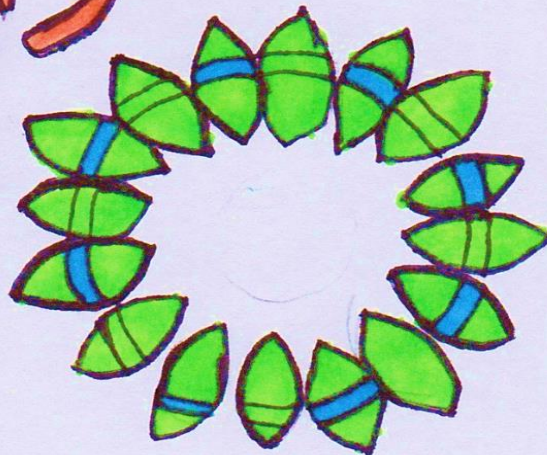
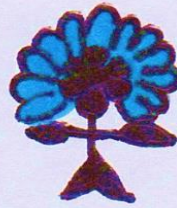
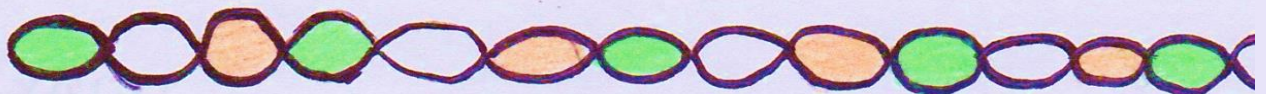


# HARI PATRIKA



Chinmaya Mission Portland,  
First Edition, 2015





## Our Beloved Gurudev

By Ashok Kajjam



Swami **Chinmayananda Saraswati** (born **Balakrishna Menon**; 8 May 1916 – 3 August 1993) was a Hindu spiritual leader and teacher who inspired the formation of Chinmaya Mission, a worldwide nonprofit organization, to spread the knowledge of Advaita Vedanta, the nondual system of thought found in the *Upanishads*, which epitomize the philosophical teachings of the Vedas.

Chinmayananda is known for teaching *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and other ancient Hindu scriptures. From 1951 onward, he spearheaded a global Hindu spiritual and cultural renaissance that popularized the religion's esoteric scriptural texts, teaching them in English all across India and abroad.

Chinmayananda inspired the formation of Chinmaya Mission in 1953. Founded by his disciples and led by him, it is a spiritual, educational, and charitable nonprofit organization that encompasses more than 300 centers in India and internationally. He authored 95 publications, including

commentaries on the major *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*. He was a visiting professor of Indian philosophy at several American and Asian universities and he conducted university lecture tours in many countries.

The BMI (Body Mind Intellect) Chart is a teaching tool innovated by Chinmayananda that became one of his hallmarks. It categorizes the totality of human experience, according to the science of Vedanta, by drawing on 11 characters of the English and Devanagari alphabets.

Through his Vedantic teachings, publications, centers, ashrams, temples, and social service projects around the globe, his work continues to provide cultural and spiritual instruction to members of the Hindu diaspora.

In 1992 Swami Chinmayananda gave an address in the United Nations titled "Planet in Crisis". Just before the Mahasamadhi Swamiji was recognized as a world-renown teacher of Vedanta and Hindu religious leader. He was selected as a President of Hindu religion for the Centennial Conference of the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, where Swami Vivekananda gave His address a hundred years ago. He was also honored in Washington, DC, at "World Vision 2000", a conference of religious leaders sponsored by Hindu Vishwa Parishad on August 6-8, 1993. The award was to be presented to Swamiji for His selfless service to humanity and as his extraordinary achievement in creating a renaissance of spiritual and cultural values in the country of His birth, India. Unfortunately, Swamiji was not able to appear for the last two functions as He attained Mahasamadhi on August 3rd.

\*\*\*

*Serene-minded, fearless, firm, in the vow of Brahmacharya, having controlled the mind, meditating, thinking on me and balanced, let him sit, having me as the supreme goal. Thus, always keeping the mind balanced, the yogi, with his mind controlled, attains the peace abiding in me, which culminates in total liberation. Verse 6.14-15*

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## Celebrating One Year

By Kishore Pathial, President, Chinmaya Mission Portland

Hari OM,

Wow, what a journey it has been over the last two years. What had been a vague desire by our members to have a home of their own has now been transformed to the vibrant center we are in today, Chinmaya Haridwar. The power of “Sankalpa” with the abundant grace of our Gurus has led to our own home with our *Madhur Krishna*, who showers his blessings upon as we travel on our paths.

Over the last year, in addition to our expanding Balavihar program, we have seen the development and growth of a vibrant Hindi, Vedic Chanting and Swaranjali (music) program. Chinmaya Mission Portland remains powered by our army of volunteers who strive to put into practice part of our pledge “giving more than what we take.” Their motivation is evident in the functioning of our center and its activities. Our Sevaks and Sevikas, from all walks of life, joyfully donate their time and resources to ensure the smooth running of our programs, the strength of our center and our financial stability.

For the Global Chinmaya Mission Family, this year marks a great milestone. The Birth Centenary of Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda, started on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015 with a massive three day celebration inaugurated by India’s ex-President Dr. Abdul Kalam, who spoke eloquently about his experience with Swami Sivanananda (Swami Chinmayananda’s Deeksha Guru) and Swami Chinmayananda.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister of India, Honorable Narendra Modi released a commemorative 100 Rupee coin as well as a circulating 10 rupee coin, issued by the Reserve Bank of India honoring Swami Chinmayananda, while sharing his experiences of having met Him and of his vision.

As the opening ceremonies in Ernakulam concluded, Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda, lit the “Chinmaya Jyothi,” an ever burning lamp,

which will travel throughout India, over the next year, bringing forth the message expounded by Swami Chinmayananda to the nation.

As we look forward to the ongoing growth of our center, I am inspired by Guruji, Swami Tejomayananda’s words “Unto Him, Our Best.” I thank all of you for your continued support and help as we continue our own spiritual journey “to give maximum happiness to the maximum number for the maximum time.”

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## A Note From

Swami Sarveshananda

Invoking the grace of the Lord and Pujya Gurudev’s blessings, let me wish everyone in CM

Portland hearty congratulations on their successful completion of their first year at their center Chinmaya Mission Haridwar.

In the ancient past every city town or village, the temples were the center of the community. The community developed every aspect of living around the sanctum-Sanctorum. The temple was the center for education, learning music and dance, martial arts, performing arts, granaries (as a relief effort against famines flood or wars), of course the spiritual center and many more utilities. So the temples were the socio-economic-spiritual hub of the society.

With the various Chinmaya Mission centers opening full functioning facilities – Pujya Gurudev’s idea was to bring the temples back as the center of the society. I’m very proud that this legacy is being continued as Chinmaya Haridwar. May this chapter of Chinmaya Mission flourish as per vision of our beloved Gurudev. May this center become the center of social, cultural, religious and education hub where all traditions will find its true meaning and purpose. Small step - giant leap ahead.

\*\*\*

*Resting in Brahman, with steady intellect and undeluded, the knower of Brahman, neither rejoices on obtaining what is pleasant, nor grieves on obtaining what is unpleasant. Verse 5.20*

## Teaching at Balavihar

By Arundhati Mahapatra

I have been exposed to Vedantic teaching and learning from Vedantic texts since my teens and have continued being part of adult study groups throughout my life. However, the teaching opportunity came to me quite unexpectedly 3 years ago. Little did I know being a teacher at Balavihar would fulfill my love for kids, teaching and Vedanta all at the same time.

The curriculum though meant for elementary kids has taught me more about faith and practical application of vedanta than many other texts. We take our Balavihar program at Chinmaya Haridwar very seriously. In the past we have had teacher training programs and continue to have informal training sessions with visiting Acharyas. As teachers we stay rooted in the knowledge of Vedanta and the philosophy of Chinmaya Mission through study groups, gyan yagnas, online education and adult camps.

The greatest reward in being a teacher is to see the children practice what they learn in class, especially for a teacher in the lower elementary classes. One day a parent told me that when she came home stressed from work, her twins told her not to worry because *“whatever happens, happens for the best”* - a story we have learnt in class this year in second grade. And that wasn't all, they also sang the Hanuman Chalisa.

In another instance when I was repenting

after having lost my temper, my nine year old daughter advised me to keep going to Chinmaya Haridwar. Seeing a puzzled look on my face, she explained more explicitly that it is a place we all go every Sunday to get rid of our negativities and learn good values.

It makes me realize what a privilege and responsibility it is to teach these children and shape their young minds with positive values from our ancient traditions and brought down to us through our *“guru shishya parampara.”*

Teaching has also given me a sense of belonging to the larger Chinmaya family in the greater Portland area. Unlike a traditional school we interact with the students as well as their families outside the classroom at Chinmaya events, festivals, camps and retreats. This enables us to form stronger ties based on a common set of core values.

It is through the grace of the Lord and Gurudev that I have been given this opportunity to belong, learn and grow with the members of the Chinmaya family. Hope the blessing continues to give me opportunities to serve and learn bringing fulfillment in my otherwise mundane life.

\*\*\*

*With the self unattached to external contacts, he finds happiness in the Self;  
with the self engaged in the meditation of Brahman, he attains endless  
happiness. Verse 5.21*

## Salutations to Guru

By Asha Godse

When my mind is wandering in an ocean of  
thoughts,

I lose focus,

You are my light house &

I gain more clarity.

When I am alone, engaged in my world,

You stand behind me &

I rise above.

When I lose my courage,  
fall down in my cage of fear,

You give me inspiration &

I become jubilant.

In darkness of failure,

I am discouraged,

You are my guide &

I see a new world.

*Now: I have ultimate faith in your path.  
Whenever there are calamities, you help me  
overcome them.*

\*\*\*

## Prayer to Lord Madhur Krishna

By Asha Godse

Keshave, Madhava, Vitthala

*Lord Krishna*

Sad Ghali Ba Tuzla

*I am calling you*

Sanjavel Maziya Jivana

*My last stage in life*

Kushit Tuzya Ghe Majala ||

*Take me in your arms*

Jagnniyanta Tu Purshottama

Partha Sangitlis Rani Geeta

*Kishan told Arjuna tales of the battlefield*

Radha, Jana, Mira, Gopika

Sarvancha Tu Zalas Trata ||

*You guided your devotees*

Dhav Pav Ve Shri Ananta

*Come help me Shri Krishna*

Tav Charnancha Dhyas Aata

*I surrender myself to your feet*

Mage Valuri N Pahane Aata

*Give me ultimate serenity*

De Charni Visava Bhagvanta ||

*Don't want to see the past*

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*Brahman is the oblation; Brahman is the clarified butter, constituting the  
offerings; by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman;  
Brahman verily, shall be reached by him, who always sees Brahman in all  
actions. Verse 4.24*

## A2B

By Chandra Nair

The 'soft' yelling of my parents rudely awakened me. "It's 4:30 AM and you are still in bed, don't you know we have to leave for the temple in another 30 minutes, you have not even taken a shower yet." I respond, "but we went to the temple yesterday, why today then?" Quick comes the answer, "it's an auspicious day, and it's very special in our culture, you have to go today." My questioning ends at that point as attempts in the past taught me the old adage - *"Resistance is futile, beatings (in this case emotional blackmail) will continue until the morale improves."*

Culture vulture, I mumble and roll out of the bed half asleep, mentally cursing why I have to lose my sleep, why do I need to go to temple, why can't I pray at home when God is everywhere (I am told), why even pray! But born in a South Indian Hindu family, raised strictly as one, this is what you are expected to do, till you fly out of the nest.

First, it's born out of love and respect more than anything else; your inexplicable bond with the parents towards all the sacrifices they make to give a better life cements the love. Second, you see everyone else doing it around you that make you think I don't want be the 'weirdo' of the block. Third, you are emotionally imprisoned by the concept of 'god fearing,' you are taught to 'fear god' or something bad is going to happen to you.

Stop! Wake up and pray; am I still in bed with all these 'bad' thoughts still haunting me like a nightmare? Loud ringing of the temple bells

jolt me out of the valley of wandering thoughts, it's time to pray, doors to the Sanctum Sanctorum is wide open. Lord's mesmerizing form resplendent with all the glory is bright and enchanting, I am captivated by the beauty, something feels divine and sublime, I do feel good about this moment, I have no words to explain, I don't even know what to ask... I simply stand, close my eyes with the thought, "Lord I do not understand why I do what I do, please make me understand since you are omniscient (as I am told). I am just here to be a 'good, god fearing and loving son' to my loving parents."

Years rolled by, I don't need to go to temple anymore, I am free from rituals; I attempt to define myself, I am 'agnostic'. I continued with my religious practice 'as taught' this time to be a 'good husband', but less importance to rituals. But the desire to learn more about the God principle haunted me deeper than ever, and I sought books to quench that desire. But again I had more questions than answers.

I wanted to impart the 'right knowledge' to my kids, clearly as you can tell I am getting older but not wiser. I hear about a place called Chinmaya Mission, and decide to give it a try.

Alas! My childhood prayers are answered. I found my Guru. I now know what I do, why I do, with conviction. I can't even miss the temple visit more than a week. True to his word Gurudev did teach Hinduism to a Hindu like me. My humble salutations at his lotus feet! Well, that's the story of my journey, Agnostic to Believer (A2B)!

\*\*\*

*The Blessed Lord said:  
Brahman is Imperishable, the Supreme; His essential nature is called Self-Knowledge, the creative force that causes beings to spring forth into manifestation is called 'work'. Verse 8.3*

## Beloved Gurudev - Always With Us

By Haritha Kajjam

I still remember the big day, seems like it just happened yesterday but it's already coming close to our one year since Murti Sthapana of Chinmaya Haridwar. I hope to share my enlivening and incredible experience to all the people in this world. Well, now I'm sharing through "Hari Patrika."

Rewinding back, we had a three day Murti Sthapana event, the first two days went really well. On the third and final day our beloved Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda visited our Haridwar center for the inauguration. On this auspicious day, I reached the center around 7:00am. I was busy setting up puja items in the shrine for the day as per the priest. The shrine was beautifully decorated with mango leaves, toran, sweet scented array of colorful flowers, shiny kalasha's with betel leaves and coconut, a tub of rice immersed with our Madhur Krishna and Suprabhatam chanting in the background. The entire building bloomed with festivity, people participating in various activities and doing them with jubilation. After an hour the temple priest arrived and made sure everything was ready before starting the pujas for the day. This is where one can see "The Grace of Gurudev and the Lord."

During the puja one of the event is performing 'Raksha Bandhan' to our Madhur Krishna and for this we needed Talisman (yellow thread tied around dry turmeric). This was a last minute thing and I had no clue about it. I thought to myself, "What do we do now?" The Indian store opened late on Sunday and by then Raksha Bandhan would be completed so I couldn't

go buy it. The Priest and I were wondering what to do and then I looked at Pujya Gurudev's picture to take care of this problem and surrendered myself.

Just then my friend Radheka Godse, beautifully dressed in Maharastrian style outfit walked into the shrine holding a 'pot' (ghat) in her hands which had panchamrutham in it. Our eyes were gazed on the pot as she was coming towards us and our eyes became bigger and wider filled with joy, we could not believe what we were seeing. The priest and I exchanged our faces and our mouths were wide open, our inner feelings simply cannot explain this magical and blissful moment. We immediately knew that this was simply "his grace" and nothing more.

Guess what was around the pot? It was a talisman. She had beautifully decorated the pot with talisman. We usually see people decorate pots with pretty ribbons, strings or beautiful paint, but not with talisman. What can I say ... it's a coincidence? I don't think so. It's Gurudev's krupa which always takes care of us.

Later in the evening when I narrated this incident to Guruji, all he said was "*Haridwar has Lord's Grace and Gurudev's presence. Otherwise this would never have happened.*" Truly indeed we are all blessed to be part of Haridwar and Chinmaya family.

May the blessing of Pujya Gurudev, Guruji, Madhur Krishna always shower upon all of

us.  
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*For, I am the abode of Brahman, the immortal and the immutable, of everlasting dharma and of absolute bliss. Verse 14.27*



## **Influence of Chinmaya Mission**

By Jolly Dhruv

Chinmaya Mission allows for quality mother daughter time. My 13 months old daughter, Saanvi Dhruv, never wanted to sit in the class and pay attention to the curriculum, songs, stories etc. But 8 months later... I see a higher level of involvement from her in the class (she is 21 months now.) This wouldn't have been possible without the amazing dedication, devotion and commitment from all teachers and volunteers.

We are thankful to our friends Seema and Sushil Neema for suggesting to join sooner and not wait. It is our treasure to have Chinmaya Mission open closer to our home. We are lucky to up bring our daughter in Chinmaya Mission Parivaar teaching Hindu culture and values in the USA.

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## **Balance**

By Karthy Chandra

We come into this world head first and leave feet first; in between—it's all a matter of balance. It's something we all strive to imbibe in various aspects of our lives—living by the mantra “work hard, play hard” and tailoring our meals to embody a “well-balanced diet.”

Balance has played a large role in my personal culture as well. It was no simple feat trying to merge two jarringly distinct worlds as my family immigrated 8,500 miles to different country. I knew that while surrounding myself with hotdog vendors, American Idol, and football frenzy, it would be easy to forget the dusty streets of India

where I had fallen and chipped my tooth, chased the stray cats, and sipped mango lassi.

It's all too easy to lose sight of the cultural aspects of a community that one is not tangibly in touch with. I was lucky enough to have two parents to reel me in every time I meandered too far from my roots, but the appreciation of my Indian roots was most directly solicited by my involvement with Chinmaya Mission.

From a very young age onwards, the Mission helped to bridge the fissure between my home and my homeland by providing me with wholesome cultural experiences and a network of like-minded individuals to enjoy them with. As the years progressed, so did my learning at Bala Vihar.

In our weekly classes, we transitioned from chanting hymns and perusing the enthralling stories of Hindu mythology to delving deeper with introspective discussions and learning how to apply Vedantic teachings to our everyday lives. Chinmaya Mission has not only informed me of my deep-rooted heritage, but it has also taught me the logic of spirituality, while emphasizing the balance of head and heart.

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*Uttering the one syllabled 'Om' – the symbol of Brahman – and remembering me, he who departs, leaving the body, attains the supreme goal. Verse 8.13*

## Observations of a Kindergarten Teacher

By Meera Nair

Kindergarten is a fun place. And 5-year olds have vivid personalities. How do I know? I teach Kindergarten at Balvihar.

Here I share a few gems from the brainstorming sessions in our class. It brings out all the colors of a 5-year-old:

They are kind and loving: *"I show love by caring and helping someone when they are sad."*

*"I show kindness to others by listening and loving each other."*

They are observant: *"Difference between humans and animals - animals can't read a book and people can."*

They like to put on a silly face often: *"What makes me smile?" - "Eating skunks."*

Moms are loved: *"My best friend is my mom. My mom is special because she loves me and teaches me good manners."*

There is practical advice: *"You can make new friends by smiling and being nice."*

They know their goals and how to get there: *"I work on my reading so I can read chapter books."*

They have expectations: *"What makes me not happy?" - "When people don't come to my birthday and don't bring presents."*

Simple joys matters: *"What makes me happy?" - "When friends come to my birthday."*

They know right from wrong: *"What is a right thing that you do?" - "I always listen to my parents." "I pray to God everyday."*  
*"What is a rule that you follow?" - "Be kind to family and friends."*

And of course, truth prevails at the end: *"God is everywhere."*

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## Our Milestone

By Sanjay and Neelam Agarwal

We are very excited to write this small note in celebration of Manas having completed 1.5 years at Chinmaya Mission in his infant class. We have been followers of Art of Living and have learnt breathing and meditation techniques that have immensely benefited both Sanjay and I.

Realizing how important it is to be exposed to the ancient wisdom contained in Indian spiritual practices, naturally we wanted our kids to be exposed to the same right from their childhood.

Unfortunately, there are not many programs for kids within Art of Living. Chinmaya mission has a well run program for kids of every age, infants included. We are happy that we enrolled Manas in Chinmaya Mission. Within a year he has learnt lots of Bhajans and can pronounce Sanskrit slokas.

We hope as Manas progresses further in his spiritual journey he will have more to learn.

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*The Blessed Lord said:*

*O Partha, neither in this world, nor in the next world is there destruction for him; none, verily, who strives to be good, O my son, ever comes to grief. Verse 6.40*

## Why do Samashti Upanayanam for Young Adults

By Radheka Godse

Our community is admired for good parenting skills and for prioritizing children's education over everything else. We proudly attribute this to our culture – our visionary sages and *Rishi-s* who gave to us our *samskara-s* (rites of passage) to build strong roots - relationships, families, and nations. So to stop disintegration, to invoke and evoke integration at all levels we must save our *samskara-s* so that they connect us all (*sanga*) to Joy (*Sat*). Let us stop acting/labeling these rites of passage as purposeless only namesake rituals, let us invest into making them actions well done.

Are our children growing, educated, and happy? *Samskara-s* act like mile markers at certain periods of life helping keep track of where we are going. Many times blinded by our love or attachment we may not make the child fully strong and responsible. We can really give them only three things - resources (material), time (mental) and effort (intellectual). Paying off for college is hard, but relatively easier than giving time. Putting effort is much harder and, this is where the role modeling scheme - *Acharya* and *Guru-Shishya Parampara* helps us. Lord Krishna highlights this in Chapter 13 of *Srimad Bhagavad Geeta*. He tells Prince Arjuna, "You need to practice *Acharya Upasana*." *Acharya* means the one who leads by example by discipline., *Sadachara* or *Acharati* and *Upasana* means to sit near or living by their role-models. The *Guru* teaches the student, initiates the student, and trains the student in knowledge. The *Guru* teaches the student how to prioritize, use *Viveka* which means discrimination that my focus is now on developing, using my intellect. The *Upanayanam* says hey, now that you are a student; don't focus on enjoying and eating, that's what babies do. Now focus on making your head and your heart strong. That's what students do. That will prepare you to be an adult. Thus together our mind begins to open as we learn how to learn.

Why would we invest in say *tabla* & robotics coaches in life? The answer is so that they 'get on the stage' and become better *tabla* & robotics players. Why introduce a religious teacher? So that they become more centered and focused. Let us help mark off an important milestone, make it into a *s m i l e s t o n e*, a celebration – *Samashti Upanayana* (Sacred Thread) where everyone does the ceremony together, the parents lead the children to their role model, the *Guru* then explains (whispers along with the fathers in their ears) to perceive in Words, Ideas & Thoughts (WIT) the ideal of a chaste student (*brahmacharin*).

We can. We must. We Will. *We wish... The Know how is available to us, so STOP wishing and think role modeling Hanumanji... Haath Bajra Aur Dhawaja Biraaje / Kaandhe Moongi Jagneu Saaje* // हाथ बज्र औ ध्वजा बिराजे । कांधे मज्जनेऊ साजे ॥ ... to practice what we learn next spring *Chinmaya Haridwar* shall be hosting a *Samashti Upanayanam* (Sacred Thread) Ceremony at our center *Chinmaya Haridwar*. *Acharya Vivekji* would be there to speak about it and give a practical way for this all to be well done otherwise it will become a ritual only without the philosophy to back it... Stay tuned for details coming soon and how to sign up... I think **YOU SHOULD DO IT**.

*"I heard and I forgot. I saw and I forgot. I did and I remembered it forever." --- Benjamin Franklin*

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*Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and a rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age. Verse 4.7-8*

## CMH Shankara Namana

By Ramesh Krishnamurthy

॥ हरिः ॐ ॥

श्री मधुसूदनसुरस्वतीविरचित  
वेदान्तकल्पलता नाम्ना कृत्या प्रथम  
प्रार्थनश्लोकाश्च विद्यतेति

शङ्कर नमन

मीमांसया कपटतो भुजगाम्बयेव  
स्वाधीनतामुपनिषद्विनतेव नीता ।

येनोद्धृतामृतफलेन गरुत्मतेव  
तस्मै नमो भगवतेऽद्भुतशङ्काराय ॥

mīmāṃsayā kapaTatō bhujaḡāmbayēva

svādhīnatāmupanishadvinatēva nītā  
|yēnōdhrutāmrutaphalēna garutmatēva

tasmai namō bhagavatē adbhutashankarāya  
॥

येन – By whom, गरुत्मतेव – like Garuda,  
कपटतो – by deceit/by outwitting, विनतेव  
भुजगाम्ब एव उद्धृता – as was Vinata  
rescued from Kadru, the mother of serpents,  
मीमांसया उपनिषद् अमृतफलेन स्वाधीनता  
नीता – brought back the possession all of  
the Upanishadic nectar-fruit from the  
Mimamsaka-s (the Saankhya logicians), तस्मै  
भगवते अद्भुत शङ्काराय नमः – to that  
extraordinary, Divine Shankara, I salute.

*I bow to that extraordinary, divine Shankara,  
who, like Garuda rescuing his mother Vinata  
from Kadru who had taken her by deceit, got  
back possession all of the fruits and nectars  
of our Upanishads from the Mimasaka-s.*

\*\*\*

## Journey to the Pinnacle

By Samudyatha Kumar

*"Walk with the dreamers, the believers, the  
courageous, the cheerful, the planners, the  
doers, the successful people with their heads*

*in the clouds and their feet on the ground.  
Let their spirit ignite a fire within you to leave  
this world better than when you found it..." ~  
Wilfred Peterson*

Miracle it has been to find all these virtues of  
inspiration that I had been longing for in  
recent years of pursuit, in one organization!  
My journey at Chinmaya Mission began at  
their first day of academic year at the new  
home of Chinmaya Haridwar. The mission has  
led me to a treasure of such magnitude, I  
have yet to discover the depth of intellectual  
wealth.

Each weekly visit to the Haridwar brings  
forth a delightful surprise as though when a  
kid opens a window of an enchanted castle,  
only to catch a glimpse of its colorful garden.  
The garden in here is the vast information  
translated from rich doctrines of Vedanta  
which are explained and simplified to the  
level of a layman.

It has been impressive to witness traditional  
festivities celebrated with an explanation of  
rationale behind it. Also admirable is the  
charitable work to support the community,  
both local and in India.  
These activities are nurtured by dedicated  
and generous volunteers and staff. Thereby,  
our children benefit the privilege to  
experience values of cultural and morally rich  
life.

*"A small group of thoughtful people could  
change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing  
that ever has." ~ Margaret Mead.*

The visiting Acharyas and Swamijis who  
undoubtedly are excellent Gurus in  
dispensing and sharing their wisdom through  
their lectures to novice learners as we walk  
the unknown terrains of spiritual life. They  
are so unassumingly humble and  
intellectually sensible that one cannot, but  
follow their advice to apply all the principles  
in daily life to attain the enlightenment that  
is much sought after.

I continue to seek true meaning of life,  
understand its purpose, discover the path of  
spirituality, strengthen my faith, attain a bit  
of wisdom and expertise to reach higher  
goals in life for larger good.

*He who thus knows, in true light, my divine birth and action; having abandoned the  
body, he is not born again; he comes to me, O Arjuna. Verse 4.9*

The void that I had in life is filling up slow and steady. Knowledge inherited from the mission has provided a code of conduct to lead a healthy life with a purpose. For that, I am ever grateful for this path paved for us by dedicated pioneers and leaders, both international and local.

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## What Balavihar Taught Me: Lesson 1

By Sanjana Mahesh

Walking into class, I already knew the stories, the lessons, the mythology and the prayers of Hinduism. So why was I awake at 9:00am on a Sunday? I'll never forget my dad actually following me in his car when I walked to my friends house to carpool for Balavihar to make sure I wasn't going "elsewhere." He'd say, "*Obviously* I do trust you, I just happen to *love* you more" as an excuse to do anything overprotective. To be completely honest, I had only joined Bala Vihar because I was trying to hang out with my friend, Anupriya, while simultaneously pad my resume for college.

Turns out, what I actually learned, I couldn't really put on my resume. The first thing I learned was that everybody was a learner... even Arjun and Rama. Apparently the stories my grandma told me had much deeper meaning than my eight year old self was capable of understanding. My cynical, know it all 16 year old self didn't like being taught anything about *life*. Especially at 9:00am on a Sunday. That's what Monday-Friday at 8:00am-5:00pm was for. But acknowledging

the idea that we humans will forever try to keep learning was refreshing. The power to admit that you know so little opened up a whole new world. For me, it broke down the shell that made my obnoxious teenage mind think I knew so much. Admitting that you don't know anything can be really difficult, but Balavihar made it **so** very easy. Bhagavad Gita says unless you're Lord Vishnu incarnate in Krishna, you don't know much and are still learning throughout the course of life. It made me realize that alongside me, quite a significant number of aunties and uncles are still learning as well how to put it all into practice. *Understanding* that it's okay to be flawed, that gossip occasionally does slip out, and that the last **C** you got on a test or that last work review has the potential to be better the next time. So next time, somebody doesn't act the way you would like them to, just remember, **they're** still learning and **you** have the potential to learn from them too. You're going to spend the same amount of time being mad at the situation, then why not just settle your ego down and spend the same amount of time on this Earth happy. (This didn't mean don't listen to your parents because they're not God but they still have wisdom because they have invaluable experiences over the years.) But be just as assured that **any** individual has **equal** potential to learn because in God's eyes, we are **all** his children, forever trying to better ourselves.

\*\*\*

*When the Lord obtains a body, and when He leaves it, He takes these and goes with them as the wind takes the scents from their seats in flowers. Verse 15.8*



## Self-Unfoldment

By Srinivas Pandruvada

As Swami Vivekananda said on spirituality, "You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul." Our innate longing is always wanting to be in 'Satchitanada' feeling, but it rarely happens. In Chinmaya Mission, the study groups come together every week and explore the deep and vast spiritual knowledge handed by our gurus, saints and great leaders in the forms of Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and more. The 'Self-Unfoldment' text written by Swami Chinmayananda is the extract of all the divine compositions in one book. It squeezes all the aspects and various theories of spirituality, religion and science. Each and every chapter is tailored and talks about the fundamental points of our life. Gurudev says, what we been looking for ages, the Self is in us. We look outside for happiness, peace, tranquility, which indeed is always with us and inside us. But due to self ignorance or too much entangled in material world, we forget that thing.

Gurudev helps us through this book, how we can attain freedom, balance our life and control the most tricky and restless mind. It helps us to develop values like truthfulness (Satyam), self control (Brahmacharya), Non-injury(Ahimsa) and how we can hold to these and progress in life. It teaches us to negate the negative thinking, jealousy, ego and vasanas. The important aspect is to see everyone equally and treat all with love, respect and compassion.

The latter chapters goes little deep and talks about the concepts of Gunas, the sheaths and

the three worlds. It explores in depth, how we can incorporate these divine qualities by meditation, yoga and doing the right Karma or actions. The path to spirituality takes a long time or many births, but we can surely try to follow the steps slowly as told by Swami Chinmayananda in Self-Unfoldment. The most important factor is to observe these ideas in our day to day life. With patience, perseverance, devotion we come closer to the Supreme.

\*\*\*

## Reflections of a Gita Student

By TK Ramchandrar

"Remain un-touched like a lotus leaf in water;" this indeed is the great benchmark of our spiritual progress. We are all typically fully engaged emotionally to all that happens around us and by us and take everything personally. This leads to negative emotions such as anger, jealousy, lust, and selfishness all of which deepen our desires and produce more vasanas.

The Lord tells us to detach ourselves from desires and remain unaffected by likes and dislikes, and joy/sorrow. Just like a lotus leaf is un-touched by the water while still fully participating in the life of the lotus plant, we need to remain unaffected by the ups and downs of our daily circumstances while still participating in the society at large. How do we do this? At the root of the problem is the mind; we must control our mind and re-channel the energy into productive endeavors such as seva for a higher purpose rather than indulge in decadent thought and activity.

*As I transcend the perishable and am even Higher than the Imperishable, I am declared as the Purusottama (the highest-Purusa), in the world and in the Vedas. Verse 15.18*

We can all take small steps to control the mind and as we practice this diligently, we can take bigger steps. I once told my Bala Vihar class to practice restraint from indiscriminate shopping.

Simply the fact that the latest fashion of foot wear looks good is not reason enough to buy it. Denying ourselves these impulsive desires forces us to practice restraint and by repeated practice, this becomes a habit. So also controlling our anger and redirecting that energy into compassionate seva is like an elixir to our spiritual growth.

As a beginner student in Vedanta, I practice self-restraint where I can. I find that as I continue to practice this, I no longer have the urge or the desire for things that I used to crave for. My state of spiritual progress is far from the 'lotus leaf', but I will continue to practice these small acts of restraint and continue to grow.

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## **Balance of Mind**

By Veena Garje

According to our Puja Gurudev's teachings "Religion is the science which teaches us how to repair broken hearts and draw music out of them."

To repair broken hearts, we need to have a heart and a vision to go through, and recognize such people. When we see our Lord dwelling in them, we automatically bow down to know and repair. To get this attitude, we must cultivate a habit of equanimity (Samata).

When we have Satsang (company of enlightened people), Satvichar pure thoughts, Namasmarana (chanting the name of god) and company of such dedicated Gurujans, following and understanding our scriptures, will help us in developing this attitude. No doubt this needs continuous practice (Sadhana).

This will lead us to balance our mind and also purify it. This gives clear reflection of our self.

When water in a lake is still, we can see our reflection. And when disturbed, it is not

possible. The bubbles in the lake rise, burst, and merge back in the water. So also, the thoughts rise and fall. Practice of meditation will lead us to calm down. In simple language, our energy is saved for better work. Yes!! To sit in correct posture for meditation, you need a healthy body.

Our body needs more oxygen to purify our blood. Pranayam is a simple breathing exercise. It means control of all expressions of life - physiological, mental, and intellectual. Yogic exercises with pure mind, keeps us fit. It is also healing.

Satvik food (Eating habits of pure, essential, natural, vital, energy containing food) will enhance healthy body and mind. So you see, body, mind, and intellect now have healthy tonic.

In this Mansarovar where the lotus is rooted in the mud, it grows and leaves away the mud behind, rises and floats over the water.

The lotus is beautiful in appearance, gives away the nectar and spreads fragrance all over.

Our mission is to perform duties untouched by the worldly glitters just like the lotus which lives in water, but still remains untouched by the water. A lotus takes time to bloom, but once bloomed, it is beautiful and attractive.

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## **Our Journey to Haridwar**

By Rajeev Singh

It has been over 2 years since this journey to the abode of Hari started. On an evening in March of 2013 a group of dedicated Chinmaya Mission Portland members gathered around Acharya Vivek Gupta.

The energy and clarity of the vision is still fresh in my memory.

*And whosoever, leaving the body, goes forth remembering me alone, at the time of his death, he attains my being; there is no doubt about this. Verse 8.5*

The pledges lined up and as the plan evolved in the next few months the dream of CMP having its home looked closer. Our current home, the Door to Hari (Haridwar) was finalized and the arduous journey from signing property papers to getting the permit from the City of Hillsboro had begun.

In July of 2013, a presentation of the plan was delivered in a Neighborhood meeting at Hillsboro Library. We sensed that the journey is not going to be an easy one, but we had firm belief that Pujya Gurudev's blessing will be there to guide us. The next two months were very hectic. I vividly remember walking to the building complex and taking pictures for several days to provide evidence of parking usage in our application. In addition, we conducted a traffic pattern analysis, held several discussions regarding the purchase of the building and had to move quickly.

In mid-August the purchase of the building was complete and conditional use of application was filed with City of Hillsboro. Next, we were required to attend a public hearing, wherein the county would determine whether to grant permission for specific types of use for our building.

This is a standard procedure for most new buildings or buildings that change ownership, and the process usually consists of gathering input from neighbors of the facility and other interested parties.

Our proposal was unanimously approved by the land use hearings board of the City of Hillsboro.

The long wait for the next steps started from this point where the building remodel required to be approved by the City Of Hillsboro and other departments. Hectic discussions between the planning committee, the architect and the building remodel contractor started. A lot of activities around the approval process were happening with back and forth between the city and the architect.

In mid-December we got the unpleasant news that city has raised objections on the occupancy plan and asked for seismic upgrades which would cost a vast amount of money. The painstaking process to review the building plan started. Few of us met with the architect at the building. Alternatives plans were discussed. The final design had several stages of extensive upgrades, as the city required extensive retrofits for our initial plan. The final approval from the city was handed over to us on January 15, 2014! It was an incredible journey and Pujaya Gurudev and Guruji's blessings were with us all through the process. We could see how the situations unfolded from despair to light of hope at every step of this journey. This is just one example of the many challenges we faced as a team, however the fruits of our labor were enormous. We now have a home; Chinmaya Haridwar.

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*Just as in this body, the embodied soul passes into childhood, youth and old age, so also, does he pass into another body; the firm man does not grieve at it. Verse 2.13*

## **Our Family Experience in Chinmay Mission**

By Surekha Reddy

Being part of Chinmaya Mission Portland is a great blessing to me and my family. Chinmaya Mission Portland provided many opportunities to serve the community and people around us. There are many ways we as a family participate and contribute to Chinmaya Mission Portland and as a result we gained the needed knowledge to live happier and lead the life with immense satisfaction. As a family, we gained the discipline in getting up every Sunday and going to Balvihar and seeing many like-minded people who are great pleasure to meet. Being a Balavihar teacher is a wonderful experience, and allowed me to learn many new areas and lend me a hand to gain wonderful relationships especially with many children. It is super nice to see them grow from pre-school to all upper grades. The smiles of the children in my class makes every Sunday special to me, and they are bundle of joy and help me to rejuvenate from a long and tiring past week to a new exiting forward looking week. Cooking is another area where my mom, my daughter and I truly enjoy in putting together the menu and working with friends in cooking and serving a meal. It is a fabulous experience in serving the meal and seeing the happy and satisfied look from the families and friends. The big Chinmaya family makes us feel very secure, provide a purpose to serve, enable us to role model to our children in many ways and integrate us with many loving and caring families. Lastly, our sweet Lord Madhur

Krishna is soooooo sweet with a beautiful smile watching all of our well-being. He gives us enormous strength and confidence in getting through every possible difficulty with ease and result in greater joy and success. It is his blessing that, Haridwar became the reality and made home for many of us and allowed us to celebrate on many occasions, learn from masters, grow the young minds with right values and finally granted us a platform to help each other. It is a divine blessing to take part in this family, where we turn impossible to possible. Sweet Madhur Krishna, Sweet Haridwar and Sweet Portland Chinmaya family! We have everything that we need, just smile, participate and enjoy!

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*Therefore, always perform actions which should be done, without attachment; for, by performing action without attachment, man attains the Supreme. Verse 3/19*

# Bala Patrika

## A Lesson Well Learnt

A Story by Kavya Ananth

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade



There lived a boy named Nanda and his mother in a village in India. They were very poor and often went hungry. They were forced to beg on the streets for food, money, and clothes. Once when they were out begging Ramanji, the richest person in town drove by in his large car. Everyone knew his house including Nanda. He was very miserly and into expensive clothes and jewelry.

Nanda suddenly had an idea. He shared it with his mother and they made a plan. That night they both sneaked out of their small hut and walked creeping silently to Ramanji's house in the dark, spooky, chilly, windy and damp night. When they reached his house, they opened the unlocked back gate and tiptoed in. They found room and closets full of clothes, money and yummy food. After eating to their fill they filled their bags with all kinds of goodies and went home in preparation for their next move.

The next morning they went out dressed as Sadhus who grant wishes in return for money. When they went to Ramanji's house they gave him expensive clothes and jewelry made with rare, beautiful, pretty and colorful shells and crystals. In return they took 500 rupees from Ramanji who was happy to get

such a good deal. However soon he realized they looked very familiar and were actually his own things that had gone missing. He got very angry for having been swindled, but gradually realized that he had gathered so much stuff that he had lost track of them and had no use for most of it.

Having learnt a lesson Ramanji went looking for the sadhus and apologized to them who then revealed their true identity to Ramanji. Feeling ashamed of his miserly and selfish ways Ramanji promised to share. From that day on he is the most giving person you will ever meet.

\*\*\*

Art by Annika Patil

4<sup>th</sup> Grade





# Bala Patrika

## 8<sup>th</sup> graders Balavihar experience

A Reflection by Aabhi Anand, Keshav Siddharta, Maya Bedge, Rahul Kajjam, Rohan Ajjarapu, Santosh Ramesh



We are 8<sup>th</sup> graders coming to Balavihar on regular basis. Our class topic is “Yato Dharma Tato Jayah” – Where there is Dharma, there is victory. Some of the topics we cover in the class are Law of Karma, Story of Mahabharata and how it reflects the decisions we make in our life, Yaksha Prashna, What is Dharma? etc. In the class, we learned the characters in the Mahabharata story and talked about their own Dharma, what is right and what is wrong. Our class has also talked about Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana Dharma means to live by the eternal/universal values that we follow. Meaning, you should have control of your sense organs and choose good values to follow.

Some of the key things we learned are how to handle a situation, what is happiness, how to overcome challenges, time management etc. Another thing we also learnt was discrimination. The actual definition of discrimination is the ability to choose between right and wrong. So we discussed things in life for that situation.

We as a class would like to share our experience on how we overcame our challenge.

Our class teachers challenged us to lead bhajans in our assembly. We are not good singers, forget about good not even singers- so how can we lead. This was the first challenge. Now if we are not singers where to go and pick the bhajans – our second challenge .

First, we chose which bhajans to pick and we picked ones that we sang in Krishnalaya since most of us knew it.

Second, we planned for a date that we would sing the bhajans on the stage. Then we planned what days and how many times we would meet .

We met multiple days and at different times. We had accounted for everyone else's extra activities before planning the meetings. Finally on April 19th our 8th grade Balavihar class led the bhajans. Although this may seem like a small event, it really meant a lot to us and taught us a lot.

Some of the important life lessons that we can take away from this experience is: time management, communication, confidence in our friends and ourselves, overcoming challenges step by step. We also learned to respect each other for who we are. Additionally two other benefits were that we got to know each other better and of course we had fun!

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# Bala Patrika

## Balvihar is Fun

A Reflection by Agmya Guttal

1<sup>st</sup> Grade



Balvihar is so fun and I hope some day you get to go there. Now you can know my memories of it. My first memory was camp with Vivekji. My second one is that of Holi . It was so much fun and Vivekji was there too. My third memory was making a thing from clay by baking it. It was fun too.

Now I am going to tell you what I learnt. I learnt about Rama and how he lived in the forest for 14 years and how the mind works. Well, you might think we are done. But I still have more to share. Maybe you will want to go there. There is a class for parents too. It is Awesome!

\*\*\*

## Sundays at Balvihar

A Poem by Arjun Pisharody

1<sup>st</sup> Grade



I go on Sundays to Balavihar  
I ride in my mother's car  
I enjoy my lunch  
Eating there with a bunch  
I learnt many stories

And also ate puris

I play with my friends

On Chinmaya weekends

\*\*\*

## I love You

## And Your Big Flower

A Story by Khyati Ruparel

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade



Once upon a time. There were two sisters. One was big and the other was younger then her. They both were planting flowers.

The small girl's flower turned out bigger. So the bigger sister got mad and complained to her mother that "It's not fair that my flower is so small while the younger sisters flower is very big. I feel mad."

Then the mom told her to listen to voice of the RAMA and not the RAVANA inside you heart. And your madness will go away.

The big sister thought about it and went and apologized to her younger sister for being jealous and told her, "I love you and your big flower".



# Bala Patrika

## Balvihar

A Poem by Rahul Manesh , 7<sup>th</sup> Grade



Best friends were made there  
A amazing, and friendly uncles, and aunts  
Loved the stories taught by teachers  
A place where people listen and learn  
Very good place to meet new friends  
I wish I started Balavihar earlier  
Helps with problems in everyday life  
A fun and kind place  
Really good for people of all ages

\*\*\*

## Our Family's Chinmaya Mission Experience

A Story by Rahul Reddy, 9<sup>TH</sup> grade



Last summer, my mom went to California to meet Swami Tejomayananda. After she had arrived there, she was approached by Swami Tejomayananda. He said that he would like my mom to be the secretary of Chinmaya Mission Portland. My mom was taken by surprise. She hadn't expected this. In fact, she did not want to do the job. But Swami

Tejomayananda sat her down, and convinced her successfully. My mom now is the secretary of Chinmaya Portland. But even before all of this went down, my mom got to know about Chinmaya Mission for the first time from some friends. She went to MJCC Jewish Center where Chinmaya Mission was being held. She learned about it, and then loved the idea of spreading Vedantic Knowledge to all of the young children in the area. So, of course, knowing how caring my mom can be, she went ahead and pulled the rest of the family into Chinmaya Mission. Soon we all loved Chinmaya Mission and went to classes regularly every Sunday. As we kept on going, she took part in some of the fundraisers and events held by the group. The entire family including me went to poojas for Lord Ganesha's birthday, Holi, and Diwali. Especially during Holi my mom actually got more involved in Chinmaya Mission. It was then that my family and I got to know that Chinmaya Mission actually brought Swami's from India. My mom held multiple Bhiksha's (dinners held for the Swami's). At these Bhiksha's, the Swami's talked about how to become pure, and happy in life. My mom looked up to these Swami's and wanted to learn much from them. As the years went on, many Swami's met my mom, and my mom even hosted a few Swami's in the 7-8 years we have been with Chinmaya Mission. To us, Chinmaya Mission changed our lives. We now believe even more in God than we did before. We live in more peace than ever, and we have more trust in the world around us knowing that God will be wherever we go. Especially for my mom, who is now the secretary and leads her family and Chinmaya Mission Portland through many more years of happiness and prosperity.

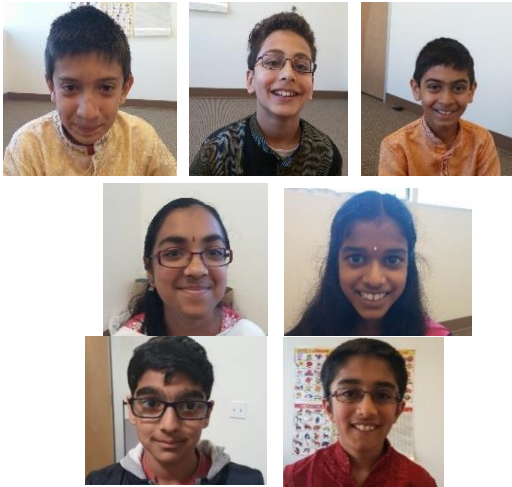
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# Bala Patrika

## Symbolism in Hinduism

A Reflection by Shudanth, Sharika, Kavish,  
Arjun, Medha, Nishanth, Praveer

5th Grade



*A Hindu is asked, "Why does your God have so many forms?"*

*May be because ....*

**Who is God?** I feel that God is my friend who is helping me all the time. God is not just my friend, but is a friend to everyone in the world, no matter what kind of a person they are. God is not He or She, but I believe that God is a combination of every living thing. => Praveer Sharan

God is someone who has great value. The values that Gods represent are values that we should have. For example: Siva's blue neck teaches us "Don't be bitter, Be better". => Sharika Pillai

### **What Qualities does God have?**

I believe my god would be strong, powerful, fair, and able to help people and Earth. My God would have a weapon to defeat all foes. He would also be pure and have a faithful helper. => Arjun Mann

### **What does God look like?**

God looks wise and old but never gets mad and is always calm. God is tall and wears normal clothes. God prays a lot and his hair is gray and black. God plays every sport, so you might see him in a sport t-shirt. I see God in everyone and everything but this is what my God looks like. => Kavish Siddhartha

### **Why do we love God?**

God is everywhere and anywhere. He is perfect in every single way. Although He has many different forms he is not limited in these forms. He helps people become pure and makes people free of egos such as greed. When people meditate on him he destroys their egos. Every manifestation of Him is very kind. Everything in life is like the phases of the moon. Everything will pass if you give it enough time. I love God because He keeps everything going, not stuck like rocks beside the road. => Nishanth Sistla

### **Why do we love God?**

I love God since He helps us all through our life by removing obstacles, like Ganapati or giving us knowledge like Mother Saraswati. My God would have a loyal and helpful helper. He would have a sudarshan chakra that destroys ego and attitude. He would have a lion as a mount. He would have a bright glow of purity around Him. He would be very knowledgeable and know millions of stories.=>Shudanth Gautam



# Bala Patrika

## Symbolism in Hinduism

(Continued)

### What do our gods tell us?

Our Gods symbolize many qualities that we should have. Lord Ganesha tells us to listen well and analyze. They tell us to think clearly. Our gods tell us to make the right decision and carry it out. They tell us not only to hear but to listen. We should be in control of our minds is another message. We should also be generous just like Him and not to be too attached.

Lord Ganesha's Elephant Ears and big head : Listen Well, Think and Analyze. Our Gods tell us to have the power of clear thinking.

Trunk: Discriminate and be Efficient.

Pot Belly: Digest and Store all knowledge.

Mouse: Obedient Mind. Our gods tell us to be in control of our mind instead of our mind controlling us.

Axe: Cut Attachments. Our gods teach us not to be attached. => Medha Nagasubramanian

God is anywhere and everywhere and if you think good thoughts and meditate He will come. My favorite God is Lord Krishna. I like him because He is thoughtful and little bit mischievous like me. He steals butter but I think He does it to make Gopika's happy. He is very caring and thoughtful like Swami Chinmayananda. => Arjun Mann

Conclusion:

*Different people feel and see Him in different ways. He means a lot of things to different people. It does not matter how you see Him, cherish Him in whichever form comfortable.....*

whichever form you feel close to.

\*\*\*

Art by Advit Velamakanni

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade



Art by Medha Nagasubramanian

5<sup>th</sup> Grade







Art by Anika Kumar , 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

# Bala Patrika

## Haridwar, My Home

A Story by Gowri Ganesh

3rd Grade



It is Sunday, March 28, 2115. My family and I are heading to Chinmaya Haridwar in our luxury flying house. I am in my room, thinking about how Haridwar felt like my second home. The house took a sharp turn. I am not surprised. I had been on this route so many times that I had it practically memorized. “Aha! That’s it!”, I said to myself. I had spent so much time at Haridwar that it felt like home to me. The house stopped and parked. I heard my mom say “We’re here”. I slid down the handrail and headed out the front door.

My dad opened the door to Haridwar and I stepped in onto the moving floor. I turned left at one point. I sat down on the bench in the shoe room. I felt my shoes being pulled off my feet and I stood back up on the moving floor. The floor took me into the assembly hall where I sat down on the magically cushioned floor. Since bhajans hadn’t started yet, my mind wandered back to the topic of how Haridwar was like a home. I had been here so many times that I had memorized the whole building.

But what else made Haridwar like my home? The question popped into my head. Well, I

had vacuumed the moving floor (very hard to do), cleaned the marks on the self-erasing whiteboards, and washed the color changing windows (not very hard). Weren’t these things like chores that we do at home? But were these the only reasons that Haridwar felt like a home to me? No. There is much more than chores.

I had come here with my family to many festivals. Some were pujas and aratis. Others were talks held by acharyas or swamijis, cultural festivals, and lots of other programs. Just like I helped paint my room at home, I had helped paint murals on the windows at Haridwar. On one occasion where my family and I came to Haridwar for an Akhand Ramayan program, we stayed so late that it almost felt like we were having a sleepover!

Loud voices interrupted my thinking. Bhajans had started. In class, we were discussing what a home was. Perfect topic. I raised my hand and said that Haridwar was like a home. So we started to discuss the subject. A few kids said that they came very often and others said that they didn’t really feel it was like a home because they only came on Sundays.

After class, I went into the kitchen to eat lunch. While I was eating, the thought came to me that like at home, I eat meals here all the time. After lunch, I went and played some games with my friends. Then I realized that friends are another reason why Haridwar is like my home.

I know that back in 2015 I had felt the same way about Haridwar. It is really a second home.

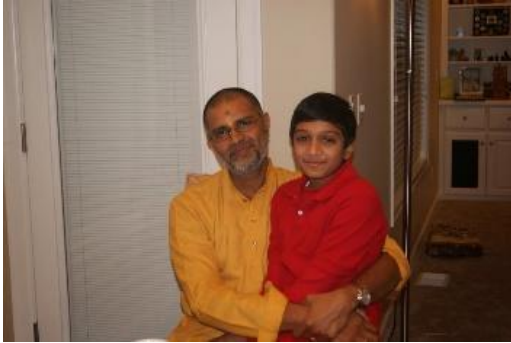
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# Bala Patrika

## Krishnalaya Camp With Acharya Girishji

A Reflection by Rahul Kajjam

8th Grade



During the time of Christmas holidays, Chinmaya Haridwar had said that there will be a Krishnalaya camp with Acharya Girishji during winter break. When I heard Girishji was coming, I was so excited to meet him again. Immediately, I told my parents to sign me up and go on the journey. This was a family camp.

When we arrived at the camp, Girishji received all of us which I felt welcoming about. The camp was a lot better than I expected. I thought it would be in a public location but it was in a very quiet, private area. The camp began early in the morning with a yoga session. It was nice to stretch my legs out a little before the day began. After breakfast, there was an assembly with Girishji. Each day, he had told a wonderful story, each with a different meaning. Then, we had gone to our classes, my teachers were TK uncle, Usha aunty and Neethu didi. In this class, we talked about who is God, where is God and great devotees of God. After the class, there was a free time period

where you could talk, play games, run around and do things like that. In this time, I made new friends and spent a lot of time with them. I also talked with Girishji a lot.

We had talked about many things going on in the present, like I had a science fair project and I was telling him about how that was going on. We had also talked about how the camp was going on and places in Krishnalaya. On one of the days, we went to the Redwood forest in our free time. It was fun, and everyone had a great time there.

Since this camp was during the Christmas holidays, Girishji had come during dinner time and distributed gifts. He did it in a very special way, dressed up in a Santa costume and for that day, Girishji was "Swami 'Santa'nanda".

Every time I am in his presence, I feel calm and think that all my worries are gone. It is always a pleasure to be with Girishji and I know I am not the only one.

\*\*\*

## Krishna

By Deeksha Easwar , 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

Kind

Rational

Impressive

Super

Happy

Nice

Amazing



# Bala Patrika

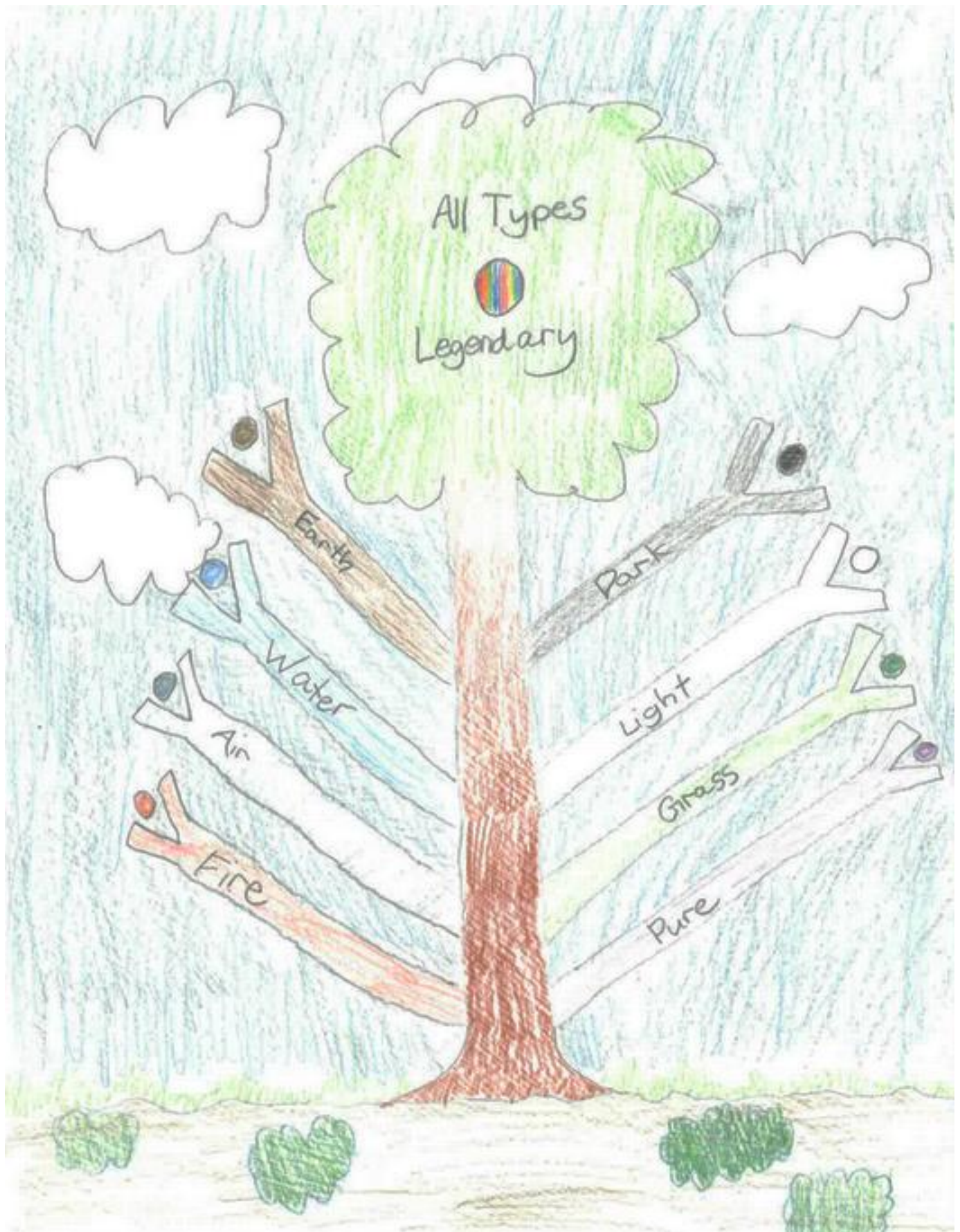
Art By Niyati Bhaskar  
Kindergarten



Art By Varun Varma  
Pre- Kindergarten







Art by Nirmay Anantha  
3<sup>rd</sup> Grade



# Bala Patrika

## My Experiences at Balavihar

A Reflection by Shriya Prasannan

6th Grade



I have been attending Bala Vihar since the age of four. All I remember during my first year is that I would cling on to my mom all the time, cry for her to stay with me and not leave the classroom! Well, I've come a long way since then! I thoroughly enjoy the classes & being part of the Bala Vihar family. I have learnt a lot of valuable lessons in these last eight years.

The curriculum at Bala Vihar is wonderful. Each year we have a theme like the Ramayana, Stories about Hanuman, Bala Bhagavatham, Symbolism about Hinduism, learning about India, etc. I have had fabulous teachers who have not only taught me about the great heritage of India and Hinduism, but have also been an integral part of my growing years with their encouragement and inspiration. I love the fact that we learn stories with moral values in a very casual way. The art work we do every year that goes with the theme of what we are learning is absolutely enjoyable. My room is full of the arts and crafts that I have done at Bala Vihar over these years! I am also part of the Swaranjali music choir and I love all the songs that I have learned. I have also learned a lot of slokas and to recite the Bhagavad Gita. I am so thankful that I have learned a few verses of the Gita from Chapter 8 to Chapter

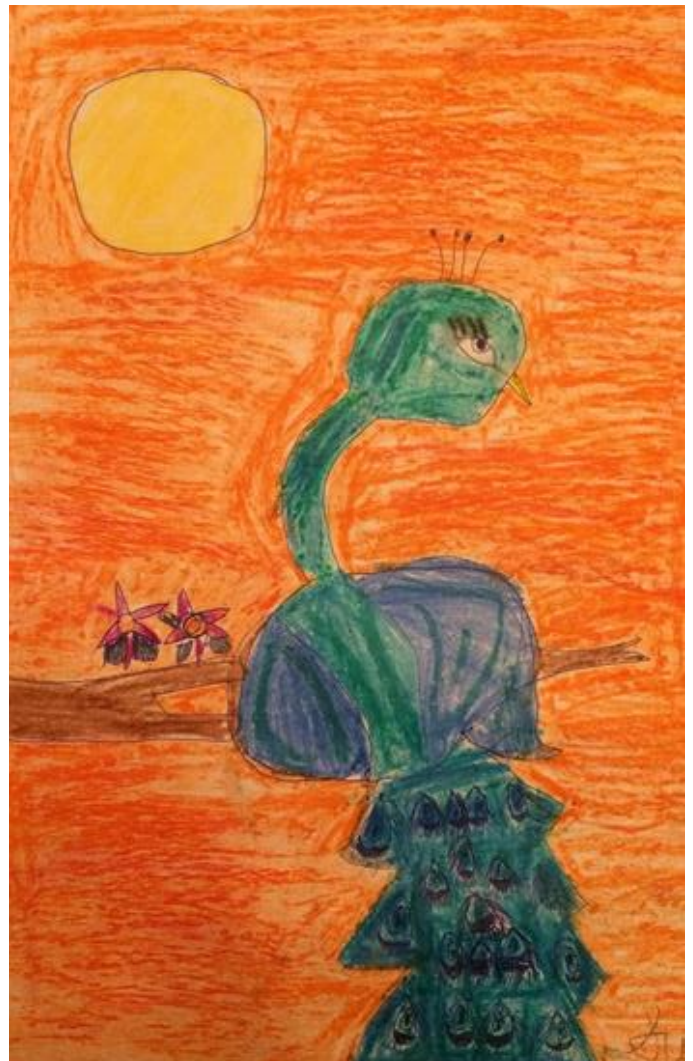
15.

Thanks to Bala Vihar, I am very glad that I have learned a lot about the rich culture and heritage of India. Bala Vihar is priority in my family and my brother Krishna and I look forward to the classes every week, but for the fact that we have to wake up early on Sunday mornings!

\*\*\*

Art by Suhanni Garg

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

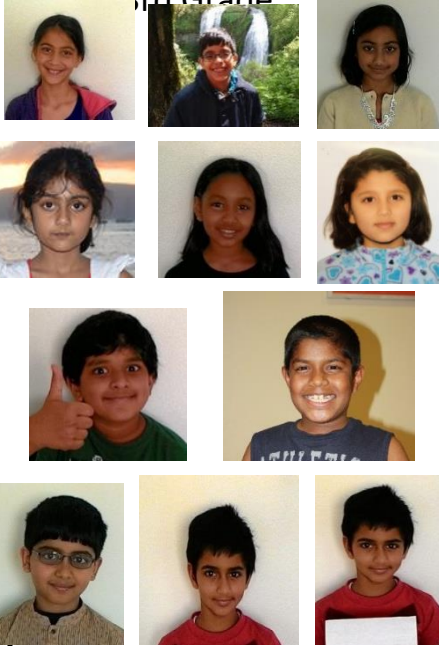


# Bala Patrika

## Our favorite stories from Bhagavatam

By Rainah, Tanush, Jhanavi, Kavya, Gowri,  
Sanika, Nirmay, Krishna, Roshen, Sashwat,  
Akash

3rd Grade



### Rainah Rajan

One of my favorite story is the churning of the milky ocean. It is about the devas and asuras. They took the king of snakes Vasuki and used him to tie mount Mandara which they used as a rod for churning the ocean. They churned the ocean to get Amritam, a nectar that makes you immortal. Before the amritam came out, lots of other things came out. Some things were good, some things were bad. One of the bad things was poison. Lord Shiva took it and drank it but Parvati put her hand to Lord Shiva's throat. That is why his throat is blue. Once the amritam came out, an asura hid on the devas' side and tried to drink the nectar. Luckily someone caught him, he only ate a little bit of amritam. The moral of the story is if you churn in your thoughts in the mind, you can find the good side of you and the bad side of you.

### Tanush Sistla

My favorite story is the story of Narasimha. It is my favorite because Prahlad is fearless in the story. I like how brave Prahlad is. I also like it because Prahlad is so devoted to Lord Vishnu.

### Jhanvi Shyam Venkitesh

My favorite story is that of a king and a minister. They go to a forest. The king fell down and broke his finger. The minister said "Whatever happens, happens for the best, it is God's will" The king got angry and pushed the minister into the well. The king went into the forest and met cannibals. They were about to kill him when they realized the king had a broken finger. They can't sacrifice a person with a broken finger as their God will do bad things then. So they let the king free. When the king pulled the minister out of the well, he asked the minister why he always said "Whatever happens, happens for the best". The minister said if he was not thrown into the well, the cannibals would have killed him

### Kavya Ananth

My favorite story is the story of Dhruva sitting on his father's lap. It starts when Dhruva does not get any attention from his Dad, Uttanapada. Dhruva goes to the forest and does deep penance. Narada comes and tells Dhruva to pray to Vishnu to get boons. Dhruva did the tapas and got the boons. It was a cute story and had a big lesson to it which is to have a firm resolution or perseverance.

# *Bala Patrika*

## **Our favorite stories from Bhagavatam**

( Continued)

### **Gowri Ganesh**

My favorite story is the story of the churning of the ocean. I like this story best because both the asuras and devas get along. Not very well, but still they work together to churn the ocean for the sake of getting the honey, amritam. The asuras were arrogant and thought that staying at Vasuki's head would get them the amritam first. But Vasuki's poison proved them wrong. Shiva swallowed the poison. Vishnu came as a giant tortoise (Kurma avatar) to hold up the Mandara mountain when it was sinking. At the end Devas drink the amritam, became immortal and defeated the asuras.

### **Sanika Bedre**

My favorite story is the story of the greedy monkey. A monkey kept on bothering a man who lived in the forest. The man wanted to teach the monkey a lesson. One day he put a jar of peanuts. The monkey stuck his hand in the jar to get the peanuts. Just then the man came and started beating the monkey. The monkey could not get his hand out because he would not let go of the peanuts. The moral of the story is to not be greedy like the monkey.

### **Nirmay Anantha**

My favorite story is the story of Narasimha. Why I like it is because Prahlad is so attached to Lord Vishnu. He never gives up in believing in Lord Vishnu. The Lord comes in the form of

Narasimha and makes Prahlad's father pay for hating Lord Vishnu.

### **SriKrishna Prasannan**

My favorite story is the story of Dhruva. He showed firm resolution and perseverance. He got blessings from Vishnu after doing severe penance.

### **Roshen Nair**

My favorite story is the story of the six sharks- lust, jealousy, anger, delusion, greed and pride. I liked it because it teaches us that only God can help us get past these sharks. I also liked the monkey story. A monkey got a bunch of grain but lost one piece of grain. In looking for it, he lost everything he had. The monkey was too greedy.

### **Sashwat Ravishankar**

My favorite story is the story of Dhruva. He showed firm determination. Even though his stepmother wanted her son to sit on the king's lap, Dhruva went to the forest and did penance to see God. I like this story because it tells me to pray to God and your problem will be solved.

### **Akash Balakumar**

I like the story of the six sharks anger, greed, delusion, jealousy, lust and pride. If you have God as your boatman, you can get over the ocean which contains the sharks.

\*\*\*

# Bala Patrika

Art by Yaamini Aga, 1<sup>st</sup> grade



Art by Sitara Kumar, 4<sup>th</sup> grade





# Bala Patrika



Art by Sanika Bedre, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade



Art by Sagarika Menon  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Art by Annika Patil, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade





# Bala Patrika

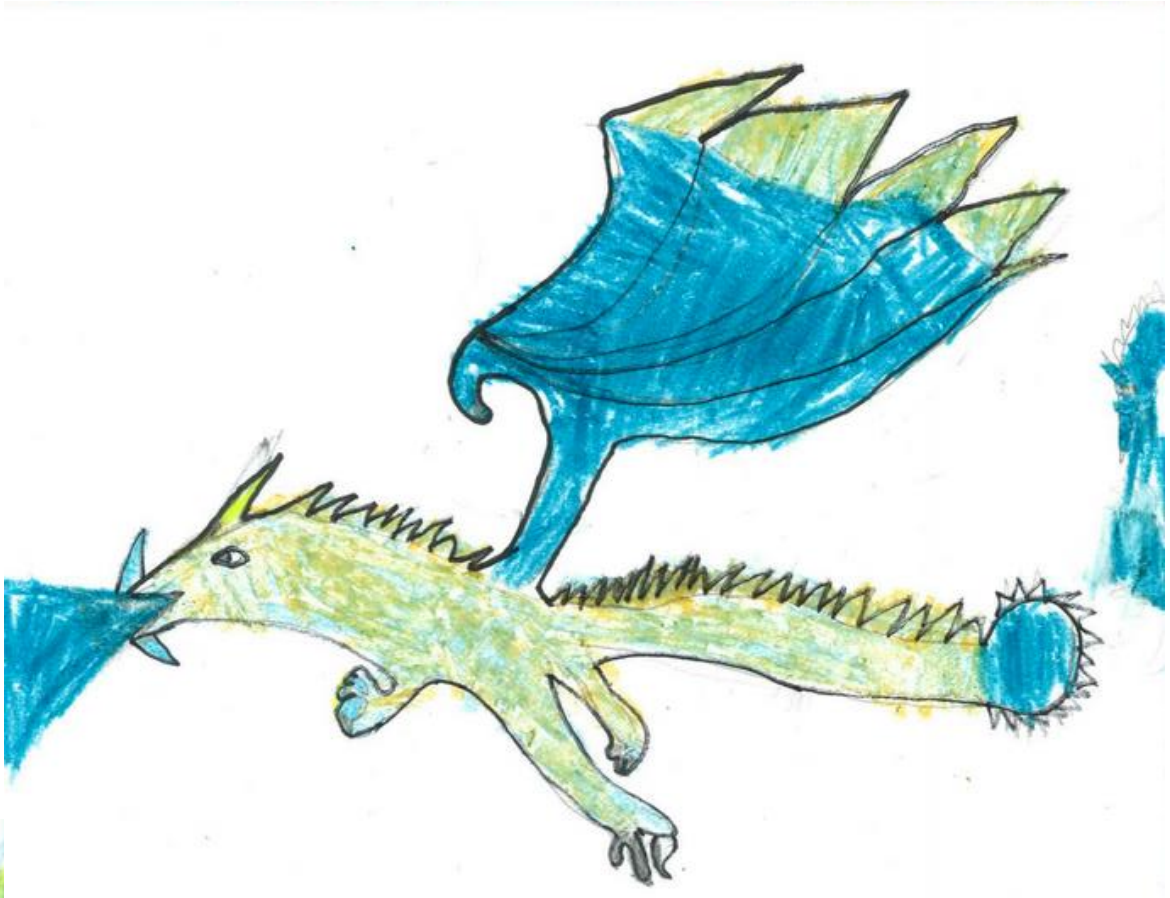


A Puzzle  
By Aditi Bhaskar, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

KRISHNA is hidden everywhere. Can you find "Krishna" by any other name ?									
H	S	N	A	N	N	A	K	A	N
I	N	G	A	U	S	V	D	R	V
M	U	K	U	N	D	A	M	O	I
S	U	R	Y	A	M	S	V	S	G
D	A	I	H	A	A	E	H	P	U
Y	R	S	D	E	D	K	N	S	L
I	A	H	L	U	H	A	M	H	A
N	R	N	S	P	A	K	V	A	P
D	S	A	E	A	V	Y	G	A	O
R	V	K	H	U	A	K	U	M	G
Find these "Krishna" names :									
Krishna	Gopal	Vasudev	Mukunda	Yadava	Kesava	Madhava	Shaam	Kannan	Hari
By Aditi Bhaskar Grade 4									

Solutions on page 39

# Bala Patrika



Art by Athmay Anantha, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade



Art by Jhavi Shyam Venkitesh  
3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

# Bala Patrika

Art by Dhwani Ruparel  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade



HART PATRIKA

Art by Agamya Guttal, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade



Art by Vaani Aga, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade





# Bala Patrika

## How Balavihar Has Affected Me

Parthav Easwar  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade



This is my 9th year going to Balavihar. Since Pre-K, the youngest class at the time, I have been heavily influenced by Balavihar. I have written in this magazine to inform you of the one most influential thing that has come about from coming to Balavihar since I was four. These days, the people I work on projects with the most in school, and the people who happen to be the majority of my friends, are people from Balavihar. We work on projects, and are friends, because we can trust each other. We can expect others to be honest, and kind, because those are values we learn at Balvihar. When I am asked "Do you like Balvihar?" I always answer "Yes, because I get to meet with my friends," So there you have it, the biggest influence, and reason to go to Balavihar, for me.

\*\*\*

## Unity is Strength

Annika S. Patil, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade



One time lived a very wise crow. Other birds believed that the crow could predict things that were true. As the crow was flying around, he saw a hunter that came and poured some grains and put a net on top of it. The crow went back to where he started and told every bird that a hunter has put a trap out for us birds. All of them understood and kept a watch out if any bird went towards the net. One night the hunter went home and the birds fell asleep. A flock of pigeons were flying by and saw that there were grains on the ground. Without thinking they went down and started to peck at the grains. When they were finished all of them tried to fly away but their feet had got stuck in the unnoticed net. Their wings were so noisy that it woke up the hunter. He smiled in satisfaction, and walked to get the pigeons. The crow heard the noise to and woke to a startle to see that some birds have gotten stuck in the hunter's trap. The pigeons were so frightened that they were making a big mess out of the net. The crow said to all of the pigeons, "flap your wings all together". The pigeons listened to the advice and it worked. They were flying now with the net slipping off their legs. Just as the hunter arrived the pigeons were already up in the air. The pigeons thanked the crow and flew towards the sunset.

Moral:

there is great strength in unity

\*\*\*

# Bala Patrika

## My Friends

Niranjana Warier

Kindergarten



I can't fly, because I have no wings,  
My friends came down and picked me up,  
With the birds in the wind, up I go whirl,  
whirl, whirl,

I saw the fountain coming up from the  
mountains,  
I saw the snow coming down from the clouds,  
I saw a castle full of fairies, I like, like, like,  
I went up to the stars and I came down, wee,  
wee, wee,  
Thank you friends, I love you too.  
\*\*\*

Solutions to the Puzzle  
By Aditi Bhaskar, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

KRISHNA is hidden everywhere. Can you find "Krishna" by any other name ?									
H	S	N	A	N	N	A	K	A	N
I	N	G	A	U	S	V	D	R	V
M	U	K	U	N	D	A	M	O	I
S	U	R	Y	A	M	S	V	S	G
D	A	I	H	A	A	E	H	P	U
Y	R	S	D	E	D	K	N	S	L
I	A	H	L	U	H	A	M	H	A
N	R	N	S	P	A	K	V	A	P
D	S	A	E	A	V	Y	G	A	O
R	V	K	H	U	A	K	U	M	G
Find	these	"Krishna"	names :						
Krishna	Gopal	Vasudev	Mukunda	Yadava	Kesava	Madhava	Shaam	Kannan	Hari
By	Aditi	Bhaskar		Grade 4					



# Bala Patrika

## Hanuman the Brave

By Sanjana S. Iyer

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade



This story is about Hanuman, about whom we are studying in Balavihar this year. Yes, he is brave, he is strong, he is awesome.....and he is Hanuman...

One day when Hanuman was walking in the forest, he saw fire everywhere. There was a forest fire. Hanuman wondered, "What should I do now?" He thought, "May be I can blow the fire out...Or I can fill my mouth with water and put out the fire".

When he wiped out the fire, he rescued all the people there and became a hero! But the forest wasn't that pretty anymore and Hanuman was willing to do anything to make the forest pretty again for the animals. So he went to Sanjeevani Mountain. He remembered from the time when he saved Lakshmana's life, that there were a lot of overgrown trees there. So he went there and took some trees and brought it back and made the forest beautiful again.

But then he heard a cry for help and this time it was demon dressed like a lady just to capture him because she knew that he liked to help people, even those who did not pray to him! Hanuman did not care who he helped, he just loved helping people, just like how he helped Rama find Sita. He would even help demons even if they captured him. He loved

to help people because it was his job! When Hanuman rushed to the demon, the demon was screaming "Help! Somebody! Help me! I am trapped under the tree. I don't want to die!" Hanuman knew it was a demon but still helped the demon. The demon wanted to give Hanuman a reward so she took him to her house.

On the way, he saw somebody that looked like Rama, but his face was covered in blood. He was scared. He rushed to help Rama, and then the demons dropped the net on him to capture Hanuman. The demons laughed and said "Got you, now! Ha Ha Ha" Hanuman thought, "I will find a way out. I am brave and smart and I don't give up. Well, what am I going to do now?" The demons took Hanuman to a dungeon and they locked him down there.

Hanuman thought, "I will escape, I always do". Then he got an idea! He waited for the all the other demons to leave, leaving behind one to guard the dungeon. Hanuman started growing in size, he became bigger and bigger, until he could see the guard. He used his tail and tickled the guard's nose.

While laughing hysterically, the guard dropped the keys, which Hanuman quickly snatched and opened the lock and flew away...Far far away from the demons!

And from that day onwards, he was always careful around demons, he was always looking up to see if there were any nets!

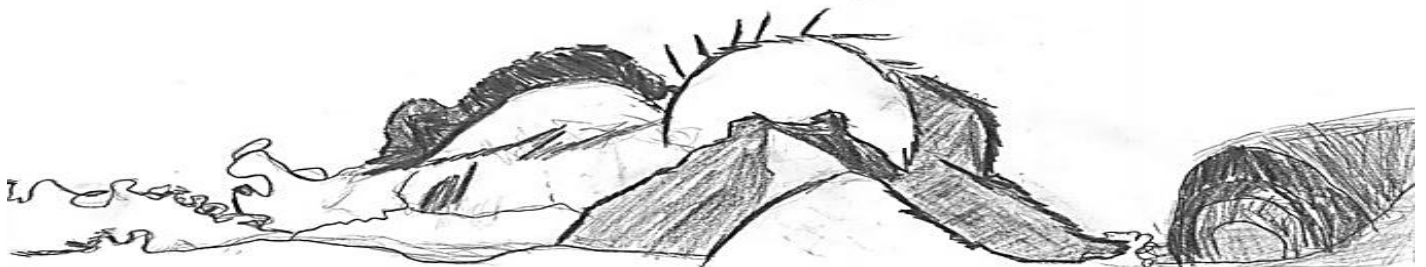
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# Bala Patrika

Art by KumKum Nema  
4<sup>th</sup> grade



Art by Athmay Anantha , 2<sup>nd</sup> grade



## Balavihar's Effect on My Life

By Sharada Menon, Alumni

Balavihar was such an integral part of my growth growing up, so it is hard to pinpoint its exact influence on me. However, this past year has been filled with big changes and my studies with Chinmaya Mission have definitely helped me with those decisions. It has been more than a year since I had spread out college brochures on the kitchen table, weighing my options. It is always easy to accept triumphs, acceptance letters, scholarships and new sheets that fit the extra-long mattresses all college dorms seem to have. However, it is a lot harder to deal with disappointments, rejections, homesickness and an incredible lack of sleep. Balavihar gave me the background and the perspective to bounce back and turn failure into motivation. The volunteers and the teachers of Chinmaya Mission helped me become more conscious of my actions and their repercussions on myself and others.

Chinmaya Mission also gave me a greater sense of culture. I felt torn between many identities growing up, particularly in my early teens. I was simultaneously detached and connected to Indian culture. As I started to see this divide in myself, Balavihar was the place I began mending these two parts of myself. Sunday mornings at Chinmaya Mission I could be immersed in my heritage and the culture I come from. Chinmaya Mission Portland is made up of people I have known my whole life who have shown me the importance of community, dedication, service, self-reflection and waking up on Sundays even when you are tired.

\*\*\*

## The Influence of

### Chinmaya Mission

By Rishi Kolady, Alumni

Trying to think about the ways Balavihar has changed and taught me as a person is harder than I thought it would be. Thinking more on it, I realize that the reason it seems hard is because Balavihar is responsible for many of the strengths and insights I've gained throughout the years. Many of the core facets of my persona were instilled in me throughout my time with the Mission, and so I had a tough time separating it out and figuring out exactly what to attribute to Balavihar and what came from other parts of my life. Honestly, I think that speaks for itself. Whether it's my confidence in who I am, my sense of duty towards my peers and my community, or the work ethic I've grown to appreciate now in college, the aspects of my persona that have made me successful have mostly come throughout my time with Chinmaya Mission, and they have become so instilled in me that they are practically second nature. The philosophy and culture I learned throughout my time in Balavihar is something I hold very dear to me. They are defining elements of who I am. In college now, I see lots of people who struggle with school and work due to a lack of foundation and a lack of confidence in their own identities. Chinmaya Mission was a huge part in giving me that and other tools that allow me tackle life, no matter how hard it may get. Whether it's tests, or projects, or just problems between friends and/or classmates, I'm confident that even if I don't already have the tools necessary to solve my problems, I'll at the very least understand how to learn from them, which is one of the most important things that the philosophy of Chinmaya Mission has taught me.

\*\*\*

*Just as a man casts off his worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied-Self casts off its worn out bodies and enters others which are new. Verse 2.22*

## Reflections on a Chinmaya Mission Life

By Geetha Somayajula , Alumni

As freshman year draws to a close, I'm more grateful than ever for the lessons I've learned in Chinmaya Mission. A thousand miles from home, spirituality is a gift that I hold to tightly (cherish). The knowledge I've gained over the last 18 years has never been put to the test as much as it has during my first year at the University of Southern California. Here at USC, I've chosen to pursue a B.A. in Choral and Sacred Music, and I'm looking forward to getting started on my B.S. in Business Administration in the Fall. Looking back, CM has played a pivotal role in my decision to apply as a music major, and has helped me overcome the challenges I've faced this year.

Right off the bat, adjusting to a new city, new classes, and new friends can make for a tough time. However, CM has instilled me with an unshakeable sense of purpose that keeps me from feeling lost. I feel grounded wherever I am and in everything that I'm doing. When I decided to apply to college as a music major, I faced resistance at home and in the community. Family and friends repeatedly tried to convince me that I should study something else. However, as I remembered Swami Chinmayananda, and the struggles he faced as a journalist and *sanyasi*, I knew my path was clear. The perseverance I've learned as a devotee of Gurudev, reminds me that if I pursue my *dharma* wholeheartedly there is nothing that can get in the way. Through freshman year, remembering my *dharma* as a musician, a student, a *sevika*, and a follower of *sanatana dharma* has made the transition so much smoother.

Being a music student calls for a lot of performing; I am constantly on stage singing, teaching, and conducting music. Throughout my life, I've struggled with performance anxiety, which has waxed and waned with my confidence level. It's always a challenge to be vulnerable in front of an audience, but the lessons I've learned in CM have pushed me to grow in that facet of my life. Growing

up, when I would thank a *sevak/sevika* in the mission after class, I remember he/she would usually say something like it's "because of Gurudev's grace." As I scroll through CM emails the sender usually signs the email with "In His Service." I never understood the significance of these simple gestures until I found myself on stage fumbling through a movement of a Mozart opera. These simple acts of humility remind me that we are but vessels for the Lord to work through, and it has made all the difference. When I force myself to remember that I am just the flute for His divine music, performing is suddenly a breeze. Stage fright stems from acute self-awareness and an obsession with results. As I push my ego to the side and immerse myself in the joy of making music, my anxiety melts away. Overcoming fear is a long journey, but I know I have the tools to emerge victorious.

On my fridge at home, we have an ancient poster titled "Tips for Joyful Living," authored by Swami Tejomayananda (I think my parents picked it up at a camp a decade ago). The first tip reads "once we choose our course in life, there is no point in complaining about situations, difficulties or problems that we may have to face. Conflicts in the mind arise due to dual and contradictory purpose in life." This year has been the happiest I've ever had, and as I reflect on this awesome year, I know that I owe a lot of it to what I've learned in CM. I've chosen my path in life, and when the going gets rough, I know how to be happy. The sense of purpose I've learned at CM is what keeps me afloat when the challenges seem insurmountable. As I look forward to this summer and the rest of my college career, I'm confident that the perspective I've developed in CM will help me be effective and joyful in everything I choose to do.

\*\*\*

*That which is like poison at first, but in the end, like nectar, that pleasure is declared to be Sattvic, born of the purity of one's own mind, due to Self-Realization. Verse 18.37*



## Decisions Through the Lens of Vedanta

By Roopa Ramanujam, Alumni

Every Sunday morning I used to be awoken at 8:00 by my mother yelling “It’s time for Chinmaya Mission!” And every Sunday morning I would groan and roll over, not wanting to get up. It wasn’t until my junior year of high school that I really began to even remotely accept that I was going. But by senior year, CMP had become my family by then and I always looked forward to spending time with my graduating class (shout out to Geetha, Rishi, and Sharada!) as well as receiving the sage wisdom of my teachers. When I was younger, I had a great time at CMP (despite my initial reluctance to wake up on time). Listening to stories and hanging out with my friends was a pretty ideal Sunday morning, in my opinion. However, I’m ashamed to say that I never truly appreciated CMP until my senior year, and especially when I had to make a decision about college. I was torn between two equally enticing schools, and there were people on both sides of the debate. I myself was leaning towards one but didn’t want to let anyone down, and the entire month of April passed by in a haze of indecision. I remember asking one of my class teachers for advice, and he told me that no one could make this decision but me because it was *my* future. That struck me particularly. I honestly feel that had I not attended CMP and learned the importance of both independence and acceptance, I would have been uncertain of my decision forever. This is something I know will stay with me for a very long time.

I know I will always have a spiritual support system in CMP and that means so much to me at this point in time when I am still trying to figure out who I am and what I want to do

with my life. The college years are prone to questioning, and CMP will always provide me with answers when I need them, or at the very least a long discussion about them. People recognize CMP as a cultural organization, but it is truly so much more than that. Of course, I learned so much about Hinduism and why I participate in the traditions that I do, but more than that, I have learned more about myself than in any other form of education I have received. For example, I learned that the reason I am prone to distraction is because I seek short-term gratification instead of reaping the rewards of a long term project or goal, and this is something I am actively working on overcoming. Only by learning about yourself can you better yourself, and I feel that this cannot really be taught anywhere else. CMP teaches us how to succeed through body, mind, and intellect. As a CHYK, I encourage my younger peers to stick with the program. It is truly worth it.

Hari Om!

\*\*\*

*He, whose intellect is unattached everywhere, who has subdued his self, from whom desire has fled, he through renunciation, attains the supreme state of freedom from action. Verse 18.49*





**Hari Om!**