

## Huge Attendance, Talented Children Mark Chinmaya Family Day Event

NORWALK, CA – The annual Chinmaya Mission Family Day, held this year on May 6 at the Sanatan Dharma Temple here, saw members and well wishers of the Mission attend in large numbers. All of them participated enthusiastically in the presentations made by the Mission's balavihar children.

The event began with a 'paduka puja' by Swami Ishwarananda, head acharya in Southern California and Br. Girish, resident acharya of 'Kasi,' the center in Anaheim. The puja was done ahead of the 91<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary of Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda, the founder of the Mission, which fell on May 8. The acharyas performed the puja to the chanting of the Guru ashtotram, Guru Stotram and Guru Paduka Stotram.

This was followed immediately by Swami Ishwarananda addressing the audience and welcoming the children and their parents. In his brief talk, he traced the growth of the Chinmaya Mission balavihars which had begun with dedicated volunteers like P. Mahadev in 1982-83 with just a few families, and had now blossomed into several centers around greater SoCal with active participation of over 500 Indian families and local communities. He praised and thanked the volunteer teachers for making this a reality.

On the occasion, a yearbook which will be presented to each child at the end of the current balavihar session this June, was formally released and placed at the feet of Gurudev. Priya Raghuram, who has designed the book was acknowledged for her contributions.

Children from eight centers around the Southland then presented short plays based on the Hindu scriptures. Deepak Kulkarni was the emcee and kept the proceedings moving forward smoothly.

The Kasi center's two balavihars played a game of Hindu Jeopardy and delineated on the Ramayana and the Chandogya Upanishad. The Mithila Center from Tustin had plays on practical Hinduism and enacted the story of the 'churning of the ocean.' From Diamond Bar came the play that debunked pride through the story of Kubera. Lord Krishna was the topic for the San Gabriel and Valley balavihars – while the latter focused on the symbolism of the peacock feather that this avatar of the Lord wears, the former presented significant moments from the story of His life. The Agoura Hills Center, based on the Prashna Upanishad presented a play on 'deluded sense organs.'

Over 700 people packed the auditorium and several were in appreciation of the presentations made. Indeed, the entire production, an amateur one put together by the children, teachers and dedicated volunteers involved prop making, costuming, script writing and several hours of practice.

Br. Girish acknowledged this effort in his vote of thanks. A prasad lunch catered by Jaybharat restaurant was served to all at the culmination of the event.