

CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

CMSD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

Navarātrī Celebrations	2
Dīpāvalī Celebrations	6
Conscious Parenting Workshop	8
Hinduism Workshop	10
CMSD in the Community	12
BV Corner	13
Tapovana Jayanti & Gītā Jayanti	15

IN THIS ISSUE OF CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

The highlights of this quarter were the festivities at CMSD. Navarātrī and Dīpāvalī were celebrated in a grand manner. There was a seminar on Conscious Parenting, workshops on personality development for girls and Hinduism. Śrī Tapovana Jayanti and Gītā Jayanti was celebrated in December concluding another wonderful year.



THE MASTER SPEAKS

If you want to take up sincere Sādhana, 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.

2018

NAVARĀTRĪ CELEBRATIONS AT CHINMAYA JYOTI

In the land of Bhārata, the feminine energy is propitiated as Śakti, with manifold features. The state of our 'becoming' from 'being,' is Śakti in movement. Navarātrī is thus a very special festival that is celebrated with reverence towards this feminine aspect of the Divine throughout India. The theme of the entire Vedas is reflected in the Navarātrī festival: Purify the mind and remove all negativities; cultivate positive virtues; gain spiritual knowledge and transcend limitations. This is the real victory – truly the dance of joy!

The Legend of Mahiṣāsura Mardini

- Presented by Grade 5

On Oct. 14, 2018, CMSD celebrated the Navarātrī festival with the whole āśrama resounding with laughter, chanting, and dancing. Both students and adults alike, were fully engrossed in the dramatization of the fifth grade Bala Vihar class on Durgā Devī's victory over the buffalo demon Mahiṣāsura. This festival is enjoyed by all, with lots of bhajans, dancing, and visiting with friends. It is also an important time for all of us to reflect on the deeper meaning of this Navarātrī festival, the victory of good over evil. The drama showcased how each God equipped Goddess Durgā with powerful weapons. It surely pointed out how difficult it can be to destroy evil - the wicked asura! However, it also contained a subtle message of conquering those sublime forms of evil that arise in one's own mind, like procrastination and being critical.



Just like Mā Durgā, one must use the weapons to remove these negativities as prescribed by our śāstra-s. Our minds very easily run out into the world to be absorbed in outside activities, and one needs tremendous strength and strong conviction in the words of Guru or the Self to turn it inward. As we enjoy over these nine nights, let us also invoke the powers of Durgā Devī to help us turn this mind inward and cut down any negativities that arise inside us.

- Faith Prasad





All Girls' Personality Development Workshop

– Grades 6 through 12

CMSD hosted an All Girls' Personality Development Workshop during this vibrant celebration of the Devi Śakti. It provided a platform for these energetic young girls to share their views on various facets of their current stage in life from intellectual, emotional to social standpoints. The beautiful aspect of the workshop was the blossoming of the energies in the short span, especially due to the strong underlying connection of similarities amongst them as supported by the backdrop of Hindu Culture.



A variety of activities were introduced including topic discussions, story building, free movement dance, group activity and cooking. A special sister-like bond came to surface among the girls! The workshop certainly gave that special opportunity to enhance the personalities and discuss the practical applications of the learnings, with interactive discussions on role model, first impressions, personal strengths, personal areas of improvements, and many more. Many of the girls showed their eagerness for more such workshops in the future.

– Manasi Popat

Reflections on the workshop

"The workshop today was an engaging and very good learning experience for me. One thing I learned today was personality is what I am inside and outside. Another piece of information I learned is that I should be authentic, regardless of what other people think. One suggestion for a discussion topic is decision - making. Thank you for the opportunity, I enjoyed it and learnt a lot from it".

- Arushi Bhardwaj

"The girls' personality development workshop was such a wonderful experience. I got to learn what it means to "develop my personality". It also gave me a chance to reflect on what qualities that I want to see in myself and also the qualities I want to work on. This was such an amazing experience and given the opportunity, I will definitely come again".

- Zil Arya

"The Girls' Personality Development Workshop truly was an amazing experience, as we were able to better our personalities while having lots of fun. Though I enjoyed every moment of this workshop, one of my favorite parts were when the high schoolers grouped up and sat with Lakshmi Aunty to discuss our concerns or experiences that we've had in the past. I'm glad that I was given the opportunity to attend!

- Prerana Kelkar



Significance of Navarātrī – Presented by Grade 10

The students from tenth grade beautifully explained the meaning underlying the celebrations of Navarātrī, during the assembly on Oct. 21, 2018. The first three days of Navarātrī are for worshipping Durgā Devī, the second three are for Lakṣmī Devī, and the last three are for Sarasvatī Devī. During the first three days Durgā Devī destroys the Mahiṣāsura in us - meaning our bad qualities such as laziness, jealousy, and greed. Next, Lakṣmī Devī prepares the mind for knowledge by implanting good values such as patience, gratitude, discipline, and responsibility. Lastly, Sarasvatī Devī blesses us with knowledge. The Japamālā she holds represents our connection with God. The Vīna that Sarasvatī Devī holds represents peace and harmony. The Swan that she sits on, has the ability to distinguish good from bad. The tenth day following Navarātrī is called Vijayadaśamī, which is celebrated for Goddess Durgā's victory over the demon Mahiṣāsura, or the victory of good over evil.

- Devika S.



Vijayadaśamī Celebrations at Chinmaya Jyoti

“Make thy life a Mahānavami Celebration! With songs and dance, with poojas and worship, with feasting and illumination, with japa and tapa, invoke the powers of the Self, the eternal nature of Thee!” - true to this quote of Pujya Gurudev, the Vijayadaśamī celebrations at CMSD came alive with music, bhajans, and dance to invoke the Śakti within. The program began with the students of tabla showcasing their prowess. The sounds of percussion marked a perfect



beginning to a musical evening as listeners enjoyed and tapped to the rhythmic beats of tabla. Next, the Chinmaya Dhvani students and the Chinmaya Swaranjali adult group presented a melodious repertoire as a loving invitation to Mā Durgā, followed by bhajans in Her praise. The beautiful bhajans in Hindi, Tamil, and Sanskrit, soaked with devotion, reached the hearts and souls of the audience and served to invoke the ādī Śakti within. This musical ensemble led to a technical Bharatnatyam piece by the dance students. The dance students enthralled the audience as they performed the newly learnt dance movements. The program culminated with Devī āratī-s in Hindi, Tamil, and Marathi followed by divine Prasadam. The musical Vijayadaśamī evening at Chinmaya Jyoti indeed blessed everyone with the bliss of Bhakti and helped to invoke the Śakti within.

- Sujata Sovani



As per our tradition at Chinmaya Jyoti, two chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā were chanted over the period of nine nights. The evenings came alive with Devī vandana and concluded with Devī āratī. It was indeed a great way to honor our Guru and at the same time connect with the higher. The chanting in unison sounded very melodious and created powerful positive vibrations. It is a very effective sādhanā on these very auspicious days.

- Uma Aggarwal



Dīpāvalī Celebrations

Dīpāvalī, the grandest of Hindu festivals was an occasion the CMSD family was looking forward to this year. The festive day finally arrived on November 7, 2018. As is usually the case for Dīpāvalī, the entire āśrama was illuminated gloriously and the crisp cool air of the evening was filled with an aura of divinity and celebration.

Many CMSD families congregated in Pranava Nilayam promptly at 6:30 P.M with children sitting with their parents along with a plate containing a picture of Lakṣmī Devī and other items for the pūjā. Everyone was ready to perform a grand Lakṣmī pūjā under the guidance of Lakshmi Aunty. The festivities began with invocation of Śrī Jyoti Vināyakā as the Chinmaya Swaranjali choir offered the melodious Gaṇeśa pañcaratnam. As is the tradition, the choir then offered the joyous and uplifting Dīpāvalī Pandigai Kondadalam; an energetic song that describes the diverse ways in which young and old celebrate Dīpāvalī in different parts of India as well as in the United States.

Śrī Mahālakṣmī Śhoḍaśākṣari pūjā was performed wherein Śrī Sūkta was chanted and kumkum was offered. All Bala Vihar children participated by performing Lakṣmī pūjā themselves, while being accompanied by their parents.



The pūjā was interspersed with several songs such as the meditative Mahā Lakṣmī Jaganmatah, Agastya Muni's composition Jaya Devī Jaya Devī Jaya Mātā Kamale.

The grade 7 Bala Vihar 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.

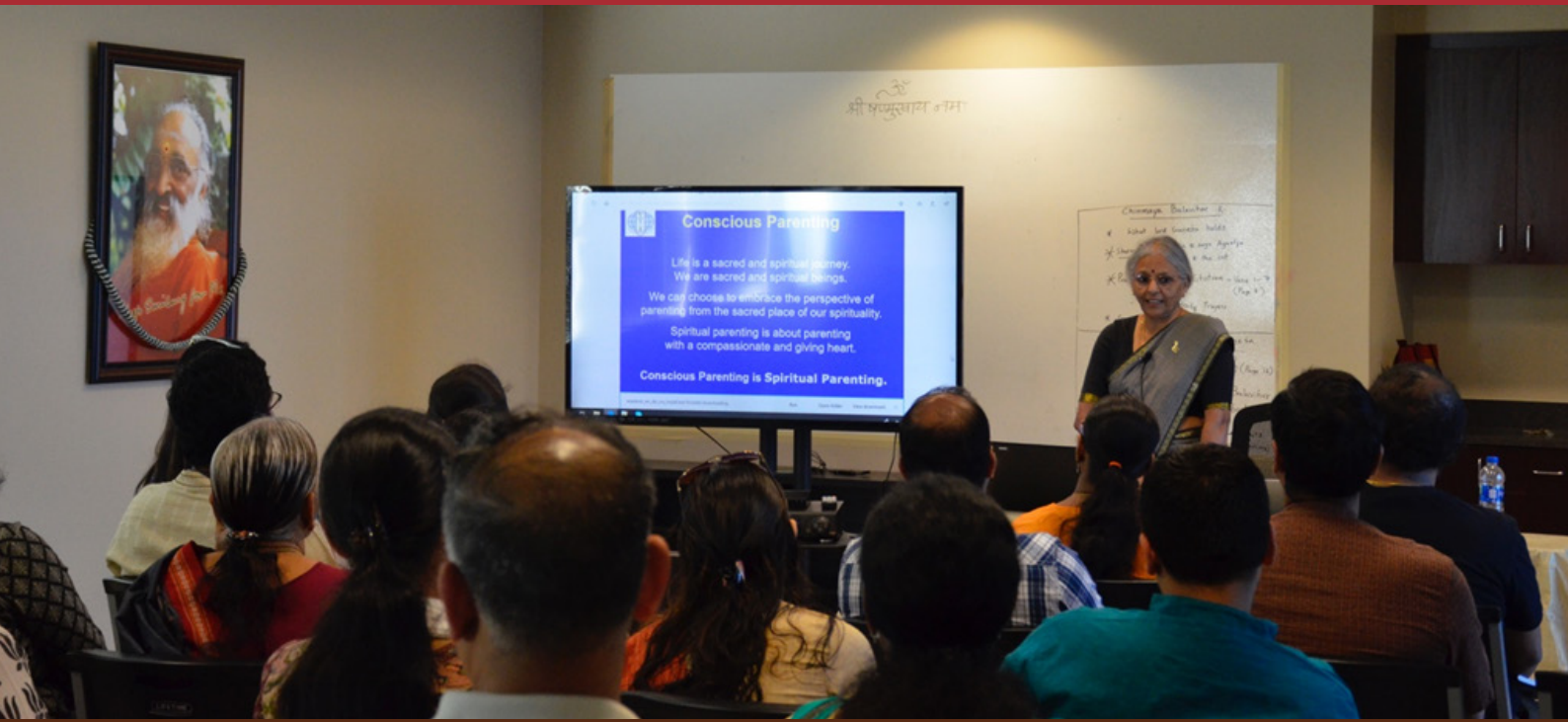


The Chinmaya Swaranjali choir offered the melodious Pambanai Mel song after the victory of Kṛṣṇa over Narakāśura in the presentation.

The celebration culminated with everyone performing Rasa Garba accompanied by the singing of Dīpā Jale. This was followed by a sumptuous dinner that consisted of delicious home cooked items from all across India. In keeping with the annual CMSD tradition, dinner was prepared and served by continuing member families to new member families.

- Ashwin Mohan





Conscious Parenting Workshop

On October 27, 2018, CMSD hosted a workshop on Conscious Parenting. The focus of the workshop was to help the audience gain an understanding of Gṛhasthāśrama, the role and responsibility of parents and understanding the parent-child relationship. Lakshmi Aunty provided a detailed set of parenting guidelines, all the while noting useful references from the scriptures as well as words of wisdom of Pujya Gurudev, Guruji and several other revered and learned figures.



Madhu and Jayesh shared the following reflections after attending the workshop - With our day-to-day struggles to provide for our families and complete what we need to undertake in our careers, it's easy to forget that our children are the best gifts we could ever get. This workshop can be compared to the act of "dusting off" the worldly thoughts around your true self and realizing the divinity you hold within, simply because God chose you to be a parent.

The teachings that were shared make one wake up to a perspective that is humbling and beautiful.



Key thoughts that stayed with me:

- 1) Our children chose us and hence we are parents.
- 2) In this world, we must ourselves be first what we would like our children to be like.
- 3) There is an “H” in parenting that no one ever told me about before and it stands for humor. It helps us get past some difficult conversations.

Below are some additional thoughts shared by CMSD members and parents who attended the workshop

The workshop gave an in-depth view of how to incorporate religious guidelines into practical lifestyle and provided us valuable guidance on how to handle various situations with our kids.

- Bhavik and Priyanka Patel

This is a very useful workshop for all parents. Sometimes we take things for granted when it comes to our kids but it was interesting to ponder upon the idea of how the kids come through us, they are not ours. I also liked how each quality within the word “parenting” was described. I would like to attend the same workshop again, next year, and see how I have grown as a parent!

- Priyanka Apte

Let us tune up the noble instrument of mind given to us through a careful policing of our motives and thoughts. Let us, with such a prepared instrument, search out the Wealth of Light-Power-Wisdom that is lying in ourselves.

”

Workshop on Hinduism

The reference to 'Hinduism' brings forth images and questions about many Gods, many books, vegetarianism, reincarnation, and the caste system. As parents or colleagues, at times, we may fumble answering questions related to these topics. The workshop on Hinduism held at Chinmaya Jyoti, San Diego on November 18 by Lakshmi Sukumar, gave a succinct overview on Hinduism or Sanātana Dharma and also served to answer many questions from the audience. Sujata Sovani shares the highlights of the workshop.

Among the scriptures, Bhagavad Gītā (The Song of the Lord) holds the essence of Vedic knowledge and serves as the manual of life for the followers of Sanātana Dharma. This knowledge was not given as an instruction, but through a dialogue between the two – the guru (Spiritual guide) and the śiṣya (disciple). This highlights one of the facets of Sanātana Dharma, that a guru is needed as a guide on the spiritual path to remove the ignorance of a deserving disciple.



According to Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, “Religion gives us a method for creating in ourselves the equipoise to stand up to life’s situations, meeting efficiently the ever-changing world of challenges. Dharma is that which brings outer prosperity and inner unfoldment.”

Satyam (Truth), Brahmacharya (Self-Control), and Ahimsa (Non-violence) are the core values, given by Sanātana Dharma, to live by in the daily life. Vegetarianism practiced by Hindus is based on the principle of non-violence, backed by the belief that the same divine resides in all beings.

The ultimate goal of an individual is the realization of the divine nature. Hinduism or Sanātana Dharma is a universal tradition that gives a technique to tune the mind to experience its own divine nature.

Among the four stages of life, brahmacharya (Student life) is for learning and preparation, gr̥hasthāśrama (family life) is to apply the teachings and also to take care of the other three āśrama-s. vanaprasthāśrama, is for mental withdrawal from worldly affairs, while sanyāśrama is for complete detachment from all ties and to live in contemplation of God. These four stages also represent mind’s evolution as one prepares on the spiritual path.

Sanātana Dharma is based on Vedas. Vedas are a repository of divine knowledge that were revealed to pure minded Sages in the ancient past. Vedas cover the entire gamut of knowledge including grammar, phonetics, everyday living, health, astronomy, astrology and spiritual.

According to Sanātana Dharma, the highest goal is realization of one’s own divine nature and liberation or moksha from the cycle of birth

and death. One reincarnates until this goal is reached. There are three steps that lead to this goal totaling the four pursuits of life: Dharma (Righteous living), Artha (Wealth), Kama (Desires), and Mokṣa (Liberation). When one lives per their dharma, the acquisition of wealth (Artha) and fulfilment of desires (Kama) gets done in a righteous way. A righteous living thus paves the way for attainment of Mokṣa.

In the Bhagavad Gītā, Bhagavan Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that the fourfold caste system (Varnāśrama) is based on the three guṇa – Sattva (Purity), Rajas (Activity), Tamas (Inertia). Each caste in the social system had a role to perform based on their abilities and skills.

The word Yoga comes from the root ‘Yuja’ means to unite. Yoga is also ‘a means to get there’. The four yoga-s or paths that lead one to the ultimate goal of Self-realization are as described: i) Karma Yoga is the path of right action and selfless service, without doership or ego, without a desire for a particular outcome, and done as an offering to the Supreme. ii) Bhakti Yoga is the path of love and devotion to the iṣṭa-devatā (chosen form of the divine) and compassion to fellow beings based on the belief that the same divine resides in every being. iii) Rāja Yoga is the path of mental concentration and iv) Jñāna Yoga is the path of inquiry and contemplation

that illumines the intellect. These four are but paths that lead to the one final goal. According to temperament one may follow a single path or a combination of these to reach the summit.

God or the Supreme Reality is without form and attributes. It is difficult to comprehend a formless entity and hence Hinduism symbolizes the Supreme in various forms. Every idol represents an ideal. For example, in Lord Gaṇeśa’s form, the elephant head represents intelligence, the small eyes point to attention to details, the mouse represents the mind full of desires which when controlled becomes a duty-bound vehicle, while modaka points to peace or illumination as the sweet praśada. Concentration on such aspects in a deity, help a seeker to be good and do good and progress spiritually in life. Thus, a form acts like a bridge to go beyond the form to the formless.

These are but some of the many facets of Sanātana Dharma. The Universal Sanātana Dharma when followed sincerely, gives the code of righteous living to individuals of different temperaments, at different stages of life, and also helps to decode the puzzle of life. I highly recommend everyone to attend this workshop at the next available opportunity to be able to understand Hinduism in-depth.



Reflections by the CMSD members

As a parent and a Bala Vihar teacher it is very important for me to know and remind myself of salient features of Hinduism. Workshop was very helpful in a sense that it opened up my thought process towards Hinduism. It helped me understand that Hinduism is not just a religion but is a way of living. It covered vast variety of topics like Scriptures of Hinduism, Fields of knowledge, different schools of thought, major pursuits of life, yoga etc. that touched every aspect of this Sanātana Dharma.

- Pallavi Kulkarni

It was very informative and interesting. Though I had some bits and pieces of information on the topic, the workshop gave complete information and clarified lot of doubts. I would like to attend even more longer sessions on the same topics. Thank you.

- Savitha Bhat

When Gurudev started the Mission, his goal was to teach "Hinduism to Hindus". The Workshop on Hinduism brought that point home to many of us. The vastness of Hinduism and its various schools of thought, baffle many new comers. Also, the profound thoughts of this philosophy seem at odds with our current experiences until we put a lot of thought to address to those apparent contradictions. This workshop addressed many such points, starting from addressing "Who is a Hindu" and also various schools of thoughts and many other aspects of Hinduism and its profound thoughts. This workshop was helpful for me to know many new things and also refresher for some of the known topics. I was glad I got a chance to participate in this workshop.

- Nagesh Nookala



CMSD Participates in Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

CMSD has been a part of Poway Interfaith Team (POINT) since its inception, which conducts a special Thanksgiving service every year. This year's event was held on November 14 at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in San Diego. Speakers from various faith organization spoke on the meaning of Thanksgiving, Inclusivity and Gratitude based on this year's theme "All are welcome at our table" from the viewpoint of their own faith.

Representing the Hindu faith, Lakshmi Sukumar spoke of the one divine essence in all beings, and how living in awareness of this oneness enables harmony and peace in diversity. This idea was then rendered in a song- 'Hey Prabho Anandadata' - by CMSD's Swaranjali choir. Bala Vihar students Harini Rangarajan and Shravani Prem explained the meaning of the song and joined the choir.



Bala Vihar students learn about pañca ṛṇa

In our Bala Vihar classes, the focus for the past three months has been on ṛṇa or debt. Students expressed that ṛṇa was a debt of gratitude. There are five types of ṛṇa-s: deva ṛṇa, ṛṣi ṛṇa, pitṛ ṛṇa, bhūta ṛṇa, and ṇṛa ṛṇa. These ṛṇa-s start with someone's act of kindness, which then makes us acknowledge with gratitude. This debt of gratitude leaves us inspired, wanting to do more and pay it forward. We have learned that we are indebted to everything and everyone around us. We may not know these people but because of what they do and how they help us, we are indebted to them. Our debt begins from the moment we are born, and the gift of life that God has given us is impossible to repay. To show our gratitude, we should use what we have been given wisely and for a good purpose.

- Ketki Chakradeo, Devika Sovani and Zil Arya (Grade 9)

Rāmayaṇa Characters Come Alive on Halloween

The third and fourth graders Halloween Rāmayaṇa dress up event was a lot of fun for all of us. It was a chance to be one among the children while simultaneously reveling in Lord Rāma. Sītā, Rāma and Hanumān costumes were popular choices. We had a few creative ones too in Tāḍakā and Trijaṭā. The games we played were based on the Rāmayaṇa theme like knocking off rākṣasas, Who am I and musical squares. Rāma and Hanumān bhajans led by Sujata had us all clapping and singing. The highlight of the evening was the search for Sītā. Our vānara senā celebrated their success by enjoying a treat of homemade cookies and fruits.



Reflections by the fourth grade Bala Vihar children

The part that I enjoyed most is when we played musical squares and marching around the squares. - Srinika Dayana

The class party was fun. My favorite activity was to find Sītā Devī. - Likhita Chava

My favorite part of the party was when we played "Finding Sītā." The game was challenging as we had to find a little picture of Sītā. I was very close to finding the picture. - Dhriti R Patil

I liked how we all dressed up in costumes. I was dressed up as Rāma with a crown, bow, arrow and a quiver. - Ajith

I enjoyed the party. Something I enjoyed was the water race. - Tanya Jayashankar

My most favorite part of the party was playing finding Sītā, because I found her. - Jai Arya



Pre-K and K celebrate Dīpāvalī in their classrooms

The Children in Pre-K and K celebrated Dīpāvalī by decorating their class room with rangolī designs and flowers. They made Dīpāvalī cards with colorful diyā-s and the classroom was brightly lit with their smiles. It was really the time of joy and worship.

Punctuality, Practice, and Perfection – the three P-s happen if you go to Bala Vihar classes regularly. Then these traits become a part of you. – Pujya Guruji

Money comes and goes, a value comes and grows.

Give your children values, instead of valuables.

”

Gītā Jayanti and Tapovana Jayanti

On December 19, CMSD celebrated Tapovana Jayanti and Gītā 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.

Śrī Tapovana aṣṭōttara and Śrī Bhagavad Gītā aṣṭōttara pūjā was conducted. The eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā was chanted thereafter.



On December 16, the eighth-grade students presented an excerpt from the Gītā Dhyāna. The children shared the challenges that the Kaurava army put forth in the Mahābhārata war and compared them to the obstacles in our daily lives. Both these challenges are overcome by surrendering to Lord Kṛṣṇa.





SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA

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