

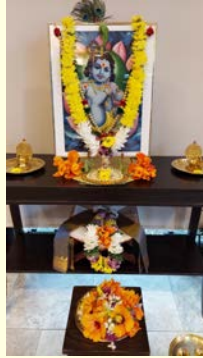
CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

CMSD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Devī Mahātmyam</i>	2
Personality Development Workshop	3
The Legend of <i>Mahīṣāsūramardini</i>	4
Symbolism of <i>Navarātrī</i>	6
<i>Śrī Sarasvatī Pūjā</i>	7
<i>Vijayadaśamī</i> - Celebrating Victory!	9
Gearing towards <i>Dīpāvalī</i> Festivities	10
<i>Śubha Dīpāvalī</i>	11
<i>Śrī Tapovana Jayanti</i> and <i>Gītā Jayanti</i>	17
CMSD Ongoing Events	20
CMSD In The Community	23
Shishu Vihar Corner	25
Bala Vihar Corner	26
BV Youth Corner	33



The key events featured in this issue are the *Dīpāvalī* festivities during October 2022, *Gītā Jayanti* and *Śrī Tapovana Jayanti* celebrations observed in December 2022. This quarter commenced with the *Devī Mahātmyam* - glorifying the *divya Śakti* and *Navarātrī* celebrations. CMSD conducted a Personality Development Workshop and participated in POINT Interfaith community events.



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."

Devī Mahātmayam

On the sixth day of *Navarātrī*, **October 1, 2022**, CMSD members participated in the chanting of the *Devī Mahātmayam*. It is a majestic poetry in *Saṃskṛtam* with thirteen chapters of 700 verses, composed by sage *Markaṇḍeya*. Each chapter describes the glory of *Devī Mā* and the destruction of the many *asura-s*. The chanting filled the surroundings with divinity.



Gira Pandya shared, “While chanting the *Mahātmayam*, we come to understand that *Mā* is the *Śakti* of all. She is the abode for all to realize divinity within and without....It was very peaceful to be at the *āśrama* for this event.”

For **Mamatha Puttur**, “It was a great *satsaṅga* of glories of the Divine Mother, which keeps us on the path of victory of our mind’s inner battle between good and bad.”

In the words of **Mrs. Mahalakshmi Ananthakrishnan**, grandmother of **Rohini Karthika Manda**, “On my visit to San Diego during this year's *Navarātrī*, I got to participate in the programs of CMSD. Everyday there was chanting of two chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā*. There was also *bhajan sandhyā* and chanting of *Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma* and *Devī Mahātmayam*. I was feeling very blessed and fulfilled chanting all these with the CMSD members. It is really heartening to see that a beautiful schedule has been made in the mission to engage in worship during these auspicious occasions. The dedication and love with which everyone participated and even made *prasāda* everyday was wonderful.”

Personality Development Workshop

CMSD hosted a “**Personality Development Workshop**” for children Grade 6 and above on **October 2, 2022**. *Navarātrī* is a perfect time to unleash the divine qualities and cultivate a victorious personality!

It was an interactive session wherein children expressed the key features that form the first impressions of a personality, the values to imbibe in order to enhance a personality, and also the qualities to efface for victory or success.

To experience joy in performing daily duties and to always Keep Smiling were at the core of the discussion. A very important quality of forgiveness was beautifully weaved in with the daily prayer, *karacaraṇakṛtām vākkāyajam karmajam vā*, highlighting the importance of seeking forgiveness for our inadvertence in our daily actions.

Ria Kotta, Grade 6, shared, “In this Personality Development Workshop, I had an opportunity to think more deeply into the qualities that I want to develop and the qualities that I want to overcome. ...we discussed who we look up to and the qualities they have. I found this workshop very helpful and meaningful.”

Tanya Pillalamarri, Grade 6, added, “I learned many important things today that will help me become a better person. Some of the topics that really stuck out were: to not procrastinate, to be “Less Irritated” and last but not the least to “Smile more” just like Pujya Gurudev says!”

For **Isha Popat**, Grade 9, “One thing that I took from the personality workshop was the value of first impressions....Talking about the qualities that I would like to take on and the ones that I would like to get rid of helped me think about what I should do to become a better person....”



The Legend of *Mahiṣāsūramardini*

On October 2, 2022, Bala Vihar Grade 5 children enacted the Legend of *Mahiṣāsūramardini*. They depicted the scene of Goddess *Durgā* triumphantly defeating *Mahiṣāsūra*, the buffalo demon.



The evil king had attained a boon from Lord *Brahmā* that he would not be killed by a man, animal or God. Endowed with this boon and the thirst for power, *Mahiṣāsūra* and his army defeated the *devā-s* and conquered the three worlds.



The Legend of *Mahiṣāsūramardini*



All the Gods joined their powers to manifest Goddess *Durgā*, who killed *Mahiṣāsura* and saved the world from the evil king. The skit was informative and entertaining.



The play was followed by the chanting of the *Mahiṣāsūramardini Stotram* and *garbā* in praise of Goddess *Durgā*.

Symbolism of *Navarātrī*



In continuation of the *Navarātrī* celebrations of **October 2, 2022**, students of **Bala Vihar Grade 10** presented the significance of each day of *Navarātrī*. The presentation highlighted the importance of worshiping *Mā Durgā* - the Goddess of destruction, *Mā Lakṣmī* - the Goddess of spiritual wealth, and *Mā Sarasvatī* - the Goddess of the Highest Knowledge.

During the first three days, the destruction power of *Mā Durgā* is invoked to get rid of all the negativities - *Tamas*. Once the *tāmasik* tendencies are annihilated, the worship of Goddess *Lakṣmī* enables the creation of good virtues - *Ṣaṭsampatti*. With gaining the purity of mind and clarity for one's own life, the last three days of *Navarātrī* are dedicated for Self Knowledge - through the worship of Goddess *Sarasvatī*. The tenth day is the culmination of the festivities through victory over the ten headed *Rāvaṇa* - our own ego, and the goal of our life is to establish *Lord Rāma* within our heart.

What a beautiful reminder to ourselves that *Navarātrī* comes and goes every year...however, are we pausing to evaluate our personal spiritual growth? The presentation concluded by shedding light on the manifold ways each region within India celebrates the *Navarātrī* festival.

Śrī Sarasvatī Pūjā



The special day of *Sarasvatī pūjā* was celebrated on **October 4, 2022**. The event commenced with the chanting of *Bhagavadgītā* chapters 17 and 18, followed by the chanting of *Śārada-stotram*. **Lakshmi Auntie** beautifully explained the significance of worshiping *Sarasvatī devī*. She personifies wisdom and speech.



Auntie also highlighted that for true success and happiness we need both the worldly knowledge and the spiritual knowledge from our scriptures. Hence, we pray to *Sarasvatī Devī* in the form of books, musical instruments, computers and everything that is a means for knowledge. The *pustaka mandala pūjā* signifies the worship of the knowledge aspect. The vehicles of Mother *Sarasvatī*, the peacock and the swan, denote the worldly achievements and the *viveka* that helps us distinguish between the Real and the Unreal respectively.

Śrī Sarasvatī Pūjā



All the present children actively participated by offering *Aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvali* to their own *Sarasvatī Devī* picture. *Praṇava Nilayam* reverberated with the chanting of *Śrī Sarasvatī stotram*. Following which, **Chinmaya Dhvani** offered a few songs.

A special melodious offering of *Vara Vīṇā* and *Mātā Sarasvatī* was also made by young Carnatic singers on this auspicious day.

The celebrations concluded with some more *bhajans*, *ārati* and *prasādam*.



Priya Garcia shared, “Together, everyone welcomed *Sarasvatī Devī* to bless our studies, arts, and lives with knowledge and wisdom.”

Nagesh Nookala expressed, “*Sarasvatī pūjā* was conducted with great fervor. I enjoyed the *pūjā* and *bhajans*. Praying to the Divine Mother during *Navarātrī* as Goddess *Sarasvatī* is a great blessing for all students...”

For **Ritu Chandiramani** it was indeed a memorable experience, she added, “It was a blessed opportunity to be able to partake in the auspicious *Sarasvatī pūjā* along with my son.”



“May our children continue to have good guidance and protection under the great teachers at CMSD, basking in the glory of our Pujya Gurudev”, concluded **Jayesh Bhatija**.

Vijayadaśamī- Celebrating Victory!

Vijayadaśamī also marks the ceremonious beginning of learning-*Vidyārambha*. CMSD celebrated this Victorious Day on **October 5, 2022**. Following the *pūjā*, the first two verses from Chapter 3 of the *Bhagavadgītā* were chanted. **Amarnath Puttur**, leading Chinmaya Kala Jyoti *tabla* conducted *vidyārambha* for the new students, and **Rishi Halker**, a continuing *tabla* student, offered a *kaida* composition. *Bharatanāṭyam* students, led by **Smt. Subashinee Venkatesh**, commenced their learning with a beautiful presentation.



Gearing towards *Dīpāvalī* Festivities



Preparations for the *Dīpāvalī* festival commenced from **October 22, 2022**, with all *sevak-s* coming together at the *āśrama* for various activities. A festival as grand as *Dīpāvalī* creates a sense of community and joins all hands together in the spirit of service.



The students of **Bala Vihar Grade 7** also started preparations for their presentation a few weeks before the festival as they came together for weekly practices. As conveyed by **Saanvi Mishra**, “I am new to Bala Vihar and the best part of preparing for the Grade 7 presentation was interacting with all my classmates during the practices as it made me close with many of them.”



Śubha Dīpāvalī



Śubha Dīpāvalī



October 24, 2022, *Dīpāvalī* celebration at CMSD had two incredible highlights: 1. *Lakṣmī pūjā* guided by **Lakshmi Aunty** joined by eight CMSD *devi-s* as “*Aṣṭalakṣmī-s*”; and 2. Visual Presentation of the Legends of *Dīpāvalī*, “*Kṛṣṇa* and *Narakāśura*” by **Bala Vihar Grade 7** students; and a special depiction of the arrival of *Śrī Rāma* by several **Bala Vihar** students and **CHYKs**.

The vision of “One Big Family” celebrating and partaking from the *pūjā* was distinct during the event. With the advent of the celebrations, Joy and Harmony became more than just words amidst the scores of the CMSD members.

Lakṣmī pūjā offered by the *Aṣṭalakṣmī-s* was not only a treat for the eyes to see at once eight *devīs* in vibrant saris but also a fulfillment for the hearts to see them perform the *pūjā*.



Śubha Dīpāvalī



The celebration was interspersed with *bhajans* by CMSD Swaranjali and Dhvani choir. The first song, as always, was the joy-filled ‘Dīpāvalī Paṇḍigai Koṇḍāḍalam’ followed by *bhajans* such as the meditative ‘Mahālakṣmi Jaganmātaḥ’ and Agastya Muni’s composition “Jaya Devī Jaya Devī Jaya Mātaḥ Kamale”.



Śubha Dīpāvalī



Several **Grade 7 Bala Vihar** students who got the opportunity to participate in the class presentations shared their reflections.

Saatvic Mahesh, “It was fun to participate in the practice sessions as it helped me understand the significance of *Dīpāvalī* as well as work together with my classmates.”

Achintya Puttur, “I enjoyed working and preparing for the presentation with my class. The experience taught me about the importance of teamwork and eloquence of speech.”

Avi Patel, “Even though I have witnessed the play on “*Kṛṣṇa* and *Narakāśura* several times, I grasped the legend and the symbolism the most this time when I presented it with my grade! It was great to see the audience reaction when all the little girls rushed to garland *Kṛṣṇa*.”



Śubha Dīpāvalī



In the words of **Bhamini Gobiraj**, “I was able to let my guard down in this environment as I was overcome with bliss and an undeniable affirmation of meaning and purpose....It was not just happiness that I was granted, as I also felt the devotion to **Lord Rāma** swell within my heart.Every moment in the *Dīpavali* celebration felt like a closer and closer step towards God.”



Śubha Dīpāvalī



The CMSD tradition of current families serving dinner to the new CMSD families was fulfilled by the environmentally friendly vegetarian food that consisted of sweets, idli, puris, dhokla and side dishes complementing the experience!

Such a grand occasion as this powerfully highlights that one's spiritual journey need not be experienced as a secluded and isolated being. And that True Happiness need not remain only as a goal but as an active way of life - both internally and externally.

A few CMSD new members shared their experience of this year's *Dīpāvalī* celebrations.



Alok Akolkar and Nikita, "It has been a little less than a year since we relocated to San Diego. The *Dīpāvalī* event was a spiritually uplifting experience. We felt welcomed by the continuing members who cooked delicious food and served with utmost love. We were impressed to see kids from all age groups performing in the skits devoted to stories of Lord *Rāma* and Lord *Kṛṣṇa* pertinent to the *Dīpāvalī* celebration. We are looking forward to seeing our children growing up in this "*Adhyātmik*" and "*Sātvik*" environment of *Chinmaya Jyoti*!"

Vivek Gangadharan and Rakhee, "CMSD *Dīpāvalī* festival was fantastic. We got to perform the *pūjā* which was very good, as we do not get such an opportunity at many places. Not to mention, the skit was icing on the cake. Good to know why we celebrate *Dīpāvalī* both in North Indian and South Indian ways. Last but not the least the food was fantastic - we got food for thought and food for stomach as well."

Divita, "It was nice to see how *Lakṣmī pūjā* is performed, and the whole festival was organized beautifully."

Śrī Tapovana Jayanti and Gītā Jayanti

Śrī Tapovana Jayanti and Gītā Jayanti were celebrated on **December 3, 2022**. The evening started with the invocation of the blessings of Śrī Tapovan Maharaj, by chanting Śrī Tapovana *aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvali* followed by Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā *aṣṭottara pūjā*.



Śrī Tapovana Jayanti and Gītā Jayanti



BV Grade 8 students offered the *Gītā Dhyānam*. The *āśrama* was filled with the divine vibrations of the *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* chanting by all for the next several hours, led by the melodious voice of **Sindhu Narasimha** (Grade 12), accompanied by her sister **Katyayini Narasimha** (Grade 8).

Śrī Tapovana Jayanti and Gītā Jayanti



The event culminated with **Lakshmi Aunty** chanting the *Gītā Mahātmyam*, reminding us of the glory and importance of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*. A special treat brought to us by **Aunty and Uncle - Dvārkādhīśa pedha prasāda** from Gujarat, was indeed a sweet surprise, in addition to their surprise presence that day.

CMSD Ongoing Events

Monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇā*

October 15, 2022

CMSD Ongoing Events

Monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇā*

November 19, 2022



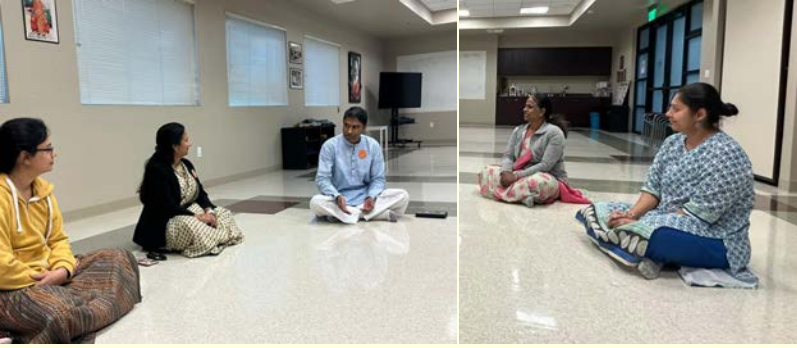
December 24, 2022

CMSD Ongoing Events

Monthly *Saṁskṛti Pālakās* Meeting



The first monthly meeting of *Saṁskṛti Pālakās* took place on **October 23, 2022**. Mothers shared their personal benefits of *satsaṅga* and discussed the goals and importance of such a positive *saṅgha*. Upholding to the age old and tested practices of daily living certainly entails patience and faith; and makes such a *saṅgha* a blessing for all the members!



November 20, 2022, *Saṁskṛti Pālakās* meeting focused on Pujya Gurudev's Speech, "Planet in Crisis" at the United Nations. The powerful words of Pujya Gurudev echoed all the minds, "Through individual perfection alone, world perfection can be aspired." As custodians of *sanātana dharma*, how we can translate this into our everyday living was at the core of the discussion.



Saṁskṛti Pālakās meet on **December 18, 2022** revisited the topics covered through the year 2022 and discussed new goals for the upcoming year.

CMSD In The Community

POINT Interfaith Thanksgiving Service



On **November 15, 2022**, CMSD participated in the **POINT Interfaith Thanksgiving Service *Simunye - We are one/I see you.*** People belonging to different religions came together and celebrated the oneness in all of us. All the performances and speeches at this event were heartwarming. Children choir sang about likening the scriptures and presented with soulful music. Speakers shared experiences in “Simunye Story” format of how people found peace by helping fellow beings in distress and how miracles happened to those that had unshakable faith.

The entire evening was well spent in offering our gratitude to the Almighty. Although we read different scriptures drafted in various languages, the essence of all these scriptures is the same – We are One! In this divisive world, having such a unifying community is a true blessing.

Sandhya Srinivasan (CMSD participant) expressed, “I was delighted to see our teachings expressed in different ways in all other faiths. The oneness that enabled us to see all fellow people of various religions, in the same light, was a unique experience that can be felt only by being there.”

For **Rahul Iyengar** (Grade 12 participant), “It was very interesting to see that all the different faiths have the same core concept of Love for Everyone and seeing God in every one of us.”

Isha Popat (Grader 9 participant) shared, “One take away that I had was the effect of one smile. I am going to make it a focus in my life to make sure to smile at everyone I meet. This point really stood out to me because I know how it feels to have a person who I might not know that will greet me or even just smile at me.”

CMSD In The Community

Festival Of Lights Interfaith Event



CMSD Swaranjali and Dhvani choir participated in the **Festival of Lights Interfaith Event** held at Ner Tamid Synagogue on **December 18, 2022**. **Lakshmi Aunty** shared the significance of *Dīpavalī* according to the Legends from North and South India, and briefly introduced the song performed by the **CMSD Choir**, “*dīpa jale maṅgala ke āja...*”. As a memento, **Lakshmi Aunty** presented the *Bhagavadgītā* book along with the Chinmaya Jyoti to **Rabbi Sammy Seid** from Ner Tamid Synagogue.

Shishu Vihar Corner

SV3/SV4 Crafts



Bala Vihar Corner

BV Grade K Activities



Bala Vihar Corner

BV Grade 1

Children Engaged in Quiet Time - Labyrinth Walk



Class Activities



BV Grade 2

Celebrating *Gaṇeśa Caturthi*



Bala Vihar Corner

BV Grade 2

Enjoying *Kṛṣṇa Līlā* action songCelebrating *Bālakṛṣṇa janma*

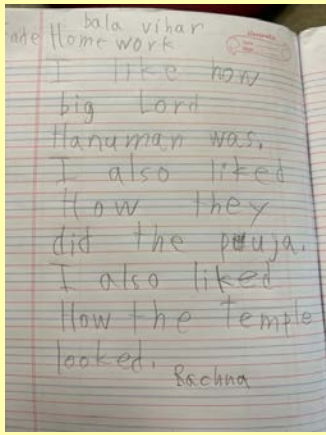
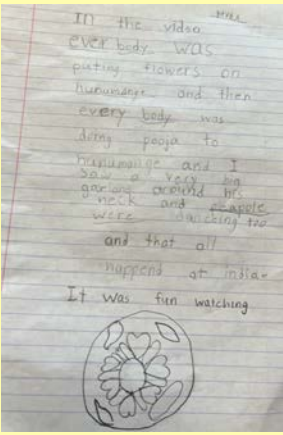
Bala Vihar Corner

BV Grade 3 Celebrating Śrī Sītā Rāma Kalyāṇam



Bala Vihar Corner

BV children watched the Video Presentation of the 9th Mastakābhīṣekam of Śrī Hanumān at Sidhbari, India



BV Grade 2 Students express in writing

BV Grade 6 Students express joy through dancing

BV Grade 4 Expressing Gratitude

We are indebted to each one of the five *ṛṇa* because without any of them we would not be able to have anything to be grateful for. I will express gratitude towards the pañca-*ṛṇa* by paying my respect to:

deva-ṛṇa - by lighting the lamp, chanting the prayers daily...

ṛṣi-ṛṇa - by offering my *praṇāma* to the *ṛṣi-s* for giving us the knowledge and blessing us to learn the mantras...

pitṛ-ṛṇa - I will offer my gratitude to my ancestors by doing right things for my family...

bhūta-ṛṇa - I love nature. I will take care of nature by planting more trees at school, in my garden, at the ashram and sowing seeds with my friends and family...

nṛ-ṛṇa - I will be kind to my friends and all the people around me. I will be grateful for my teachers, uncles and aunties at the ashram, doctors...

- Anuj Kelkar

We express gratitude to **deva-ṛṇa** by doing *pūjā*; **ṛṣi-ṛṇa** by respecting our teachers and keenly listening; **pitṛ-ṛṇa** by carrying on the religion and traditions; **bhūta-ṛṇa** by not plucking out plants or destroying animal habitats.

- Samanyu Sudi

I can show gratitude to all living beings, *devā-s* and the great seers by remembering them often and paying heed to the lessons taught by them.

I am grateful for being alive, everybody who has helped me, everybody who taught me, my friends, and my family.

- Reva Appani

Bala Vihar Corner

BV Grade 4 Expressing Gratitude

I am indebted to:

deva-ṛṇa for giving me healthy jiva(life). I will pay back by chanting and praying to God.

ṛṣi-ṛṇa for the knowledge and culture. I will pay back by following a good path.

pitṛ-ṛṇa for giving me this body. I will pay back by taking care of my parents and listening to them, and keeping them happy.

bhūta-ṛṇa for giving us food, air, water, fire. I will pay back by taking care of the planet.

nara-ṛṇa for giving me friendship. I will pay back by serving others, and not harming anyone.

The five things I am grateful for - family, earth, God, food, friends.

- Rishav Menon

We are indebted to each one of the five *ṛṇa* because we all work together to survive.

Devā-s: They show me the right path.

Great Seers: They share wisdom.

Ancestors: They teach right or wrong.

Nature: Nature gives me food.

Other humans: They help me.

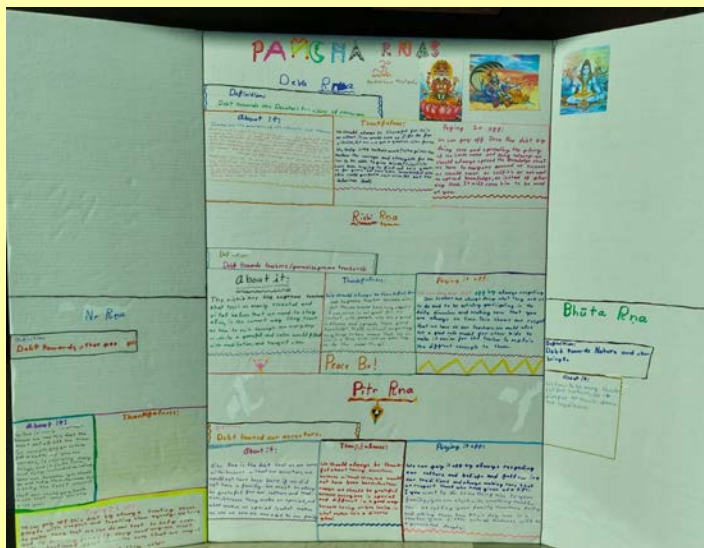
The five things I am grateful for - family and friends, the world we live in, food, life and water.

- Meenakshi Vangala

We are indebted to each of the five *ṛṇa* because we are meant to respect and be thankful for each one of them by understanding that they discovered and taught us expecting nothing in return.

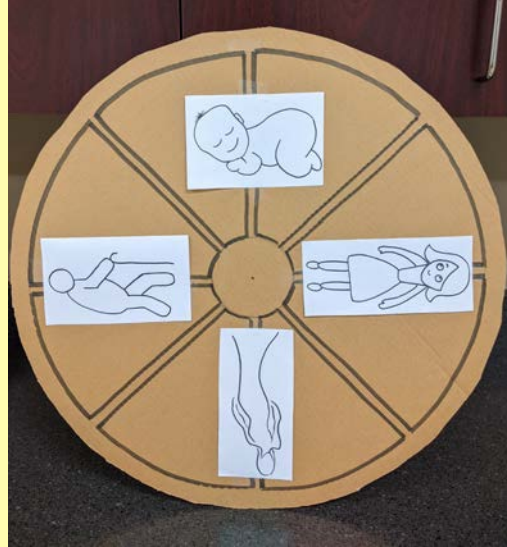
I will express gratitude to the five *ṛṇa* by seeing the good in everyone, including plants, animals and all the great seers who have done so much for us. Five things I am grateful for are family, food, a place to live, and knowledge.

- Arnavi Bathija



Bala Vihar Corner

BV Grade 10 Created The Wheel of Life and Rebirth



Aniket Chakradeo, “In Grade 10 we have been studying the teachings of *Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa* in the *Bhagavadgītā*. In the beginning of Chapter 2, *Bhagavān* tells a distraught Arjuna not to grieve over death. This is because while the body is temporary and is constantly changing and will eventually perish, the *Ātman* within us is immortal.

To represent this, we made the wheel of rebirth which depicts the different stages of life and how they will constantly repeat just like the turning of a wheel.”

BV Youth Corner

Zero Degree

This year, three CMSD high schoolers **Arushi Bharadwaj**, **Hemadarshini Rajendran** and **Shravani Prem**, and **Sukumar Uncle** are collaborating with Zero Degree Collaboratory (ZDC), an initiative of the Kozmetsky Global Collaboratory (KGC) at Stanford University. The aim of the Zero Degree Initiative is to drive a cooling economy in a future world where the global temperature rise is zero degrees.

Vision Statement:

Imagine a day in our lives that adds zero increase to our home planet's climate temperature. The Zero Degree Collaboratory is creating safe, innovative, entrepreneurial research and practice spaces. We are developing processes, methods and algorithms to create and track climate temperature reduction as the new economic asset. This new value creation will be the performance index of prosperity in the cooling economy.

Further information about the Zero Degree Collaboratory is available at:

<https://www.zerodegree.io/>

After having meetings with Dr. Shariq (Director of KGC/ZDC) to refine our group project idea, the team planned to create an mobile app called Personal Action on Climate Temperature (PACT). Features of the app include calculating the personal greenhouse gas footprint of high school students and other individuals, global temperature rise, and impact of GHG emissions on children's health. Finally, the app incentivizes people to take action by providing tips, promoting friendly competition, and allowing users to set goals. The purpose of the app is to gather data about GHG emissions as well as promote an eco-friendly lifestyle.

While creating this app, we have worked with Dr. Devesh Vashishtha (Devesh Uncle) and one of the Poway school district board members, Dr. Darshana Patel, in addition to Dr. Shariq and his colleagues at Stanford. With their guidance, the app is well on its way, and we plan to release it in the upcoming weeks. Furthermore, we have established a Zero Degree Lab club at DNHS and are planning to expand our project to other high schools in San Diego.

Some CMSD parents will also provide guidance on how to design such an application.

This project has attracted interest from other CMSD high school students in the High School Mentorship (HSM) program. Through our students' connections, some other high schools such as CCA have expressed interest in joining this project.

- **Arushi Bharadwaj, Hemadarshini Rajendran and Shravani Prem**

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