



CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

CMSD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

104 th Chinmaya Jayanti	2
20 th Annual Program Presentation	5
Bala Vihar Graduation	9
Bala Vihar Awards	9
Rāma Navamī & Hanumān Jayanti	11
CMSD Orientation	11
Mothers' Day Celebrations	12
Bhagavad Gītā Chanting	13
BV Youth Corner	14
CMSD in the Community	15
New Custodians of the āśrama	17
Pujya Guruji's Birthday	18

IN THIS ISSUE OF CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

The highlights of this quarter were the 104th Chinmaya Jayanti celebrations and the 20th Annual Program presentations by our Bala Vihar students. Mothers' Day was celebrated the Chinmaya way with *matṛ pūjā*. Śrī Rāma Navamī and Hanumān Jayanti were celebrated with *pūjā* and class presentations. The 2019-20 session concluded with the Bala Vihar Awards and Graduation ceremony.



THE MASTER SPEAKS

*An intelligent choice of thoughts changes
the character pattern in us,
placing thus the entire destiny of our life
in our own hands.*



Chinmaya Jayanti Celebrations on May 8, 2020

May 8, 2020 marked **Gurudev's 104th Jayanti**. Despite the limitations due to COVID, there were celebrations worldwide as an offering to the "**Yuga Puruṣa**", our Pujya Gurudev. A grand *rājōpacāra* was offered by Gurudev's devotees and disciples around the globe. The *rājōpacāra* was telecast Live on the Chinmaya Channel (YouTube). The celebrations started in the morning (India time) with *Pādukā Pūjā* performed by Swami Swaroopanandaji and the most melodious and devotional birthday song sung by Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda.

Nita Halker shares her impressions: "The *rājōpacāra* was truly a royal tribute befitting the great master. Witnessing many centers all over the world get together to celebrate Gurudev's *Jayanti* in a very unique way made us feel like we are all part of this big Chinmaya family."

Pallavi Kulkarni adds: "The children expressed their love through their singing, chanting, dancing, dressing up as Gods and their beautiful drawings. Adults shared their experience with Gurudev and the time they spent with him. Youth shared their reflection on how Gurudev inspired them in their everyday life, helping them build that unwavering faith in God and *Guru* and made their life more beautiful. Everything was woven together to show how Gurudev transformed each one of them in a unique way. It was truly inspiring to see *Brahmacarin-s* and *Swamin-s* express how they came to know Gurudev."



In San Diego, the *Pādukā Pūjā* was performed at Chinmaya Nivas in a grand way. The altar for the *pūjā* was impeccably arranged with orange and white roses, beautiful *tulasī* and flower garlands.

At the end of the chanting of the 108 names, the flowers offered at Gurudev's feet beautifully displayed the number "104".



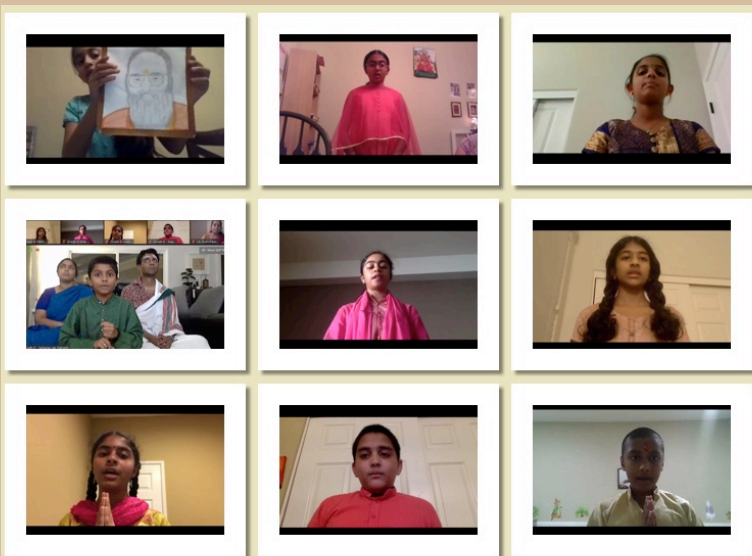


San Diego families participated in the *aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvalī* through Zoom.



Manasi Popat and family shared "It is purely HIS grace that enabled us to partake the 104th CMSD *Chinmaya Jayanti* celebrations via Zoom from Sri Lanka. The "*nāmā*" we got to offer at the lotus feet of Pujya Gurudev will stay in our hearts forever!"

The offerings to Gurudev by CMSD Swaranjali group continued through the evening.



The sixth grade children presented the *Guru Pādukā Stotram* and talked about the life of our Pujya Gurudev. The children expressed their reverence in various ways.

As **Padmaja Menon** reflects "Gurudev *Jayanti* celebration at CMSD was special this year with all of us being home, but still very much being part of the celebration and being able to do the *aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvalī* offering to Gurudev." The 104th *Chinmaya Jayanti* will surely be remembered by many for a very long time.

-Hetel Babla

Chinmaya Jayanti - a beautiful worldwide celebration

Each Sunday families dressed in their traditional attire arrive at Chinmaya Jyoti to absorb the rich teachings of our beloved Gurudev. We laugh, we think, we question, we ponder and we feel an immense gratitude. Thus emboldened we go throughout the week finding ways to keep His work alive. We make efforts to get closer to the Truth through study groups, we work fervently to create the environment for a joyful and engaging relationship between our children and Gurudev, we increase our ability to love by detaching from everything else and attaching ourselves to Him, we serve others who need us, and of course we diligently seek to see the glory of His Grace in as many moments as we can muster in our day-to-day lives.

This is the regular atmosphere of the *āśrama* in San Diego. Even the youngest among us can feel the pull of what Gurudev left behind here; for it was in San Diego that He left his mortal coil, leaving his light as a beacon for each and every one of us. That beacon is brighter now than ever. While the COVID pandemic has taken away our ability to gather under His watchful eye in the wonderful environment of our *āśrama*, He has given us countless opportunities to deepen our connection to Him. Through uninterrupted sessions conducted via Zoom here and through the prolific sharing of valuable experiences provided by CCMT, we have been transported to verandas where we can sit with Swami Swaroopananda & Swami Tejomayananda, to the centers where we meet bramacharis and bramacharinis and even inside the birth home of Adi Shankara!

While each has its own beauty, none have blessed us like the grandest experience of the 104th *Chinmaya Jayanti* celebrations that were broadcast worldwide. Six hours of gripping programming produced and aired over two days showed us the reach of the Chinmaya family and reminded us of how blessed we are to have been pulled into His loving embrace.

And for us in San Diego – the celebrations did not end there. After watching the magnificent program in the morning and seeing many familiar faces represented on it, we gathered again in the evening to continue “the party” for our favorite person. The evening began with a *pūjā* for Gurudev’s *pādukā*-s followed by a relay of families chanting one name from the Chinmaya *aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvalī* and the english meaning. It was a meticulously planned relay rendered by each family with great verve and enthusiasm and it was like a beautiful mantra mala strung together with great love and devotion worthy of being presented at His Glorious Feet. While each family chanted, in front of Gurudev’s feet a surprise was being constructed. When the chanting ended, we saw a flower cake-like structure representing the 104th *Chinmaya Jayanti*!!

Afterwards, when the *ārati* was completed, many families stayed on Zoom sharing stories of Gurudev and speaking of the wonderful *rājōpacāra* program the night before, in the morning, and again in the evening at San Diego. At nearly 11PM at night, we reluctantly pried ourselves away from the “party.” I’m certain that most of us had the best sleep that night dreaming of Gurudev and remembering how privileged indeed we are to be a part of His Global Family!

Om Śrī Gurubhyo Namaḥ – Unto Him Our Best

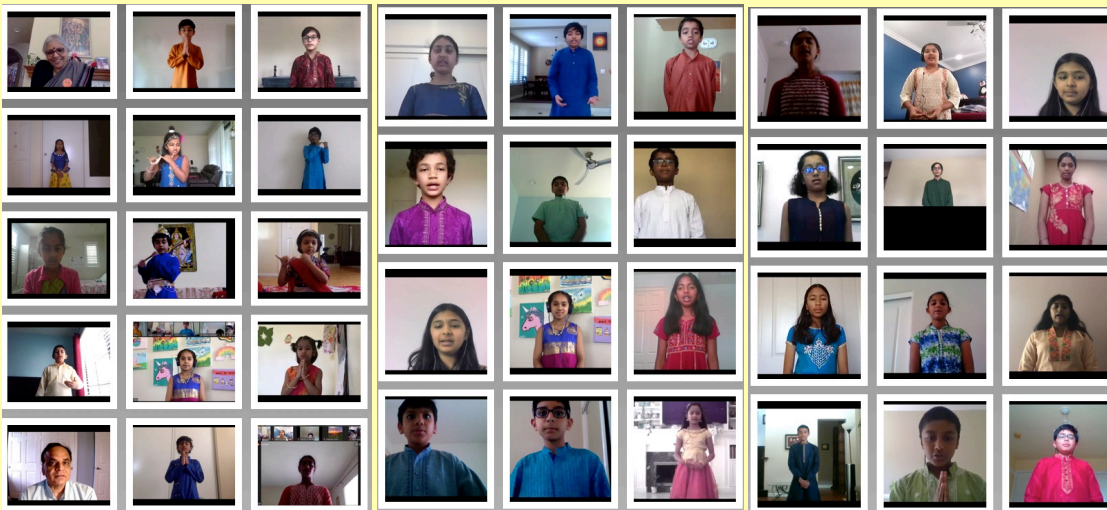
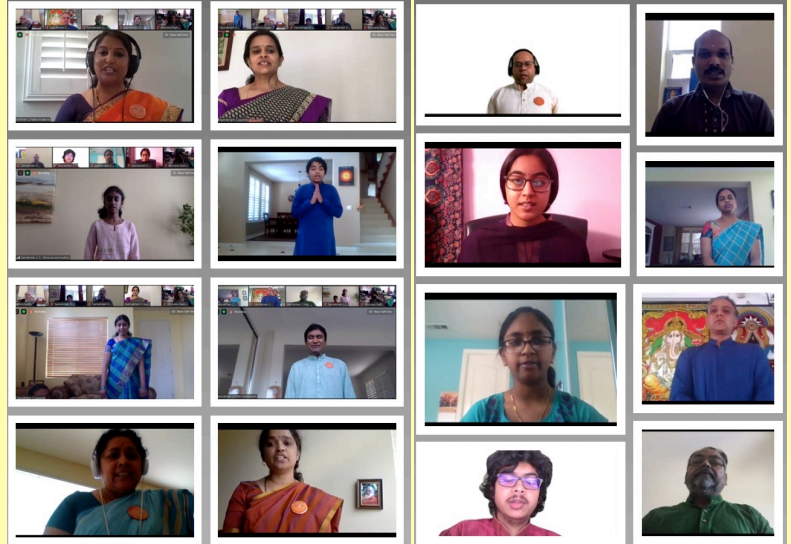
-Priya Narthakii

CMSD 20th Annual Program Presentations

The challenges presented by the COVID-19 situation did not deter our CMSD Bala Vihar students a bit as they enthusiastically prepared and presented the 20th CMSD Annual Program on Zoom over three weeks. **Ashwin Mohan** shares his reflection supported by contributions from **Manasi Popat, Jayesh and Madhu Bathija** and the **Kelkar family**.

Annual Program on June 7, 2020- Language Classes

The **Samskr̥ta Vihar students** chanted the *aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvalī* during the morning assembly. For the presentation some students put the *subhāṣita-s* in prose order and explained their meaning. Other students wrote and read in *Samskr̥tam* as a part of writing skills. **Pallavi Kulkarni** gave a heartwarming introduction to Chinmaya Jyoti āśrama in *Samskr̥tam*. The students ended the presentation with the Chinmaya Mission *Pratijñā*.



The **Hindi Pāṭhaśālā students** recited beautiful verses by great hindi poets such as Kabirdas, Rahim and Rabindranath Tagore followed by the meaning in English. The consistent theme was to highlight the beauty and the importance of *seva* and *bhakti*.

The students of **Tamil Pallikoodam** began their presentation with the melodious songs *Thamizh Thaai Vaazhthu* and *Prabho Ganapate*. The younger Tamil students presented *Uлага Neethi* by Ulaganaathar along with the English meaning. Then, the older students recited *Kondrai Venthan* by Avaiyyar along with the translation. The wonderful messages were truly relevant to today's times!



Chinmaya Kala Jyoti Presentation

Shrikar Nag, Bala Vihar 4th grade *tabla* student, presented the *Kaida-s* and a *tukra* in *teen taal*. The introduction and explanation of the presentation by the student made the performance even more enjoyable.



Bala Vihar Presentations on June 14, 2020

The program started with the Chinmaya Bala Vihar song presented by Chinmaya Dhvani.

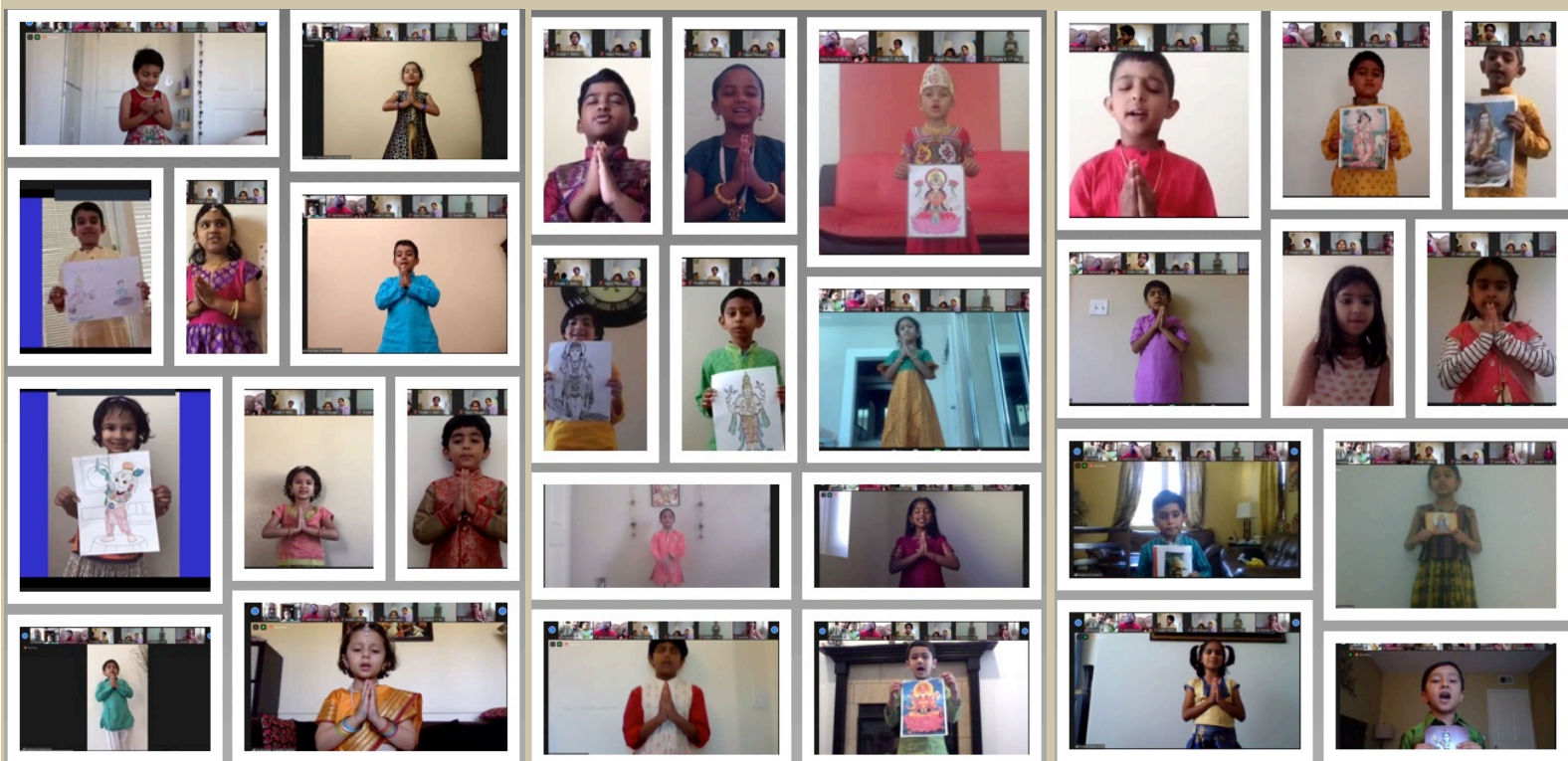


This being the year 2020, the theme of the annual program was to identify the 2020 Vision by Swami Swaroopananda in context of the curriculum learnt by the students in their respective grades. It was presented beautifully by all grades. Right from Pre-K through the high school grades, the students proved themselves to be proficient in the relay style presentation over Zoom. It was a unique experience for all witnessing the program online.

The PreK and K curriculum of "Daily Prayers" and "One God Many Forms" was presented with great enthusiasm by the students.

Grade Pre-K

Grade K



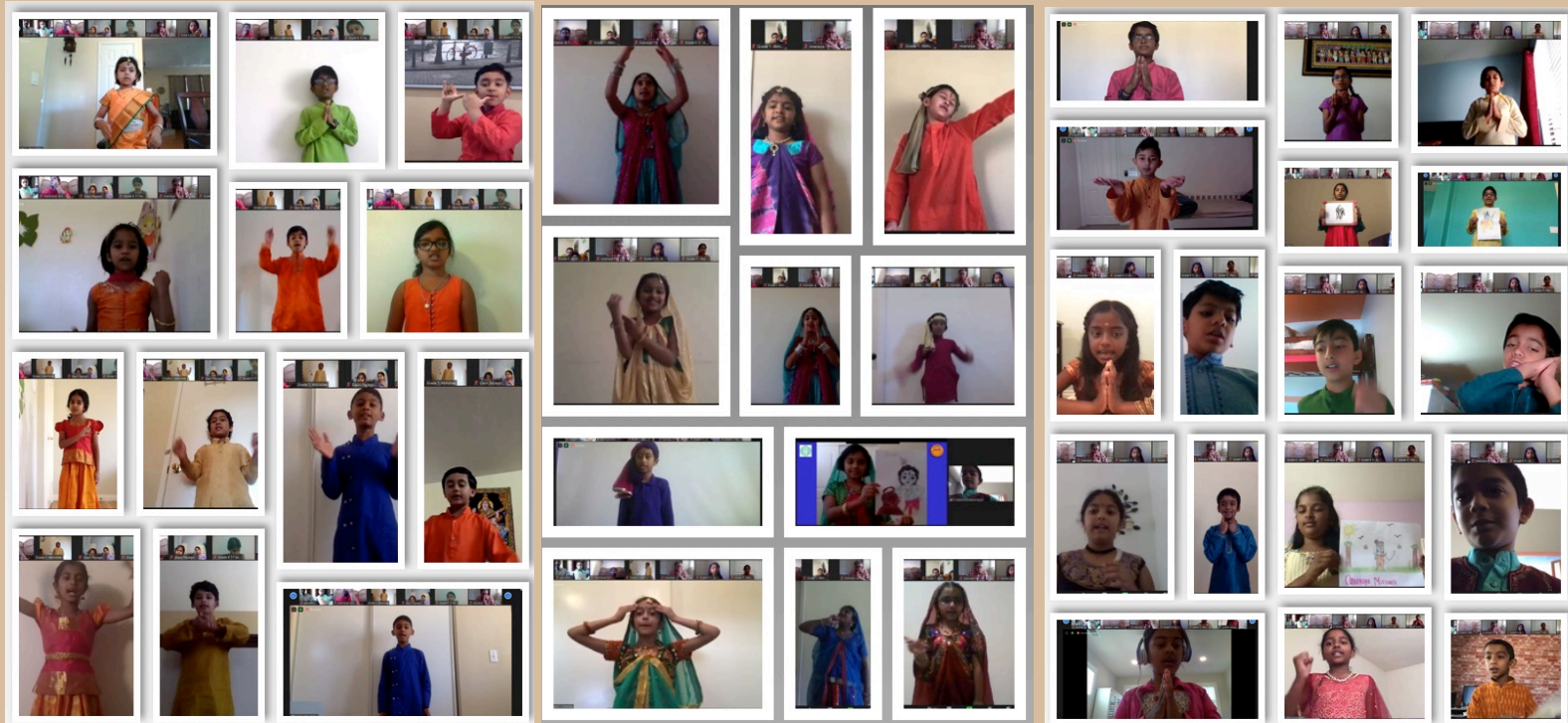
The elementary and middle school students provided us with a good bird's eye view of what they learned in their respective classes. It was as if several years' worth of knowledge was packed into a short period for the audience.

A new CMSD member puts it aptly "...The commitment of the teachers involved was tested at a whole new level. The result was astonishing and the program was very enjoyable."

Grade 1

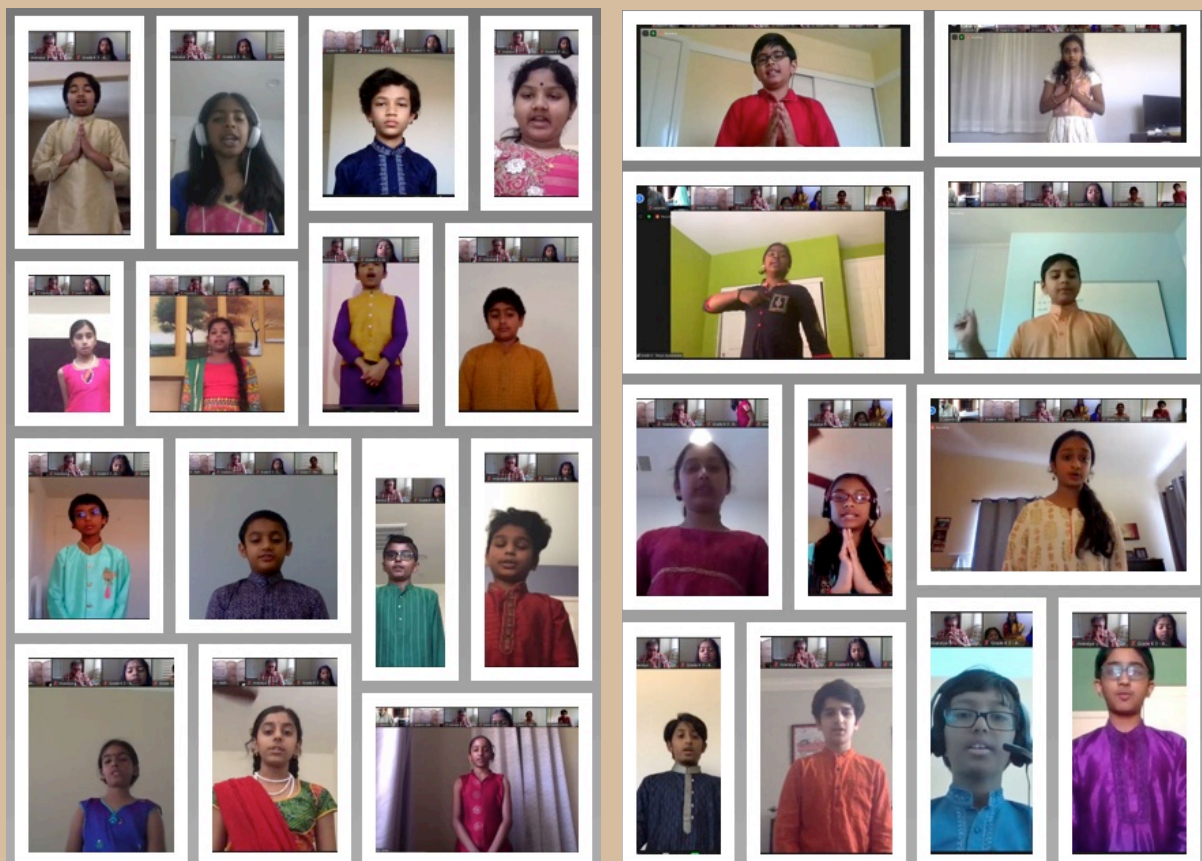
Grade 2

Grade 3

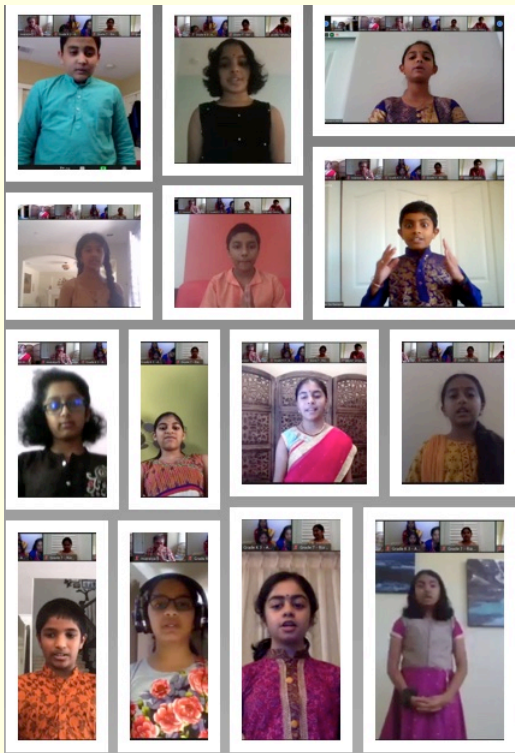


Grade 4

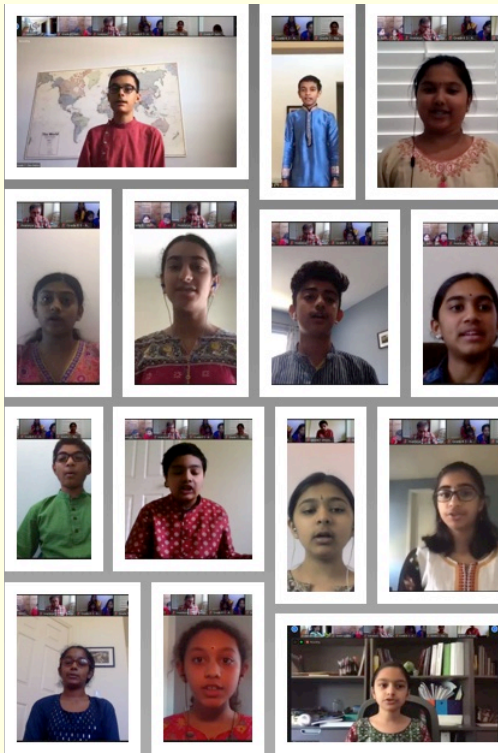
Grade 5



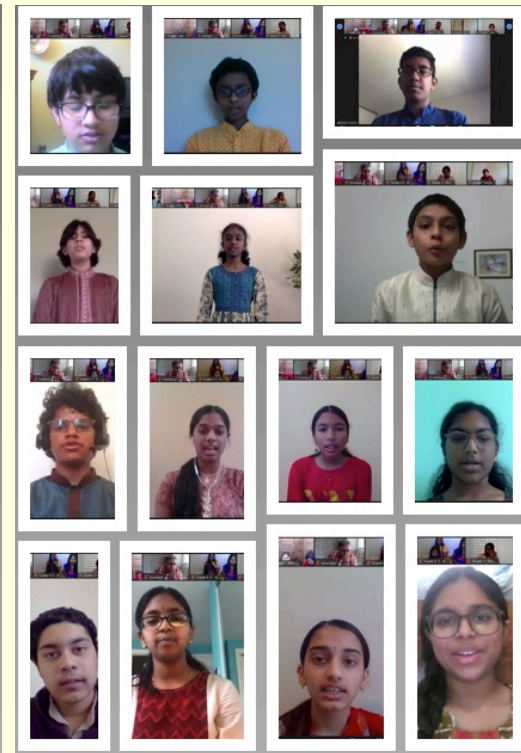
Grade 6



Grade 7

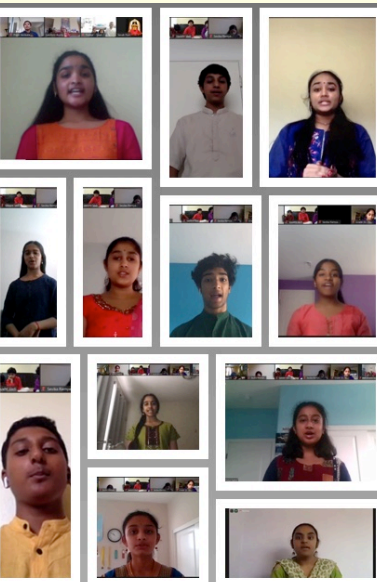


Grade 8

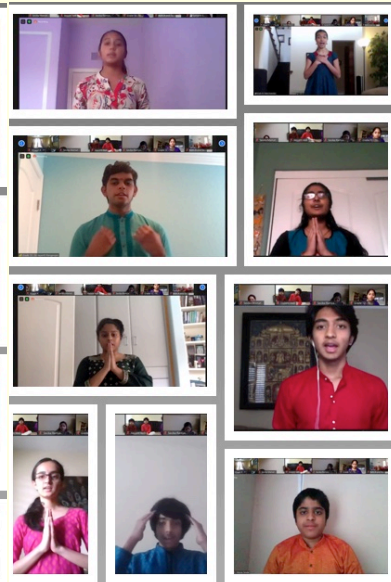


The 9th Grade presentation took the current pandemic situation and showed the "*ādhyātmik*" versus "*bhautik*" ways of dealing with it. The Grade 11/12 video was truly a memorable educational experience. They reviewed the year's material of Self Unfoldment as well as incorporate the learnings into a script.

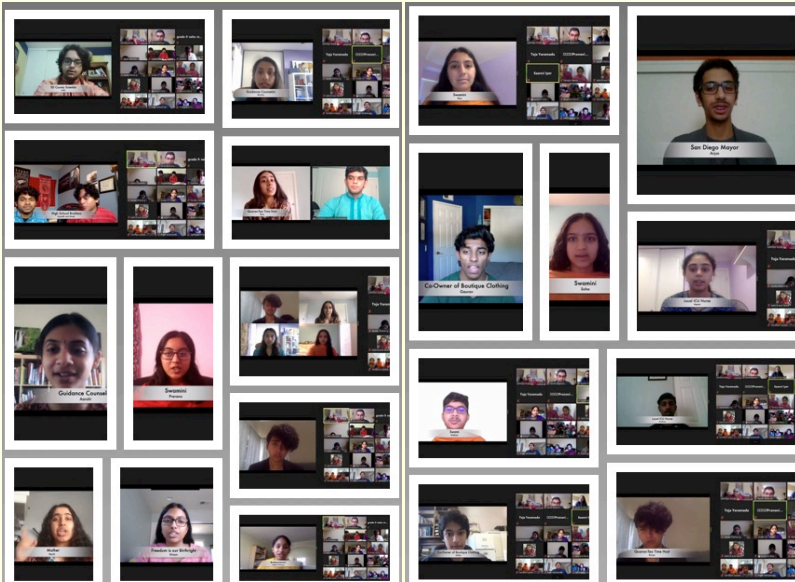
Grade 9



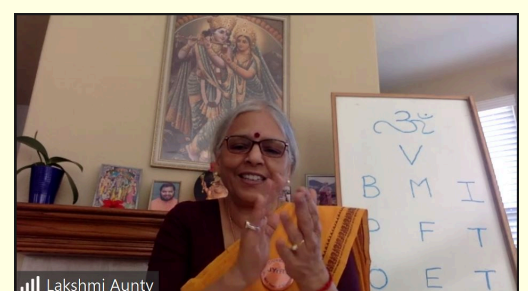
Grade 10



Grade 11 & 12



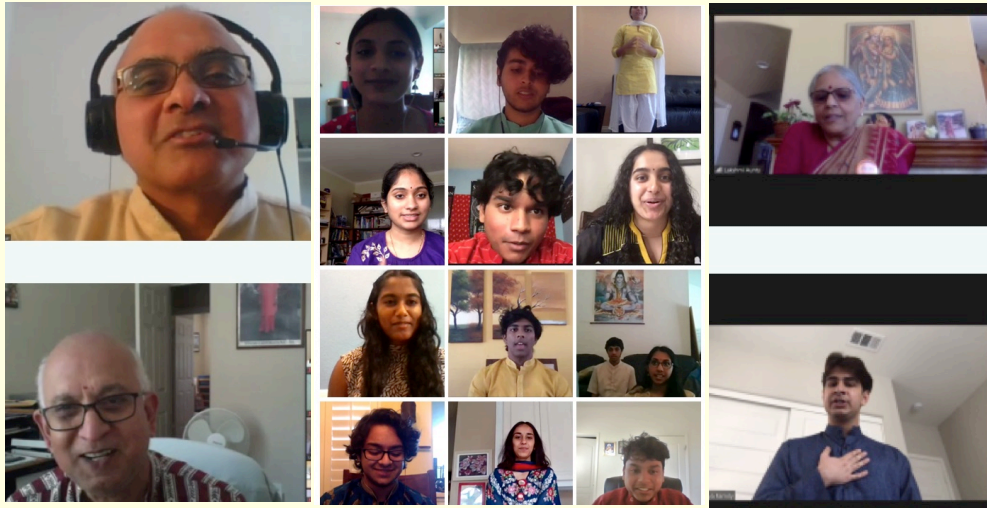
The audience was in awe as all the Bala Vihar classes pulled together their presentations so amazingly through relay-type plays. We are truly blessed to have a wonderful audio-visual team that enabled these presentations through skillful use of technology.



Bala Vihar Graduation: Class of 2020 - June 21, 2020

The BV graduation ceremony is always an emotional event, having seen the children grow up over the years in Bala Vihar. This year's ceremony was no different. A really special touch was provided by the slideshow that showed the CMSD BV Class of 2020 in various programs and presentations right from the time they were in Pre-K! It was also really nice to hear about each graduate's plans. This was followed by the graduates answering questions from Sukumar Uncle and Rajasekhar ji on how they were inspired by the teachings in Bala Vihar and how they will apply these in their college lives.

Lakshmi Aunty gave the Bala Vihar Excellence award to **Rachna Halker** for outstanding performance and service. **Mihir Pandya** led the CHYK-West initiation pledge for the graduating Class.



Graduates express their thoughts about Bala Vihar

Smriti Panchal - A overarching idea I learned in all my classes is that happiness is a state of mind; it is a choice. Abiding by my Dharma, aligning my values with the scriptures and seeing Nature as my *Guru* is the best way to achieve inner peace. ...

Riya Agarwal - By not being controlled by my desires and remaining level headed, Bala Vihar most importantly gave me an understanding of having a meaningful life where I can make the most of what is available to me. ...

Rhea Gandhi - One of the greatest things that I've gotten from being in Bala Vihar is a sense of community. From going to *Mahāsamādhi* camp in 2018, I've come to appreciate how being surrounded by people who hold the same beliefs as me and have great conviction helped me grow more confident in my own thoughts. ...

Ankit Bhatia - The connection between a student and his *guru* is long lasting, and is one that I will continue putting effort into by joining the Chyk group at UCSD as well as continuing to apply any and all new teachings from my gurus to myself. ...

Pavan Navani - OM is the power behind everything, it is the power behind all beings living and nonliving, as well as the power behind our senses. OM is the power that makes the eyes see and that allows us to perceive the world as it is. It is the infinite cause for all our experiences and life itself. Studying self-unfoldment and applying it to life is like seeing color for the first time.



Bala Vihar Awards

Another significant aspect of the year-end celebration is always the announcement of awards to the Bala Vihar students. The Bala Vihar *sevaks* and *sevikas* called out the names of the students who achieved excellent attendance throughout the year as well as their overall performance in class. Awards were also announced for *Gītā* chanting competition as well as the completion of various levels of Chinmaya Slokanjali. All the bala *sevaks* and yuva *sevaks* were recognized for their *sevā*, and Hindi Language students for completing Level 4.

CMSD Graduate Reflection by Rachna Halker

This year, the Bala Vihar class of 2020 had a graduation like no other. It was a brief, yet welcome respite from the turbulent events we have experienced so far. Although it wasn't exactly the graduation we had all hoped for and aspired to, it was no less inspiring or memorable.

In Hindu culture, a student's graduation from the *Gurukula* signifies not the end of education, but rather serves as a reminder that the pursuit of real knowledge never stops. Our CMSD Bala Vihar graduation conveyed the same purpose; that of moving forward with the pursuit of higher understanding in mind, and to live the teachings which we have absorbed thus far.

Here, I talk about the significance of graduation, but not about the ceremony itself. I found it humbling to look back on past years and recognize how so many people selflessly dedicated their time and energy to shape my character and ultimately helped me become the person I am today. I've been involved in Bala Vihar since first grade, and so has my family, which is why I think it's been such an important part of my life since then. All that I have learned from Bala Vihar throughout the years has impacted my personality in a way that I believe will remain with me for the rest of my life.

Whether I was listening to stories from the great epics, learning about the true meaning of spiritual practices, or even engaging in class discussions, I always felt that I was in a place where I was truly understood. Especially during my high school years, I began to gradually understand what the knowledge I was receiving meant to me, and how I applied it in my personal and academic life. There were weeks when I wouldn't want to come to Bala Vihar because of difficulties at school or at home, but interestingly enough, that always seemed to be exactly what I needed to do. Sometimes I would find answers to my problems in the text we were studying, or from my peers when we had class discussions.

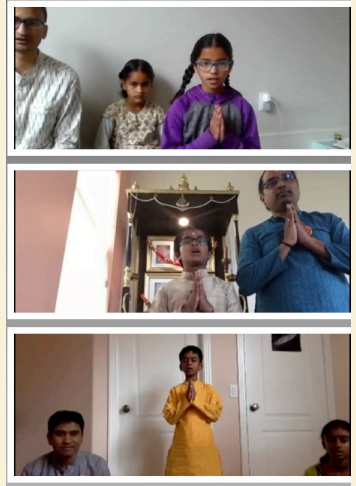
My experiences in Bala Vihar have made me aware that while I may not get everything I want or wish for in my life, I almost always will get what I need. Now, I finally understand that the learning never stops. I may have graduated from Bala Vihar this year, but that doesn't mean I'll let go of all that it means to me, nor does it mean that I can remain complacent in what I have learned thus far. My connection to Bala Vihar will remain with me throughout my life, and will continue to shape me into a better version of the person I am today.

Harih OM!

Śrī Rāma Navamī on April 2, 2020

This year's Śrī Rāma Navamī pūjā, was witnessed via Zoom. The Ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā was performed beautifully followed by bhajans. At noon - the time of Rāma's birth - Lakshmi Aunty, supported by Pallavi Kulkarni, sang the popular Śrī Rāma janma chaupai-s set to tune by Pujya Guruji." As Lakshmi Aunty said, "the only thing not possible on Zoom is the prasadam distribution." On the following Sunday, Grade 3 students chanted some verses of the Nāma Rāmāyaṇa. What a lovely way to celebrate the birth of Lord Rāma. Jai Śrī Rām!

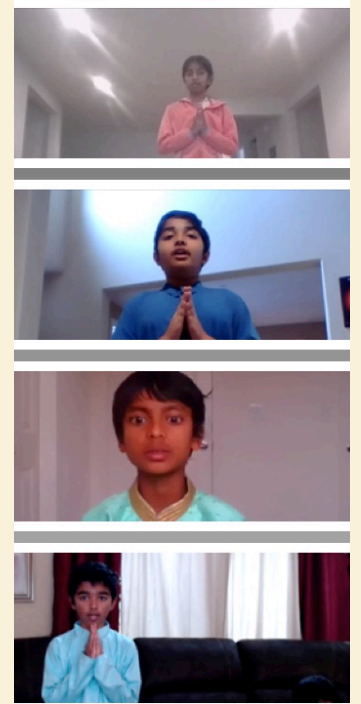
-Lalitha Kumar



Śrī Hanumān Jayanti on April 8, 2020

A great hero in the Rāmāyaṇa is Śrī Hanumān. He is an unmatched source of strength, self-control, knowledge, and the spirit of service. Hanumānji has the perfect personality to inspire all of us during this unique and difficult time. This year on Śrī Hanumān Jayanti, we had the opportunity to sing the glories of Hanumān by chanting the Hanumān Cālīsā with our global Chinmaya family. It was so wonderful to watch and listen to devotees from around the globe as they participated in the global online relay chanting. I personally found it very comforting during this challenging time and drew great strength from chanting the Hanumān Cālīsā. Though we could not be together physically one could still feel the bhāva during the online satsaṅga. The celebration continued through Sunday April 12, 2020 when our fourth grade Bala Vihar students led us in the chanting of Nāma Rāmāyaṇa and Hanumān Cālīsā; reminding us that with love and devotion to Hanumānji and Śrī Rāma we will be able to get through the current difficulties. Jai Hanumān! Jai Śrī Rāma!

-Faith Prasad



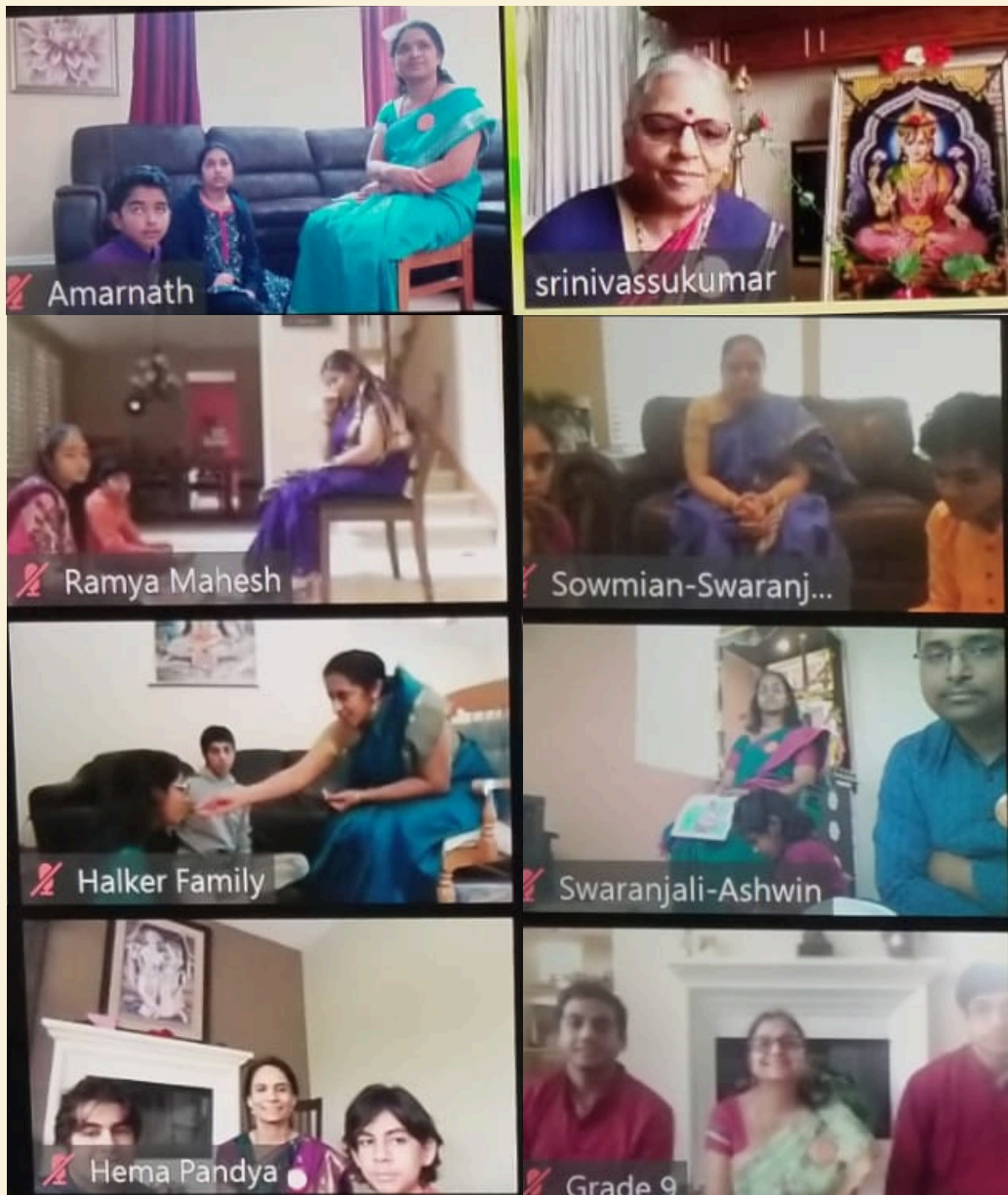
CMSD Orientation and Registration E-Session

CMSD orientation session was a wonderful way to communicate about all the programs Chinmaya Mission San Diego has to offer. Many facets of our activities are not known especially to our potential members, and this event highlighted how all the Mission activities are geared towards the spiritual upliftment of the entire family. This year, given the COVID pandemic, the CMSD 2020-2021 Orientation and Registration E-Session was held over Zoom on May 23rd and 24th to give an opportunity for the larger community of San Diego to understand the Chinmaya Mission Programs and to ask questions. The addition of **Shishu Vihar** as a "Mommy and me" program for ages 3 and 4 years was highlighted and well received.

Mothers' Day celebrations on May 10, 2020

It is always a joy to celebrate Mother's Day (and it was not diminished being virtual on Zoom) by praying to and seeking the blessings of the divine Mother *Mahālakṣmī*. The *mātr̥ pūjā* was performed with the chanting of the *mātr̥ stavanam* song by Pujya Guruji, which invokes love and gratitude in our hearts. The explanation in English after each stanza conveyed the deeper thought behind the words and helped everyone present to offer gratitude to their own Mothers and to the divine Mother. The *pūjā* concluded with very soulful Bhajans.

-Sujata Sovani



Bhagavad Gītā Chanting Competition

The *Bhagavad Gītā* Chanting Competition was held on May 9, 2020. 48 Bala Vihar children, 1 CHYK and 13 adults chanted verses from the first chapter of the *Gītā*.



Spending Our Time Wisely

We made it! Summer vacation has now begun, our workload as students is significantly reduced, and it seems that now we have all the time in the world to do as we please. However, during these unpredictable and unfortunate times, the best we can do right now is to make the most of it.

"Not doing what you feel like doing is freedom" - Swami Chinmayananda

Whether we choose to view this time as a new opportunity or as an inconvenience is our choice. One may want to lounge around and let time simply pass by, but this is not freedom. While at the moment it may feel like we're free to do what we want and act how we please, in the end, we have given up on our self-control and are no longer free to choose what to do. If I think like this every day, do I really have the choice of how to spend my time or am I simply choosing the path of least resistance? Moreover, we can never fully overcome this unless we actively choose to listen to our intellect first.

The next time I don't want to take advantage of all this time I have, I must think: how can I use my freedom right now to make the best decision to help me in the long run? For example, some productive use of our time over the summer staying home are reading, journaling, exercising, drawing, OM cooking, preparing for the upcoming school year, the list goes on. Another way to spend this time is with our family. In our normal busy lives, it may be hard to even find couple of hours to spend with them, so we should use the time right now to cherish the people we love the most.

Of course, it is okay to take breaks and relax every once in a while, but the more we listen to our intellect, the more we gain control of our actions, thoughts, and decisions so that we can lead the best life forward. How we choose to use our time right now is in our hands, so let's use this time for self-reflection, self-control, and spiritual growth!

-Vaishavi Jayashankar

Graduation

We're all very familiar with the concept of graduation: walking through rows of people in caps and gowns, while hearing our name announced through a microphone and receiving the fancy paper certificate signifying our achievements. But is that all graduation is really about: receiving a piece of paper that we can hang on our wall for onlookers to praise us?

Samāvartana is the graduation ceremony performed when school life has ended, and it is considered a purification ritual. These *saṃskāra karma*-s have been practiced from the vedic age, an example of a *saṃskāra karma* being the sacred thread ceremony. In today's world, graduation ceremonies occur even for the transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten, proving that even in the present day, rituals and ceremonies marking the start in a new life are performed and special occasions are celebrated.

But why do we even need to partake in these rituals? As Pujya Guruji wrote in his book Hindu Culture, "Because in the performance of the ritual, an impression is left upon the mind of the person or persons involved so that they feel they are beginning a new life and have a new responsibility to fulfill". Let us not view our transition from one grade to the next and beyond as a mere sense of personal gratification, but instead as the beginning of a new chapter in our lives while having a higher sense of responsibility and duty towards others.

-Ananya Bharathwaj

CMSD in the Community

Mask project

CMSD members worked with Interfaith Community Services (ICS) earlier this year to deliver more than 550 face-masks for the safety of front-line volunteers and the ICS staff to continue their work. In fact, CMSD provided the first set of masks for them. Interfaith Community Services focuses on empowering people in need to stabilize and improve their lives through comprehensive programs, in partnership with diverse faith communities and people of compassion.

Ilona from ICS thanked CMSD and expressed "We are so grateful for ALL of the support! Your group was the reason our staff could continue working, as you provided us with our first set of masks, before we had any, so a really BIG THANK YOU to everyone who helped."



CMSD Members share their experience

It was beautiful how everyone worked together. The sewing machine, elastic, thread that I used for this project are all not mine! My friend gave a whole bunch of cloth & helped fix my very first sewing machine jam. My children also had a very good experience with this project. These days my daughter asks me to sew when it's time for her to sleep. She's somehow finding it comforting to doze off watching me sew. My son did some math this week with the mental additions of how many we collected. They both enjoyed watching everyone drop off their masks. I'm so glad to be part of this project. Never thought it'll help my family and friends too, apart from ICS.

-Jayanthi Shanmugam

It has been a different experience working on the masks. We made the masks in 3 batches. The first weekend was very challenging. Having made the commitment already, it was overwhelming when it was taking more time than we had estimated. Keeping in mind the purpose helped us overcome all the difficulties. It brought out a lot of creativity during these challenging times. The next 2 batches were a breeze and we all enjoyed as a family pitching in. Thanks to CMSD for this noble initiative and providing all the guidance and support as well.

-Sandhya Srinivasan

Both my children enjoyed making masks. With this project we all learned to use the sewing machine. Thank you for the opportunity.

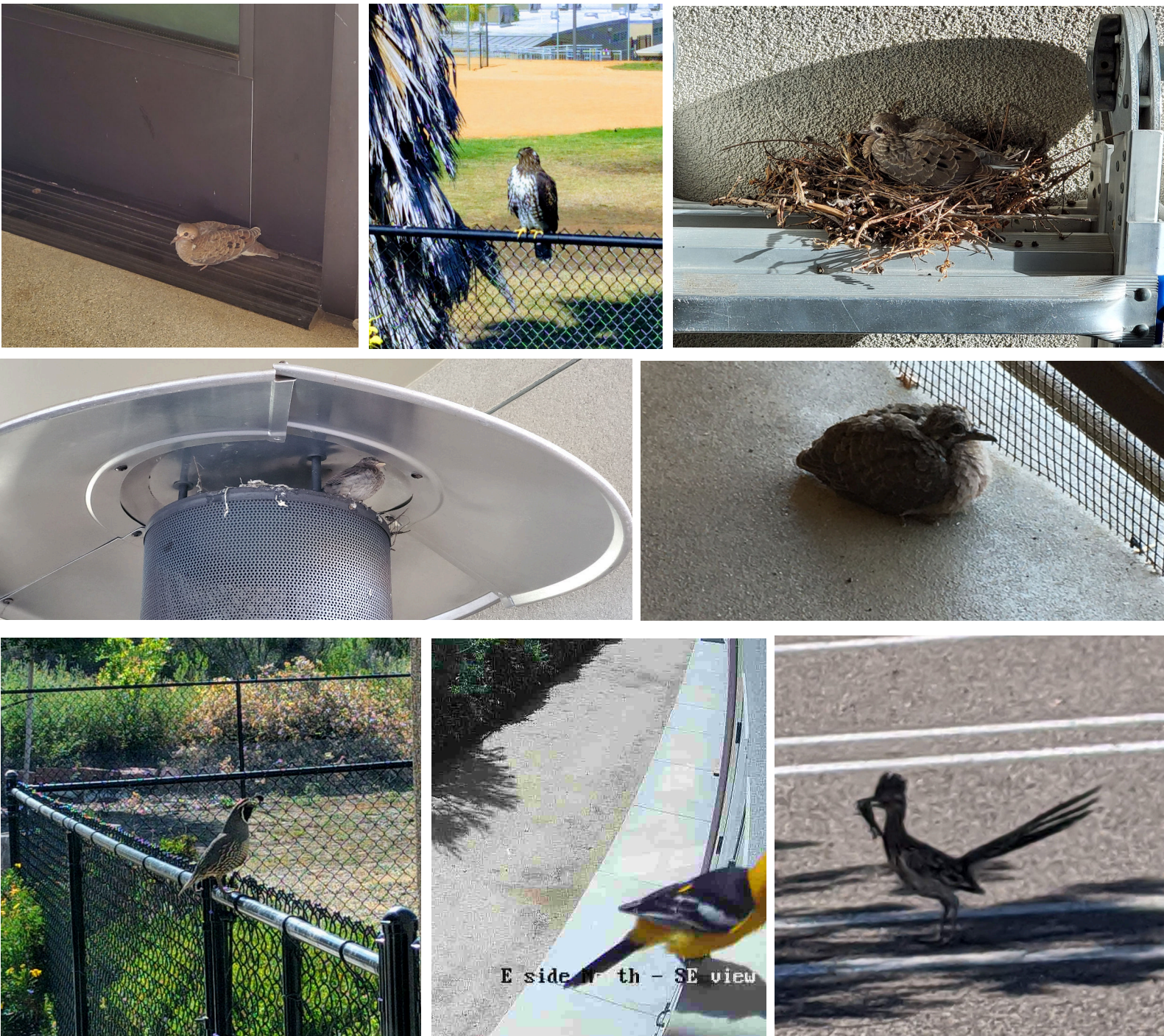
-Priyanka Patel



New custodians of the āśrama

As the CMSD members cope with Covid19, the āśrama brightens the lives of many others - hawks, quails, roadrunners, goldfinch, sparrows to name a few. Many different birds have claimed their territory and over several days built their nests over ladders and on top of the patio heaters. Many others visit the parking lot, the classrooms and the gardens. In these times of shelter in place, these birds remain custodians of the āśrama.

om sarve bhavantu sukhinah



Celebrating Puja Guruji's birthday on June 30, 2020

On June 30th, **Puja Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji** turned 70 and it was a joyous celebration in San Diego with a musical offering presented online via Zoom. This day also marked the 18th anniversary of Chinmaya Dhvani at CMSD. For many years, Puja Guruji has delivered profound teachings through bhajans that he himself composed and sang. On this special day, Chinmaya Swaranjali beautifully rendered several of Puja Guruji's divine compositions. In his "*jisa hāla me, jisa deśa me*", Puja Guruji inspires us to remember the Lord in whatever state we are in. In a more jovial tone, Guruji in his bhajan "*Śyama sundara ko to ānā hi hogā*" complains to the Lord that having told us to focus only on quality of our actions, the Lord needs to deliver too, by coming into our hearts. We also invited Guruji into our homes and hearts with the concluding song *āvo Guruji hamne tujko pyār se bulāya hai*" composed by Lakshmi Aunty in 2008. "Oh dear Guruji, please come and fill us with service (*seva*), divine company (*satsaṅga*) and spiritual knowledge (*jñāna*)..."



We closed the evening with the birthday song seeking his blessings as always, followed by Lakshmi Aunty and many CMSD members sharing their experiences of the time they spent with Puja Guruji.



FROM THE HEART OF PUJYA GURUJI

SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA



*Hold yourself responsible for maintaining standards
greater than what others expect from you.*