nāmāvali*. The celebration culminated with a sumptuous *mahā prasādam*, prepared by all the *sevikā-s*.

I personally feel very blessed to be a part of CMSD and to me San Diego is a sacred land. I have participated in many *Mahāsamādhi pūjā -s* in various cities in US but the feeling I get at Chinmaya Jyoti is like none other. Lakshmi and Sukumarji's selfless service to Pujya Gurudev is commendable.

Om Śrī Chinmaya Sadgurave Namaḥ.”

- Asha Dayana

CMSD Book Fair - August 2-3

A grand book fair was held over the weekend of August 2-3 as part of CMSD celebrations in memory of Pujya Gurudev's *Mahāsamādhi*. Over 150 new publications, DVD's and CD's were added to the already sizeable CMSD collections for the benefit of members and the general public by our sevak, **Radhachandran Padmanabhan**.



Video Presentations-August 2

Chinmaya Udaya-Life of Pujya Gurudev / Pujya Gurudev's Mahāsamādhi -San Diego to Sidhabari

On Saturday afternoon, there was a screening of "**Chinmaya Udaya**", a documentary on Pujya Gurudev, produced by CM Washington DC under the guidance of Swami Dheerananda. The children and adults in the film put on a riveting enactment of the life of Pujya Gurudev and his interactions with Swami Tapovanam and Swami Sivananda.




This was followed by a somber video of Pujya Gurudev's last journey 21 years ago, after the arrival of his body in New Delhi and the many *puja*-s and rituals leading to the internment at his final *samādhi sthala* in Sidhabari.

Children and adults alike got a rare peep into our past from these videos that transported all present to a more grateful and reverential attitude for the Chinmaya *Mahāsamādhi Ārāghanā pūjā* on August 3.


- **Rajasekar Vaidyanathan**

CMSD 11th annual Youth Camp - "We are going OM" July 7 - August 3


This year the Chinmaya Summer Youth Camp was conducted over four weeks, with the overall theme of "We Are Going OM". Each camp/week had a different topic and each camp week ended with a special *pūjā* and the four-week camp culminated in the *Mahāsamādhi Ārādhana* Day on August 3, 2014.




Mother, Mother Everywhere!




Chinmaya Mission San Diego
Eleventh Annual Youth Camp
Week 1 - July 7-12, 2014
Chinmaya Jyoti
Poway, California



Rāma, the Ideal Child!




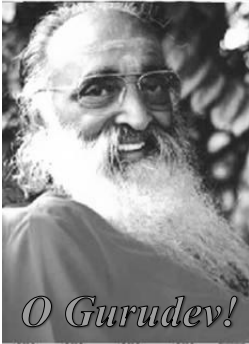
Chinmaya Mission San Diego
Eleventh Annual Youth Camp
Week 2 - July 14-19, 2014
Chinmaya Jyoti
Poway, California



**SAINTS
&
SAINTLINESS**

*Bring out the hidden Saint
in you!*

Chinmaya Mission San Diego
Eleventh Annual Youth Camp
Week 3 - July 21-26, 2014
Chinmaya Jyoti
Poway, California

O Gurudev!

Chinmaya Mission San Diego
Eleventh Annual Youth Camp
Week 4 - July 28-August 3, 2014
Chinmaya Jyoti
Poway, California

Each week, campers learned stories, *stotram-s*, *mantra-s*, *bhajan-s* and made handicraft creations reflective of each week's theme. As part of the learning experience, children were also introduced to good cooking practices. The students participated in preparing the salads. Food was freshly cooked and served, lovingly, by the camps' *sevika-s* and mothers. The idea that each individual is part of the cosmic order was introduced in a fun way by asking the children to dress according to the color of the day and eat the appropriate lentils of the day, for example, on Wednesdays it was Bhel Puri with green mung dal. They also learnt to recycle and help when necessary. Children partook in gardening activities with Swaroopa Ji, planting Methi and sunflower seeds, watering them and watch them grow over the four weeks of camp.

The campers presented what they learned during the camp on the final day, which was a delight to watch. Their heartwarming messages were filled with devotion and wisdom. Their presentation included chanting, singing, acting, interviews followed by a demonstration of *Sūrya Namaskāra*. Every child received a maroon camp shirt with the camp theme "We Are Going OM" imprinted on it.

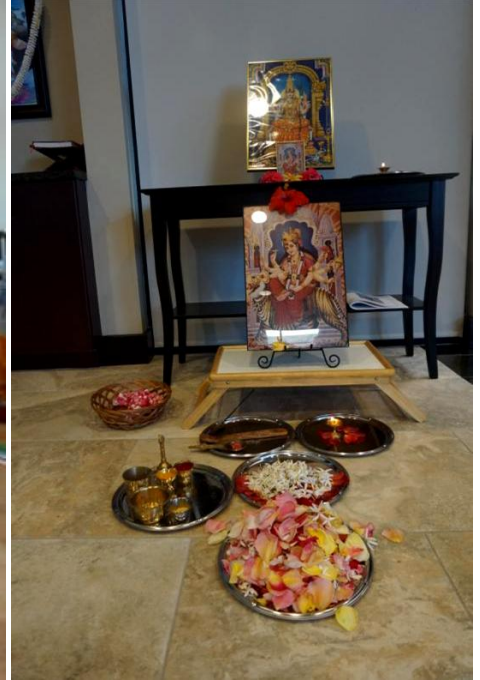
Throughout the camp, in learning and through their activities, it can be said, the children learned about the 18 -ities - "to develop in their personality, but cannot be attained in the university."

Week 1- "Mother, Mother Everywhere!"

The three aspects or *Śakti* of the Divine Mother was reinforced in the lessons and daily activities. Even during their walks the children observed the Divine Mother in Her forms of Creation, Sustenance and Destruction. They learnt several verses of the *Mahiṣāsūramardini stotram*. They made their own posters expressing in their observations of the *Durgā* power, *Lakṣmī* power and *Sarasvatī* power. On Friday, the day of *Devī*, children participated in the 16-step *pūjā* of Mother *Durgā* using their *pūjā* plates and *Devī* pictures in frames decorated by them.

The concluding day of first week's camp fell on the auspicious day of *Guru Pūrṇimā*. Our beloved Lakshmi aunty invoked the *Guru Paramparā* by citing Veda Vyasa, Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Tapovan Maharaj, and our own Pujya Gurudev. She then led the chanting of 108 names of Pujya Gurudev during the *Guru Pādūkā pūjā*.





Week 2- “Rāma, the Ideal child”

The first lesson introduced was the importance of *tapas* by the parents in order to bring forth a divine child. Śrī Rāma’s qualities are friendliness, obedience, respect for parents and elders, fearlessness, punctuality, self-discipline, concentration, and control over the mind. All of these qualities were explained through the stories of Rāma’s childhood.

Arts and Crafts reinforced the stories and the lessons. One group of children worked on preparing the City of Ayodhyā and King Daśaratha’s Palace. The second group worked on clay figures. The third group prepared presentations on the values being taught. Students also made a bow and arrow with wooden arches and dowels meticulously cut by our sevak **Senthilkumar chelladurai**.

The older students got a chance to learn some cooking skills. The campers also played a game using the four pillars in the Ashram Courtyard. Each pillar represented the four key cities from the *Rāmāyaṇa*: Ayodhyā, Mithilā, Kishkindā, and Laṅkā.

The final presentation for Week 2 camp “**Quest-O-Rāma**” was done on Saturday, July 19th, immediately after *Hanumān pūjā* and *sundarakāṇḍa pāraṇa*.



Week 3 - "Saints and Saintliness – Bring out the hidden saint in you"

The lives of 18 saints were covered, starting with Andal from the south, and moving geographically north to Varkari saints from Maharashtra, then Mirabai, Tulasidasji and finally ending with Swami Sivananda and Swami Tapovanam. Inspirational stories were covered from the life of each saint. Children discovered that the common thread in the lives of saints was the exclusive devotion to God in and through all the hardships they faced. This was further impressed upon the minds of campers when they watched the episode of *Upanishad Ganga* on the life of Tulasidasji. Children made saints calendar and in their own words, wrote about each saint and colored pictures in the calendar. The concluding program followed a *pūjā* to Swami Tapovan Maharaj which was performed by each camper with the picture of Swamiji in the frame decorated by them as part of the camp projects.



Inspired by the young poet saint Andal, our young campers learnt to make flower garlands under the guidance of *sevikā*-s **Swaroop Kalva** and **Padma Bhat**, and proudly offered them to the deities in Pranava Nilayam.

Week 4- "O Gurudev!"

This session focused on Gurudev's 108 names, which were taught through his life's story. The kids also did fun activities. For example, Gurudev travelled throughout India in his early life and his journey was taught to the kids by them pointing out all of his destinations on an actual map of India. Another activity for the older kids included watching a video of Gurudev's United Nations Address in 1992, called "Planet in Crisis". Campers made posters on "Gurudev- the pride of *Bhārata*" and made *Pādukā*-s from flip-flops. They also played a board game called "Om Alone". This week culminated with Pujya Gurudev's *Mahāsamādhi* day. All the campers and their families and many Mission members got together in reverence to Pujya Gurudev.



Caturthī pūjā for *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka* was on the Thursday of the week. Campers watched **Saroj auntie** make *modakams* for *naivedyam* which was later relished by the children as *prasādam*.



The following are the observations of the camp *Sevikā*-s and CMSD parents:

Mamatha Puttur rejoices “ I would like to describe my daughter Aditi’s camp experience. "Mother, Mother everywhere", this theme is just right for a fourteen year old girl. It helped her in knowing the inner *Strī Śakti*. Supreme Knowledge is possible only through pure mind. The camp taught how one has to work on destroying the bad thoughts and negative tendencies, which will only lead to pure love within oneself like that of Divine Love. The camp taught the children how to respect everything as Mother, and helps them to face their day-to-day challenges. Aditi described to me she learned about three main forms of one Divine mother – they are the power (*Śakti*) in the world of creation, sustenance and destruction. I loved that she was able to understand the reasons and purpose of celebrating *Navarātrī* and *Vijaya Daśamī*. She enjoyed the beautiful stories, games and arts and crafts too. She especially loved learning *Sūrya Namaskāra*. Overall, she loved being in *Satsaṅga*. So, did I and Achintya.”

Sumathi Iyengar observed “ Every minute was utilized gainfully during the camp. While lunch was being mobilized by the Annalakshmis, children did *Sūrya Namaskāra* and stretching exercises. Lunch in itself was a holistic experience. Children learnt which lentils were for which day of the week, the correct ways of eating such as praying before meals, not touching serving spoons with eaten hands and to finish everything on their plate.”

In **Hema Pandya’s** words “Week 2 focused on all of the qualities of *Rāma* as a child. Those are Friendliness, Obedience, Respect for parents and elders, Fearlessness, Punctuality, Self-discipline, Concentration, and Control over the mind. All of these qualities were explained through the stories of *Rāma’s* childhood. What better way to learn these important values than through *Rāma’s* example! Week 4 ‘O Gurudev’, the camp ended on *Mahāsamādhi* day. It had special meaning since it reminded all of us about our Gurudev’s life and mission. These are the best things we can teach our children.”

Faith Prasad noticed “It was a very dynamic learning that involved all of our senses while fully engaging our minds. What a perfect way to learn and have fun!”

Nita Halker recalls her experience “I had the privilege of attending the last week of Bala Vihar youth camp this year along with my kids. As always, it was a great learning experience for me, getting to know the Bala Vihar kids up close and also learn different things along with them. Everything was done in a systematic way so as to instill the good values in our children. Our morning routine comprised of prayers, where we learned to chant the ‘*Kṛtajñatā Stotram*’ and ‘*Tapovana śatkam*’ Overall, it was a wonderful learning experience for me and I’m already looking forward to the next year’s camp.”

Smita Bhatia says “...In all the weeks, one aspect that stood out is the power of silence. We all observed silence during snack time in the morning. This period of quiet contemplation helped focus and renew energy and enthusiasm for later sessions.”

Suneeta Inguva expresses “... Being in all the four camps was a big transformation for my son Kapil. Sitting in the right posture, expressing himself and writing – it helped a lot towards all these aspects. He also started understanding the value of God and why we should worship God. Particular impact on him was in the 4th week where the camp focused on Gurudev. Kapil wrote 4 pages in his camp book during this week. ... Also the Stotrams, and Pledge, the Aratis – he knows everything now. It was so much fun.”

Beena Senthil says “.... I like my kids to attend the summer camp every year. At the camp they are not only exposed to the good culture, but it is also the food. They get everything when they come to camp. It’s an all round experience.

Rajesh Agarwal reminisces “I was fortunate to be at Chinmaya Jyoti on the auspicious days of *Guru Purnimā* and our monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa pārayāṇa*. These days also coincided with the concluding days for the weekly Bala Vihar camps. It was the first time these camps were held at our own *Chinmaya Jyoti*, and there were four week-long camps as opposed to the one week camps we have had for the past nine years.

...What impressed me the most at the first week’s presentation was kids bringing out the divinity in simple things that we use daily, but never give much thought to. They beautifully articulated the noble qualities of “**Pencil Mātā ji**” and what we can learn from them.

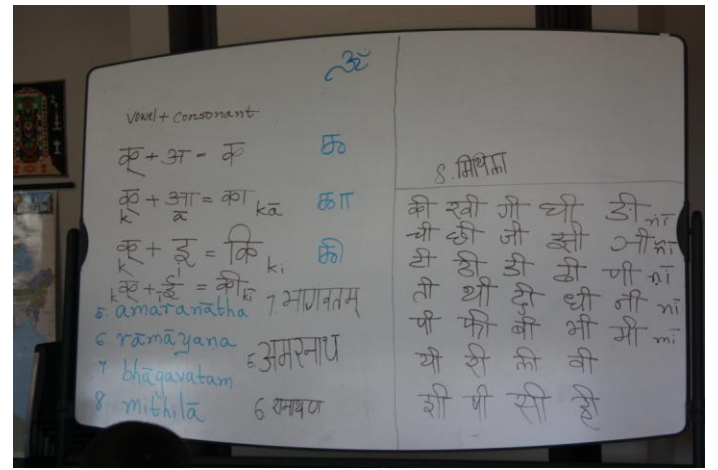
... The concluding day of the second week’s camp coincided with our monthly recitation of *Sundarakāṇḍa* from *Śrī Rāma Caritamānasa*. Kids’ enthusiasm was reflected in their action-filled singing of *Hanumān Cālīsā* and *Vīra Māruti*. Following the *pūjā* ceremonies, campers made a brief presentation reflecting that week’s theme in very creative ways. Their presentations left me with an impression that during their week-long training, our campers (from Preschoolers to High Schoolers) were engaged in varied creative activities that brought out the importance of teamwork and how to learn from each other’s strengths.

The second week’s presentation included a miniature model on the city of Ayodhya which kids built as a team. Kids’ creativity in building the model was very evident in the blend of age-old handicraft techniques using clay-molding with new-age LEGO bricks. Their attention to minute details was very impressive.

Both evenings, our Pranava Nilyam was at full capacity with enthusiastic Bala Vihar campers, their parents, friends and extended family members. After the program, children, guests, parents, and volunteers feasted on a delicious pot-luck dinner at our ashram’s outdoor dining venue with nice cool breeze blowing.”

Sanskṛta Vihar

Seventeen campers also attended the Sanskṛta Vihar camp offered on four Saturdays during the month-long Summer camp.



bhāṣāsu mukhyā madhurā divyā girvāṇabhārati |

That is how the **Saṁskṛta Vihāra camp** started every saturday morning. It meant "Among the languages, foremost, sweet and divine is the speech of the Gods". And that is what *saṁskṛtam* is. Over the course of four saturdays, each a 3 hours session, we learned all the 15 *svarāḥ* (vowels), 33 *vyañjanāni* (pure consonants). We also learnt how to join the consonants and vowels to make sounds (*svarayukta vyañjanāni*) and eventually to write simple words! In just four weeks, we were able to learn so much!



What I like the best about this camp is its logical approach, all the fun games and exercises we do, and the fact that these classes have inspired me to join the Saturday morning Vedic Chanting group. The CMSD **Saṁskṛta Vihāra** is a great opportunity to learn the **Devā bhāṣā** in a practical and simple way; I encourage everyone to join and reap all the benefits that it has given me!

- Aditi Puttur, Grade 9



CMSD On-Going Events

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

July 2014 –CMSD Camp families

August 2014 – Mamatha and Amarnath Puttur

September 2014 –Anila and Raj Parikh



Gaṇeśa Caturthī Celebrations- August 29

A *ṣodaśopacāra puṇjā* was performed to Lord *Śrī Jyoti Vināyaka* on the occasion of *Gaṇeśa caturthī*, a year after the grand opening of the ashram. 108 *modakams* were offered in *naivedya*. Many of our members participated and partook of the blessings of the Lord on this auspicious day.

Navarātrī Celebrations- September 25- October 3

Gītā Jñāna Yajña - September 24-30

Navarātrī was celebrated at CMSD the Chinmaya way with the chanting of two chapters of *Bhagavad Gītā* on each of the nine nights. Additionally a *Gītā Jñāna Yajña* was conducted by Swamini Gangananga, Acharya, Chinmaya Mission Mumbai.



Swamini Amma expounded the **ninth chapter of the *Gītā*** in the evenings and discussed the *Mahāvākya -Tattvamasi-* in the text *Vākya Vṛtti* by Adi Shankaracarya during the morning sessions. *Bhiksha* offerings were made respectfully by our members throughout her stay in San Diego.

Navarātrī Presentation –Sept. 28

As part of the Bala Vihar education, the students in 5th grade led by teachers Amarnath Puttur and Indu Manickam beautifully enacted the legend of *Mahiṣāsūramardini* played by **Shrina Patel** following which the entire congregation chanted the *Mahiṣāsūramardini Stotram* in honor of Mother *Durgā*.



BV Students' corner

Our young poets express their learning about the Divine mother and Puja Gurudev during the summer camp:

Sarasvati sits on a lotus and helps us focus.
Dressed in white is Sarasvati, she is the jnana sakti.
Lakshmi is dressed in red, when I pray to her I won't
have any dread.
Lakshmi helps Vishnu sustain all; she will help me if I
fall.
Durga Devi dresses in red, and Mahisha she did
behead.

-Ketki Chakradeo, Grade 5

----- Goddess Sarasvati -----

Clad in white,
What a pure sight,
The divine Vina she plays,
Vedas held tight,
Showering us with Light,
Teaching us knowledge everyday.
Japa we must chant,
Forget this we can't,
Focus helps us understand and see.
Lotuses at her feet,
The goddess of speech,
We pray to you, O Mother Sarasvati!

----- Goddess Durga ----

O Destroyer of Mahishasura,
One with many arms.
Born from the gaze of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva
Please keep us from doing harm.
Durga Devi removes these tendencies,
The laziness in our mind,
Please clear the darkness, so we can see,
O Compassionate Mother, One so kind!

----- Goddess Lakshmi ----

She who gives us lots of wealth,
We must pray to her!
She who promises values and health,
Only worship can make these occur.
Lakshmi Devi teaches not to hoard,
But give to all in order to get.
So next time you have plenty assured,
Thank Lakshmi Devi, don't forget!

-Aditi Puttur, Grade 9

Durga devi has divine Shakti
I pray to her with unlimited Bhakti
Lakshmi is dressed in Red
I pray to her when I go to bed.

Sarasvati sits on a Lotus
and she helps us Focus
Sarasvati is the Goddess of knowledge
She will help me when I am in college

- Aniket Chakradeo, Grade 2

Our Gurudev

Gurudev was born
in Kerala state,
his worldwide work
made him great!

Gurudev taught us
purity and simplicity,
We follow his teachings
with sincerity!

Gurudev was loving,
caring and kind,
his prayers and teachings
will help my mind!

There are many stars
but only one sun,
There are many gurus,
but Gurudev is only one!

It's too bad that
camp is almost done,
Learning about Gurudev
is so much fun!

- Soham Kamat – Grade 2

Ode to Gurudev- by our summer campers

Swami Chinmayananda taught me that whatever happens we have to keep trying. For example, His heart was only working 20% for 3 years, but he worked hard because that did not stop him. He also taught me to listen carefully. Swami Tapovanam did not repeat any instructions. I was inspired by Gurudev because he could control his senses. Swami Tapovanam had a box of sweets, but Gurudev was not greedy for the sweets and offered them to river *gaṅgā*.

- **Aniket Chakradeo- Grade 2**

As we all know, our Gurudev was a great Master. He was VERY energetic, ever smiling 😊, and the founder of Bala Vihar. Today, I would like to express my gratitude to him and share what inspired me about him.

I am very happy that there is a Bala Vihar because if there wasn't, kids wouldn't know about our culture and Hinduism would soon fade away. Bala Vihar teaches me about many great people and qualities. It also gives me role models to look up to such as Our very own Guruji. There are always smiling sevaks and sevikas waiting to help us learn. I have been going to Bala Vihar ever since Pre-K, and I can't imagine life without Bala Vihar.

Our Gurudev was a very inspiring man. There are a lot of things about him that inspired me, and here are some of them. Gurudev worked hard till his last breath, which taught me to make the most of my time. He also was very courageous and wasn't shy about Hinduism. He wanted to spread spiritual knowledge across the whole world. He was also VERY punctual.

The thing that stood out to me the most was that he lived by the symbolism of the Indian flag. The orange stands for sacrificing the minor things for the significant things. Gurudev did this when he sacrificed family life and worldly desires for *sannyāsa*. The white stands for purity, which leads us to the truth. Gurudev's words were very pure and refined and had a lot of power. The green stands for relationship with Mother nature and not being cruel to any plant or animal. Gurudev was vegetarian and did not hurt or kill Mother Nature. And the blue Dharma Chakra stands for dynamism and righteousness. Gurudev was very active and Righteous. As you can see, Gurudev truly was the real son of India. Harih Om!

- **Ketki Chakradeo- Grade 5**

When Gurudev had learned from Swami Tapovanam he showed lots of gratitude and always listened. If I can listen and be grateful like Gurudev I will be a better student and person. I have heard all the great things Gurudev did and am inspired to do my best in life like the great soul, Swami Chinmayananda. If I meditate, do japa, and always do the right thing I will be a better person. Swami Chinmayananda was the pride of Bharat because of his sacrifice and courage, his purity and truth, his righteousness and dynamism, and his growth and connection with Mother Earth.

I have just finished fourth grade and have learned about superman, Hanumanji and his values. If I can follow his values I will be a positive person and will be generating positive energy making other people happy. All the values I am learning in Bala Vihar are the keys to living a happy and good life.....

- **Rohan Loomba- Grade 5**

..... In Chinmaya Mission, I get many ideas of what I can do better in my life. When Gurudev learnt from Swami Tapovanam, he showed lots of love and attention like a real teacher. In Chinmaya Mission, I feel good that I am learning lots of good things. I can be happier and nicer by following all the things I learn. I am thankful to Gurudev, Guruji and all my teachers.

- **Ria Loomba- Grade 2**

CMSD Bala Vihar – Back to Bala Vihar nights- Sept. 10-19

This year for the first time since its inception, CMSD held “Back to Bala Vihar nights” sessions for parents of all our Bala Vihar children by grade in their own classrooms over six evenings. Parents were given a clear presentation on the philosophy, motto and teaching approaches in Bala Vihar. Parents also had the opportunity to ask questions and benefit from the small group interaction by grade level with their child’s teachers.

Philosophy and Approach to Teaching

“Children are not vessels to be filled, but lamps to be lit.”- Pujya Gurudev

We seek to instill the moral values and high ideals in the children of Bala Vihar so that they may be the shining lights for our society. The subject matter itself is not about imparting a set of facts (though we do teach facts!) but rather about transforming the personality. This is about our long term life goal, and not the short term “test and result” system we have in academic institutions. The values instilled here about *how to live a good life* are not taught elsewhere, in Universities etc., but they are the key ingredient to success in *any* field: academic, social or personal.

The goal is to awaken the knowledge inherent in our children, to equip them with the tools to be independent thinkers. Children are taught *what* to think and *how* to think, in a loving, guided atmosphere. Through this, they become seekers of the Highest Truth, and develop their inherent abilities of discrimination and understanding. It is only by this route that they grow to be pillars of society, able to stand up for *Dharma* and the values espoused from the ancient *ṛṣi*-s to our modern day Masters.

The Bala Vihar Motto is “To help children learn with Fun; To delight like the Moon and shine like the Sun.”

The primary goal of Bala Vihar is to develop devotion to the Lord and the Guru, who is none other than the Lord himself. This is done by inculcating values and virtues from our *vaidic* culture to build a noble character.

Bala vihar classes from pre-K to grade 12 are organized to match the ability and maturity of the child to learn. Starting with divinizing daily habits through daily prayers and habits in PK and K, they are introduced to the different forms of God through stories of devotion, to understand that One Lord/Reality appears as many forms.

Basic human values are inculcated through ABCs of *Vedānta* in grade 1 and strengthened through devotion to Siva and Krishna in grade 2.

Grades 3 &4 discuss the values portrayed by the Lord in His human incarnation in the *Rāmāyaṇa* along with His perfect devotee *Hanumān*.

Stories of devotees and devotion from the *purāṇa*-s induce love for God in Grade 5 and lead to the fearlessness of devotees such as *Prahlāda*.

The need for a Guru as the guide to take us toward God is emphasized in grade 6, through the study of the Twenty-four preceptors in *Avadhūta Gītā*, wherein the necessity of the right vision of life and situations is driven home.

Transitioning from values to character analysis in *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, children, in grades 7 & 8 understand the strong personality traits to cultivate and the pitfalls to avoid in order to build a noble character.

Advanced topics of spirituality and fundamentals of Vedanta are introduced to the students in grades 9 through 12. They study Symbolism and Hindu Culture, Vision of *Bhagavad Gītā* and an introduction to 'Self-Unfoldment'.

Children in high school grades are given opportunities to do *sevā* through various service projects at the ashram and in the community. This is an essential part of the youth training as their motto indicates: **“to harness youth potential through dynamic spirituality.”**

CMSD – how I see it now

Hari Om to our Chinmaya Mission family,

In February 2013, by Pujya Gurudev's grace and the blessings of my family, I began the 2013-2014 Residential Vedanta Course conducted by Swami Prakashananda in Trinidad and Tobago.

At the time I left-a year and a half ago, *Chinmaya Jyoti* was what might be best called as a potential reality. It was a reality, because land had been purchased and foundations had been laid. Therefore it was no longer a dream in our heads, but a tangible entity complete with building permits. However, it was still a *potential* reality, because though the structure had dimension and a construction plan was in place, its living pulse, its *jīvatva*, was yet to come into being. After all, what was going to make it tick? Breathe? How was it going to appeal to the seekers of San Diego? All these things were still potentialities of the future.

And we all can see that a beautiful structure, however gorgeous it may be, as a physical construction is only empty. Bhaja Govindam tells us that a body without life can never appeal to us, and in the same way an empty building can never appeal to us spiritual seekers unless it is imbued with living ideals. It takes a great creativity, a great swelling of vision, to make that structure *alive*. When I came back, I found that our beloved Chinmaya Jyoti had become just such a place.

I'm most surprised that, in such a short time, the sheer *amount* of activities happening is incredible! Camps, language classes (including *Sanskṛtam*), music and chanting programs, an upcoming Preschool, and all of this in addition to the established Study groups and Bala Vihar! Incredible is probably not a good enough word for this. I think for any average person, even *thinking* about the amount of time, paperwork, coordination and meetings involved would result in a minor stroke. But luckily for us, Lakshmi Aunty, Sukumar Uncle, and the Super-Sevaks of the Mission have never been average! And their passion is manifest in every facet of *Chinmaya Jyoti*.

The most striking aspect of the Mission is that everything is integrative. The same devotion with which the gleaming *Gaṇeśa mūrti* is worshipped in Pranava Nilayam, is the devotion with which the classrooms are cleaned and the lesson plans are developed. All the teachers are also *sevaka*-s and *sādhaka*-s, and all the members are a family. The Mission, from the classroom to the ideas imparted to the children and adults, is spotless. Every act of the hands is accompanied by the love of the heart, and the understanding of the intellect. Every act is bent towards our Gurudev, and the higher ideals of Selfless Service to God.

Chinmaya Mission Worldwide is all about integration. Its primary focus is the dissemination of the highest knowledge of the Self, *Ātma Jñāna*, and all other offshoots are in service to this. Chinmaya Vidyalaya integrates spiritual and secular knowledge, Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) seeks the Divine through research, Chinmaya Naada Bindu reflects the Divine in dance and the creative arts, and Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development (CORD) serves the Divine through the social service of man. The coolest part of all of this, however, is that Chinmaya Jyoti is offering (or in the stages of starting) some form of all these right here! It is the sprawling expanse of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide in miniature. This is invaluable not only because it gives every person of any temperament a place to serve, but also because it offers us the chance to see how all areas of a society can be uplifted in *different* ways through *one* vision. It is the greatest of social experiments, for the spiritual scientist. To see the macrocosm playing out right in front of your eyes in the microcosm is rare indeed. I have been blessed to see this in Trinidad, and again right here in San Diego.

Really, any person is capable of cobbling together a set of classes and calling them by fancy names. But whatever CMSD offers, is not just in name but it is in the caliber of the knowledge. This is not surprising, because Gurudev only

ever gave us His best. But for this level of quality to be consistent, it can only happen when the Vision is crystal clear. One clear vision is how integration happens, for that is how we know *why* we sing, pray, chant and study. We do it for a better understanding of the nature of this Universe, which is our own nature. We do it to quieten the many clamors of the mind, so that the one call of the Divine can be heard in our hearts. When we see this oneness of purpose and learn it here at our Ashram, it is because of the dedicated vision of our beloved Lakshmi Aunty and Sukumar Uncle, and all the *sādhaka*-s. This is a priceless treasure we all get to share!

Swami Prakashananda likes to remind us that in the midst of all this *sevā*, hustle and bustle, we should remember – *God does not need us to do any of these things!* He is *sarvaśaktimān* (all-powerful). If He wanted a Mission, and classes, and programs, He doesn't need us to do it! He can do it himself! Instead, we need to always remember that this is *our* great blessing. To Conserve, Manage, Serve and Dedicate (CMSD), is our privilege as human beings. The Mission is nothing but a great field of opportunity for *us* to make *ourselves* better, to purify our own minds, and to achieve the highest realms of knowledge and bliss. When we give our time, devotion and resources to the Mission and our community, we only are getting the benefit. We start seeing the oneness in all things, and develop a deep relationship with our ancient spiritual culture. Instead of feeling like strangers adrift in the wide world of problems, we feel the comforting embrace of a universal family. We become kinder, more patient, more loving, not just to our families but to ourselves.

Chinmaya Mission San Diego holds a unique and special place in my heart. Here was where I heard the wisdom of Gurudev for the first time. I can't thank the Mission enough for the love and guidance it has shown me as a fledgling and sometimes wayward, spiritual student. Singing its praises is easy and fun to do, and as natural as breathing! And to sing the praises of CMSD is to sing the praises of Lakshmi Aunty and Sukumar Uncle. We can see their love in the shining faces and the happy smiles of our Mission members, which is the true benchmark of success and the only possible outcome of such dedicated service. Thank you for this opportunity.

With Love and Om,

Brni. Akalka

CMSD – an oasis

My first association with Chinmaya Mission was back in 1983 when a *Gītā Jñāna Yajña* was conducted at Mulund, then a sleepy suburb of Mumbai. Our home, across the street, served as the 'local office' and we were delighted to volunteer.

Volunteering for the summer camp at CMSD has been the highlight of my visit to San Diego this year. Sojourning in the US, year after year, several months at a time, can sometimes feel like a walk in a desert, parched by the lack of spiritual companionship. But, in this summer camp, I found an oasis. The selflessness of *sevikā*-s, the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Sukumar, the dedication of parents and the liveliness of children has made this visit an unforgettable one. I am indeed grateful to Mrs. Sukumar for giving me the opportunity to be involved, and to Mrs. Smita Bhatia for picking up and dropping me daily.

The *Yajña* in Mulund was a great success, and our involvement earned us some bragging rights in the community. But, what I cherish most was the time I spent with some wonderful people - many now lifelong friends. This summer camp will now give me something beautiful to share with them.

With Prem and Om,

Saroj Srivatsa, Mulund, Mumbai, India

Self-Unfoldment- Excerpts from Study group *sādhaka*-s reports

“...Going through the study group with Sukumarji and fellow *yātri*-s in this spiritual journey, I realized that it is not impossible to change the mindset. As long as the goal is clear that Self-realization is possible, faith and *Guru*’s guidance will get you there!

In the comfort of my own car, loaded with groceries and material possessions, I came across a homeless woman with four children holding a placard begging for food and clutching “her cart” filled with meager possessions. But all I could see was her dirty clothes and the stench that left an unpleasant whiff in the air and in my nostrils. With a sudden jolt or divine intervention, I realized that I was filthy too! (Who am I to judge her?) I am carrying the stench of my judgments, my likes and dislikes/*Vāsana*-s and wrong notions everywhere. But since I am so attached to them, I hardly notice the staleness and filth of it. It is only my *Guru*’s compassion and his faith in me that is guiding me to his door, showing me the path to better choices and helping me re-focus on my goals through *Karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *Jñāna yoga* and *meditation*.

I can achieve my goal of purer mind by eliminating body-mind identification through continuous introspection - raising my value system by constantly improving and raising the bar, detection, negation and substituting with a new better qualities like selfless deeds and *seva* so that it naturally becomes part of my character.

The idea is to accept every experience as it comes without being too emotional and judgmental, whatever it may be. My short term goal is to unlayer the sheaths of my *Vāsana* –s without adding new ones. Until our mind is pure, we will only see the reflection of God. Just as we see our reflection in the mirror but not the true self.

Whatever already exists (past and the future) will express itself, whether you like it or not or want it or not. But to pollute it or contaminate it with an expectation or a comparison, you dilute and render the experience with a negativity hereby making it “useless”. We become “mental” in our sentimentality! Our presence should be a joy for everyone we come in contact with because both the world and I are none other than expressions of the same self.

Continuous *sādhanā* and meditation alone can take me closer to my goal. At the seat of meditation as an observer of the flow, I realized that I exist irrespective of my body, my mind, my flow of thoughts and experiences. I, *Paramātma*, alone exists, “*Aham brahmāsmi*”. Everything, every object, every atom in the world is pervaded by the same God-principle, then I am part of everything and everything is part of me and I am nothing.

I experience intermittent periods of bliss and peace but not all the time because of my incompleteness due to my *Vāsana*-s, desires, or past experiences. As a result we keep expressing ourselves in different forms rather than focusing on the single-pointedness of our goal and thoughts. We don’t have the capacity yet to envision ourselves complete and sustain the inner joy and peace for longer lengths of time.

In conclusion, I have to drop all BMI identification and act in the world. Let all my expressions be pure and uncontaminated. Discover self-knowledge and lead myself from darkness to light, from untruth to the truth, from self to selfless and beyond – to surrender to the source, the changeless, and the very cause of our existence!”

-Smita Bhatia, March 2014

“.....The chapter on sustained joy gives the principle of persuading the mind to be happy to help drop all agitations. The calmness I felt reading the paragraph on surrender “O Lord, this is all your Maya only.....I am neither mother, daughter or worker in the office. O Lord, all that I am is Yours alone” – I felt as though all my stresses were suddenly lifted, as if these lines were written specifically for me.

So where does the conclusion of my first reading of Self-Unfoldment leave me? I understand that I need to practice my *sāadhanā* of living in the present, being conscious of my true self as I interact in the world. I need to cultivate and develop a habit of reading and contemplating on the scriptures as well as spending time in satsanga in the company of like-minded people, all of which help strengthen my discrimination of the Real from the unreal. I need to develop a strong sense of devotion and gratitude and perform every action as an offering to the Lord. I need to make a daily habit of spending time in meditation in the morning and introspection and training of the mind before I go to bed so I can spend every day in beautiful thoughts with a cheerful mind, learning from my past mistakes, so that I can make a nobler future. Regularity and sincerity on this path will take me closer to my true Self and away from the BMI package I have thus far identified with. I have to remember my true nature –saccidananda- at every moment, ever-existent conscious and blissful..... Indebted to CMSD, Lakshmi Aunty and our group teacher Nagesh; ever grateful to fellow members of our study group.. ”

- Puja Loomba, May 2014

“.....What I have got out of this second reading of Self-Unfoldment (and also continued Gita study since all are overlapping) is that intellectually I know I am the Divine, the most powerful, happy and omniscient yet my experience is that of being powerless, limited, and at mercy of so many factors both external and internal.

So how to bridge this gap? I think knowledge is half the battle and with Self-Unfoldment over the years it has gotten easier to apply objectively the knowledge in most situations. For example, if I fall and my knee hurts I can at least say the body is hurting not I (not that it hurts any less!). If I am angry at an assistant not doing her job I am able to separate her inefficiency from her as a person and have compassion.

I also am able to recognize this same logic is not so easy to apply when my attachment to the person or object ideal is strong. For example, if it comes to my children, my belief on marriage, abortion, etc. I find it hard to not negatively or positively react to the other person, or idea or feeling. So, working on lessening this attachment by seeing all the same will be helpful to minimize my sorrow.

The ego is what is keeping me separate from others and especially separate from the all pervading consciousness. It forms a shield partitioning me off and this is the thief who steals my contentment. In an attempt to maintain this "separateness" is also where all the sorrow is coming from. Another problem I see in me frequently is that I still get really judgmental even if I am right. I am seeing now that the insistence on my being right is just as bad as when I am wrong. That rigidity of thinking and insistence of things being a certain way is wrong. The expectations from others, is also my pitfall. That's where I get disappointed when they are not met. So not that I need to lower my expectation in a defeatist way but I have to understand that I need to do my dharma per role in life, backed by scriptures. It truly is to each, his own. I can only change myself not anyone else.

-Poonam Bhatia, April 2014

“.....On a personal note, learning such details about my own mind and thoughts fills me with awe. It is amazing to learn that in spite of all the so-called 'road blocks' we face in our journey of life, it is possible to transcend our limited capacity. It is heartening to realize that we all have infinite potential inside of us that we have not tapped into fully.

In the hustle and bustle of the daily life, it is very easy to get distracted and entangled in the worldly life eventually causing much suffering to us. What I have learned from 'Self-Unfoldment' is the ability to slow down and question myself on my actions and thoughts. I know that this is just the beginning of an exciting journey towards understanding more about myself.”

-Nita Halker, June 2014

“...In Foreword, Madam Emir writes:

We need to undo some of the wrong thought patterns we’ve developed – and once those are undone, we can experience greater happiness than we ever even dreamed.

After reading this, for over a year, I constantly reflect and try to identify the state of the thought patterns. This reflection was/is an ongoing process. Learning the content of the book in study group format allowed me to understand the state of the mind more clearly. I realize that discussions, listening to lectures, additional readings and *mananam* are very effective ways for proper learning.

The words used to define religion (Religion is the technique by which we get our mind and intellects trained... (p.18)) and the reason to follow the scriptures (the scriptures represent the data gathered and conclusions arrived at by generations of sages, the scientists of the spirit. Their theories and conclusions have been confirmed as true by at least hundred mystics in every century all over the world for many thousands of years. p20.) made me rethink and reshape the previous opinions.

Introduction to BMI was very thought provoking & made me contemplate a lot. In my opinion, chapters on actions, values and energy provide essential guidelines to be successful in secular world, also. A detailed description of the personality of self-realized person is given in the chapter on self-realization. The steps to follow, to become such a person is elaborated in the next chapter. Write up on Meditation procedure is very detailed with very clear warnings on expectations & potential frustrations. I concur with our group coordinator Nagesh that ‘Sustained Joy’ is a chapter to read often, preferably every day, to keep the mind instrument in right conditions.

Initially, it felt overwhelming when thinking about selecting *sāadhanā-s* to ‘go from present state into non dual substratum’ or to ‘undo the wrong thought patterns’ currently in place. After contemplation, I decided to work on developing one habit, namely, ‘staying in the present’. A technique, a practical way, to stay in the present is to do any activity extremely well.

Rationale: To do any chore extremely well, undivided attention to detail is needed. It can happen only if awareness (consciousness), mind and body work together. During that time, the mind will be engaged with one thought/activity only as in *Japa*. So, every activity is an opportunity to train the mind not to leak energy with worries etc., which means ‘staying in the present’. Once this becomes a habit, wrong thought patterns will not dominate. Achieving such a state of the mind is a great step to ‘go from the troubled state into non-dual substratum’.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Chinmaya Mission and to my fellow travelers Poonam, Puja, Rohit, Senthil and Nagesh for this great opportunity to learn about the sages’ conclusions properly.

-Umesh Kumar, April 2014

“**Self-Unfoldment** has resulted in a transformational change in my outlook by making me a better person. It has given me a deeper understanding of myself, my goals, and the true meaning of life.

...One of the greatest early discovery for me was the understanding that having the right thoughts are the key to having a fulfilling and happy life. Right thoughts that are *Sāttvic* in nature or are *Rajasic* without insisting on the results of the action can lead one to a successful trajectory.....

Finally, I find that how little I know and I desire to learn more, and improve by living what I have learnt and what I am learning. I am closer to my goal than I was 2 years ago but need to act now.”

-Rohit Loomba, May 2014

“.... Having finished the text I asked myself the question “What has the study of Self-Unfoldment changed in me? How have I benefitted from this study”? For me the most important thing is, I now have a correct understanding of what meditation is and have started to change my previous habit. I had learned meditation as a technique for dealing with minor physical pain, which has helped me tremendously and I will continue to use, but that is not what meditation is when I am doing *Sāadhanā*. After reading the meditation procedure I noticed that I had never done #3 which is to fix my mind on the Lord. I have done my meditation in my backyard, in my car, and in my meditation chair, but never really with this one shift in my thought process. I had been focusing on my breath or sensations in my body, but not where it should be...on the Lord. Initially I had trouble changing my thought process and felt frustrated. Then one day, I decided that I would sit near the altar. I cannot put into words exactly but I can feel that this has made a change in me. Sometimes I chat with the Lord; sometimes I listen quietly, but every time, I feel more connected. “

-Faith Prasad, October 2014



UCSD and CMSD CHYKs serve at CORD-Siruvani in Coimbatore

Extract from CORD Siruvani -Narrative report of activities during September 2014

.....7 volunteers from University of California San Diego came for a fortnight to a month to CORD Siruvani. The team was led and organized by Sri Parthu Reddy Kalva and consisted of Sri Vinayak Pillai, Selvi Erika Reames, Selvi Tanvi Sheth, Selvi Hinal Parikh, Selvi Mayanka Barath and Selvi Aditi Gautam. Most of them are long term Chinmaya Mission members, CHYKs and Balvihar teachers.

The team stayed at Chinmaya Gardens Ashram. They worked on 5 areas:

1. Environment – mainly by **Parthu**
2. Women’s Health – mainly by **Erika, Mayanka & Hinal**
3. Tobacco & Substance Abuse Awareness – mainly by **Aditi**
4. English Education – mainly by **Erika**
5. Open Drainage – mainly by **Tanvi & Vinayak**

o The team visited around 8 schools several times to bring the programmes to the children and to the villages to bring it to the villagers

o Under the Environment Health Leadership, the team through Power Point presentations and activities made the children & adults realize the importance and then the method of waste segregation. They made them realize the value of the products we discard and how to convert “**Trash to Cash**”. Charts made by them were put up in many places.

o Under the Women’s Health Programme, the team addressed girls in schools and women in Mahila Mandals. The focus was on raising awareness on anaemia and menstrual hygiene and reproductive health. To the village women, after a detailed interaction, the various contraceptive possibilities were also discussed. The team also visited the Govt Subcentre to interact with the women who came to get their babies immunised.

o To raise awareness in tobacco & substance abuse, presentations were shown in schools & villages.

o English books were sponsored and donated to 8 schools libraries and the CORD office library. The team also taught English in the schools and in the tuition centres in the evenings.

o They also conducted Balviharas and helped train Balvihar Sevikas.

o The team examined the open drains in Boluvampatti and Thenamanallur, had a portion of the drains cleaned and then made a mesh which would keep the segment of the drains clean. They worked on it without any outside help and put the system in place and it is being monitored.

o Selvi Mayanka translated for all the members as she knew Tamil well.....



UCSD -CORD team with Dr. Meera Krishna-Director, CORD Siruvani



Inspecting the school tank

CMSSD Parents speak

Parents express their joy at the beginning of the second school year at *Chinmaya Jyoti!*
Hear what they say about the Back to BV nights.

Thank you to all the teachers for taking the time to do this. It is so nice to be able to meet the teachers outside of the Sunday session.
-Neesa Patel (K,5)

....very informative session which gave parents not only the understanding of the children's Bala Vihar curriculum but also information on various study groups for adults.
-- Vinay Iyengar (4)

Very informative, learnt what questions other parents face. Nice to know teachers and their background. Learnt how we should treat our children and create the right environment at home.
-- Rupal Patel (K, 5)

It is amazing to me how much thought, planning and preparation goes into teaching our children. The systematic value- based scriptural education from PK to 12 is invaluable. This character building skill set will guarantee them success in life.
- Poonam Bhatia (5, 9,11)

I think it was a very successful event and helped the parents understand what their child is learning in BV and how they can practice at home with their children to emphasize the same.
-Kalpana Gidwani (5, 10)



If I love myself, I must try to bring total integration within myself. This implies taking care of the body's health, the mind's beauty and the intellect's subtlety.

Swami Tejomayananda

