

CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

CMSD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

Welcoming 2023 with a Special <i>Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Pūjā</i>	2
<i>Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana</i>	3
CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations	5
<i>Mahāśivarātrī</i> Celebrations	12
<i>Ādi Śaṅkara</i> Production Screening	15
<i>Śrī Rāma Navamī</i> Celebrations	15
CMSD Ongoing Events	18
CMSD In The Community	20
Shishu Vihar Corner	20
Bala Vihar Corner	21
BV Youth Corner	26
CHYK Corner	26

CMSD's **Twenty-Second Anniversary** celebration was the main feature in this quarter. Successful completion of fifteen years of *Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇā* was another important milestone. Uplifting devotional festivities were observed during the **Ninth Tyāgarāja Ārādhana**, *Mahāśivarātrī* and *Śrī Rāma Navamī* celebrations. The highschoolers' and CHYKs' Annual MLK Workshop on "**One World Family - Sustainability, Love and Service**" was well received by the Youth.



THE MASTER SPEAKS

"The Sun does not ration its light from house to house or from room to room, but it is the walls that deny entry to sunlight into a room. The river flows; everything depends upon the canals that you cut in taking its waters to your land. Similarly, a Guru or the teacher, beaming in his own perfections, gives out the knowledge in his own intimate language and experience, and it depends upon the individual seers to benefit as much as they can."

Welcoming 2023 with a Special *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Pūjā*

On **January 1, 2023**, CMSD families gathered to celebrate the New Year. *Praṇava Nilayam* was glowing with a beautiful image of *Śrī Viṣṇu* emerging from the depths of ocean and creating a serene and peaceful ambience. The *ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā* commenced with the blowing of the conch and invocation to Lord *Viṣṇu* followed by *Śrī Viṣṇu sahasranāma arcanā*. This marked a reverential offering of the completion of the study of *Śrī Viṣṇu sahasranāma* by the CMSD members during the year 2022. Knowing the meaning behind each of the 1,000 names enhanced the overall experience for all.

Mukhya Swami Swaroopananda's video message perfectly summed up the New Year celebrations, "The New Year will be truly Happy when we spread Happiness to everyone around!"



For **Prem Pathuri** (CHYK), "Participation in the *pūjā* and chanting of sacred *stotrams* blessed me with a quiet mind and a deeper connection with the Self."

Shyam Krishnamurthy was inspired by Swamiji's message about giving happiness to others. He added, "I realized I developed greater focus on *Nārāyaṇa* in my thoughts and actions. Indeed, the *arcanā* energized me further to develop greater focus in my daily practice."

Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana



CMSD celebrated the ninth annual *Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana* festival on **January 12, 2023**. *Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana* is celebrated on the fifth day after the full moon in the month of *Puṣya*, on the day Saint *Tyāgarāja* attained *Mahāsamādhi* in 1747. The *Ārādhana* day is observed as a commemorative music festival in honor of the Saint who is the greatest Carnatic vocalist and composer.

On this day, musicians from all over the south India gather to render *pañcaratna-kṛtis* (five gems of *kṛtis* composed by Saint *Tyāgarāja*) at Thiruvaiyaru and worldwide.

The event at *Chinmaya Jyoti* started with *pūjā* of the presiding deity *Jyoti Vināyaka*, followed by *Śrī Tyāgarāja* Swami *aṣṭottara pūjā*.



Nagesh Nookala gave a brief history of the Saint and **Amarnath Puttur** introduced all the participating vocalists and musicians. The concert was started by invocatory *kṛtis* led by **Devesh Vashishtha**, accompanied by **Vidhya Bharath**, **Aditi Puttur**, **Lakshmi Appachar**, **Akshaj Bharadwaj** in vocals. The musicians accompanied were **Radhakrishnan Ramachandran** on flute, **Vignesh Nydhruva** on violin, **Naveen Basavanahally** and **Mahesh Vashishtha** on *mṛdaṅgam*. The theme of the *kṛti* was introduced by **Nagesh** at the beginning of each rendition.

Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārāadhanā



In the first invocatory *kṛti*, *Śrī Gaṇapatini*, *Śrī Tyāgarāja* invites all to come and join in the worship of Lord *Śrī Gaṇapati*. The second invocatory composition highlights *Guru* and his grace. *Śrī Tyāgarāja* says however virtuous one may be, only by *Guru*'s compassionate grace one cuts through the forest of *tāpatraya*, suffering from all worldly sorrows and attachments, by attaining the Supreme Knowledge.

The first of the *pañcaratna-kṛtis*, *Jagadānandakāraka* in *Nāṭa*, is the only *pañcaratna-kṛti* that was composed in *Samskṛta*. In this *kṛti*, *Śrī Tyāgarāja* extols Lord *Śrī Rāma* as one who is the cause of all bliss in the universe. In the second *kṛti*, *Duḍukugala nannē dora koḍuku brōchurā* in *Gauḷa*, *Śrī Tyāgarāja* lists all the errors he has committed in his life and asks who but *Śrī Rāma* could redeem such a sinner.



Several soulful renditions of Saint *Tyāgarāja* were also individually dedicated by various artists. The program in the honor of *Saint Tyāgarāja*, with his *kṛtis* glorifying the Lord lifted the attendees to a higher plane of devotion.

For **Akhila Koneri**, “The brief explanation of the meaning of each *kṛti* before the rendering added another dimension to experiencing the performance...”

Deepthi Anipindi shared, “It was such an honor to attend the celebration today. No words can express how divine and blissful an experience I had.”

CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations

January 2023 marked the completion of twenty-two years of Chinmaya Mission in San Diego. The week-long celebrations commenced from **January 22, 2023**, with a Q & A Session series. **Lakshmi Aunty** and **Sukumar Uncle** answered questions posed by Bala Vihar students, *Sevak-s* and *Sevikā-s* about the journey that they embarked to bring Pujya Gurudev's teachings of *Vedānta* to San Diego.



What a fantastic way to unfold the grass root works of Chinmaya Mission in San Diego led by the tireless efforts of **Lakshmi Aunty** and **Sukumar Uncle**! Their sharings revealed the depth of their reverence and gratitude for their *Guru*, which kept them undeterred in the face of many challenges.

In the words of **Radhachandran Padmanaban**, “**Lakshmi**'s reflection on CMSD's 22-year journey was full of inspiration... The articulate responses recounting her own arduous, but joyful Chinmaya *Sevā* should inspire us to greater heights in our own *sevā*.”

The CMSD Anniversary Program, ***Sūrya-22***, was held on **January 28, 2023**, to commemorate the work of Chinmaya Mission in San Diego since its inception on **January 28, 2001**. This date coincided with the auspicious occasion of “*Rathasaptamī*”.



An eye-opener to Lord *Sūrya*'s heritage with its universal appeal, the beautifully showcased hymns from vedic literature, arts, yoga, legends, list of festivals, list of temples as well as the performance of *pūjā* called *Sūryanārāyaṇa Aṣṭottara* were all-encompassing. The program highlighted that *Brahman* is the supreme truth that one has to realize through the deity of *Sūrya* as the Sun God represents *Brahman* itself.

CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations



To the only *pratyakṣa devatā* - *Sūrya Bhagavān*, who adores namaskāra-s, the program was inaugurated with a meditative rendition of “*Sūrya Mūrthe Namostute*” by **Devesh Vashishtha**.

To the luminous who illumines, to that icon of *Brahman*, who has been worshiped since the Vedic times, the verses “*Uttiṣṭhottīṣṭha Govinda*” signifying the prayers offered at dawn were chanted by **Adhvay** and **Aaditya** (Grade 6).



Grade 2 and Grade 3 children highlighted the significance of *Sūrya Arghyam* through the story of *Mandehas*.

CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations



Thereafter, **Lakshmi Aunty** invited CMSD members to make the water offering to the Sun God while chanting the *Gāyatrī Mantra*.



The little SV and BV children lovingly sang a song welcoming the rising sun - “The sun will rise, the birds will chirp..” The elementary and middle school students offered *Sūrya Namaskāra* while chanting a sun salutation for each of the twelve postures. The audience also joined in to perform this ancient practice.



Grade 4 presented a beautiful story about how *Sūrya Bhagavān* blesses his ardent student *Hanumān* who demonstrates the qualities of reverence to the *Guru* and exhibits persistence to learn the knowledge of the Self.

Grade 5 and **Grade 6** children narrated the legends of *Sūryadevatā* through various stories.

CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations



Akshat Bhatia (Grade 11) explained the reincarnation of Lord *Viṣṇu* as *Sūryanārāyaṇa* and talked about the direction and movement of the Sun as seasons change. Highschoolers further described the significance of *Sūryadevatā*.



CMSD families, along with **Grade 7** children, recited the sacred hymn “*Āditya Hṛdayam*”, which is known to bless the *upāsaka* with longevity, health, wealth, removing worries and defeating enemies.



A few *mantras* from the *Sūrya Upaniṣat* from *Atharva Veda*, and *Cakṣuṣopaniṣad* were also recited.

CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations



Grade 10 and 11 recited the verses from *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* which refer to Lord *Sūrya*. The knowledge of the Supreme Self was bestowed to *Ikṣvāku*, founder of the Solar Dynasty of Kings. **Grade 9** presented a talk on temples and festivals related to Sun God.



Aunty mentioned that performing charitable acts on Solar Eclipse days is considered very auspicious and so also on *Rathasaptamī*. The 22nd Anniversary Program concluded with CMSD's youngest children displaying *Sūrya* and Lotus craft; celebrating the occasion.



CMSD Board members **Nikhil Varaiya**, **Sukumar Uncle**, **Prem Venkatesan** as well as CMSD *sevak-s* **Manasi Popat** and **Radhachandran Padmanaban** urged all CMSD members to rise in the spirit of *sevā bhāva* and donate generously. Reminding everyone that 2023 is a very special year, marking the 30th year of Gurudev's *Mahāsamādhi* and the 10th year of the inauguration of *Chinmaya Jyoti*. As future custodians of the *Āśrama*, the children pledged to be Chinmaya Kids who will always revere the *Guru*, take care of the *Āśrama* and be global citizens.

It was especially heartening to hear the cheer and joy in the children's voices.

CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations



All CMSD members walked towards the front of the *āśrama* to partake in *Sūryanārāyaṇa Aṣṭottara* chanting and *Sūrya pūjā*.



The final part of the program was reciting the Chinmaya Mission pledge by everyone to mark the beginning of the year 2023.

Bhamini Gobiraj expressed, “Be it the learning of gratitude to the *guru paramparā* or of the importance of *dāna* at *Sūrya-22*, I was brought back again and again to the purpose of Chinmaya Mission San Diego: ‘a place for ego to die’.”

CMSD 22nd Anniversary Celebrations



The potluck vegetarian lunch that followed was an indelible mark of the abundant blessings of Lord *Sūrya* on the occasion of CMSD 22nd anniversary celebrations. Basking in the warmth of the mid-day Sun, the families enjoyed the potluck lunch and mingled leisurely with each other, regaling the eventful day.

This spiritual haven, *Chinmaya Jyoti*, where Pujya Gurudev through his chosen instruments teaches the knowledge of the Supreme Self, the knowledge that reveals the path to Infinite Bliss, a knowledge that will be the moral compass to guide our children's minds in this chaotic world, a knowledge that is our Savior, is our Refuge!

Member Reflections:

Tushar Sathe, "It was a fantastic program ... One of the teachings that I took away from this was the *sevā bhāva* that *Sūrya Bhagavān* has without fail in nourishing Mother Earth...Auntie mentioned how *Sūrya Bhagavān* is *namaskāra priya*. This really stuck with me and gave me a new meaning and a new way of paying my obeisance to *Sūrya Bhagavān* in the form of *namaskāra*..."

Archana Venkat, "The power of Sun God reflects in our life everyday, and it was a wonderful opportunity to learn about this one aspect and really connect the physical world and the spiritual understanding of God's existence."



On **January 29, 2023**, CMSD families met at the Sunday Assembly for the conclusion of the Q and A session giving an opportunity to learn more of the initial days of the Mission when the *Yajña*, Study groups, camps and *sevā* were performed.

In and through it all, **Lakshmi Aunty** concluded, "When you choose His work, everything is provided." Aunty and Uncle's service and devotion will stay etched in our hearts and their commitment will always inspire all!

Mahāśivarātrī Celebrations

CMSD families gathered for the *Mahāśivarātrī* celebrations on **February 18, 2023**. The *pūjā* began promptly at 6:00 PM as the families assembled in *Praṇava Nilayam*. Chinmaya Swaranjali adult choir and Chinmaya Dhvani children's choir began the celebration with heartfelt renditions of *Gauri-Nandana Gajānana* for Lord *Gaṇeśa* and the upbeat *Bholā Śaṅkara Naṭana Manohara* to welcome *Śiva* into our *āśrama*. After invoking the lord, CMSD *sevak-s* **Nagesh Nookola** and **Hariharan Janakiraman** performed the *ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā* for Lord *Śiva* under the guidance of **Lakshmi Aunty**.



The atmosphere in the *āśrama* became meditative with the recorded chanting of *Rudram* and *Camakam* by **Pandit Ravichandran**. Thereafter, *Praṇava Nilayam* reverberated with the chants of *Śrī Śivapañcākṣarastotram*, *Līngāṣṭakam*, *Śiva-mānasa-pūjā* and other *Śiva-stotrams* as all members accompanied the chanting.

Mahāśivarātrī Celebrations



As the *abhiṣekam* was being performed along with the chanting of *Puruṣa Sūktam*, all Bala Vihar children gathered around eagerly to watch the ritual and learn about the significance of each step.



All the devotees got an opportunity to hear the *Śivarātrī* message from Swami Swaroopananda, the Global head of Chinmaya Mission. A few minutes before *ārati*, Lakshmi Aunty guided all present to meditate on Lord *Śiva*, focusing on the divine Jyoti within. *Ārati* was then offered to culminate a memorable, joyous and truly meditative evening.

CMSD members **Amarnath and Vasanthi Gajula** shared their reflections, “At the end of the *pūjā*, we were asked to meditate on the Lord. I felt I was so close to a powerful force...”

CMSD Bala Vihar *Sevika* **Swarna Navubothu** expressed, “I was able to do real “*Upavāsam*”-- living close to God...”

Mahāśivarātrī Celebrations



On the following Sunday, **February 19, 2023**, the students of Bala Vihar **Grade 2** presented the story of the hunter and the tiger and led the chanting of the *Bilvāṣṭakam*.



Thereafter, **Grade 9** presented the special legends and significance behind Śivarātrī celebrations.

Ādi Śaṅkara Production Screening



CMSD's first stage production *Ādi Śaṅkara* was screened at *Chinmaya Jyoti* on **March 5, 2023**.

Echoing **Sukumar Uncle's** words mentioned prior to the showing of the production, **Akhila Konneri** shared, "If I were one of the audiences watching the production on May 8, 2005, I too like many others would have definitely joined the mission!"

Śrī Rāma Navamī Celebrations

The 14-month study of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* at CMSD, which was inspired by **Uncle Mani's** teachings, concluded in **March 2023**. **Lakshmi Aunty** watered every Sunday the houseful attendees' parched hearts and minds with the happenings in the entire life of the King of *Ayodhyā*, Lord *Rāma*.

Naveen Bonda shared, "The lectures based on *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* helped me recognize how various characters, especially *Śrī Rāma*, *Sītā* and *Hanumān* illustrated through the story the way to live life aligned to higher *dharma*, at all times. The lectures also brought out the *vedāntik* aspects associated with the story, which is a great blessing as it helped to connect learnings from other texts."

Radhachandran Padmanaban expressed, "I was particularly overjoyed to learn in three dimensions - listen to selective chants from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, hear the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* and the lessons we should learn from *Rāmāyaṇa* for our own personal growth. **Lakshmi** set the right tone with the message that *Rāmāyaṇa* should serve as a mirror to help us identify our own shortcomings and aid in our personal growth."

Śrī Rāma Navamī Celebrations



Śrī Rāmanavami, celebrated on **March 30, 2023**, was a perfect tribute to the study of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*.



The celebrations commenced with *bhajan* offerings by Chinmaya Dhvani and Chinmaya Swaranjali. CMSD member **Devesh Vashishtha** sang beautiful compositions of Saints *Tyāgarāja* and *Purandaradāsa*.

On this Śrī Rāmanavami, little **Raghava** (two-month-old baby of **Kamya** and **Chandru**) appeared as baby Śrī Rāma to the delight of all!



Śrī Rāma Navamī Celebrations



Śrī Rāma aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvali pūjā was followed by āraṭi and prasādam. Senior members of Saṁskṛta Vihār and CMSD Devi-s recited the Sankṣepa Rāmāyaṇa, and Śrī Rāma hṛdayam from Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.

For **Bhamini Gobiraj**, “To experience joy on this day in the name of Lord Rāma through the unique and heavenly bhajans, pūjā, āraṭi as well as receiving prasādam is a mark of His sacrifices, especially as the consort of Mother Sītā. Through CMSD and beyond, the life of model King Rāma stands even now to elevate each one of us to live a life of “no drama” or lack of suffering.”

Vijay Mani shared, “The atmosphere was peaceful and electric at the same time. The rendition of Tyāgarāja’s “naḍaci naḍaci” was mesmerizing; pointing out that the true location of Lord Rāma is where there is no birth or death. My praṇāms to the organization for connecting us with our roots.”

Devesh Vashishtha added, “Śrī Rāmanavami celebrations at CMSD were a special chance for me to meditate, sing bhajans with our CMSD family, and personally offer a musical prayer to Bhagavān Śrī Rāma....I took heart in seeing children participate, as such events will inculcate value in our children for Īśvara...”



On Sunday, **April 2, 2023**, **Grade 3** children presented a short play depicting Śrī Rāma janma and chanted Śrī Nāma-Rāmāyaṇa.

CMSD Ongoing Events

Monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇā*



On **March 25, 2023**, CMSD celebrated a remarkable milestone of completing fifteen years of monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇā* with fifteen *yajamān*-s.

CMSD Ongoing Events

Monthly *Saṁskṛti Pālakās* Meeting

On **January 15, 2023**, the first session of *Saṁskṛti Pālakās* was conducted with a focus on “**Values are Caught and Not Taught**” and “**Sustainable Living**.” The discussion this month was directed to the quintessence of how the daily living structure within a family creates a strong value system that is easily absorbed by our children. Mothers, being the focal point of the family, must incorporate sustainability into everyday living which eventually results in the upbringing of “**Responsible Global Citizens**”. The essence of “**Think Globally Act Locally**” was beautifully brought about in the discussions.



The **February 12, 2023** meeting strengthened the discussions of the previous session with a focus on: “**Practicing Hinduism with Pride**”.

The *mantra* from *Chāndogyopaniṣad* teaches that “If one eats pure food, one’s mind becomes pure. If the mind is pure, one’s memory becomes strong and steady. If the memory is good, one becomes free from all bondages.” This was the basis for the group discussions on **March 12, 2023**. The meeting centered around cultivating *sātvik* eating habits right from a young age and nourishing the mind and body with the right *āhāra* for all the sense perceptions.



CMSD In The Community

Workshop On “Ethical Dilemmas” At Francis Parker School



The “**Ethical Dilemmas**” workshop was held on **February 16, 2023** at **Francis Parker**. This workshop examines several ethical dilemmas from varying spiritual perspectives. **Lakshmi Aunty**, as one of the panelists, represented the “*Sanātana Dharma*” perspective. She beautifully brought into light how actions are primarily guided by the spiritual maturity of each individual; and emphasized the significance of invoking divinity through a prayerful attitude. The remarkable words shared by Aunty, “Don’t Play GOD; Pray to GOD” were unanimously accepted by all the panelists present.

Shishu Vihar Corner



SV3: Class Craft Activities - Śrī Rāma bracelet

Bala Vihar Corner

Grade 2: Winter Project - Diorama on *Bālakṛṣṇalīlā*

Bala Vihar Corner



Grade 2: Children enjoying during *Mahāśivarātrī* rehearsal.



Grade 2: Damaru project - *Mahāśivarātrī*

Bala Vihar Corner

Grade 4: Diorama on *Rāmāyaṇa*

Bala Vihar Corner



Grade 4: Pot of Devotion fertilized with **Knowledge**, blossoms the flower of *Hanumānji* bejeweled with gems of intelligence, strength, courage, fearlessness, freedom from disease, freedom from fatigue, eloquence and fame

Bala Vihar Corner

Grade 6: Winter Break Poster Project - 24 Gurus from *Avadhūta Gītā*

BV Youth Corner

High School Mentorship Software Development Workshop



January 2, 2023, CMSD High School Mentorship Program

CHYK Corner

Annual MLK CHYK Workshop



On January 16, 2023, CMSD conducted its Annual MLK CHYK Workshop. The topic this year was: **One World Family - Sustainability, Love and Service**, and the nucleus of the discussion was the need for individuals to stay true to their values regardless of what is happening in the world around them. This is because positive changes can only occur if individuals change themselves on the individual level.

CHYK Corner

However, it can be hard to stay true to our values under all circumstances. This is where the importance of *Satsaṅga* is realized.

Below are some reflections from the High Schoolers and CHYKs attending the workshop:

Aditi Hariharan (Grade 9): I learned a lot from this session, mainly about the challenge of maintaining my values in this society.

Shravani Prem (Grade 11): One idea that really stuck with me was that it is important to be with good company and make sure the people I surround myself with share similar values and will keep me on the right path.

Akshat Bhatia (Grade 11): From this workshop, I learned that I must start by changing my own self with my full effort instead of focusing on other people.

Arushi Bharadwaj (Grade 12): The MLK workshop provided me with several new insights about thinking about my relationship with the world, particularly through the lens of sustainability and citizenship. My primary focus should be to change myself.

Shyam Pandya (CHYK): This workshop helped give me more strength and a higher perspective to be more positive for current events going on in our world.

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