



# CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

CMSD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



## IN THIS ISSUE

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Navarātrī Celebrations            | 2  |
| Gītā Mahotsav and Tapovan Jayanti | 7  |
| Hinduism Workshop                 | 13 |
| Anuboothi                         | 14 |
| Dipāvalī Celebrations             | 15 |
| We are Bala Vihar                 | 17 |
| CMSD in the Community             | 18 |

## IN THIS ISSUE OF CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

The highlight of this issue is the *Gītā Mahotsav* celebrations. The quarter began with the *Navarātrī* and *Dipāvalī* festivities. An inaugural dance seva program, workshops on *Strī Śakti*, Hinduism and multiple community events were also held this quarter.



## THE MASTER SPEAKS



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





## Navarātrī Celebrations Aug 29 to Sep 10, 2019

Each year, the nine nights of *Navarātrī* festival come alive to celebrate the three forms of the *Devī* - *Durgā*, *Lakṣmī*, and *Sarasvatī* - the three *Śakti*-s within each of us. First, we invoke Goddess *Durgā* to kill the *vikāra*-s within, followed by Goddess *Lakṣmī* to bestow the wealth of virtues on us, after which Goddess *Sarasvatī* showers the blessings of the highest Self-knowledge. Goddess *Sarasvatī* is the Goddess of Knowledge and the Fine Arts, represented by a book, *japa mālā* and the *vīṇā* in her hands.



### *Sarvasvatī pūjā* on October 6, 2019

Chinmaya Jyoti celebrated *Sarvasvatī pūjā* on *aṣṭamī*, the eighth day of *Navarātrī* in a grand way. Students gathered in the Pranava Nilayam with a picture of *Devī Sarasvatī*, flowers, and *akṣata* to perform the *pūjā* led by Lakshmi Aunty. Books including scriptural texts were placed at the altar prior to the *pūjā* per our custom. The event commenced auspiciously with the chanting of the *medhasūktam*. The *Ṣoḍaśopacāra* was then performed as Aunty explained the meaning every step of the way. Chinmaya Dhvani and Chinmaya Swaranjali offered melodious songs in praise of Mother *Sarvasvatī* followed by captivating Carnatic music offering of the Dikshitar *Kṛti 'Śrī Rāmā Sarasvatī'* in *nāsikābhūshaṇi* by Srilekha Chandrasekhar and Vrishank - Grade 7.

True to the saying, “*ācārya devo bhava*”, students reverentially bowed down to all their teachers. It was a wonderful sight to see all the teachers decked in shades of white, a color that represents purity, discrimination, and self-knowledge. The *pūjā* culminated with delicious sundal and sweets as *prasāda*. Let us all pray to the Mother Goddess that may we be blessed with courage, noble virtues, and wisdom on our spiritual journey.

-Lalitha Kumar and Sujata Sovani





### *Strī Śakti* – Discover the *Devī* & Manifest the *Śakti* Within

CMSD hosted a special workshop during the beginning of *Navarātrī* - celebrating **power feminine**. The Mother in her all-encompassing form of *Māheśvarī* represents the three *devī-s* that we celebrate during *Navarātrī* over nine nights. It was a wonderful journey into discovering the various powers of these *devī-s* and gaining insights into the manifestation of that *śakti* within. The Union of *Śiva* and *Śakti* is worshipped in the form of Lord *Ardhanārīśwara*. It is indeed empowering to know and understand that *Śiva* and *Śakti* dwell within our inner consciousness, and essentially our true nature is complete and in balance of the masculine and feminine energies. The celebration of a festival can be experienced in its true glory only when one is able to align the subtle aspects and gross aspects involved in the festivities. The workshop represented a gateway into the *Navarātrī* festival with a well-rounded knowledge!

-Manasi Popat

#### Reflection by CMSD Member:

“The workshop discussed the characteristics of goddess *Durgā*, *Lakṣmī*, *Sarasvatī* and how we can balance these in our own life. It had a positive impact on me as I was able to internally reflect upon these thoughts and determine where my strengths and weaknesses exist, thereby integrating my personality to be an effective mother, daughter, wife and a balanced woman. We all have our responsibilities to see that we are making progress in our spiritual path as well. The discussions made during the workshop provided answers to my questions. Left with beautiful thoughts to ponder upon and practical applications for my spiritual progress.”

-Suman Bhaskaruni

“I truly appreciated the insight that Lakshmi Aunty provided...and I would strongly recommend that it be offered to a wider audience.”

-Smita Chopade



## Vijayadaśamī Celebrations and Vidyārambha

On October 8, 2019 Chinmaya Jyoti marked the ceremonious beginning or *Vidyārambha* of learnings. The program commenced by powerful chanting by the Vedic chanters followed by the tabla students showcasing their prowess. Chinmaya Dhvani and Swaranjali groups presented melodious *bhajans* dedicated to *Mā Durgā*. The soothing beats of the Bharatanatyam piece was a perfect way to conclude the program. The *āśrama* was filled with soulful festivities throughout the nine nights of *Navarātrī* and its beautiful culmination on *Vijayadaśamī*. In words of Pujya Gurudev, “Dussehra is the victory over the senses, which signifies the end of mind!”

### Bhagavad Gītā Chanting

Unity, Peace and God - all three things are intertwined together every night in the Pranav Nilayam, when the CMSD Family get together and chant the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Words from Lord *Kṛṣṇa* himself and we are blessed to get an opportunity to soak our minds in it! Whether one understands the scriptures with its subtlety or not, the power held in the slokas is experienced by all. Not only this, but *Bhagavad Gītā* is the Lord's song and it's beautiful and rejuvenating to chant. All the nights were filled with peace and happiness and I will always treasure this experience. -**Sindhu Narasimha**

"I sincerely feel that I am blessed for getting such an opportunity of chanting *Bhagavad Gītā* during the most auspicious days of *Navarātrī* at our *āśrama*. Though *Gītā* chanting itself is meditation for me, chanting with like-minded people in the focused environment made me go into a deep meditative state, enhancing my experience. The ambiance and the vibrations of the chanting made me feel the presence of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* around us." -**Swarna Latha**

*Gītā* chanting by itself is very joyful to me. Doing it in the company of others at the *āśrama* makes it divine. Coming to the *āśrama* during *Navarātrī* feels quite festive. Thank you CMSD for arranging this." -**Sandhya Srinivasan**

### CMSD celebrates Durgāṣṭamī with Devīmāhātmyam Pārāyaṇa

*Navarātrī* is the most auspicious time to recite and chant the Glory of *Devī śakti*, and contemplate on the inner significance. It also signifies the defeat of the forces of darkness in our life each day. With each hour and constant remembrance of the presence of the divine Mother within us all, let the Light Shine. On October 5, 2019 -the day of *Durgāṣṭamī*, Pranav Nilayam witnessed the power of the *Devīmāhātmyam*, which is also known as *Śrī Durgā Saptaśati* or *Śrī Chandī*, comprising of 700 mantras. It is seemingly a narrative of the battle between the *Devī* and the *asuras*, however, there is a deeper significance to these demons and the battles. At one level it is also an allegory to the inner battle between the divine and the demonic forces within the human mind, amid the positive and negative forces. “The energy experienced at the *āśrama* was very powerful and uplifting” as expressed by one of our CMSD members, **Ramya Mahesh**.

-**Manasi Popat**



## The Saga of *Mahiṣāsura Mardini* and Significance of *Navarātrī*

Each *Navarātrī* is a moving and unique experience. No matter how many times we have celebrated this festival over the years, it is indeed quite memorable each year! From the lively *garba* to the vibrant *golu*, *Navarātrī* brings happiness into all homes, and unites us under the three śakti goddesses.

Every fifth-grade class has its own special and unique way of portraying the legendary saga of *Mahiṣāsura Mardini*. This year, the audience was soaked in laughter, thanks to the zealous performance from the fifth graders! *Mahiṣāsura* had attained a boon from Lord *Brahmā* that he would not be killed by a man, animal or God. The role of evil *Mahiṣāsura* was portrayed with great energy and zeal. The Gods joined their forces to create Goddess *Durgā*, empowering her with unique strength and weapons. The pinnacle of the play was the depiction of the war between Goddess *Durgā* and *Mahiṣāsura* wherein Goddess *Durgā* fiercely yet with grace conquered the evil. The play ended with melodious *Mahiṣāsura Mardini Stotram* led by Chinmaya Swaranjali, and the entire courtyard was reverberating in the spirit of victory!

Tenth graders introduced the significance of *Navarātrī* wherein during the first three nights Goddess *Durgā* is invoked to remove the impurities from the mind. Goddess *Lakṣmī* is invoked thereafter to cultivate the noble values and qualities. And finally, *Sarasvatī Devī* is invoked for gaining the highest knowledge of the Self. This is the significance of the nine nights, and when all these are gained then there is *Vijayadaśamī*, the day of true victory! As we can see, the theme of the entire Scriptures is reflected in the *Navarātrī* festival: Purifying the mind, removing all negativities, cultivating positive virtues, gaining spiritual knowledge and transcending limitations. This is the real victory - the dance of joy

-Shreya Sapkal and Manasi Popat









## Gītā Mahotsav and Tapovana Jayanti on Dec 8, 2019

The *Gītā* is a total and exhaustive summary of the philosophy of the Upanishads and though it reads as simple and elementary, in its import and deeper significances, the Divine Song exhausts the entire Knowledge. - Swami Chinmayananda.

Our Pujya Gurudev's words echoed in our minds as we all witnessed the unfoldment of the *Gītā* Mahotsav on December 8, 2019. CMSD *Gītā* Mahotsav was a magnificent way of celebrating *Gītā* Jayanti - a perfect homage to our Pujya Parama Gurdev Tapovana Maharaj on his *Jayanti* day.



sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ

The highlight was the grand opening - *Gītā Dhyānam* up to *sarvopaniṣado gāvo*, where all the *Upaniṣad-s* sprang to life, represented by the cows. This was followed by the opening of the curtains and revelation of the Kurukshetra scene - coming straight out of chapters 1 to 3.





We will always cherish the messages beautifully portayed by *Kṛṣṇa* and Arjuna and the eighth graders. Chanting the entire *Bhagavad Gītā* has a beauty and power of its own, and I got to experience it first hand on the *Gītā Mahotsav* day, which was priceless. Interspersed with workshops, quizzes, children's activities, *kathaland* and *bhajans* made the environment so lively special and memorable. Just like God is the thread upon which we, the individual pearls, are strung, *Gītā mātmyam* weaved us in its meaning and melody.



The concluding message of carrying a personal pocket *Bhagavad Gītā* and referring to it few times a day was indeed very powerful and inspiring! The *Bhagavad Gītā* is an infinite ocean of wisdom. But however incomprehensible its vastness, it's never daunting; it beckons and nudges one gently to take a dip in its sublime waters. And every time one does so, there are exquisite gems in store for the taking.

-Manasi Popat and Smita Bhatia





## *Gītā Mahotsav* related Reflections

Starting with the *Bhagavad Gītā* puja to the *Gītā mātmyam* and *Gītā āratī* at the end of the day, we immersed ourselves joyfully in the *Gītā* and basked in its teachings. *Gītā Dhyānam* verse enacted by the docile Bala Vihar cows and the chariot with the despondent Arjuna and the resplendent *Kṛṣṇa* followed with the chanting of Chapter 1 made the chanting more meaningful and we eagerly looked for what was enacted in front of our eyes for the first few chapters. -**Lalitha Kumar**

*Gītā Mohotsav* was truly memorable - only with a thorough vision, proper discipline, co-operation, self dedication and working together as a Chinmaya Mission Family with the spirit of sacrifice any achievement is possible. -**Santoshi Kelkar**

*Gītā Jayanti* is such a special occasion; it was an opportunity for me to remember God's own song and remind myself of the power of *Gītā* in my daily life. The atmosphere during the *Gītā* chanting was divine -**Kumar Basavanahlli**

The chariot was a pleasant surprise and the explanation before chanting each chapter was very useful. -**Parag Kelkar**

We had been mentally preparing for weeks before by chanting Chapter 7 of *Bhagavad Gītā* and getting familiar with reciting the verses. On Sunday, we completely soaked ourselves in the introduction and recitation of the *Gītā*. I don't think I will ever forget the young ones dressed as cows representing the *upaniṣad-s* and Lord *Kṛṣṇa* who has milked these treasure houses of supreme knowledge in the form of *Gītā*. When we read the verses of *Gītā* we appreciate the timeless wisdom within, but to see and hear Lord *Kṛṣṇa* and Arjuna made the chapters come alive! Spending and entire day focused on *Gītā* was a rare opportunity that I feel blessed to have been a small part of. Lakshmi Auntie's parting advise to make *Gītā* a central part of my life really elevated my inspiration. I now keep my pocket Gita on the family room table so I can read through it more regularly. -**Faith Prasad**



"Everybody is a leader" was the key message in the '**Leadership Skills**' workshop. I felt the attributes of a leader matches well to that of a spiritual seeker. A good leader is also working to fulfill a higher goal and fight against one's lower tendencies. Great Workshop!

-Mahesh Subramanian

The '**Karma Yoga In Parenting**' workshop was very useful. The acronym of parenting and the conversation with God struck a chord. I learned that patience is a key value. -PriyaSudarsan

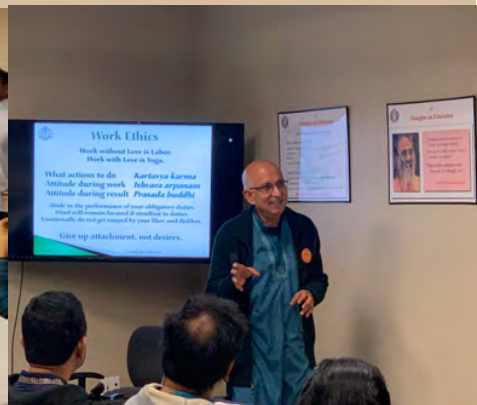
The expansion of the word Parenting was very useful. - Ashwin Mohan

'**Desire Management**' is the first lesson of Vedanta. The verses were aptly extracted from the Bhagavad Gita. My take away from the workshop - "fulfill your desires in such a way that the desire does not linger." -Sandhya Srinivasan

The '**Work Habits**' workshop was very practical and can be applied to every work situation. It was well organized. Doing work without attachment was the key message. I also liked the message "Serve-Deserve". -Radhachandran Padmanabhan

The '**Work Habits**' workshop was geared towards working professionals and apt for the *āśrama* I am in. I understood that I may have too many hurdles but running away from them does not help me. I also learned about what attitude I should have towards my work, my priorities and not run behind desires that let your mind wander. -Priya Venkitaraman

The '**Work Habits**' workshop helped me to look at duty as worship without attachment to the results. -Amarnath Puttur





## Coloring



Coloring was one of the favorite activities for children at the *Gītā Mahotsav*. Every Image was carefully chosen by Lakshmi aunty on *Srimad Bhagavad Gītā* theme. The expressions and the detailing of those images were amazing. *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* word search was popular among older kids. I truly believe that these Images of our valuable text will remain in their heart forever. I was glad to be part of this and happy to see the joyful expression of children while they color.

-Ramya Mahesh

## Kathaland



At *Gītā Mahotsav* 2019, 30-40 children were enraptured by the skit and interactive stories presented by the Kathaland team.

-Sumathi Vinay



## Game Booths



I liked the Trivia Booth where I learned the general facts about *Bhagavad Gītā*  
 -Sarika Pasumarthy , Grade 10

I can understand the names of Lord Krishna and Arjuna better as I chant the *Gītā* , thanks to the Gamesbooth.  
 -Arushi Bharadwaj, Grade9

During the whole day we reveled in the Knowledge of *Gītā* , and different aspects of it. Many children stopped by the booth “Has *Gītā* gone through you”, a quiz game to test how much you know about basics of the *Gītā* . Overall it felt absolutely divine to spend the whole day, chanting, reflecting and reveling in *Gītā* . I always look forward to *Gītā Jayanti* every year.  
 -Uma Aggarwal

## Art Work on Display







## Hinduism Workshop on Nov 10, 2019

The workshop on Hinduism held at Chinmaya Jyoti, San Diego on November 10, 2019 by Lakshmi Aunty, gave a succinct overview on Hinduism or *Sanātana Dharma* and also served to answer many questions from the audience. Besides CMSD members, representatives of the interfaith community and teachers from local schools attended the event. Many important topics such as law of karma, stages of life, vegetarianism and the true meaning of *Varṇāśrama* were presented in a concise manner. The workshop dispelled many common misunderstandings regarding Hinduism. For **Deepa Rungta** it was a powerful reminder of what it means to be a Hindu. For ninth graders like **Arushi Bharadwaj**, the workshop was a revision of some of the topics learned in class and at summer camp, as well as a nice exposure to new information." **Rishi Halker** and many others felt that they learned a lot at the workshop. There were breakouts to further discuss and clarify questions that the attendees had. The Universal *Sanātana Dharma* gives the code of righteous living to individuals from all all walks of life. I would recommend everyone to attend this workshop at the next available opportunity as there is something new to learn every time.

-Mahesh Subramanian







## Anuboothi, a Classical Dance Program - Oct 20 2019

An eager audience of *rasika-s* gathered in the serene courtyard of Chinmaya Jyoti San Diego as the Kala Jyoti wing of CMSD showcased its first dance seva performance, a new production entitled 'Anuboothi' by young visiting artist **Vijayashri Vittal** from India. The performance was well chosen and delivered on the ashram's promise of "Unto Him Our Best." As the *NāṭyaKarma* from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* states: "Keep your throat full of song, Let your hands bring out the meaning, May your glance be full of expression, While your feet maintain the rhythm." This was most certainly captured by Vijayashri as she danced to the recording of her own voice with a grand orchestra. The graceful dancer's humility and service-minded offering at the feet of Pujya Gurudev was evident, as she opened with *Durgā Devī* Durita Nivariṇi in raga Navarasa Kannada capturing the various aspects of *Devī* in her many forms. The main piece of the evening, the Lalgudi Jayaraman Varṇam in *rāga cārukesi*, 'Innum En Manam Theriyadavarpol' portrayed the beauty of the relationship between the Flute and *Kṛṣṇa*, as an analogy of the Jivatama's search for Paramatma. Vijayashri's voice interlaced with brilliant flute interludes brought out the experience of the yearning in the true and committed spiritual seeker. Though her *Nṛitya* fell short of completeness at times, the sweetness of her voice and her grace overshadowed those elements and lent nostalgia in the *rasika* to embark on a similar journey of assuaging one's worries at the Feet of the Lord. The program concluded with *kākkai siraginile nandalālā* by Tamil Poet Bharathiyar in *Rāgamālīka* with ideas reminiscent of Chapter 10 in The Bhagavad Gita where the dancer divinizes everyday experiences by showcasing various themes that point to the Supreme's charm. The most thrilling of these experientially, was in the line "Kettkum oliyellaam nandalālā" (in all the sounds we hear, it is only you The Supreme). Here, the true beauty of this piece was highlighted. Laya was produced with no mridangam and solely through the arrangement of the violin to provide the beat along with the interludes of the masterful flute to move the *rasika's* soul as we could perceptibly hear the Supreme in every sound. Adding to the effect was the simplicity and honesty of Vijayashri's abhinaya. All in all, the performance was conclusively a fitting start to the first of what we hope will be many such quality presentations in the coming years at CMSD.

-Priya Narthakii

As a dancer myself, I could feel and appreciate her passion and dedication towards carnatic music and classical dance form of Bharatanatyam. Dancing to one's own voice is quite rare as well. I thoroughly enjoyed the performance by Vijayashri Vittal and I wish her all the very best in all future endeavors. -Suba Venkatesh

Vijayashri's joy in her chosen field, her passion and attention to detail were quite evident in her performance. In a nutshell, a spiritually uplifting experience for both the dancer and the audience. -Lalitha Kumar





## Dīpāvalī Celebrations on October 27, 2019

On October 27, 2019, *Dīpāvalī* was celebrated at Chinmaya Mission San Diego in a festive way. The auspicious morning began with invocation of *Śrī* Jyoti Vinayaka followed by offering of flowers at the holy altars of Swami Tapovana Maharaj and Pujya Gurudev. This was followed by *Lakṣmī pūjā* conducted by Lakshmi Aunty. *Śrī Mahālakṣmī Ṣoḍaśopacāra* was performed where in *Śrī Sūkta* was chanted and kumkum was offered while singing the 108 names of *Śrī Mahālakṣmī Devī*. Flowers were offered while reciting the *aṅga pūjā aṣṭōttara* worshipping every limb of the Divine goddess. As is the CMSD tradition, our Bala Vihar children participated actively by performing *Lakṣmī pūjā* accompanied by their parents. Continuing with another CMSD tradition, the Grade 7 Bala Vihar students enacted the play of *Kṛṣṇa* defeating *Narakāśura* to release 16,000 maidens and thereby presented the symbolism of self-control which everyone could derive from this story. The audience applauded with amazement as a beautiful shower of flower petals fell upon *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, after his victory over *Narakā*.



The beauty of the celebration was further enhanced several bhajans offered by CMSD Dhvani and Swaranjali choir – starting with the joy-filled *Dīpāvalī Pandigai Kondadalam* and followed by several songs such as the meditative *Mahā Lakṣmī Jaganmatah* and Agastya Muni's composition '*Jaya Devī Jaya Devī Jaya Matah Kamale*'. The celebration reached a crescendo when everyone danced the *Rasa Garba* to the singing of '*Dīpa Jale..*'. Another special tradition that all CMSD members look forward to is the one where continuing CMSD member families serve lunch to new member families in order to warmly welcome them into the CMSD family.

-Ashwin Mohan





Being a new member at CMSD and having witnessed the grandeur of Dussera festival at the āśrama, I was now eagerly waiting for the Dīpāvalī celebration too. And it did prove to be equally energizing. All the members, gracefully dressed, arrived at the āśrama which welcomed us all with a colorful rangoli design at the entrance. With warm "Hari OM" greetings, we entered the divine Pranava Nilayam where a beautiful altar of Goddess Lakṣmī was erected. The Mother seemed to be waiting to see and bless all Her joyful children. All the women were blessed with the sacred kumkum from the Lotus Feet of the Goddess. The entire celebration showed me how each and every member worked together as one family, with intense involvement and huge coordination to make the event most blissful to every participant. **-Sai Sreelakshmi**

The *Dīpāvalī* celebration this year was truly amazing and fun. With the blessings of Mother *Lakṣmī* and Pujya Gurudev the festival was fantastic. The different approaches to why *Dīpāvalī* is celebrated was very informative. The rasa garba and singing was very interactive and gave joy to everyone. On that auspicious day, we were able to worship the Mother *Lakṣmī* but also mingle with our friends and enjoy ourself! **-Hemadarshani Rajendran, Grade 8**

CMSD member as well as Bal Vihar Sevika added - It was a wonderful experience to celebrate *Dīpāvalī*. This year's celebrations presented a nice perspective of how *pūjā* is associated with different aspects and not just wealth. The presentation of the kids tied in with the festival wonderfully and gave an opportunity get to know the different stories based on which the festival is celebrated in different parts of India. **-Padmaja Menon**





# WE ARE BALA VIHAR – The Voice of CMSD Youth

## Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a time of being surrounded with family, eating good food, and having an overall great time, but of course as the name intended, the holiday is highly centered around the concept of thankfulness and being grateful for what God has given us. All around the world, there are people who have less, if not any, access to basic needs. Given that we are blessed to attend Balavihar, live in a safe community, and have easy access to safe water and food, we must be humble and grateful for what God has blessed us with. With great “power”, or easy access to needs in our case, comes great responsibility. Think about it. How could we possibly be able to pay back our parents for raising us our whole lives, thank our Gurus for teaching us these great values we use throughout our lives, or to God for blessing us with this safe lifestyle with easy access to basic needs? It’s practically impossible! Thankfully, there are many other ways to express our gratitude. We can donate to charities, conserve materials, and reduce waste. We can also volunteer and serve others. We should reduce our plastic use, reduce carbon emissions, and not waste food. Doing all of this will help us leave a better life for our future generations, but more importantly, be grateful and give back to Mother Earth and God for the safe life we are blessed with.

- Vaishavi Jayashankar

## New Year, New You

The beginning of each new year marks the start of a fresh beginning, with new responsibilities, goals, and resolutions that we work towards fulfilling throughout the year. These goals and resolutions could be as little as making the bed every single day, or as ambitious as striving to reduce the impact of global warming. One of the projects, led by Grade 9, focuses on feeding the homeless through food drives. The goal of this project is to give things that we have in abundance to those in need, and serve others. Along with this project, our high schoolers have been making plans to raise awareness on the effects of plastic on global warming as well as the minimization of plastic use. By setting goals that we want to accomplish throughout the year, we develop the ability to focus our minds on something we want to achieve while helping others in need.

-Ananya Bharathwaj

## Story Time - Vāmana Avatār

This quarter, we celebrated the festival of *Dīpāvali* at our ashram. Each one of the five days of *Dīpāvali* have a special meaning and a story behind them. The festival of Bali Pratipada is celebrated on the fourth day of *Dīpāvali* in some parts of India and recognizes the victory of Lord *Viṣṇu* over King Bali. King Bali was extremely generous and brave, as well as a steadfast devotee of Lord *Viṣṇu*. He had conquered the entire world, including the Heavens. Upon seeing her children, the *Devatās*, deprived of their kingdom, Mother Aditi reverently prayed to Lord *Viṣṇu* and asked him to be born as her child. Lord Vishnu responded that he would be born on the Earth as the *Vāmana* avatar and assist the *Devatās* in gaining back their kingdom. Shortly afterward, as King Bali was performing an *Aśvamedha Yajña*, a small boy (Lord *Viṣṇu*) showed up before him. Although he was oblivious of the fact that the boy was Lord *Viṣṇu*, King Bali felt a compelling feeling of love towards the boy. The king welcomed him with respect and asked the boy how he could help him. King Bali prompted the boy to express his desires. The boy replied, “I only want as much land as I can cover in three steps.” The *asuras* present at the assembly began to laugh at this simple request, but as soon as they did, the boy began to increase in size. He grew so big that his first two steps covered the entire Earth and sky. “Where shall I place my last step King Bali?” Lord *Viṣṇu* asked. “O Lord, please place your last step on my head,” King Bali responded humbly. Lord *Viṣṇu* then placed his foot on Bali’s head and pushed him underground to *pāṭhalā*, appointing him as the king of *pāṭhalā*. Lord *Viṣṇu* was pleased with Bali’s devotion and granted Bali the boon that he would be allowed to visit the earth on Bali Pratipada every year. This is why we worship Bali on this day and welcome him to our homes.

- Arushi Bharadwaj

# CMSD in the community

## CMSD at the Bicentenary celebrations of 'The Birth of the Bab'

On **October 27, 2019** Chinmaya Dhvani Choir led by Lakshmi Aunty presented a beautiful universal prayer "*Om Tat Sat Śrī Nārāyaṇa Tu*" - highlighting the underlying unity of all the religions at a celebration honoring unity and diversity organized by the Baha'i group of Oceanside. The Choir also performed a *bhajan* with mesmerizing beats highlighting the *Dīpāvalī* celebrations. It was a heartwarming event, simple yet powerful presentations by groups from different religious backgrounds.

My experience at the Baha'i gathering was special. It felt great to sing in front of many different people from different cultures and backgrounds. I enjoyed the different songs, prayers, and skits from varied religions. -Aditi Bharadwaj – Grade 6

I enjoyed the first act because I got to see all the different religions and their main teachings, and they all pointed out the same Truth. The presentation was done in a very nice and simple way with glow in the dark effects. It was a wonderful experience to represent my religion through a universal prayer and bhajan. -Isha Popat – Grade 6



## CMSD at the Francis-Parker Diversity Panel

In today's age of increasing diversity, it becomes inevitable for a spiritual organization to have a presence in a larger and more visible way. Keeping this at core, CMSD strives in making it's mark as a prominent spiritual organization by taking active interest and part in events that uphold spirituality. On **October 29, 2019**, Lakshmi Aunty featured as one of the panelists at a Diversity Panel held by Francis Parker School. The program was conducted in order to create awareness of diversity amongst various religions, and understand the importance of acceptance of these diverse concepts. Atheism and why the need of religion was beautifully brought out by Lakshmi Aunty in a Vedantic way, and the essence of *Sanātana dharma* was expounded.

- Manasi Popat







On **November 3, 2019** CMSD joined the Sikh community to celebrate the 550th birth anniversary of their founder prophet Guru Nanak in Poway, California.



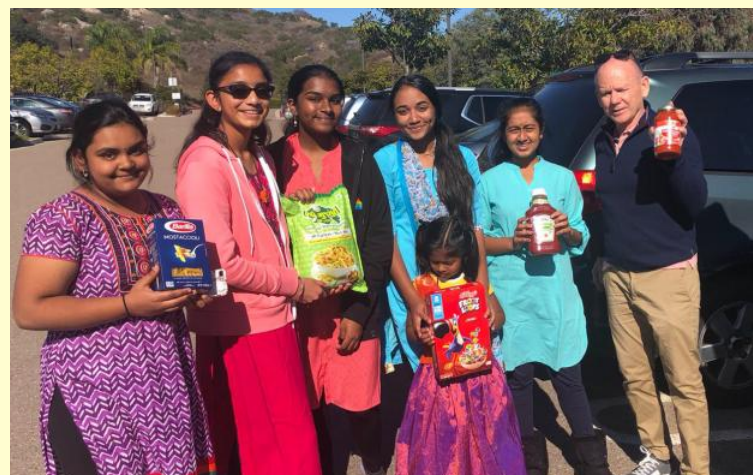
On **November 20, 2019** CMSD participated in the eleventh annual POINT Interfaith Thanksgiving Service in San Diego. It was a wonderful event that showcased how different religions can come together to express their gratitude towards the One underlying Truth.

-Manasi Popat

## CMSD Food drive

This year CMSD had arranged a food drive with the Interfaith organization during the festive season in order to give back to the community. I had the opportunity to lead this project along with Swetha Bala of Grade 9. The CMSD food drive was a great success thanks to all the generous donations made by all the members.

-Neha Mahesh, Grade 9



## Halloween the Chinmaya way

On the beautiful afternoon of **October 26, 2019** the 3rd and 4th grade balavihar classes celebrated Halloween the Chinmaya way, with a Ramayana dress up party. Students had fun choosing a favorite character to come dressed as, and even more fun guessing who everyone was. Prizes were awarded to one student per grade for originality and effort for their costume. For a few hours, we had fun bringing the lessons we learn in class to the lawn of the ashram. Lessons like patience, discipline, teamwork, focusing our mind, and the joy of singing the praises of the Lord. We rounded out the fun with homemade snacks and fruit.

- Faith Prasad



**PUJYA GURUJI SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA**



*That which is ever new and fresh,  
that alone is Good, Real and Beautiful.*

*May this New Year bring you  
ever greater Goodness, Happiness and Success.*