January

Balazine 2013

COVER ARTWORK
Revant Ranjan
Grade 8, Chitrakoot

IN THIS ISSUE:
Children of Chinmaya Mission, Dallas-Fort Worth Balavihar present their artwork, articles and commentary on various topics...

Happy New Year!
OM SHANTI, SHANTI, SHANTI

HARI OM

Over the holidays, I was getting bored and was looking for something to do. While going through my parent’s book shelf, I found one of the smallest books in our house – “why do we...” written by Swamini Vimalananda and Radhika Krishnakumar. This smallest book helped me understand why we chant OM, say Shanthi three times and do Aarati. These are the three things we do at Balavihar every week.

Why do we chant OM?

OM is the universal name of lord. We believe that God started the creation of this world by chanting OM. So we consider OM to be very auspicious and begin all our tasks by chanting OM. Chanting OM also fills our mind and our surroundings with peace. Chanting OM helps us stay focused on GOD during our prayers and meditation. In Balavihar, we also use OM as a Greeting. Hari OM.

Why do we do Aarati?

Aarati is one of the 16 steps we perform in our pooja. We wave the lighted lamp clockwise in front of the God while chanting prayers and at the end of the Aarati we place our hands over the flame and touch our eyes and head. By doing this we pray God to help us make our thoughts noble and beautiful. To light the Aarati lamp, we use camphor which emits a pleasant perfume by burning itself. This teaches us to spread love to everyone around us by sacrificing ourselves.

Why do we say Shanthi three times?

Shanthi means peace. We chant Shanthi three times to express our intense desire for peace. Disturbances and sorrows we face are of three types – 1) from unforeseen divine forces like earthquakes, volcanoes etc. 2) From our surroundings like accidents, pollution etc. and 3) from within ourselves like anger, frustration etc. So to remove or minimize the three types of disturbances and sorrows we chant Shanthi three times. Om Shanthi, Shanthi, Shanthi.
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A one of a kind magazine by the children, of the children, for everyone!

Nitin Chikkodi, Grade 3, Session I, Saaket
Ramayana

Ramayana is one of the oldest epics in the Hindu mythology. It is a story about the virtuous king Rama of Ayodhya. An epic is a BIG poem. There are two very popular versions of the Ramayana. One was written by Sage Valmiki in Sanskrit and the other written by Saint Tulsidas in Awadhi (A form of Hindi).

Valmiki was a robber, but he became a sage after meeting Narada. Valmiki means 'AntHill' that grew over him when he was praying to Lord Rama. Valmiki wrote the Ramayana in Sanskrit. Valmiki’s Ramayana has 24,000 slokas in six different Kandas – Bala Kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kishkinda Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Lanka and Yudha Kanda.

Tulsidas lived in the northern part of India from 1532-1623. His Ramayana, written in Hindi consists of over 1,000 stanzas of about 12 to 18 lines each. He was motivated to write the Ramayana in the local language because people did not understand Sanskrit and Tulsidas wanted to spread the teachings of Rama.

The difference between the 2 versions of Ramayana is the language of the story. Valmiki Ramayana talks about Rama as a great man and king. Tulsidas was a big devotee of Rama and he shows Rama as God in Ram-Charit-Manas (Tulsidas Ramayana).

Ramayana teaches us to be calm and not get angry so easily. Like Lord Rama we must respect our elders and be kind to others.

Anushka Kumar, Grade 3 and Sanjana Kumar, Grade 1, Session I,
COURAGE

Courage is doing an act that goes beyond your fears. It is a characteristic that you choose. Facing your fears is tough and sometimes dangerous. But everyone has a fear. Courage is taming that fear. But instead of me explaining that, let me tell you a story...

On a fine summer afternoon, Geetha walked down the school cafeteria aisle as the ‘popular table’ stared at her muttering and giggling. Geetha was an ordinary middle school girl, who loved to read. Everywhere she went, she had a book in her hand. She didn’t care what the ‘populars’ said until one day their tricks went from the mental to the physical.

Geetha was walking up to her organized locker when the queen of them all, Brittany came along. Her posse stuck to her like leeches. She’s always was on the hunt for loose prey and there Geetha was standing helplessly. “Oh My God, look at her hair. I mean this is a school not a dump”. Brittany walked over and tripped Geetha.

That was it. Geetha had just about enough. “Get back here! What did you think you can just trip me and get away with it? I don’t care who you think you are...just wait and watch, soon everyone including the Principal will see who you REALLY are.”

Brittany and everyone around her stood there with their mouths agape. They were speechless. No one had ever dare talk back to Brittany. Slowly their expressions changed from surprised to stunned. She grabbed her expensive bag and rushed out.

Geetha had been waiting for this moment for 6 years. Finally Brittany got a taste of her own medicine.

Sometimes you have to face a tough situation to find your strength. It takes tons of courage but nothing is impossible. This is a true incident...that had happened to my best friend.

Trisha Mahajan, Grade 6, Session IV, Saaket

DIVERSITY

Diversity here, diversity there
We see diversity everywhere!
Diversity of toys, diversity of cars
Diversity of colors and of stars.
Diverse animals and plants.
Many types of shirts and pants.
Without diversity, we would all be the same
Imagine us all being twins with the same name!
Diversity makes us unique in our own special way
So let’s give diversity a hip-hip-hurray!!

Akash Jape, Grade 4, Session IV, Saaket
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Sanjana, Grade 2, Session II, Saaket
Grade 1 Celebrates Ganesh Chaturthi,
Ganesha rocking music on the Stage

Sneha Maram, Grade 2, Session II, Saaket
Shruti Maram, Grade 5, Session II, Saaket
A Simple Life

Shantiv Monga, Grade 1, Session I, Saaket
All good things start with Ganesha

We all pray to Him namesha

Diwali spreads light

With diyas and lamps shining bright

And good overcomes evil with all its might.

**HAPPY DIWALI!**

*Araalya Mahajan, Grade 2, Session III, Saaket*
Diwali is the Festival of lights. People decorate their houses with colorful lights and Diya. They exchange sweets and gifts. They wish each other “Happy Diwali”.

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Diya Anand, Grade 2, Session II, Saaket
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Kavya Panchakarla, Grade 3, Session I, Chitrakoot
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BALAZINE

Anashay Monga, Grade 5, Session I, Saaket
Have you ever wondered about other family’s food? You may think that America has all of the food it needs to feed the people living there. But you are wrong. Many families go to bed without food. The North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) helps make sure that those families get food.

For Diwali, the Chinmaya Mission 10 and up volunteer group went to NTFB to sort and package potatoes. There were 2 other community organization groups that came too. We were sorted into 3 groups and we had to see who could package the most potatoes. My group packed a 7 box wide and 6 box high packages. We finished sorting out our potatoes so we got a new set of potatoes to pack.

In the middle we had a break. Everybody had methai and other snacks. There was a snack vending machine and a drink vending machine. There was a line to get these items, but I skipped.

When we got back into the warehouse, we finished packing potatoes and we got our results on how much we packed. We packed 33,600 lbs, 770 boxes, 27 pallets (and you won’t believe how many meals), 40,321 meals! Everybody whooped and cheered so loud that you couldn’t hear the Hindi music that was playing. I don’t know about everybody else, but I was feeling proud of myself and the rest of the volunteers. What an accomplishment in 2 hours (technically 1 hour and 50 minutes because of the break)! Finally, we signed out.

I feel that I helped many families; I’ve changed because I want to do more things that help other people. I’ve learned how to pack and sort potatoes. Many people go to bed hungry, and I can make a difference for those in the need of hunger, and that we had a great time volunteering for Diwali.

Nikhil Jaisinghani, Grade 10, Session III, Saaket

Subhas Chandra Bose was born in Cuttack, Orissa on January 23, 1897. His mother was Prabhavati, his father, Janiki Nath Bose. Subhas grew up to be a bright young man who worked towards freeing India from British rule. He didn’t agree with Mahatma Gandhi that the road to freedom is only a non-violent one. So, he joined Deshabhandhu Chittaranjan Das to form a party called the Swaraj Party. This party won the Calcutta Corporation Election and Deshabhandhu got to be the mayor and Bose, the chief executive officer of the Calcutta corporation. They boycotted all foreign goods in Calcutta and asked people to wear khadi. The British were angry with Bose and sent him to jail in Burma. He was released from jail when he fell very ill. He proceeded to Europe for treatment. When his health improved, he toured many countries in Europe and promoted the cause of Indian Freedom. He was allowed to return to India when he was elected Congress Party President in 1938. He wanted to strike at the British and demanded Indian independence, but had to resign from the Congress because of differences with Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders. He formed the Forward Block Party and planned to destroy the Holwell Monument, which was a symbol of slavery. Subhas was arrested and sent to jail. He disguised himself as a bearded Muslim and escaped to Berlin. He formed the Indian National Army and worked with Germans and Japanese to liberate India from British rule.

Aditya Shivaswamy, Grade 1, Session I, Saaket
I wasn’t sure I wanted to go into the Episcopal church. The old stone building looked out of place next to the flashing screens and signs of Times Square. For me, the place represented a foreign religion, something faraway and distant, something I almost wanted to stay away from.

But I had time to kill in the Big Apple, so I shoved open the huge, dark doors and wandered inside The Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

Outside, car brakes screeched, music blasted and crowds of people wandered around.

But inside the ancient building, there was peace. The heavy doors blocked out the crazy sounds of pop culture and Times Square. I feel the same way whenever I enter my Hindu temple in Dallas.

Somewhere above me, an organist played low, mellow notes that resounded and echoed in the huge space. The notes reminded me of the low-pitched Sanskrit chanting in Hindu prayers.

I wondered if I was even allowed to enter, but nobody seemed to mind. I was a little nervous, but went into the sanctuary and looked at the fancy architecture, the glowing stained-glass windows, the rows of wooden pews. The pulpit sat at the front.

The church seemed nothing like my temple, a blocky building with an informal assembly hall. Swamis (Hindu pastors) usually don’t give sermons like Christian preachers. Instead, community members sit around and talk about religious philosophy, led by the swami.

Looking at the pews and pulpit, I felt like I was in one of those stuffy, formal places where people are supposed to wear suits and ties. I looked down and scowled at my T-shirt and shorts.

Then I saw them: A handful of silent New Yorkers sat in the pews, praying with their eyes squeezed shut. One guy was wearing a jersey and had a baseball cap in his lap. A lady looked like she had just been shopping in the streets. I felt more comfortable in my T-shirt.

As I walked down the side aisles, I saw stone statues of Christian saints. They sat in half-domes carved into the walls, cavities that looked like craters in the stone. Candles stood at the saints’ feet, along with old, scratched-up donation boxes. I watched people light the flames, kneel and slip bills into the wooden boxes.

The scene looked familiar. At my Hindu temple, statues of demigods sit in half-domes carved into the walls. These statues are artistic representations of the monotheistic God of Hindu philosophy. Worshippers pray at the gods’ feet, light lamps and slip donations into boxes, just like the Christian New Yorkers.

I was starting to like the place, so I stayed for a while. I listened to the deep, echoing organ notes. I watched the praying Christians, their heads bowed. I looked at the stone saints, their faces peaceful.

As I stood in the aisle, I thought about how we are all looking for the same thing. And I know we all have different ways of reaching that goal. But maybe all our different paths aren’t so different.
In schools around the world, students learn about differences in beliefs, traditions and religious philosophies — differences that often create conflicts between and within religions. But standing in that church, I wondered what really mattered: the differences or the similarities? Whether or not we are religious, or even spiritual, we all want to become better people. And while our beliefs may be completely different, our ways of getting to the goal aren’t as different as we sometimes think.

I gave the huge space one last glance. Then I headed out, back to the honking drivers, blasting music and flashing screens of Times Square. As I went through the huge, dark doors, I passed a white-haired stranger who gave me a farewell nod.