

## **San Gabriel Marks Hanuman Jayanti with Lecture Series by Swami Ishwarananda**

The Masonic Temple in San Gabriel, usually the venue for balavihar classes on Saturdays, instead on the weekend of April 18-20, saw a strong turn out of adults who came each day to hear Swami Ishwarananda - the head acharya of Chinmaya Mission in Los Angeles - discourse on the beauty and power of the 'Hanuman Chalisa.'

While the subject itself was opportunely timed, given that Hanuman Jayanti fell on the concluding day, the text and Swamiji's delineation of it fell in the realm of timelessness.

Like the proverbial string that holds the pearl necklace, Swamiji strung together in simple words the greatness of Hanuman the bhakta and the concept of bhakti, gave vedantic interpretations to many ideas in the Chalisa and suggested what spiritual steps can be adopted by the sadhak.

Each day over a 150 people congregated in the hall that was painstakingly decorated by San Gabriel volunteers. Gurudev's picture and the deities of Ram Pariwar, Lord Ganesha and Hanumanji dominated the front of the hall. Swamiji was flanked by the traditional Hanuman Asan, which he explained was in keeping with the great Ramadasa's desire to always want to be where the glory of his Lord was being spoken about.

Swamiji's lectures, each day, was preceded by the children of San Gabriel chanting slokas: the Guru Stotram, Bhagavad Gita Chapter 7 and on the final day, Hanuman Chalisa. While the older children stayed back to listen to the discourse of the day, the little ones were tended to by professional baby sitters and watched DVDs on the Ramayana and Hanumanji.

The bookstore set up in the foyer by volunteers also catered to their needs and several copies of the Bala Ramayan and Bala Bhagavatam, among others, were bought by parents.

Balvihar children also led the arati at the conclusion of Swamiji's talks. Every attendee was offered fruits and a boxed home made meal as prasad and on the day of Hanuman Jayanti this was supplemented by ladoos and vadas from the vada malas that had adorned the two idols of Hanumanji. Swamiji also distributed a pictorial Hanuman Chalisa book as prasad.

Most of those who attended were from the San Gabriel and surrounding areas and there was a general consensus that having Swami Ishwarananda lecture in their neighborhood had provided them a true opportunity to be a satsangi.

- BY NIMMI RAGHUNATHAN

*Audio CD, DVD and MP3 of the talks can be purchased at Mithila and Kasi bookstores.*

*A synopsis of the talk is available at:*

*[http://www.chinmayala.org/newsletter/HanumanYagnaNotes\\_SG2008.pdf](http://www.chinmayala.org/newsletter/HanumanYagnaNotes_SG2008.pdf)*