The Master Speaks:

Forgive liberally your enemies.... in fact, nothing can annoy them so much! They expect you to kick back and so have planned to break your ribs with return kicks. All these planned onslaughts become empty and hollow when you just forgive them! Many enemies become true friends when lavishly and lovingly forgiven!

- Swami Chinmayananda

In this issue of Chinmaya Pradīpikā

The special highlight of this quarter is the Chinmaya Birth Centenary Celebrations (CBCC). The 100th anniversary featured many activities including Guru Paduka Puja, a CBCC grand production, “Chinmaya Rama” and a Jñāna Yajña on the “Essential values of Mahatma Gandhi” by Swami Chidatmananda, Acharya, CM Hyderabad.

Bala Vihar students presented their annual programs to the delight of parents and teachers. The 2015-16 session concluded with graduation ceremony. The annual summer Youth camp was the last major event of this Quarter during the week of Pujya Guruji’s birthday and it will be featured in the next issue.
Pujya Gurudev’s 100th Birth Anniversary Celebrations

Pujya Gurudev’s 100th Birth Anniversary was celebrated on May 8th in San Diego—the land where HE left HIS Jyoti—with great devotion and reverence. Samskṛti Nilayam welcomed one and all with a bright rangoli, and with tender banana stems with fronds adorning both sides of the gateway. Bright green mango leaves, colorful paper festoons, and the refrain "Unto Him Our Best" in glossy letters that were suspended from the trellis created an atmosphere of elation and reverence. Stepping into the festive environment, one saw the imposing garlanded figure of Pujya Gurudev, standing hands crossed, regally surveying the proceedings from the balcony above. On the stage below, at the eastern end of the atrium, He sat enthroned under a gilded arch and golden umbrella, smiling benevolently at His children and at Lord Jyoti Vināyaka in Pranava Nilayam. In the sacred center of the atrium was a huge gleaming Jyoti, encircled on all sides of the floor by beautiful rangoli. It was altogether a beautiful sight to behold!

It was evident that many a Sevak and Sevika, who had worked behind the scenes for weeks up until the late hours of the night before, had stayed true to the motto "Unto Him Our Best". Lakshmi Aunty greeted everyone with hariH Om! and through His divine presence the entire Ashram—parents, grand-parents, children—reverberated with a synchronous and melodious unitone “hariH OM” !!! For a split second, one could even hear the sparrows and swallows (that have taken shelter within the Ashram in his grace) tweet in unison almost continuing to thank Gurudev. Such was the grandeur on Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda’s 100th birth anniversary celebrations.
The mood was set for the 400+ mission members and families joining in the Guru Pādukā pūjā, and worship of Chinmaya Jyoti at the center of the octagon in front of the stage. Following Jyoti Vināyaka pūjā, families took their seats on the floor next to their personal altars, and the morning’s function was led from the stage by our chiefsevaks—Smt. Lakshmi Aunty and Sri. Srinivas Sukumar. After invocation and bhajans by Chinmaya Dhvani and CMSD Band, Devesh Vashishtha sang a melodious piece ‘Gurudevo tava mahaniya kṛpa’ a most endearing composition by Pujya Guruji.
The Chinmaya Jyoti lamp was lit, and ṣodaśa-upacāra pūjā was conducted to Pujya Gurudev’s Pādukā-s.

Sixteen Devi-s adorned in colorful silk sarees, ornaments and flowers performed arcana to the Chinmaya Jyoti while the Guru Pādukā pūjā was performed on stage. It was as though the Aṣṭalakṣmī-s had descended to worship Pujya Gurudev on this most auspicious day, which also coincided with Mothers’ Day.

Following naivedyam and ārati, nritya upacāra to the guru as "Brahmā-vaśānu- Maheshvara" was offered gracefully by Smt. Meenal Chakradeo. Pujya Guruji’s birthday song dedicated to Pujya Gurudev was played in his own voice. Guru Pādukā stotram and Tapovana ṣaṭkam were also recited by the congregation.

An orange birthday candle in the shape of a flower, and an orange "100th birthday cake" were offered as well.

The sixth grade Bala Vihar students presented on few of the 108 names of Pujya Gurudev that inspired them.

All Devi-s and members danced around the Jyoti in great joy to the tune of “Cilanga katti odi odi vayo” – celebrating the birth of Balakrishna Menon to later bless the world as Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati. To conclude the wondrous morning, the entire āśrama recited the Chinmaya Mission pledge in Sanskrit and English followed by the prārthanā gītām – “tvam hi no netā”.

As part of the ārati and taking Pujya Gurudev’s blessings, various CMSD members offered their pledge cards, at Gurudev’s feet. We dedicate our work and result to Him alone with steadfast devotion. Chapter 15 Bhagavad Gita was recited by all. The mahāprasādam was partaken by all with great joy and enthusiasm to continue to do UNTO HIM OUR BEST.

- Ranga Sampath, Rajasekar Vaidyanathan and Srajan Raghuwanshi
Chinmaya Slokanjali Grand Awards

Two Bala Vihar students, Ketki Chakradeo and Aditi Puttur, who completed the requirements of Chinmaya Slokanjali-all five levels of the self-paced competition initiated on May 8, 2011, received their trophies on this auspicious day.
CBCC Grand Production “Chinmaya Rama”

yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānin bhavati bhārata | 
abhyaṭṭhānam adharmasya tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmyaham ||4.7||

In the words of the Lord, whenever and wherever there is a decline in righteousness and a predominance of unrighteousness, O descendant of Bhārata, at that time I manifest Myself. This was the resonating verse that reverberated all throughout the courtyard, as we, the audience, awaited in awe for the birth of Lord Śrī Rāma. Chinmaya Rama, which took place on May 15th, 2016, was the amazing musical-style production that outlined the life of the Ideal Idol, Lord Rāma. Chinmaya Rama went through many scenes of the Rāmāyaṇa, outlining a different Ideal Aspect of Lord Rāma, including the Ideal Birth, the Ideal King, and the Ideal Teacher, among many others. This production really gave the viewers an amazing experience, as it was filled to the brim with singing, narrating, chanting, great acting, and witty teaching from Lord Rāma. But what separated this production from other Rāmāyaṇa plays, was the interpretation that took place at the end of each scene, giving the audience a higher understanding of the ideologies that Lord Rāma lived for. The interpretation was designed to tie together the scenes of the Rāmāyaṇa with its core symbolism.

Soon the Rāmāyaṇa was no more a mere story, rather it became a lifestyle that one must aim to internalize; it became a wealth of teachings and values. The verse in the beginning really asserted that Lord Rāma came down to restore Dharma, righteousness, and dispel the darkness of ignorance, in order to introduce the brilliance of integrity and wisdom. In one part of the production, Lord Rāma is portrayed speaking wisdom to the fallen Vālī. Vālī had taken his younger brother’s kingdom and wife. He also exiled Sugrīva with no mercy. Vālī had done actions of adharma, and so Lord Rama, the dispeller of adharma, had to come and restore dharma. Satisfied with these words and purified of all sins, Vali then ascended to heaven. Another notable instance in Chinmaya Rama was Rāma going after the golden deer to accede to Sītā devī’s request. Although, he knew the deer was none other than an asura, he still went after it to teach the lesson that objects of desire can cause problems for people in the materialistic world. This of course did cause problems for Sītā devī later on. Also, his role as an avatāra had to be fulfilled, as he knew he would eventually confront Rāvana, and this was just one step closer to his goal of incarnation. This section of the Rāmāyaṇa was also shown to teach that when the Ego, Sītā, is diverted by outwardly pleasures, like the golden deer, it will succumb to them and get separated from the Divine, Lord Rāma.

So all throughout the production, scenes like these were shown in full color by the actors, embellished with meaningful verses and songs, and tied together by the narrators and interpreters. In conclusion, through the production Chinmaya Rama, the viewers and performers were each able to internalize at least one aspect of Lord Rāma’s beneficial manifestation.

- Aditi Putur (Gr.10)

Chinmaya Rama - A blissful experience as a part of birth centennial celebrations for Pujya Gurudev. As the name suggests, it was a perfect blend of important events from Ramayana with clear understanding and its implication in today’s world – beautifully depicted by the Sutradhari.

One of my favorite scenes was the one that portrayed Lord Rāma crying for Sītā’s pain due to abduction and separation. The “bhāva” for the actions of the Lord is many times, misunderstood, if not learnt from the true source. The yearning of the Lord for his true bhakta was magical and showed the importance of our attitude in all of our work. The divine grace is always present, and it is unto us to do our best. The attitude behind Karma is the prime force attracting the divine grace.

Another beautifully portrayed scene was wherein Kaikeyi follows the path of destruction as induced with jealousy upon Manthara’s advice. It was a captivating performance showing the downfall in one’s life as pointed out in the Bhagavad Gītā - Chapter 2 (verses 61 to 64).

- Manasi Popat
Chinmaya Rama in Pictures…
“Chinmaya Rama brought all the members, elders, youth, kids together and excellent performance is the result and joy for all- the organizers, participants and viewers. The team of Sevaks stands out in Excellent and Marvelous silent self-less service which is a unique factor for success of all Programmes.”

-Swami Chidatmananda, Acharya, CM Hyderabad
Jñāna Yajña by Swami Chidatmananda, Acharya, CM Hyderabad

Swami Chidatmananda, Acharya, of CM Hyderabad visited San Diego from May 12 to 15 joining us for the CBCC celebrations. CMSD members were blessed to hear Swami Chidatmananda-ji’s discourses on “Essential values of Mahatma Gandhi” and take part in a Guided meditation session.

CMSD member, Hemadri Tunuguntla, shares his experience:

“...A brilliant question from Arjuna, “Sthita-prajñasya kā bhāṣā ... (Gita 2-54)” prompted the Lord to pour the nectar of all Vedas and Upaniṣad-s in a relatively easy to understand language and format, which we all know as the Bhagavad Gītā. In spite of detailed answers by Lord Krishna, to all the questions on Sthita-prajñā characteristics, it is still very difficult to comprehend these laksana-s to the extent the common man could practice in his daily life. The common man longed and prayed for a living example for better understanding. Mohandas Karamchand “Mahatma” Gandhi is a fitting answer to all those prayers, for he walked on this earth in the contemporary history where effects of kali yuga were rampant. Many first generation Indians residing in USA are very familiar with the Mahatma for they have studied him in their course work during their high school and college years. Many might have written essays on him and won prizes in competitions as well. But how many of us could relate his life and the virtues, he believed in and steadfastly practiced, with the teachings of Upanishads? Well, it is no longer an issue as Pujya Swami Chidatmananda took upon himself to quench this thirst with his lecture series titled “Essential values of Mahatma Gandhi”. Some of us were fortunate enough to attend this discourse during the week of May 12, 2016.

Swami Chidatmananda, the Acharya of Chinmaya mission, Hyderabad and Regional Head of the mission centers in Andhra Pradesh, is very accomplished yet very gentle and easily approachable and I personally appreciated his enigmatic ‘Mona Lisa’ smile. He demonstrated his thorough understanding of Mahatma Gandhi and could quote even minor incidents of his life with dates and places etc. Swamiji emphasized the values of the Mahatma while constantly drawing our attention to the corresponding vedantic teachings and how they can be put into practice. Gandhiji once paid tribute to īśopaniṣad with “If all the Upanishads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the īśopaniṣad (... tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā ... ) were left in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live forever”. Gandhiji truly imbibed and put into practice the following śloka:

\[
\text{yastu sarvāni bhūtāni ātmavevānupāsyati}
\]
\[
\text{sarva bhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijugupsate}
\]

Swamiji argued that this belief alone paved the path to Gandhiji’s fearlessness, practice of ahimsa and his efforts towards eradication of untouchability.

I came out of the discourse fully convinced that Gandhiji’s life is a guide to understand the otherwise unfathomable scriptures and their teachings.”
Gita Chanting Competition

The Sixteenth Annual Bhagavad Gītā chanting competition was held on April 30th. 24 BV students and 10 adults chanted Chapter 16 with great devotion.

Panel of Gods

On May 22, CMSD Yuva Sevaks conducted a special event-Panel of Gods, for the PK-2 grade Bala Vihar children. The children welcomed various gods with great enthusiasm. Each God told a story to entertain the children.

Lord Gaṇeśa shared an inspirational story when he had to compete with his brother to win a fruit.

Lord Viṣṇu told the story of Vāmana.

Lord Rāma shared a beautiful story of how squirrels helped build the bridge to Lanka.

Lord Śiva and Mother Pārvatī also shared stories with the children.
Śrī Rāma Navamī

Śrī Rāma Navamī celebrations at Chinmaya Mission San Diego was a very divine experience. Śrī Rāma aşṭottara pūjā was performed for the Lord. After the pūjā, several melodious bhajans were sung in praise of Śrī Rāma and Sītā-ji. Overall, the atmosphere was very peaceful and pious. It was a wonderful experience to celebrate one of our most important festivals along with the Chinmaya family. –Ashwin Mohan

Hanumān Jayanti

On April 23 2016, Hanuman Jayanti was celebrated in a very special way. Hanuman Chalisa-thon was led by Grade 4 class and families.

“Five other students and I played tabla to the cheerful chanting of the Hanumān Cālīsā. The microphones were passed around as all devotees chanted. After some time, you could go outside and eat delicious prasād cooked by the Sevika-s. The Hanumān Cālīsā was chanted 108 times, each time more cheerful than the previous one. Many devotees kept coming and going, each one with sincere devotion. Singing the Hanumān Cālīsā, which is personally my favorite prayer, was very uplifting.”

- Aditya Mavalankar, Grade 7
On May 21st, a CMSD Interfaith Youth conference was held on the theme of “Light”. This CBCC event was held along with the Poway Interfaith team. CMSD CHYK-s and Yuva Sevaks participated along with other young adults from various faith organizations and presented on the theme of “Being the Light”.

©2016 Chinmaya Mission San Diego

July 2016 Issue-No19
Bala Vihar Annual Day Celebrations- June 12 & 19

It is a delight to see the Bala Vihar programs every year- the culmination of a full year’s learnings that are presented in a creative manner. “I am Thine!” was the theme for the annual day celebrations appropriately chosen to commemorate the CBCC year. The program began with an invocation by Chinmaya Dhvani. The PK class children the daily prayers with faith and devotion. The Kindergarten class took us to the land of Gods and Goddesses. The children beamed with joy as they shared what they have learnt.

First graders showed us how to recite the alphabets –the Chinmaya way! The values presented remind us that it starts with an Aspiration to reach a higher goal and the Zeal to walk on the path of Dharma. We can, we must and we will!
Second graders described the charm and sang songs on their sweet Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The third and fourth graders presented Bala Rāmāyaṇa. The third graders emphasized the importance of always saying the name of Lord Rāma. They sang the song “Bolo Ram” and effectively presented “Khāte bhī Rāma kaho, Pīte bhī Rāma kaho”.
Fourth graders presented the glories of Lord Hanumān. The children shared the qualities of Lord Hanumān, what they learnt from these values and how they use it in their daily lives.

Fifth graders, who studied the Bāla Bhāgavatam, shared the nine modes of devotion sharing examples for each mode.
Sixth graders explained that the grace of the Guru is the grace of God. They enacted the story of Giri who was a student of Ādi Śaṅkaracārya. With śraddhā and guru’s grace, Giri was transformed to Toṭākācārya. Seventh graders presented the teachings of Vibhīṣana Gītā.
The second week of the annual day program began with an amazing performance by the Tabla Students of Chinmaya Kala Jyoti. It was wonderful to see the excellent progress made by these students over the last year under the tutelage of their teacher, Amarnath Puttur.

The eighth grade class performed a talk show on controversial topics in the Mahābhārata. They had a creative idea of a time machine that brought back Mahābhārata characters from the past. The importance of doing one’s dharma even when it is difficult, was emphasized. Ninth graders presented a skit on Hindu culture. The theme was “My Salutations to that reverential teacher, who opened my eyes, by applying the divine collyrium of self-knowledge in my eyes which are blinded by the cataract of ignorance” and it was portrayed through the story of a king and how he ruled his kingdom.

Tenth grade class presented “Decision 2016”, a presidential candidate debate, where the candidates presented their views on the Environment. Guidance from the Gītā was provided in helping making the right choice.

11th and 12th graders presented the values from the Gītā in the form of a skit named “Heroes of Bodville”.

©2016 Chinmaya Mission San Diego  July 2016  Issue-No19
Bala Vihar Awards and Graduation

The annual CMSD awards ceremony and the graduation of high school senior students were held on June 19, 2016 following the student presentations. Lakshmi Aunty assisted by other teachers and Sevaks presented the awards for perfect attendance, Chapter 16 Gītā chanting competition, Chinmaya Slokanjali, and BV Quiz awards. All the BV teachers were also recognized.

BV Graduation

Four graduating high school seniors along with their families performed the Guru Pādukā pūjā led by Lakshmi Aunty. The graduating students offered guru dakṣiṇā and received their certificates. The families of the graduating class served lunch to all members of the CMSD family.

Yet another year of Bala Vihar came to a grand finale.
Bala Vihar Corner

The second and fifth grade projects are highlighted in this edition. The second grade students have showcased the stories of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the fifth graders- the Nine modes of devotion.
PARIKSHIT MEETS KALI

Cow
The cow symbolizes Mother Earth. She's crying because the vices (the symbols of the bull's legs) were cut off by Kali.

Kali
Kali symbolizes all evil elements on earth that cause destruction. Where he lives, there is pride, jealousy, lust, vanity and falsehood.

Bull
The bull symbolizes all the vices needed for peace and prosperity on earth (dharma).

9 Modes of Devotion

1. Veneration
2. Pujan - offering of the best to the Lord
3. midst of the best offerings to the Lord
4. Pujan - offerings of the best offerings to the Lord
5. Veneration - worship of the best offerings to the Lord
6. Pujan - offering of the best offerings to the Lord
7. Veneration - worship of the best offerings to the Lord
8. Pujan - offering of the best offerings to the Lord
9. Pujan - offering of the best offerings to the Lord
CMSD members speak about Chinmaya Rama

It was a very impactful play. I haven’t seen such a play that conveys teachings of Lord Rama’s virtues to apply in our modern lifestyle. Outstanding choreography and performance by the entire cast, sevaks and teachers.
- Panchal family

Play was marvelous. Outstanding performance by everyone. Thoroughly and professionally executed. Kudos to the directors and everyone involved. We need more such plays in the future.
- Magesh Babu and family

Chinmaya Rama play planted the seeds of learning the Ramayan values in an entertaining and educational way. We are all blessed to have a wonderful setting of our Ashram to enjoy Chinmaya Rama. We look forward to annual plays like it in the future.
- Mavalankar Family

.....One of my favorite scenes was the one that portrayed Lord Rama crying for Sita’s pain due to abduction and separation. The yearning of the Lord for his true bhakto was magical and showed the importance of our attitude in all of our work. Another beautifully portrayed scene was wherein Kaikeyi follows the path of destruction as induced with jealousy upon Manthara’s advice.
- Manasi Popat

Loved the narration of the sutradhara-s-made me look at the epic from a different perspective—how they relate to our daily life experiences! Congratulations to the entire team!
- Padmaja Menon and family

...What struck me is the law of karma and the need to do the right action at all times based on 3 G’s (God, Guru and Gita). And right thinking follows automatically....
- Poonam Bhatia

Have Faith in the inherent goodness of others.

-Swami Tejomayananda