



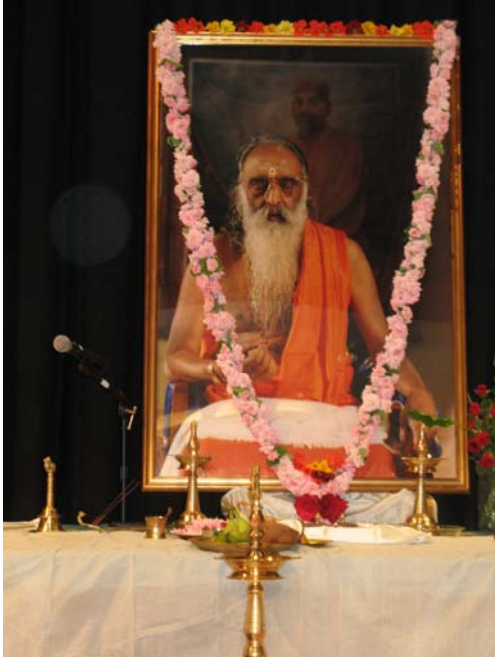
Chinmaya Mission San Jose

e-Newsletter

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Graduation Ceremony



This was like a rite of passage for the thirteen graduates of the Bala Vihar/Yuva Kendra program - Chinmaya Mission style!

On one side of the large auditorium at the Jain temple in Milpitas, the youngsters sat fiddling with the roses in their hands and talking to each other in hushed tones. This was the day that culminated the many years that they had spent acquiring the spiritual foundation for their lives. Some had stuck to the program right from kindergarten. Others had attended the classes with frequent “sabbaticals”, as one of the graduates put it! But here they were, young birds ready to fly the nest!



Anand shares his Bala Vihar experiences

For some, leaving the nest was an emotional time – something that they had looked forward to all their lives, but now that it was here, it was an overwhelming experience. For some others, this was yet another milestone in the journey of life. Four of the thirteen graduates came forward to share their experiences of Bala Vihar with the rest of the audience.



Stage all set for the graduates to perform Paduka Puja

The evening on May 6th started off with Gurudev’s paduka puja performed by the graduates. The boys and girls sat on the stage in front of a huge, decorated picture of Gurudev. Each of them also had a small picture of Gurudev and items to perform the puja. After the puja, a portion of the Taittreya Upanishad, which has injunctions for students, was read to the graduates, first in Sanskrit and then a translation in English.



Paduka Puja by Students

The final part of the graduation ceremony was the graduation address given by Prabodhji. He asked the graduates to draw inspiration from the life of Gurudev, with whom at every breath there was a teaching!

Prabodhji told the students that though they had completed one phase of their lives as students, their learning would go on and their responsibilities would only increase. He said that there wasn't enough time for them to commit all mistakes and correct them too. "So, learn from others' mistakes", he said, "it saves time and sorrows!"

Speaking about life after college, at work, Prabodhji prompted the youngsters to ask themselves – Who am I working for? Is it for myself or is it for a noble cause? To stress the importance of this discrimination, he used a simple yet very powerful analogy. Both the sun and the glowworm emit light, he said, but there is a crucial difference between them. The glow of the glowworm can be seen only in darkness, but the sun shines when there is light all around! The sun dispels darkness; the glowworm revels in the dark.

Be like the sun and dedicate your lives to a higher cause, Prabodhji said. You then work for brilliance in your own lives and all around too. If we shine when there is darkness around us, that is the vision of the glowworm. But to shine and help others around us to shine too is the vision of the sun. With this vision, we will live the Scriptures, he said.



Prabodhji's words of wisdom for the graduates



Presentation of Awards

With these wonderful and inspiring words of wisdom for the young graduates and for all of us, Prabodhji blessed the graduates and turned the stage over to Uma Auntie. She felicitated the 133 teachers, many of whom teach two and even three classes of Bala Vihar every weekend! The teachers received a book about Swami Tapovan Maharaj as a token of appreciation for their dedicated work.

After the Acharya Vandanam (honoring the teachers), we got to watch two presentations. One was a beautiful photo documentary on the life and work of Gurudev, Swami Chinmayananda. It was a collage of scenes from his life, set to violin music of the song "theeratha vilayaattu pillai" (a song describing the never ending pranks of the child Lord Krishna!)

The second presentation was an inspiring video of Chinmaya Mission's activities worldwide. It was a revelation to many of us in the audience who think that Chinmaya Mission is little more than Bala Vihar, to see the range of activities that the Mission engages in. From providing social services like free hospital care and professional training of nurses, shelter and support for the aged, financial and moral support for tribal women etc., to being a source for the lay person to understand the ancient religion of Hinduism and the wisdom of Vedanta, the Mission's activities run the whole gamut. Of course, Bala Vihar is one of the Mission's main programs because Gurudev knew that our children's moral fiber determines the quality of our future as a species. The video presentation left us with a feeling of pride for being part of this vision.

The memorable evening concluded as always with everyone enjoying prasad that was sponsored by the parents of the new graduates.

Hari Om!

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Chinmaya Mission San Jose, Sandeepany, 1050 Park Avenue San Jose, CA 95124
Tel (408) 998-2793 • www.chinmaya-sanjose.org • email: reg@chinmaya-sanjose.org