

# CHINMAYA PRADĪPIKĀ

CMSD QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



## IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome 2024! New Year Celebration	2
Śrī Rāma returns to Ayodhya	4
CMSD 23 <sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda	5
Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana	14
Mahāśivarātrī Celebrations	16
'On A Quest' - A Biopic on Pujya Gurudev	19
CMSD Ongoing Events	20
Shishu Vihar/Bala Vihar Corner	21
Annual MLK CHYK Workshop	24

The highlight of this quarter was CMSD's **Twenty-Third Anniversary** celebrations graced by **Swami Siddhananda**. Festivities including the Tenth **Tyāgarāja Ārādhana** and **Mahāśivarātrī** were observed with devotion and reverence. The Youth participated in the highschoolers' and CHYKs' Annual MLK Workshop on "**Service as the means to Success**".



## THE MASTER SPEAKS

"Ganges is not merely a geographical river, but She is a permanent symbol of the Infinite Truth, which is the Eternal Substratum for the phenomenal play of all impermanent names and forms."



## Welcome 2024! New Year Celebration



On **January 1, 2024**, CMSD family gathered in *Praṇava Nilayam* to welcome and celebrate the new year 2024. The morning began auspiciously with **Lakshmi Auntie** performing *Śrī Gaṇeśa pūjā*.

## Welcome 2024! New Year Celebration



*Guru pādukā pūjā* was offered by CMSD *sevak* **Ashwin Mohan** and *sevikā* **Priya Venkitaraman**, followed by the chanting of *Guru pādukā stotram* and *Śrī Viṣṇu Sahasranāma pārāyaṇa*. The celebrations concluded with *ārati* and *prasādam*.



In his special New Year message, **Mukhya Swami Swaroopananda** highlighted how this year is even more special due to the 108th *Jayanti* of Pujya Gurudev. Swamiji's message to everyone was to chant "*Om Śrī Cinmaya Sadgurave Namah*" at least once every day and also chant two verses from the *Bhagavadgītā* along with reading Pujya Gurudev's commentary.

-Ashwin Mohan



## Śrī Rāma returns to Ayodhya



The joyous occasion of *Śrī Rāma Janmabhūmi Mūrti Prāṇa Pratiṣṭhā* (observed in India on January 22, 2024) was celebrated at *Chinmaya Jyoti* on the eve of **January 21, 2024**. The celebration commenced with the lighting of five lamps followed by the chanting of *Śrī Rāma-aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvali*, *Śrī Rāma stotram*, *ārati* and *prasādam*.



Bala Vihar children celebrated this occasion at home by lighting lamps and offering prayers.



# CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda

## Welcoming Swamiji at *Chinmaya Jyoti*, January 26, 2024



Swami Siddhananda arrived at *Chinmaya Jyoti* on the eve of **January 26, 2024**, and was ceremonially welcomed with a *pūrṇa kumbha* and chanting of Vedic *mantras*.

## An Evening of *Bhajans*, January 27, 2024



The 23<sup>rd</sup> CMSD anniversary celebrations commenced on **January 27, 2024**, with an evening of *bhajans* with Swami Siddhananda (CM Philadelphia) accompanied by Maya Kapadia (CM Kansas) on keyboard, Amarnath Puttur and Dev Babla on tabla, Sukumar Uncle on cymbals and supported by CMSD's Chinmaya Swaranjali.

With the auspicious chant of *Om Sri Cinmaya Sadgurave Namah*, **Lakshmi Auntie** introduced **Swami Siddhananda** as one who has been under Pujya Gurudev's guidance for many years. She also mentioned that Swamiji is not new to CMSD as he has come to San Diego many times over the 23 years. It is a lot of fun to be around Swamiji and her children also experienced that growing up singing and playing musical instruments with Swamiji.

In Auntie's words, "For me it is like Gurudev himself is here as Swami Siddhananda". Sukumar Uncle went over a brief biography of Swami Siddhananda and his various contributions.

# CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda



On the occasion of CMSD's 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary, Swamiji sang 23 mesmerizing bhajans with love and devotion; engaging the audience every step of the way. A beautiful divine evening of *bhajans* by Swami Siddhananda transported us all!

-Smita Bhatia

## Member Reflections:

"Being part of Chinmaya Swaranjali, we often sing Swamiji's *bhajans* but to witness him singing his own compositions was a divine experience...He also shared how he was inspired to write *bhajans*. In his words "I would write one line, *Bhagavān* would write the next ten!" Swami Siddhananda is a man of few words, but his *bhajans* are so evocative that no words are needed. "

- Tushar Sathe

"I spent a wonderful, divine and fulfilling evening singing with Swamiji....Definitely felt so peaceful after the experience and could feel the divine, positive flow of energy within me!"

- Vidhya Bharath

## Special program "Jaya Gaṅge", January 28, 2024





## CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda

With **Swami Siddhananda** presiding over the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary celebration of Chinmaya Mission San Diego chapter, all members gathered with much gusto and anticipation. The anniversary celebrations continued on **January 28, 2024**, with the theme '*Jaya Gaṅge*' in honor of the sacred and revered icon of Hindu culture - **Mother Gaṅgā**.



After invocation to Mother Bharat with rendition of “*Jayati Jayati Bhārata Mātā*” by CMSD’s Chinmaya Swaranjali, the program began with Swamiji invoking Mother Gaṅgā with holy *Triveṇī* waters into *Samskr̥iti Nilayam* amidst Vedic chants. With the gurgling waters in the background, the composition of the legendary Muttuswami Dikshitar “*Gaṅge Mām Pāhi*” was offered.

As Lakshmi Auntie enthusiastically shared many spiritual facets of the holy river, it indeed felt that it was a tremendous blessing for all of us to be at such proximity to this holy embodiment.





# CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda



The BV children presented the story of *Gaṅgā*'s descent from the heavens - starting from *Brahmāji's Kamaṇḍalu*, touching Lord *Viṣṇu's* feet and coming down through Lord *Śiva's* locks before touching the land of Bharat. This eternal symbol of Truth, which has captivated the minds of sages, saints, *devatās* and commoners alike, is said to contain all “*tīrthas*”.



# CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda

With picturesque words, the children described the enchanting and transformative route of the *Bhāgīrathī* from the Gomukh glacier to Haridwar in the Indo-Gangetic plains.

The children reminded us that Mother *Gaṅgā*, who is a symbol of peace, love and progress was in the *prārabdha* of the people of Bharat.



Interspersed between the presentations, children chanted various hymns such as - *Gaṅgā dhyānam*, *Gaṅgā Gāyatrī* and *Gaṅgā stotram*, to name a few.

One such hymn was by our Gurudev's beloved teacher Swami Tapovanam, who was known as *Himavat Vībhūti* as he was a great devotee of Mother *Gaṅgā* and until the very end stayed in her lap.

We also learnt of the various festivals celebrated on the banks of the Ganges - *Gaṅgā Daśahara*, *Jahnuspatamī*, *Kumbha melā* and *Gaṅgākārṣaṇa Utsavam*.



Drawing on the symbolism of the very human mind being a 'river of thoughts', the children presented 'The river she is flowing..' May we be single-pointed in our spiritual endeavor to merge with the Divine as a river relentlessly endeavors to merge with the ocean.

CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda

Sharing with us a picture taken on a boat ride on Mother Ganges, Lakshmi Auntie explained how the *Gaṅgā* is fast in her pace (*Rājasika*) while the *Yamunā* is slow (*Tāmasika*). The invisible *Sarasvatī* represents knowledge (*Sāttvika*). Auntie also reminded us of Guruji's quotes beckoning us all to do our duty towards Mother *Gaṅgā* and help clean up the river to undo the pollution we have caused.

Gurudev was inspired by Mother *Gaṅgā* at Uttarkashi to embark upon his journey to reach the masses with the wealth of the holy scriptures. He wanted to “run down like the *Gaṅgā* which nourishes and inspires with its refreshing waves”.



# CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda



The little SV3 and pre-K children delighted one and all with their presentation of “row, row, row your boat...” reminding us to treat this *samsāra* as a river, this very life as a dream (unreal) and keep endeavoring chanting the Lord’s name with firm conviction that HE alone is the one who can help us cross this *Māyā*.



Towards the end of the program, everyone was transported into a serene and peaceful state with the background score of “*Rāma Ho, Rāma Ho Rāma....Jīvan Sāgara Mere Bhaiyā*”. The unison chanting of “*Gange Gange namastubhyam*” was an apt grand finale honoring Mother *Gaṅgā*!



# CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda



Concluding this auspicious celebration, Lakshmi Aunty announced the commencement of *Chinmaya Jyoti* Phase 2 work and encouraged one and all to walk steadfast into this new and exciting expansion journey of our *Āśrama*.

**Swami Sidhananda** composed and sang a *bhajan* for this special occasion - “*Gaṅge Gaṅge Sarvābhīṣṭapradāyini māte*” that kindled *bhakti* in all hearts. He also congratulated and honored **Lakshmi Aunty** and **Sukumar Uncle** for their selfless and devoted efforts. Reminding us all of *Śrī Rāma Lallā* at *Ayodhyā*, he urged us to be on our own spiritual “*ayanam*” keeping Lord *Rāma*’s teachings in mind as we work outside. He also urged little children to read *Bāla Rāmāyaṇa* book each evening with their parents and chant “*Śrī Rāma Jaya Rāma Jaya Jaya Rāma*”.

Young *kanyās* offered bangles to Mother *Gaṅgā* followed by floating *diyās* in Mother *Gaṅgā*. The celebrations concluded with *Gaṅgā ārati*, *garbā* to the tune of *Maiyā*, *O Gaṅgā Maiyā* and a delicious homemade potluck lunch served by CMSD *sevaks* and *sevikās*.

-Akhila Koneri



# CMSD 23<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary celebrations presided by Swami Siddhananda



## *Satsaṅga* with Swamiji, January 28, 2024



We have always heard from Lakshmi Auntie about Pujya Gurudev through his stories and sayings. Fast forward to the evening of **January 28, 2024**, Swamiji conducted *satsaṅga* for CMSD *sevaks* and shared anecdotes narrated in his own unique style of the living-breathing-walking-talking Gurudev. It felt as though we were now several more steps closer to Pujya Gurudev.

For **Jayesh Bathija**, “Swamiji to me will be a subject matter expert on the Virtual Reality experience with Pujya Gurudev. Swamiji’s down-to-earth personality and finding ways to make someone new comfortable was deeply impactful. I loved how he encouraged us to use music that is deemed acceptable as the means to connect to the Truth.”

[Click here for more pictures and member reflections](#)

## Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana



On **January 30, 2024**, CMSD celebrated *Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana* – the *Mahāsamadhi* of the great *bhakta* *Śrī Tyāgarāja*, on the same day when it is celebrated in Tiruvaiyyuru located in Tamil Nadu. Born in 18th century Tamil Nadu, *Śrī Tyāgarāja* composed music called *kṛtis* as an *upāsana*, love for the Lord. Hence his works are called *Nādupāsana*.

His *kṛtis* are on different deities though he was especially fond of Lord *Rāma*. *Śrī Tyāgarāja*'s works are filled with the highest teachings of Vedānta hence named *Tyāga-brahmopaniṣad*.

*Tyāgarāja Ārādhana* at CMSD began with a reverential *pūjā* by **Lakshmi Auntie**.



**Nagesh Nookala** presented a succinct background of *Śrī Tyāgarāja* and **Amarnath Puttur** introduced the musicians. It is customary to render the *pañcaratna kṛtis* on *Ārādhana* day. These are the five gems of *Śrī Tyāgarāja*'s compositions. The first three *kṛtis* praise the lord and the last two praise the *bhaktas*.



## Śrī Tyāgarāja Ārādhana



The event was led by **Devesh Vashishtha** (vocal), **Suresh Krishnamurthy** (violin), **Aditi Puttur** (vocal), **Akshaj Bharadwaj** (vocal), **Naveen Basavanahally** (*mṛidaṅgam*), **Mahesh Vasishtha** (*mṛidaṅgam*), **Vidhya Bharath** (vocal), **Usha Rao** (violin) and **Sumathi Vinay** (vocal). Vocal artists also offered individual *kṛtis*.

In addition to the above singers; **Akshara Mustalya**, **Sowmian Rangarajan** and **Ashwin Mohan** offered individual *Tyāgarāja kṛtis* supported by **Achintya Puttur** on the *mṛidaṅgam*.

The program concluded with *Śrī Tyāgarāja's mangalam* wishing for the well being of all, offered at the feet of Lord *Rāma*!

-Nagesh Nookala and Sumathi Vinay

[Click here for more pictures and member reflections](#)



## Mahāśivarātrī Celebrations



On **March 3, 2024**, students of Bala Vihar Grade 2 enacted the legends of *Śivarātri* - the story of *Brahmā* and *Śrī Viṣṇu* trying to find the end of a bright beam of light and the story of a hunter and the tiger where Lord *Śiva* blessed the hunter after the hunter unknowingly offered *bilvā* leaves onto *Śiva Liṅgam*. Their presentation ended with the chanting of the *Śiva-Pañcākṣara-Stotram*.



Grade 9 students presented the symbolism behind *Śivarātri* through the various names of *Śiva* such as *Nīlakaṇṭha*, *Gaṅgādhara* and *Nāgabhūṣaṇa*.

- Hetal Babla



*Mahāśivarātrī* Celebrations





## Mahāśivarātrī Celebrations



Mahāśivarātrī was observed this year at *Chinmaya Jyoti* on **March 8, 2024**. It was a wonderful opportunity for children to witness *ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā* and perform *arcanā*. They enjoyed watching the *liṅgam* bathed in various *dravyas* that were used for the *abhiṣekam* such as milk, yogurt, *pañcāmṛtam*, sweet lime, coconut water, sandalwood paste and *vibhūti*. Children enthusiastically waited for their turn to offer *abhiṣekam*.

Powerful vibrations permeated *Praṇava Nilayam* with the chants of *Śrī-Rudram* and *Camakam*.

The *nṛtya* offering by Srimeenakshi on *Śiva Taṇḍava Stotram*, composed by *Rāvaṇa*, enthralled the audience.



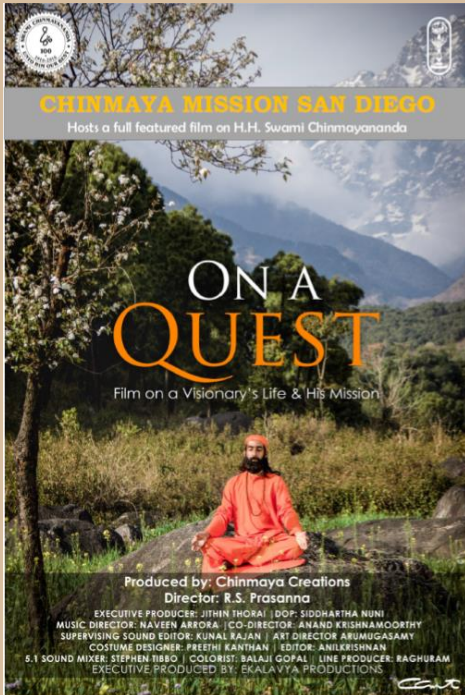
## Mahāśivarātrī Celebrations



It was indeed a perfect occasion for planting the *rudrākṣa* seeds specially brought from Kauai *āśrama* by a CMSD member family. The beautiful evening concluded with a meditation session and *ārati* at midnight.

- Sandhya Srinivasan

## ‘On A Quest’ - A Biopic on Pujya Gurudev



On March 30, 2024, CMSD hosted a screening of ‘On A Quest’ – a biopic on the life of Pujya Gurudev.



# CMSD Ongoing Events

## Monthly *Sundarakāṇḍa Pārāyaṇā*



January 20, 2024



February 17, 2024



March 23, 2024

[Click here for more pictures](#)



## Shishu Vihar Corner

### SV3 in-class activities



[Click here for more pictures](#)

## Bala Vihar Corner

### Grade K: in-class Activities



[Click here for more pictures](#)

### Grade 2: Winter Project - Diorama on *Bālakṛṣṇalīla*



[Click here for more pictures](#)



## Bala Vihar Corner

### Grade 2 children actively participating in sculpting Śiva Liṅga



[Click here for more pictures](#)

### Grade 3: Diorama on Rāmāyaṇa (story up till Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa)



### Grade 4: Diorama on Rāmāyaṇa



[Click here for more pictures](#)



# Bala Vihar Corner

**Grade 5:** Rowing boat to the tune of “*Rāma Ho, Rāma Ho Rāma....Jīvan Sāgara Mere Bhaiyā*”



**Grade 7:** Winter Break Poster Project - Compare and contrast *Ayodhyā* brothers, *Kiṣkindhā* brothers and *Laṅkā* brothers





## Annual MLK CHYK Workshop



On **January 15, 2024**, CMSD conducted its Annual MLK CHYK Workshop on ‘**Service as the means to Success**’. The discussion focused on how to integrate gratitude and *sevā* into education and career pursuits.

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

“I learned the importance of serving others through inspired self-effort, combining both action and vision, by which I am giving up my lower tendencies for the higher.” - **Aditi Puttur (CHYK)**

“In the workshop I learned about the true purpose of service, and it was a great opportunity for me to reflect on the teachings from Bala Vihar pertaining to service. I was also able to understand how service can guide me through life as the primary goal in my future career.” - **Shravani Prem (Grade 12)**

### Chinmaya Pradipika Team

Parag Kelkar, Ritu Chandiramani, Reshma Rao, Smita Bhatia, Akhila Koneri, Manasi Popat and the CMSD Photography Team