

Prerana^{e-zine}

An inspiration to hindu women



Happy Makar Sankranti

Prerana Team

◀National Coordinators▶



Anjali Patel

Almost 18 years ago, in a sevika shakha baithak, we thought of a newsletter that evolved into "Prerana" which was then a cute little publication only four pages long. It soon became the national sevika publication. For me, Prerana's seed lies in my childhood. As a child, I helped my grandmother edit a hand-written magazine for her women's group. I still remember those days how all those women used to contribute. I thank my grandmother for exposing me to the wonderful world of editing and publishing. Prerana had a wonderful journey spanning the past 18 years with some breaks. We always had a wonderful team. After each break, we would reconvene the team with the same enthusiasm and dedication. We had many brain-storming sessions, ideas, struggles, challenges, and fun. This time with a new face of "Prerana". All the readers are prerana for Prerana

Anjali Patel (Maitri Shakha, Frisco, Dallas, TX)



Suvidya Rane

Namaste Everyone,

Working for PRERNA is kind of a dream to me. The Prerana team is incredible and extremely helpful. All the SEVIKAS from all sambhags are getting involved and are always ready to share their thoughts through their articles. Isn't it amazing?

After one year, I can see Prerana is emerging as a resource for inspirational words, daily tips, motivational quotes, and spiritual or devotional matters, Ayurveda/Yoga practices, and so on. The hard work of our team, the wonderful articles from all sevika authors, and Anjali Tai's dream is making Prerana successful.

Suvidhya Rane (Sun Prairie WI)



Chitra Javdekar, PhD

I remember the day when Anjali ji called me about helping with editing Prerana. Very quickly, I discovered that the Prerana team is just phenomenal! I have enjoyed working with the entire team: planners, documentation experts, editors, designers, proof-readers, and most importantly, authors! My experience has been one that has given me so much joy, and new appreciation for the character-building work that happens inside the shakha. It has connected me with many sevikas. Through Prerana, I believe that we are strengthening our connections to Hindu culture and our roots; and hopefully, in the long term, contributing to Vishwa Shanti.

Chitra Javekar (Azad Shakha, Boston, Massachusetts)

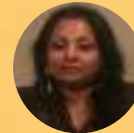


Kanaka Tirumale

Namaste. It has been a beautiful learning journey working with a wonderful team and reading all your articles. I can't believe it is already a year since we brought out the Makar Sankranti edition! "Prerana" as the name indicates is to inspire Sevikas to come together, work together and share their favourite vishays. Both readers and writers contribute to the success of 'Prerana'. I have personally experienced that many articles give us 'dhairya'(courage) and 'kshema-sthairya'(steadfastness). I hope that your support and encouragement will continue to inspire us to bring more interesting topics to our Prerana magazine. Dhanyosmi.

Loves reading, travelling, cooking and teaching children
Kanaka Tirumale (Maitri Shakha, Frisco, Dallas, TX)

◀Editors▶



Richa Yadav, PhD

'Prerana' has given me an opportunity to connect with so many sevikas through their inspiring and engaging pieces of writing. Although the magazine has never laid out guidelines or precepts on the content, to my amazement, sevikas' writings across all sambhags exude a natural 'rootedness' in our rich cultural heritage, novelty, and enthusiasm.

I never knew that I would be so fortunate to be on the team someday. The ability of the team to cooperate and coordinate smoothly is commendable. When there are doubts about the content or the layout, we all came together at short notice, discussed what had to be done, and then dispersed with a newfound drive. There is so much to learn from the team and the contributors to the magazine. Where else will I find such a thorough connection with tradition, creativity, and modernity? It's all about 'prerana'! Richa Yadav (Sanskrit shakha, Flower Mound, Texas)

◀Editors▶

Swati Arun || Priti Gagil || Sneha Garg || Ruchi Munshi

◀Proof Readers▶

Sarika Patel || Varenia Shrikant || Prajnya Woonimani

◀Design Team▶



Anila Mantha

I had worked on Prerana magazine earlier and loved coming back to it. The best thing about being a part of the Prerana team is the dynamics and the friendships we have made over time. Everyone on the team is so capable, knowledgeable, and independent. Each one brings their own creativity and flavor to the magazine. I am currently on the design team and work along with Anjali Desai ji. We both work on the design aspects which include the design of the cover page and the layout and images in the magazine.

Anila Mantha (Lonehill Shakha, San Jose, California)

Loves going on hikes with her family and dabbling in arts and crafts along with her preschool son. She also likes to learn editing software.



Anjali Desai

Namaste all, Since the past one year I have been working with the Prerana magazine team. What I have experienced is a very friendly atmosphere with no pressure. The work has helped me learn the latest software that we use to design the magazine. As a team, we discuss and try to produce an awesome issue every single time! Every issue I learn a lot and get to know the talented sevikas all around North America. All the articles are great, my favorite are Book review and Women I admire.

Anjali Desai (Prerana Shakha, Dallas Texas)

Loves graphic Designing, Cooking, Reading, and Traveling.

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About HSS

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) USA is a voluntary, non-profit, social and cultural organization. It aims to organize the Hindu community in order to preserve, practice and promote Hindu ideals and values. HSS conducts structured programs of regular athletic and academic activities to develop strong character and leadership skills in its members, and encourage maintaining Hindu cultural identity in harmony with the larger community.

Visit: www.hssus.org
for more information

About Prerana Magazine

We, as women, are heavily occupied with familial and professional commitments. Our day mostly begins with household chores and continues till late evening with umpteen types of routine jobs for people around us. At times, it seems that we are working like machines, just going on restlessly. And then, without realizing when, disappointment, despair, and loneliness seep in and we begin to question: why are we doing all this, and for whom? This is the time, we need to reflect and introspect. This is the time we need to catch up with other women around us and ask, 'How are we all doing?'

This magazine, 'Prerana' is an attempt to reconnect women with each other and with self to find our inner 'prerana', the motivation to continue working ceaselessly, but with a clarity and vision that we are moving on together to build a strong Hindu society, brick by brick, with our collective efforts, with love and enthusiasm. Let's bring out the beauty in each other, support each other, and thrive together!

Write to Prerana

Share your experiences with Prerana. Send in your articles about your experiences in HSS, art and craft projects, book reviews and stories. Not sure whether your article's topic fits prerana? Have questions or comments regarding this issue's articles? write to us.

Send in your articles, questions & comments to:
prerana.feedback@gmail.com

‘Next Generation Ask’ Listen, Love, Let go !

How do you find your passion?

This is an interesting question. In my opinion, we feel passionate about many things. Such emotions are sometimes fleeting, and sometimes they stay longer. We derive passion from people we meet, the situations we encounter, or the stories we hear. There are times when we feel passionate about something, but we do nothing about it. We just keep thinking about it! Sometimes, we feel suddenly passionate about something. In my opinion, addressing such temporary passions, taking some action, and evaluating ourselves are essential steps. Even if we decide against taking any actions, such an experience can teach us something. There are times when our laziness, procrastination, or lack of time, prevent us from taking any action, but our mind hovers over it always.

When we find ourselves making such mental plans, I think it is essential to act and work on those ideas. Be sure to allocate some time to your ideas and dreams. You may find your real passion hidden somewhere there!

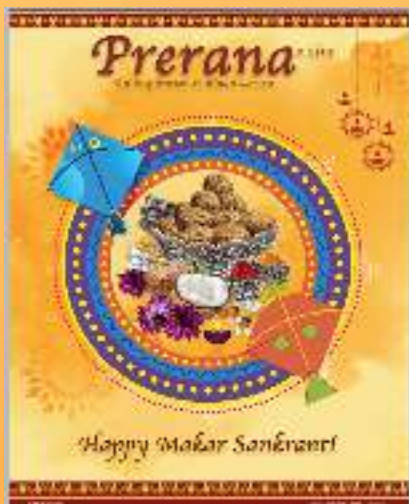
What do you think are essential qualities to look for in a partner?

Choosing a life partner is often one of the most challenging responsibilities one can have.

To decide the qualities you want to look for in your partner, you need to know yourself better. You need to know your values. You need to know your non-negotiable values, which are essential for you, what you want, and what you are ready to give up. Irrespective of how much you plan, nobody knows the future. Sometimes the best of the plans fail, you get new ideas, and life flows like a river taking turns. You can find yourself facing a unique situation. It is for this reason that a couple must develop trust and love for each other. This is an investment of time and energy.

If you know your values and how family, dreams, health, and money contribute to your life, you should make the right choice. There is no one formula that one can use to find their partner because we are all different.

For a happier and healthier relationship, let me suggest three crucial “L”s of LIFE---- Listen, Love, Let go!



On The Cover Page

January 2021! While the Sun has changed the course of its journey, upward or northward movement (Uttarayan phase), are we humans looking at the time to come with new hope? Yes, each one is being optimistic as vaccines are here as a much-needed lifeline. Our prospects for recouping in 2021 will depend largely on how quickly a safe and effective vaccine is distributed. 2020 was nothing less than a fearful wakeup call to make remind us that we need to revitalize our lifestyle and attitude- to work on our immunity through ‘yog’, to rebuild our relationships developing more ‘atmiyata’ as life is precious, and do more ‘sewa’ to tell the world how much we believe in ‘Vasudhaiv kutumkam.’ Time has been unkind and difficult in the recent past, but change is inevitable. Let’s be optimistic. Maya Angelou’s quote hovers on my mind: “We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated.”



YOG “A Shift Of The Mind”

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः

“As the mind, so the person; bondage or liberation are in our minds.”

When I was approached by a sevika bhagini for a write-up on yoga a couple of weeks ago, my initial plan was to share a few pointers about Ashtang Yog and its implications. But then thoughts shifted as I sat down to write and went through the memory lane of my yog journey during this pandemic. Before I studied the philosophy of yog this summer, I considered the practice to be the union of body and mind. However, the true essence (Prana) and the practicability aspect was still missing. Two enlightening resources (The Bhagwad Gita, by Eknath Easwaran and The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, by Swami Satchidananda) truly guided my unsettled mind to find new meaning in nothingness and a stillness. Here I am, sharing my introspection of finding a mindful, calm, and subtle goal of life that seeks to transform the lower into the higher, ignorance to wisdom, and sickness to health.

As an educator, I attend professional development workshops several times a year. The goal of each workshop is to equip us with a growth mindset to assist our students in transitioning from overcoming a mental block to having a progressive attitude in life. Likewise, I discovered that yog is a similar transformation of the mindset, an inward shift of being on the mat for a set of minutes during the day to the ultimate realm of union between Atman and Brahman. It came to me as a surprise that this realization of ultimate truth starts with just a single breath.

Breath awareness is a fundamental part of yoga practice. When I am entirely focused on balancing in a pose, the breath creates a space in my body and mind and ultimately helps me reach a higher state of mental clarity. And this mental clarity for a few minutes a day is helping me recognize my priorities at my workplace. To put it another way, I am worrying less about every seemingly urgent email that hits my inbox and can focus on distinguishing between what is important and what is urgent.

Similarly, I had a perception that if I am not insanely busy, I am not productive. I learned that reality is quite the opposite. During these past six months of the pandemic, I was forced to go through a longer period of inactivity than usual, bound at home and away from social life. By being on the mat for a few minutes a day, I was able to see through how my activity and inactivity affect the tension balance in my body. That is where my learning of yog shifted from just being a “*physical activity/union*” to the stillness of mind. I was able to recognize the fallacy and constraints of the unhealthiness of my limited and self-limiting identity and let it dissipate. This transfer

of thoughts has allowed me to move closer to my personal goals and away from the distractions that do not truly matter.

In the end, yog can be viewed as the repositioning of the mind that brings the gift of stillness, even amid the chaos, by teaching us to let go and bring awareness to every moment. We can then recall our essential, spiritual nature, and life becomes more joyful, meaningful, and carefree

*“Yog takes you into the present moment,
the only place where life exists”.*



Written By: Sonia Puri

Shaka: Sanskaar Shakha, Flower Mound, Texas

Hobbies: Enjoys writing poetry, travelling, and singing.

SITA WARRIOR OF MITHILA

By Amish Tripathi

I grew up in a liberal-minded family of four generations living together under one roof with an intrinsic love for reading books. I thoroughly enjoyed my grandmother telling stories and discussions about religion and history, who herself was a Sanskrit scholar; It came as blessings in the form of easy escape from regular study times. Gradually, I got interested in reading and thanks to the not so very small library in my home.

One of the books which I read was Sita-Warrior of Mithila written by Amish Tripathi. We have all known Sita as the centric part of the great epic Ramayana for her role as a faithful wife who brilliantly faces a series of events with anguish, but never gives up on her values and Dharma. This book retells Ramayana from a feminist perspective and, unlike most conventional portrayals of Sita, represents her as a choiceless, duty-bound woman. The feminist tone of the book gives Sita an identity of her own. Redefining Sita, who

was earlier known to us as a submissive woman, the author narrates her as the shaper of destiny with massive strength.



The storyline comes in a fictional format and describes her life from childhood to adulthood. A highly intellectual and philosophical king Janak as a father also known as Rajrishi and the administrator queen Sunayna as the mother provides a rich childhood base for Sita. She was not the natural heir and, to prove

her identity in the royal family of those orthodox times, she had to put more effort into her grooming. Sita grew up as a girl with lots of energy directed towards physical, mental, and spiritual excellence. Sita mastered martial arts, Vedas, Shashtra, and human psychology. She helped her parents from a young age and at one point she took over the responsibilities to run the whole kingdom after losing her mother, Sunayna. She established a long-lasting political and the administrative system in the kingdom of Mithila which later helped king Janak when she got married and had to go with Shri Ram.

Sita

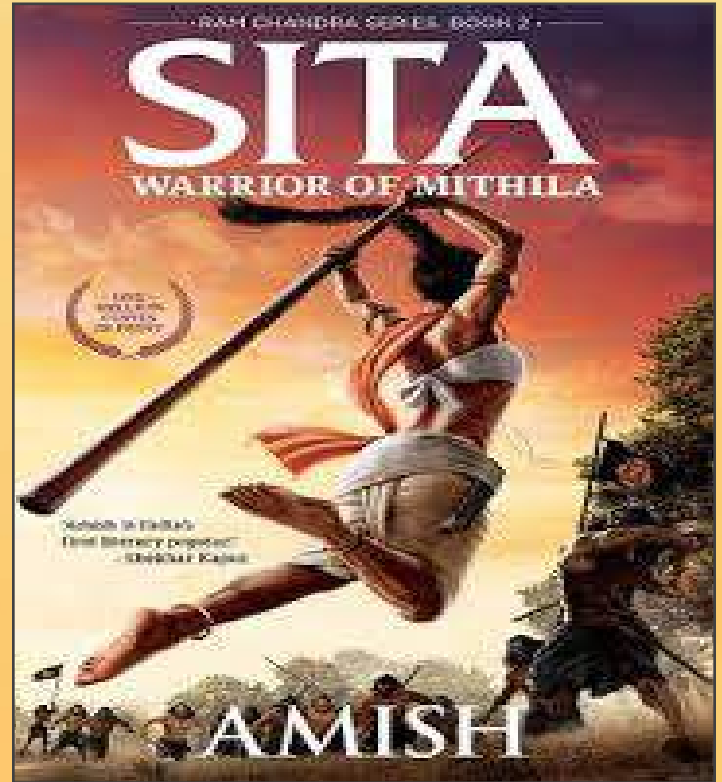
सा देवी त्रिविधा भवति शक्त्यात्मना
इच्छाशक्तिः क्रियाशक्तिः साक्षात्शक्तिरिति

That divine Being is threefold, through her power, namely,

**The power of desire,
The power of action,
The power of knowledge.**

After reading the book, it appears that Sita is not just Shri Ram's wife or a quarry of Raavan. She is a mighty supremacy on her own, willingly contained in royal rules she decided to follow. Her characterization is the one we call an empowered woman now.

Photo Credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amish_Tripathi



It gives readers the impression of a woman transforming into a goddess by the sheer strength of her character. She always thought with a very clear and strong mind of her choices and decisions. Be it protecting Mithila from the attack of Raavan or going to exile with Shri Ram.

In present times, education has opened our minds to explore and novelty, but at the same time, enduring traditions and beliefs are shattered to the extent that we have raised certain questions on them. Youth draws attention by challenging the context in our scriptures. It is difficult for the logical minds to visualize the artifact of Pushpak Vimaan or Shri Hanuman flying across the ocean without vindication. This book describes everything in a very convincing way, with logic and reasoning, as to satisfy the interpretation with scientific explanations.

This Sita is what I, and possibly my sister or my daughter too, can easily relate to: in the power of self-confidence, mindfulness, and physical strength. Sita from this book inspires me to be a woman like her who follows the path of Dharma, which always leads to the betterment of life irrespective of adverse circumstances one encounters in this journey.

It is the modern reintroduction of the Hindu way of life and religion to the youth.

Written By: Gargi Dadhich

Shaka: Vijay Shakha, Irving, Dallas, TX

Hobbies: She likes to travel, read books and go camping.

American Women I Admire

“Unflinching Devotion To Women & Their Rights – *Susan B Anthony*”

If this were the year 1919, in these past Nov 4th elections, you, as a woman, would not have been able to vote because men often believed women to be too erratic and irresponsible to be allowed to vote.

If women can vote today, it is because some strong female activists fought for decades before finally succeeding in getting the federal government to certify the ratification of the 19th amendment about voting rights for women on August 26th, 1920. This year is the centennial year of that momentous decision.

While there are many stalwart white and colored women suffragists, Susan B. Anthony stands tall as a life-long suffragist, abolitionist, speaker, author, and president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

Susan Brownell Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts, on February 15th, 1820. She was the second of eight children to her parents and was raised as a Quaker. Right from childhood, Susan had a strong sense of morality and righteousness. At the sudden downturn of her family's fortunes, she discontinued her education at the tender age of 17 and began to work as a Quaker boarding school teacher. Susan continued to support her family by working as a headmistress at the Canajoharie Academy women's wing and then, for a while, also headed the operations of her family's farms. But her instincts for social justice drew her to reform activism, and she finally decided to dedicate her life to social reform.

In her early thirties, Susan met Elizabeth Stanton, another crusader for women's rights, and they became lifelong friends and associates in their fight for women's rights. Each woman complimented the other's skills, and together they formed a fierce team that rallied against every inequality women faced.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (sitting) with Anthony

Susan advocated against slavery and for women's rights. She fought for equal pay for women, the right to equal opportunity to serve as officers and committee members within a given organization, and improved property rights for married women. Susan fought for the women's right to choose their field of study and profession. Throughout her struggles and campaigns, she realized that women's suffrage (right to vote) was the key to secure all other rights for women.

Susan's passion for women's rights was summarized perfectly in the motto of the weekly publication 'The Revolution' that she and Elizabeth produced - "Men their rights, and nothing more; women their rights, and nothing less." Susan remained unmarried. Her Spartan lifestyle and personal integrity were admired by even those who did not support her ideas. Susan died at her home in Rochester, NY, on March 13th, 1906. She was 86. Another fourteen years would pass beyond when Susan's hard work of 60 years finally came to fruition in the form of the Nineteenth Amendment, colloquially known as Susan B. Anthony Amendment.

In 1979, the United States Treasury Department honored her work by depicting her profile on a dollar coin. She was the first woman citizen of the country to have received such an honor.

What I admire most about Susan is her perseverance and her single-minded focus and dedication to her cause. Despite the difficulties she faced, she remained steadfast in her goal to get women equal rights. My deepest gratitude to all such pioneering women of the world!

Photo Credits: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_B._Anthony

Written By: Neena Narumanchi || Shaka: Charleston || Hobbies: She believes in spreading the values and wealth of our Sanathan Dharma.

Sutra Bandhan Raksha Bandhan

Sanatana Dharma has its own beautiful way to always remind us that we are divine and our soul is infinite. Our Dharma gives us the most profound ideals using the simplest methods. One of those simple and beautiful methods is “Sutra Bandhan”.

It is astonishing to see that tying a thread around the wrist is considered a superstition, a blind faith, or a mental placebo in this day and age. But if we keep an open mind and observe closely, such threads are used extensively in our culture.

Our Dharma is based on scientific thinking which always leads us onto the path of progress and shows us the most practical way to live. The literal word for thread in Sanskrit is “sutra”. This comes from the root word “siviyati” which means “which connects or holds together”. Sutra is used in establishing a connection with a person or an object and is used extensively on different occasions with different names such as Mangalsutra, Jyagni Pavitam, Kankanam, Abhay Sutam, Raksha Sutam, and so on. We prepare these threads differently based on their intended purpose, how they are worn, and who wears them. So let’s see the science of employing threads for specific purposes of human wellbeing.

Rakshabandhan is one of the festivals that proves how our festivals are based on science. On the full moon day of the month of Shravan, sisters tie Rakhi/Raksha sutram —a thread of protection —around their brothers’ wrist. When Bali, the King of the Danavas asked for a boon from Shri Vishnu Bhagwan to guard his gates in Patal Lok, Lakshmi came to King Bali and tied the Raksha-sutram to his wrist, and asked for the release of Shri Vishnu Bhagwan from his duty of guard. From that day, we started celebrating Rakshabandhan.



Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessary that the Raksha-sutra is only tied by a sister to her brother. There are other examples from our history that tell stories of when such threads were tied for protection. Sachidevi, the wife of Indradev tied the Rakshasutram to Indradev to protect him when he went out to fight Vruttasura. Draupadi tied the Rakshasutram to Shri Krishna when he got hurt and bleed by his Sudarshanchakra. In all these, the Raksha (protection) was for the wearer. Traditionally, the thread is also supposed to be made out of organic materials and should be worshiped with Mantras.

It is said that we should not cut this Rakshasutra, and always untie it and burn it off in a Hawan kund, or dispose it in flowing water. We should untie it only after finishing the mandala- a period of 42 to 48 days.

One beautiful Mantra for Raksha bandhan is,

येन बद्धो बलि राजा, दानवेन्द्रो महाबलः ।
तेन त्वां मनुबध्नामि, रक्षमाचल माचल ॥

Let’s talk about the scientific thinking behind Rakshabandhan. In the old days, the rakhi was made of cotton threads dipped in turmeric. It is believed that this makes it capable of holding energies for a long time. Similarly, it is believed that chanting the right kind of mantras appropriate for the occasion generates an immense amount of energy, which is held by the Rakhi/ Raksha Sutra (like a battery) for the one who wears it.

The science of Ayurveda is based on the “Naadi Parikshan” – the three pulses signals called “Vata” , “pitta” and “kapha”. When we tie a sutra on our wrist, it is believed that we put very light pressure on our naadi, making the blood flow smoother. In this manner, we ensure that all three Naadis – “Ida naadi” , “Pigala naadi” and “Sushuma Naadi” work very well. So, the Rakshasutra is for everyone, regardless of their gender.

This beautiful connection of our festival with science makes us feel so proud of our Dharma. Let’s keep on spreading and passing on the beautiful progressive viewpoint of our Dharma to the people around and our next generation.

Written By: Nidhi Adhvaryu || **Shaka:** Adi Shakti, Charlotte, North Carolina || **Hobbies:** Tell stories and singing

Tips For Kitchen

'Two words- Satvik food and Mitahara'

- Equip your kitchen with high-quality gadgets to make your cooking process easy.
- Minimize the use of plastic for storage.
- Do not cook in a nonstick pan as the coating is reactive.
- Buy the highest quality ingredients for cooking, as this will determine your health.
- Do not bring junk food home as it is easier to stop the enemy at the doorstep.
- Minimize the use of microwaves.
- Use fresh ingredients that are local and seasonal, if possible.
- Keep a fixed schedule for your meals.
- Cook with love and care and chant mantras during cooking.
- Serve gracefully.
- Eat as a family.
- Offer prayers and Naivediyam before eating.
- Eat with joy and love and a feeling of gratitude.
- Minimize talking while eating and connect with your food.
- Use Steel thalis to eat in and eat with your hands. Sit on the floor if possible.
- Consume food within three hours of cooking.
- Eat to live not live to eat.
- Avoid snacking between the meals and minimize the number of meals.
- Eat only when hungry.
- Avoid eating after sunset.
- Eat till just full, don't overeat.
- Eat only such food that can be digested within 18-24 hours.
- Chew food till it is liquid before swallowing.
- Minimize three whites: salt, sugar, and white all-purpose flour.
- Clean food leads to clean thoughts.
- Let thy food be thy medicine and thy medicine be thy food.
- Lead by example for your kids.
- Sit in Vajrasana after eating.
- Drink water 30-40 minutes after meals. Avoid water during meals.

Written By: Hetal Nayak || Shaka: Swami Vivekananda, San Antonio, TX



Tips for Safe Driving

Driving is one of those things that once you've learned how to do it, it becomes second nature to you. Safety is something that drivers should always keep in mind. No one wants to admit to being a distracted driver, but we've all texted, talked, or eaten while driving. The truth about distracted driving is that it does not take much for our attention to be diverted. No matter how skilled a driver you are, it's a good idea to remind ourselves of the basics of road safety from time to time.

Here are some tips for safe driving

- **Buckle Up:** Always wear your seat belt! Seat belts are essential in any type of moving vehicle. If there is a seat belt, you should wear it.
- **Stay Alert:** Actively pay attention to your actions and those of the drivers around you when driving, especially when motorcyclists are around.
- **Avoid Distractions:** Phones are the number one distraction. Try not to use them, especially when kids are in the car. If you need to use it, use it in hands-free mode.
- **Avoid Speeding:** The speed limits are carefully selected to maximize drivers' safety and protect the surrounding areas (homes or businesses).

Written By: Avni

Hindu Women From History

“Mother Of Social Work – *Padma Vibhushan Durgabai Deshmukh*”

Durgabai Deshmukh was a lawyer by profession, a freedom fighter by choice, a social activist by nature, a visionary leader, and an ardent follower of Gandhi who only wore khadi and never wore any jewelry.

She was born on July 15th, 1909 in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh into a traditional Telugu Vaidiki Brahmin family. Her father was Bennuri Ramarao, a social worker, and her mother was Bennuri Krishnaveni, a homemaker. Her father's selfless service heavily influenced Durgabai since her childhood. Even though the family had limited means, her father instilled in Durgabai and her siblings the importance of seva to the ill and poor people of their community. He truly believed in the saying: “*Manava seva ye Madhava seva*” or serving people in need is equivalent to serving God.

Durgabai was married to her cousin at the young age of eight years, but she was supported by her family in her decision to not consummate her marriage and pursue her education. Durgabai was deeply inspired by the speeches of Mahatma Gandhi, and by the age of twelve, she decided to join the fight for freedom and started to only wear clothes made of khadi, a natural fiber cloth woven locally in India. An example of Durgabai's sheer determination can be observed when she wished to coordinate a meeting between Mahatma Gandhi and women belonging to the local devadasi and Muslim communities. Although the organizers demanded a large sum of 5000 rupees to host the event, Durgabai raised that amount and successfully hosted the event.

By the time she was fourteen, Durgabai was deeply involved in the fight for independence and chose to quit school in order to oppose English education. She was so inspired by the speeches of Gandhi that she felt compelled to improve her knowledge of Hindi and translate his words into Telugu. As another initiative, she started the Balika Hindi Patashala to teach Hindi to the local girls in Rajahmundry.

In the year 1923, the Indian National Congress held a conference in her hometown Kakinada. Fourteen-year-old Durgabai volunteered in the event and was responsible for the verification of the entrance tickets of all attendees at a khadi exhibition. Interestingly, she did not allow even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (who eventually became the first Prime Minister of Independent India) to enter the venue without a ticket! Ultimately, the event coordinators had to purchase a ticket for Pandit Nehru to enter the exhibition. Pandit Nehru praised Durgabai for the courageous nature that she embodied as she fulfilled her duty.

Durgabai was a dedicated and prominent follower of Gandhi's satyagraha movement. Moreover, she was instrumental in organizing women-led sa-

tyagrahi movements. She also participated in the civil disobedience movement and was imprisoned three times by the British for her active role in the fight for independence. During her time in jail, she realized that many women, much like herself, were incarcerated for



crimes that they did not commit, but they were forced to remain silent on the issue due to their lack of education. This created a spark within her to study law and become a criminal lawyer. After her release from prison, she obtained her Bachelor of Arts (BA) in History and a Master of Arts (MA) in Political Science from Andhra University. She also went on to earn a law degree from Madras University and started practicing as a lawyer in the Madras High Court in 1942.



Durgabai was also a member and the only female chairman of the Constituent Assembly of India. As a member of the steering committee, she actively participated in debates, fiercely defended the property rights of women in the Hindu code bill, and lowered the age requirement for those seeking to hold council positions from 35 to 30 years. She concurrently started an adult literacy program to empower widowed and deserted women and help them become self-sufficient.

This program and various other initiatives eventually became the famous AMS (Andhra Mahila Sabha), a voluntary organization for women that offers support in the realms of health, disability, rehabilitation, legal aid, and old-age support.

In 1953, Durgabai married her second husband Mr. Chintaman Deshmukh, the Finance Minister and later the first Governor of RBI. Pandit Nehru and Sucheta Kriplani were the two witnesses in their civil marriage. Durgabai and Mr. Deshmukh were a unique couple that dedicated their lives to the cause of building the nation and donated their incomes to various social welfare activities.

Durgabai was a leading advocate for the establishment of family courts, and strongly believed that they would reduce the burden on the supreme/high courts and be a forum to bring families together.

Durgabai passed away on May 9th, 1981, in Narsanna Peta, Andhra Pradesh. The Family Court Act was enacted by the parliament in 1984, three years after her demise. Durgabai was truly one of the nation's most dynamic freedom fighters – a true defender of social welfare and a champion of women's rights that will forever be remembered for her contributions to India.

Photo Credits: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durgabai_Deshmukh

Written By: Lakshmi Duggirala

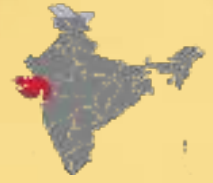
Shaka: Hanuman, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Hobbies: She enjoys playing the veena and singing. Other interests include gardening and being in nature.



“Our State Gujarat”

Jai Shree Krishna, Kem Cho? “Maja Ma”



A cheerful Gujarati addresses when you meet one. Fun-loving, lively, clad in colorful bandhani prints, impressive with the garba moves, the Navratri ras has always been a sight of fascination to anyone who experiences it. And then the quest starts, who are they? What are they? From, where are they?

*They represent one of the states of Bharat. Today let's delve into this most vibrant state of Bharat – Gujarat.
People proudly call “Garvi Gujarati”.*

Located on the western coast of India. It borders different states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and union territories like Dadra and Nagarhaveli, also a vast coastline of Arabian Sea and Pakistan. It has a varied landscape like the Rann of Kutch, white desert, on the other side a beautiful coastline, dense forest of the Girnar where the rarest species of Asiatic lions are found.

Gujarat is also a perfect blend of the ancient and the modern time, that coexists. One of the oldest cities like Dwarka to the Statue of Unity (Statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) built on Narmada river. It is also a place of pilgrimage with many old tales associated with these places.



Once Moon god was cursed. He lost his luster. He regained it back with a severe penance for Lord Shiva. This holy place called Somnath tirth, or Prabhas tirth. One of the Jyotirlingas, the temple is built on the holy triveni sangam, meeting point of 3 rivers, Hiran, Saraswati and Kapila. Somnath temple is associated with tales of destruction and rampage, while on the other the pages of history are filled with stories of brave men and women who fought till their last breath to defend it.



There are many more temples, monasteries, stupas, caves and monuments. Like the Dwarkadhish temple in Dwarka, Akshardham in

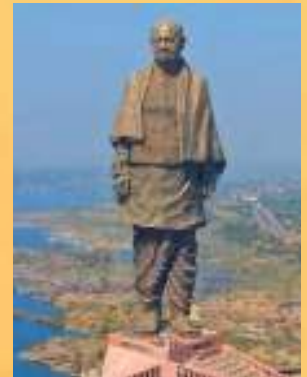
Gandhinagar, Ambaji Mandir in Banaskantha, Shrinathji Temple in Nathdwara, Shri Girnar tirth Junagadh, Khambhalida caves in Rajkot etc, where devotees come from all over the world.

Other than religious places Gujarat has many interesting sites like ancient wells, forts, museums etc. Rani ni vav (Stepwell) is one such fascination which has been declared as World heritage site by UNESCO.

If you are a foodie, then visiting Gujarat is a must. Imagine a full fledge vegetarian platter that comprises chunda, dhokla, khandvi, patra, khichdi, kadhi, rotla, thepla, undhiyu, ganthia nu saak, mohanthal, sukdi, magaj...the list is unending, and the dishes are mouthwatering. The place is famous for Jain food too, where onion and garlic are just ‘No’ ‘No’.



The whole of the Gujarat and the Gujaratis living all over the world get ready with lots of enthusiasm to celebrate Navratri. Women dressed in chania choli, decked with bindis, earrings, bangles etc and men wearing kedeyu and dhoti are often seen dancing in circles around the diety of Maa Durga. The symbol of energy, wisdom. The dance is called Garba and Dandiya raas. Garba is performed with clapping hands, while dandiya is performed with (Dandiya)sticks. The philosophical reason is, to honor the fact that all humans have the divine energy of Devi within them.



The state has well-diversified business profiles like the jewelry and diamond industry, petrochemicals, drugs and pharmaceuticals, minerals, dairy, textiles, ceramics IT, power, engineering and many more. It has attracted investors not only from India but from all over the world. The advantages being many uninterrupted power supply throughout the year, hardworking nature of the people, port facilities, cluster development methods etc.

Gujarat is the janmabhoomi of great leaders like Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Mahatma Gandhi, Dadabhai naoroji, Narendra Modi. The leaders, who changed the outlook of outsiders to view Bharat.

Written By: Vinaya Dandekar || **Shaka:** Shivaji, Alpharetta, Georgia || **Hobbies:** Tell stories and singing

Festivals Of Bharat

“Makar Sankranti”

India is a land of festivals. Makar Sankranti is one of the famous festivals of the Hindu religion. Everyone celebrates this with great joy and happiness. The festival is celebrated every year on the 14th or 15th of January based on the solar calendar. Hindus celebrate this festival by taking an early morning holy dip in the river and offering prayers to the Sun because, according to Hindu mythology, the Sun is a God.

Meaning of Makar Sankranti

Makar Sankranti has two words: *Makar* and *Sankranti*. Makar is the Zodiac sign (Rashi) of Capricorn, and Sankranti means transition, which makes Makar Sankranti the transition of the Sun into the Makar Rashi. Hindus consider this to be a very sacred and auspicious occasion, and they celebrate it as a festival.

Importance of Makar Sankranti

The shift of the Sun into the Makar rashi is of divine importance, and Hindus believe that taking a dip in the holy river Ganga washes away all our bad Karma and makes our Ātman pure and blessed. In addition, it signifies the increase of spiritual light and reduction of materialized darkness. From a scientific point of view, starting from Makar Sankranti, the days become longer and the nights become shorter.

It is also believed that by taking a dip in the holy ‘Triveni Sangam’ (The point where Three holy Rivers met namely Ganga, Yamuna, and Brahmaputra) at Prayagraj on Makar Sankranti during the time of ‘Kumbh Mela’, all your sins and obstacles in life will wash away with the flow of the river.

In the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in India, the Makar Sankranti festival is celebrated in a grand manner. There, this festival is celebrated for three days. The first day is called Bhogi, and celebrated with the traditional Bhogi Mantallu, or bonfire, lit early in the morning. Along with wood, dried cow dung cakes are consigned to flames. It signifies the end of a phase and the beginning or fresh start to a new chapter. People take a holy dip in a river or sea or have an early morning bath, wear new clothes, and decorate their houses with mango leaves and flowers. Girls draw rangolis at the entrance to the house and put gobbemmalu (Gobbemmalu are balls made of cow dung decorated with turmeric powder, red vermilion powder, flowers, and different types of grains). Young children are showered with a mixture of flower petals, Jujube berries, and coins to ensure their wellbeing. It is believed that this wards off an evil eye and invokes blessings from elders. Some create a beautiful display of dolls (generally replicas of gods and goddesses) at home. The second day is celebrated as Sankranti. On this day special sweets and the special rice dish called ‘pongal’ are offered to the Sun God. On Kanuma, the third day, the cattle that work in the fields and contribute to a generous harvest are decorated, worshipped, and fed pongal with gratitude.



Photo Credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makar_Sankranti

Written By: Swetha Sripadi || Shaka: Chaithanya, Belleville, Arkansas || Hobbies: Cooking, Petting talents doing craft works

रश्मिमंतं समुद्यन्तं देवासुरनमस्कृतम् । पूजयस्व विवस्वन्तं भास्करं भुवनेश्वरम् ॥

Raśmimatam samudyantam devāsuranamaskrtam । pūjayasva vivasvantam bhāskaram bhuvaneśvaram

(Worship the Sun God, the ruler of the worlds and lord of the universe, who is worshipped by devas and asuras and who is worshipped by every one of the universe).

Educated

A MEMOIR

By Tara Westover

A friend suggested *Educated*, a Memoir by Tara Westover for our book club. When I got my copy and read the back cover, I was instantly captivated. Having been raised in India by a broad-minded family, where education was highly prized and considered as essential as food and water, Tara's story sounded like a complete contrast from my own. I wanted to know more about her life.

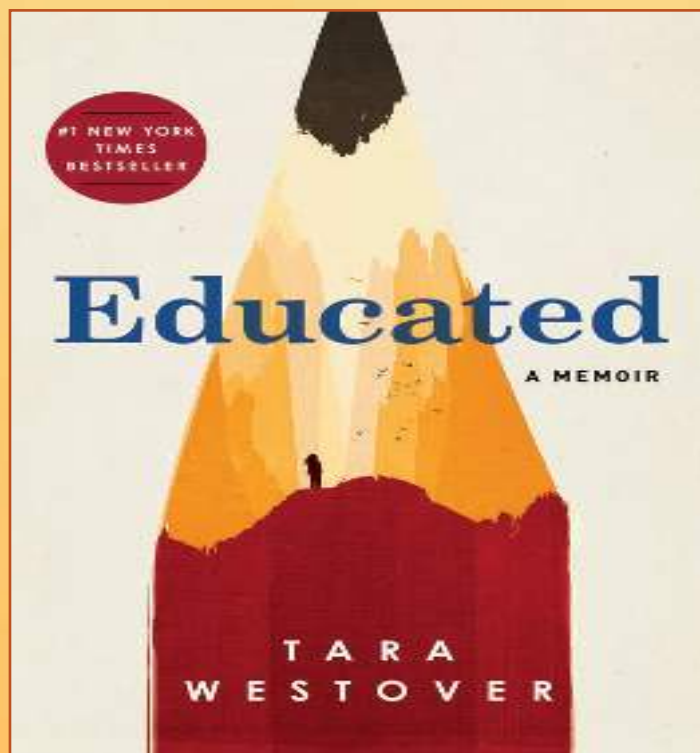
Tara Westover was one of the seven children born to fundamentalist parents of the Mormon faith. She had no birth certificate, no medical records, and no formal education. Her father believed that the government was brainwashing the citizens, and that the family should interact with the health and education systems as little as possible. He also believed in the end of the world, and the family prepared for doomsday by stockpiling home-canned fruits in the house. Tara's mother was an unlicensed midwife and herbalist. Tara spent her childhood summers stewing herbs for her mother and winters salvaging and scrapping in her father's junkyard. She suffered multiple injuries from working in the junkyard, but her father forbade hospitals, doctors, and nurses. Whether it was gashes and concussions or burns from explosions, they were all treated at home with herbs. Tara's mother suffered a brain injury in a car accident and never fully recovered.



The family was so disengaged at the emotional level that when an older brother became abusive and violent towards Tara, nobody paid attention. Tara felt that her life was narrated for her by others. Their voices were forceful, emphatic, and confident until she realized that being told something and believing it are two different things.

Once, another older brother of Tara visited the home and told her about the possibility of going to college if she could get a decent score in the ACT (standardized test scores accepted for college admissions). That's when Tara dared to dream for the life she sought for herself. She taught herself enough algebra, trigonometry, and grammar to secure a decent ACT score and got accepted into Brigham Young University. At seventeen, to set foot in a school setting for the first time was an adjustment for her- to put it mildly. Even though she was very interested in knowing about the new world she found out about in textbooks and lectures, she soon realized that

curiosity is a luxury for the financially secured. She struggled to pay her rent and fee. In a desperate attempt, she had to lie to her mother about the family's tax returns so she could apply for a grant from the government. After paying the tuition dues when she had about a thousand dollars in her account that she did not need immediately, she realized the most powerful advantage of money: the ability to think of things besides money.



Tara studied history, learning for the first time about the real world, and how it came to be. She learned about important world events like the Holocaust and the civil rights movement. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents. She was subsequently awarded a Gates Cambridge Scholarship and earned an M.Phil. from Trinity College, Cambridge, in 2009, and in 2010 was a visiting fellow at Harvard University. She returned to Cambridge, where she was awarded a Ph.D. in history in 2014.

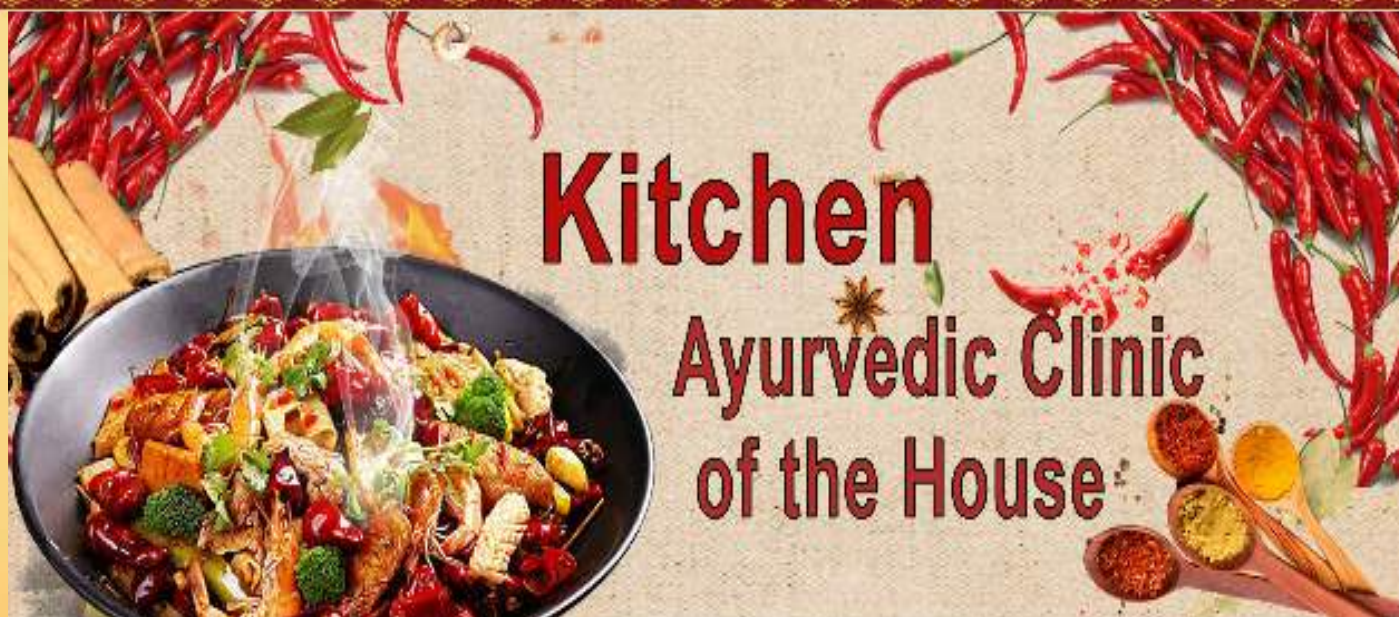
'Educated' is not just about emphasizing the importance of 'education' as the title might suggest. It is an ingenious insight into self-discovery through the process of education. Despite all the unpleasantness of circumstances, Tara's writing is not bitter or cruel towards her family; instead, it is about sadness and grief that comes with breaking off the family loyalty. It is about rising above it all when one is torn between the sense of duty, the ingrained belief, and wanting to develop a sense of self. It's the kind of book that I think everyone will enjoy, no matter what genre you usually pick up. I believe immigrants especially can relate to Tara's story because it is a tale of strength, grit, and perseverance.

Written By: Neelu ji Pandey

Shaka: Vivekananda, Cary, NC

Hobbies: Spending time with my family, Reading, Watching period dramas and Long walks in nature.

Photo Credits: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educated_\(book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educated_(book))



Kitchen

Ayurvedic Clinic of the House

Ayurveda is a branch of Atharvana Veda, given to humans by Dhanvantari, the God of Medicine. Our scriptures say, “Shariram khalu dharma sadhanam.” This Sanskrit phrase means our body is indeed the instrument of dharma through which human beings reach the ultimate truth. Ayurveda guides us to lead a physically and mentally healthy life.

Ayurvedic Kitchen

Ayurveda guides us that food can be medicinal and preventive when eaten correctly, and preserves the body's immunity to diseases.

In Ayurveda, the kitchen is called “mahanasam.” It's the place where the food is prepared for the nourishment of the body, and at the same time, it's the place to treat ailments. The kitchen is the platform for its energy and nutrition through spices, vegetables, and fruits.

Human Constitution

According to Ayurveda, the human body consists of three doshas, seven dhatus, and three malas. The three doshas are Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. The seven dhatus are rasa (lymph/plasma), rakta (blood), mamsa (muscle), medha (fat tissue), asthi (bones), majja (bone marrow), and shukra (semen). It also has three malas: feces, sweat, and urine.

A proper balance of these three elements (doshas, dhatus, and malas) of the body is a must for well-being. The balance of these three elements depends on the type of food, its properties, its potency, and individuals' digestive power. Humans' digestive capacity is called Jatharagni. It's three types: Teevragni (high), mandagni (low), and samagni (medium).

Food Details

According to Ayurveda, the taste is called ruchi. There are six tastes, madhura (sweet), amla (sour), lavana (salty), tikta (bitter), katu (pungent), and kashaya (astringent). Food with a balance of the six flavors is needed for the body.

Holistic medicine says some foods aggravate the tri-doshas, while some decrease doshas and maintain the doshas' normalcy. According to the food potency, some are hot like pepper, and others are cold like milk.

Intake of Food

To maintain our digestive power, while eating, half of the stomach should be filled with solids, one-fourth with water, and the remaining part should be allowed for air movement. Ayurveda prescribes mindfulness during preparation and consumption of the food. Ayurveda classifies food into three types based on the effect it produces: satvika or the food that keeps the mind calm, eases thinking and analyzing; rajasika or the food that makes us aggressive, leading to decisions taken in haste; and tamasika or the food that slows decisions, actions, and imparts laziness. Taking satvik food is recommended for a peaceful mind.

Sometimes preventive ways like personal care and hygiene are unable to keep the disease away. Medicinal properties of spices in our kitchen give the simple ayurvedic remedies to keep us safe.

Some of the simple ayurvedic formulations with spices in the kitchen are:

Black pepper: relieves indigestion and eliminates phlegm from the respiratory tract (airways and lungs).

Turmeric: Daily intake of one teaspoonful of turmeric powder in a glass of warm water relieves knee pain by its anti-inflammatory properties.

Cinnamon: A teaspoon of cinnamon powder in a small cup of hot water relieves cramps in the stomach by its antispasmodic effect.

Jeera: Water with jeera improves appetite, taste, and desire to eat.

Kalonji: Chewing half a teaspoon of kalonji seeds twice a day for one month relieves the foul breath of the mouth.

Ajwain: Intake of 60 ml of ajwain water twice a day reduces the gas, stomach pain, and constipation.

Clove: Chewing on clove will reduce throat irritation, mucus formation, which relieves the cough.

Red pepper (lal mirchi): The aromatic effect of pepper clears the sinuses and relieves congestion.

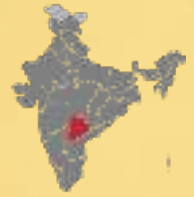
These are some examples showing Ayurveda is in our food and kitchen, helping us keep ourselves fit for the world.

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Written By: lavanya Rajoli

Shaka: Omkar shaka, Raghav vibhag, Charlotte, NC

Hobbies: Reading and listening of Indian Philosophy, Trying little new things, Learning music.
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Our State "Telangana"



"Na Telangana...Koti Ratanala Veena" ...Poet Dhasaradhi Krishnamacharyulu

Telangana is the 29th and youngest state in India - formed on June 2nd 2014. Telangana has a very rich history and culture, many holy places, unique traditions, a strong economy, education, good industries, and most of all friendly people who welcome people from all over India to live there.

Telangana was ruled by Satavahana, Kakatiya Dynasties, Musunuri Nayaks, Delhi Sultanate, Bahamani Sultanate, Golconda Sultanate, and Asaf Jahi Dynasty (Nizams of Hyderabad state). Since Nizam didn't accede to India after independence, the Indian army invaded Hyderabad state in 1948 - "Operation Polo" led by Patel ji and became part of India. Telangana became part of Andhra Pradesh in 1956.



Telangana is very rich in its literature. Palkuriki Somanatha (12th century) wrote Basava Puranam. Gona Budda Reddy (13th century) wrote Ranganatha Ramayanam. Bammara Pothana (14th century) translated Bhagavata Purana from Sanskrit to Telugu. He was a farmer and rejected to work for the king and dedicated Bhagavata Purana to Bhagwan Rama. Bhakta Ramadasu composed several songs on Rama. Acharya C.Narayana Reddy was awarded the Jnanapith award and Padma Bhushan for his Telugu literature. Poet Kaloji was also awarded Padma Vibhushan.

Telangana poets and writers used their work to fight against Nizams and feudal landlords. Suravaram Pratapa Reddy started a magazine. Great Poet Dhasaradhi Krishnamacharyulu wrote this song "Na Telangana...Koti Rathanala Veena" when he was jailed by Nizam. The song "Bandi Enka Bandi Katti" written by Bandi Yadagiri is famous all over rural Telangana and was used to fight against Nizams and feudal landlords. National award-winning Telangana Film director B. Narsing Rao made films like Daasi, Maa Bhoomi depicting the suffering of people from Telangana especially women under Nizams and feudal landlords.

Telangana is home to many brave women. Rani Rudrama Devi (12th C) from Kakatiya Dynasty was one of the first female rulers in In-



dia, who ruled for 36 years and fought many wars. Chakali Ilamma, a poor washerwoman fought against feudal landlords and became a leader in the Telangana rebellion. Sarojini Naidu was born and grew up in Bhagyanagar. Lakshmi Kantamma, an MP was instrumental in allowing women to become IAS officers.

Telangana has several holy places. Bhadrachalam, Lord Rama's temple was developed by Bhakta Ramadasu. It is believed that Bhagwan Rama, ma Sita, and Lakshmana spent some part of their vanvaas, and Goddess Sita was abducted by Ravana in the forests around this area called Parnasala. Seeta Rama Kalyanam for Sree Rama Navami and teppotsavam (float festival) in Bhadrachalam are very famous.



Jogulamba Temple is one of the eighteen Maha Shakti Peethams. It is believed that Goddess Sati's teeth fell here. Vemulavada Raja Rajeshwara Temple (Shiva) is also very famous. Farmers in the region bring some rice grains from the new crop and offer them to God. They also have a unique ritual "Kode Mokku" where devotees do pradakshin with kode (bull, Nandi).

All Hindu festivals in Telangana are celebrated with great joy. Ganesh Utsav in Bhagyanagar(Hyderabad) and Shobha yatra on Nirmarjanam day near Tank Bund area are very famous. Ganesh murti in Bhagyanagar, Khairtabad is the tallest- 59 feet installed in 2013.

Bathukamma is celebrated for nine days during Navaratri. Bathu-



kamma is a flower stack with Gouramma made with turmeric at the top. All women in the village/town/area gather in the evening – place Bathukammas at the center and go around them singing songs.

Bonalu is a unique Telangana festival celebrated in the Aashadha month. Women cook prasadam with rice in pots and place pots decorated with neem leaves on their heads and take it to nearby Goddess Shakti's temple. Women also pray and offer prasadam to the Neem trees.

Telangana also has a tribal population – Lambada, Koya, Gond, Chenchu, etc. Sammakka/Medaram Jatara and Nagoba Jatara are Hindu tribal festivals celebrated in Telangana. Medaram Jatara is held every two years for four days and is the world's largest tribal congrega-



tion in the world with ten million people.

Rice is the major crop, staple food, part of festivities in Telangana. Traditional snacks like Sakinaalu and Sarva pindi made with rice and sesame seeds are unique to this region apart from world-famous Hyderabad Biryani. "Talambralu" is a wedding ritual where the bride

and groom pour rice grains mixed with turmeric on each other. Every five years, a married woman's maternal family performs a ritual called "vadibiyam" with rice. During Bonalu "vadibiyam" ritual is performed for the Goddess. Other crops include cotton, mango, turmeric, lentils, tobacco, peanut, sesame, sunflower.

Traditional Telangana attire comprises saree, lehengas, and oni for women, dhoti, kurta, and kanduva for men. Telangana is very famous for its silk and cotton handlooms – Pochampally, Gadwal, Kothakota, Mahadevpur Tussar, Narayanpet, etc. Fashion designers in Telangana are using these fabrics to create modern outfits and are showcasing them internationally. Chintakindi Malleshham, son of a weaver from Telangana received Padma Shri award in 2017 for inventing "Lakshmi Asu machine" that reduced the weaver's efforts in Pochampally.

Telangana has many historic and tourist places to visit. Warangal Fort, Thousand pillar temple, Ramappa temple in Warangal built by the Kakatiya dynasty (12th-13th C) are under consideration by UNESCO to be declared as World Heritage sites. Perini is a unique traditional dance form in Telangana and is depicted on the sculptures of Ramappa temple. Laknavaram lake, Pakhal lake, Kuntala waterfalls, Bogatha waterfalls, Nagarjuna Sagar Dam, Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger reserve are also famous.



Bhagyanagar, Hyderabad, known as 'City of Pearls' is the capital and is one of the largest metropolitan cities in India with major IT, pharma industries, and universities. It is famous for traditional Polki jewelry and lac bangles (Laad Bazaar). Tank Bund with Buddha Statue, Lumbini Park, Birla Mandir, Birla Science Museum are a must-visit in Hyderabad. Nehru Zoological Park has more than 1500 species along with a lion Safari. Ramoji Film City is the largest film city in the world- this is where Baahubali movie was shot. Try to visit Telangana and experience its rich culture on your next trip to Bharat!

Photo Credits:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telangana>

Bathukamma Photo courtesy hmtvlive.com

(<https://www.hmtvlive.com/telangana/bathukamma-festival-started-in-telangana-state-55599>)

Bonalu Photo courtesy swarajyamarg.org (<https://swarajyamarg.com/search?q=Bonalu>)

Written By: Lavanya Kunduru

Shaka: Maitri Shakha, Frisco, TX., Texas

Hobbies: Reading about Hindu culture, Indian history and politics.



Pranayama

“The Yogic Breathing”

In today's busy world, we are all entangled with many things around us, which can cause immense stress and anxiety. We often hear people talk about physical health, eating healthy, and sleeping right, but very rarely do we have a conversation about mental health. Mental health is not taken as seriously as physical health. We charge our cell phones and laptops every day, but do we recharge and rejuvenate our minds? The secret to proper mental health lies in your breath. To prevent mental problems from occurring, incorporating breathing techniques in our everyday life is important. This helps us evade stress that can eventually lead to depression.

Pranayama is the ancient yogic practice of controlling your breath. In Sanskrit, “**prana**” means life energy and “**yama**” means control.

Patanjali Yoga Sutra 2.49 defines pranayama as:

तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोगतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः ॥४९॥

“Tasminsati shwasapraswasayogativicchedaha pranayamaha”

(II. Sutra 49)

Tasmin = in that state of asana or posture;

Sati = being;

Shwasa = inspiratory breath;

Prashwasa = expiratory breath;

Gati = movement;

Vicchedaha = breaking;

Ranayamaha = regulating the breath.

“In that state of being in asana or posture, breaking the (usual) movement of inhalation or exhalation is regulation of breath.”

It is rightly said that one should breathe like a tortoise and live longer. Here is the sloka from the Gita:

“When, like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs on all sides, he (a sage) withdraws his senses from the sense-objects, then his wisdom becomes steady”

(Chapter 2-58)

The secret of a tortoise's long life: its breathing rate. It breathes only three to four times every minute, whereas human beings breathe at least 15 times every minute. If you slow down the breathing rate by Pranayama breathing techniques, you live longer.

The breathing techniques involve breathing through the nostrils in a specific pattern of inhalation, breath retention, and exhalation. You might not realize but the mind, body, and breath are intimately con-

nected and can vastly influence each other.

The holistic practice of Pranayama goes beyond a couple of asanas and stretches; it is a lifestyle and philosophy. Pranayama accompanied by meditation leads to a path of enlightenment, which focuses on building physical and mental strength. Enlightenment also depends on traditional values and has a spiritual base that has been practiced for many years.

The goal of pranayama is to form a bridge between the body and the mind. It helps circulate oxygen throughout your body, and by doing so, removes toxins and impurities from the mind and body. This is meant to provide healing physiological as well as physical benefits. Some common yoga breathing exercises and their western names include Ujjayi breathing (Victorious Breath), Bhastrika pranayama (Bellow's Breathing), Bhramari pranayama (Humming Bee Breath), Kapalhati Pranayama (Breath of Fire or Skull Shining Breath) and Anulom vilom (Alternate Nostril Breathing).

Researchers have documented a lot of benefits of Pranayama:

- Reduces anxiety and improves concentration
- Helps in detoxification
- Improves digestion
- Boost immunity
- Good for nasal passages and sinuses
- Improves lung health
- Improves skin health
- Helps to treat sleep disorders
- Lowers blood pressure

American Magazine *Scientific America* has named Pranayama as Cardiac Coherence Breathing in its article titled “Proper Breathing Brings Better Health”. Pranayama has been widely accepted and embraced across the globe. Yoga and pranayama classes are very popular and are the first to fill up at any gym. However, pranayama has always been termed as leading to spiritual path rather than the religious path, keeping it secular.

Pranayama is not patented, however, it's a Yogic practice that is very old. Hindus believe that each and every individual should be able to follow whatever spiritual path they chose as per their desire. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, means the world is one family. It is engraved in the minds and souls of every Hindu. Pranayama has been termed by different names across the globe but the spirituality, tradition, yogic science, and the origins are inseparable.

Written By: Sheetal Lohar

Shaka: Shri Krishna, Suwanee, Georgia

Hobbies: Passionate about reading health related topics, Travel, Dancing, Cooking, Painting, and I enjoy spending quality time with my family.



KIDS CORNER

Each devotee can be only in the house of one deity. Each house can hold only one devotee. Use the clues below and solve the puzzle of 'in whose house each devotee resides?'



Devotees

Aditya, Soumya, Akshaya, Abhiram, Abhijith, Sanaa, Abhay, Karthik, Aarav, Anvitha, Meenakshi, Anvitha, Adhithi, Ritesh.

- Akshaya and Aditya are very far from each other.
- Sowmya is talking to an owl.
- Abhiram is feeling very calm.
- Abhijith is bathing a tiger.
- Adhithi is staying with an avatar of Lord Vishnu.
- Sanaa is 2 houses from Soumya.
- Aditya is cleaning a really heavy bow.
- Abhay is learning to fight with a mace.
- Karthik is looking at a trident.
- Aarav is feeling very cold in the mountains.
- Ritesh is somewhere in the middle.
- Anirudh is organizing some sacred books.
- Meenakshi is playing with a peacock.
- Anvitha is not close to Anirudh.

Hint: The puzzle does not have all the clues. You need to learn a bit more about the deity and iconography to solve this puzzle

Written By: Shubha Kope || Shaka: Tanaji Shakha, Houston, Texas

॥ ॐ ध्येयः सदा सवित्र मण्डल मध्यवर्ती नारायण सरसिजा सनसन्नि विष्टः
केयूरवान् मकरकुण्डलवान् किरीटी हारी हिरण्मय वपुर् धृतशंख चक्रः ॥

dhyeya sada savitra mandala madhyavarti | Narayana sarasija sanasanni vishtah |
Keyuravana makarakundalavana kiriti | Hari hiranmaya vapura dhritashankha chakrah ||

One should meditate on the form of Lord Narayana situated in the sun globe. He is seated on a lotus, with golden bracelets, crown, shark earrings; he is golden in complexion, and holds the shankha and chakra in his hands!

‘Konerirajapuram Natarajar Temple’ Tamil Nadu

Written By: Arthi Thiagarajan

Konerirajapuram, a beautiful village situated close to the temple of town of Kumbakonam at the centre of the fertile Kaveri Delta in Tamil Nadu, is surrounded by lush emerald green paddy fields and tall swaying coconut gardens. The signature of the village is the famous 1000 years ancient Natarajar temple built by Chola Queen Chembian Mahadevi. The presiding deity is Umamaheswarar and his consort is Sivagami Devi. A beautifully paved thirukulam, or temple pond, in front of the temple adds to the beauty of the temple and the village. Many temples were built during this time, including the Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur by emperor Raja Raja Chola and the Gangai Konda Cholapuram Temple by his son, Rajendra Chola.

The temple houses the magnificent life-size murthy of Nataraja. The murthy is made of Panchaloha, a combination of 5 metals – Gold, Silver, Bronze, Brass, and Copper. The Nataraja of this temple is said to be a swayambhu; it came into existence to satisfy a devotee's wish. Bhagawan Shiva is also worshipped in this temple as Vaithyanatha Swami, one who wards off all health problems in his devotees. The sanctum of the temple is constructed in such a way that the murthy can never be removed.

The temple performs daily Annadanam in its main hall to feed the poor.



‘Sri Govardhana Kshetra Bengaluru’ Karnataka

Written By: Anjana Bhadri



Whenver we speak of a temple in India, we most often mention its ancientness and the kingdom or the ruler under whom the temple was constructed. However, a recently constructed temple under the administration of Puttige Matha is a marvel. Udupi Sri Puttige matha is one of the ashta mathas, (eight Hindu monasteries) and was founded by Jagadguru Sri Madhwacharya. This temple fuses natural elements of rock formation on the historic bull temple road in Bengaluru, Karnataka with creative man-made sculptures and inscriptions.

The temple's main entrance is through a small tunnel leading to an opening that houses the main deity, Lord Krishna. He is in a standing posture, holding up the entire Govardhan mountain with the little finger of his left hand. All around the main deity, various carvings of Krishna's feats will not go unnoticed; and the temple priest or an official will indulge you by telling the story that each carving depicts. The temple is well maintained and its peaceful environment is a retreat to divinity. It is a very satisfying and enriching experience, especially for young kids. This temple has several branches across the USA.

‘Yaganti Uma Maheswara Temple’ Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh

Written By: Anupama Cherukuri



Sage Agastya once performed a penance for Lord Shiva at this place and requested Shiva to appear before him. Pleased with his devotion, Bhagawan Shiva appeared along with Parvathi Devi in a single stone as the Swayambhu Ardhanareeswarar murthi. The two distinct images are also marked with Vibhooti (sacred ash) and turmeric to distinguish Shiva and Parvathi. This is one of the only places where Lord Shiva is worshipped in an idol form instead of Shiva Lingam.

The most interesting part of Yaganti is a monolithic Nandi (Shiva's bull) statue that is said to grow an inch every 20 years. It is believed that the rock with which it is built has an inherent property of growing.

Another interesting fact is that crows cannot be found anywhere on the temple's premises. Since crow is the vahana of Shani Bhagavan (Saturn), they say that Shani does not bother anyone who is within the vicinity of the temple.

The Akasha Deepam (lamp) is also one of the major attractions in the temple. This temple lamp is placed on top of a rock structure. The lamp glows from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. It is indeed amazing how the lamp burns in the open air on top of a hill, amid the strong winds.

Tips For Saving

Do you know that US retailers give deep discounts on particular items throughout the year to clear their inventory? Information compiled from various online saving blogs.

So let us check out which months are best to buy which items:

January	February	March	April	May	June
Beeding (Winter White Sale)	TVs and Electronics	Golf gears	Vacuums	Small kitchen appliances and spring clothing on clearance	Tools and grills
Fitness Equipments	Some winter apparel, home goods, mattresses, & appliances on President Day	Cruises	Jewelry, lots of tax freebies	Furniture during Memorial Day	Gym membership
July	August	September	October	November	December
Personal electronics	Back to school items	Grills on clearance	Outdoor furniture on clearance	BLACK FRIDAY AND CYBER MONDAY sales of items on sale	Cars at lowest prices as dealers want to clear inventory
Patio furniture towards the end of the month	Summer clothes and lawn mowers	Furniture and mattress on Labor Day	Halloween decorations and candies on sale	Electronics, kitchen appliances, clothing, and gift items	Toys and Christmas decorations towards the end

Written By: Swati Kapse || Shaka: Kundalini and Omkar, Charlotte, NC



Healthy Food



Eat Healthy, Stay Healthy!

Namaste, I am Ruchita. Since I am in the field of Medicine and Life Sciences, I have a special inclination towards healthy lifestyle and healthy food. I thank everyone for letting me share my views on healthy food.

“It is rightly said in our Vedas”

दीपो अद्यत्यते भगवन्तं कज्जलं वा प्रसूयते ।
यदन्नं गमयेन्नित्यं जायते तादृशी प्रजा ।

Meaning, the lamp takes away darkness and produces (black) soot! The quality of the food one eats daily, is what one will produce. This overall means, **“We are what we eat”**. So, eat healthy and keep your body healthy.

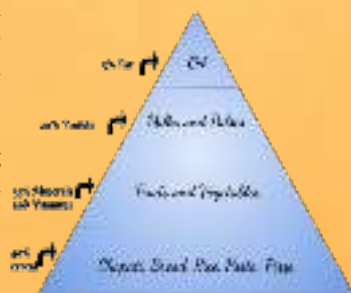
Healthy food is the food which contains essential nutrients in adequate quantities to help maintain and improve the overall growth of the body. Let's discuss important qualities of food which makes it healthy.

1. First and foremost, as said above, the most important quality of food is nutrients. This means having a **“balanced diet”**. Let's understand more about balanced diet through this food pyramid:

Now, based on the age, work, and other factors like the season, there can be small changes in this food pyramid.

- Very young kids at a growing age can take 40% minerals and vitamins, 35% protein, 20% cereals, and 5% fats.

- Someone who does more physical work will need extra energy so they can take 40% cereal, 35% protein, 20% minerals and vitamins, and 5% fats.



So, what do these nutrients do in your body?

- Carbohydrates/Cereals: Carbs are called energy giving foods. Your body processes Carbs into glucose, which provides energy. Energy is required for everything from rigorous physical work or basic metabolism of the body. Cereals like rice, chapati, bread, pasta, pizza etc. are carbohydrates.

- Proteins: Proteins are called body building nutrients. In the body, these are processed into amino acids. Proteins are mostly needed by growing people or bodybuilders and athletes.

Pulses like moong, tuar, urad, horse gram, chana etc. are proteins. Milk and other dairy products like paneer, curd, and cheese are also a

very important source of protein.

- Minerals and Vitamins: These are called vital nutrients. They are vital for the proper function of each part of our body. They also help in improving the immune system. They are not needed in a large amount, but they are still a must. Vitamins like A, D, E, and K are fat soluble vitamins and B, C are water soluble. Deficiency of any vitamin leads to diseases like night blindness, rickets, scurvy etc. In the same way, minerals like copper, iron etc. are required in the right amounts.

2. The second quality of healthy food is the compatibility of foods.

This is the idea that some foods digest well with each other, while others don't. Combining foods carefully can drastically improve the quality of digestion. It supports the body in receiving a deeper level of nutrition which has a positive impact on our health. However, most people in the modern world are accustomed to eating several foods that usually don't go together. Some of these examples are fruits with nuts, or beans and cheese, or milk and curd, or milk and citrus fruits. These combinations are highly incompatible.



3. Third most important quality of healthy food is that all meals must be cooked properly. Meals need to be freshly made because frozen food is very unhealthy. Food is better when cooked on medium flame with slow and steady pace, and not in an Instant Pot or microwave. Food mixed in an adequate amount of spices makes it a satvik meal. Another important consideration is where you are cooking and what utensils are being used. Typically, earthenware is the most appropriate type of utensil. But if that is not possible, stainless steel is best. For chapatis and some vegetables, non-rusted iron pans can be used.

4. And finally, the fourth quality of healthy food is the season the food is good to eat in. For example, cereals like bajra, makka, generate extra heat in our bodies, so they should preferably be eaten in cold weather or in winter. I love to eat “bajre ki khichda” in winter a lot. Foods like curd, watermelon, lemon should be eaten more in summer because they cool and hydrate our bodies

To summarize, my recipe for healthy food is to ‘prepare food with natural ingredients and with lots of love and patience’. Also, the food must be eaten with full attention, respect, and gratitude.

Kindly avoid these labels on food: frozen, preserved, processed, refined oils, added sugars, etc.

Written By: Ruchita Mansingka
Shaka: Maitri Shakha, Frisco, Texas



Home Away From Home

‘My Vistarakship Experience’

In the summer of 2015, I got the opportunity to go on a vistarakship. I stayed with families in Springfield, Bloomington, and Peoria while conducting and being a part of abhyas vargs, balagokulams, many kishore activities, Sakhi Samhelan, and more. However, the most impactful portion of my vistarakship was my interaction with other karyakartas; in fact, in the five and a half years since my vistarakship, these bonding moments are what I remember the most.

By meeting and dining with other families in their homes, I observed what traditions or practices the family had that I liked and wanted to incorporate into my own life, and which traditions I missed from my own house that I now knew I would continue growing up. For example, one family had all their meals together at one spot and talked about each other's day, which, as dull as it sounds, was something I enjoyed and felt like home.

I also made a conscious effort to pick out the best qualities of people I met and embedded them in myself. For example, I appreciated some of the traits that I admired tremendously in different people: compassion, personability, and being a good listener. One of the most helpful things during my stay in Bloomington was talking to Shrikanth ji at the end of the day to recap what has been going on and what to do next. Throughout these conversations, I realized how attentively he listens and how much that helped me. By interacting with all these people, I hope to improve myself a little bit by trying to apply these qualities in myself as much as I can.

Everyone was extremely caring, as well. Every person I met asked how I was doing and if I needed anything, not out of an obligation, but because they cared. It was amazing. There was one day where I was having lunch and dinner at the same house. For lunch, we had rice, which was great. Then the family asked me what I usually eat at home. I was very aware that I was currently eating a meal composed of rice and had been eating rice-based meals for the last few days, which I was not used to. I said we eat everything and anything at home to not offend anyone, including roti, sabji, rice, and daal, and more. In the evening, when I came back, the family was making Rotis. Only when sitting down, did I realize that they had only made rotis for me. I was the only one eating rotis, but they had made enough rotis for me to think that everyone was eating rotis as well. I was utterly blown away that they went so far out of their way to make me feel comfortable. And this is just one example of many. The amount of care and love these families I met for the first time showed is extraordinary. It was Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in practice. It was this care that made the vistarakship become a home away from home.

Written By: Karuna Kankani

Answer For Kids Corner Quiz

- Lord Ganesha's devotee is Akshaya
- Goddess Lakshmi's devotee Sowmya
- Lord Buddha's devotee Abhiram
- Lord Ayyappa's devotee Abhijith
- Lord Narasimha's devotee Adhithi
- Goddess Durga's devotee Sanaa
- Sri Rama's devotee Aditya
- Lord Anjaneya's devotee Abhay
- Lord Subramanya's devotee Karthik
- Lord Shiva's devotee Aarav
- Goddess Saraswathi's devotee Ritesh
- Lord Brahma's devotee Anirudh
- Sri Krishna's devotee Meenakshi
- Sri Vishnu's devotee Anvitha