

Prerana

e-zine

An inspiration to Hindu women



Wish you all a very happy Varsha Pratipada

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About the 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 and comments to:
prerana.feedback@gmail.com

On the Cover



While Mother Nature is brimming with flowers to mark the spring season, it also is heralding the arrival of the Hindu New Year for us. This occasion marks the beginning of growth, affluence, and prosperity. The festival of Yugadhi offers a cornucopia of food to taste and food for thought- the delectable food we enjoy during Yugadhi is a blend of sweet and sour. It reminds us that life has the ups and the downs, the high and the lows. The festival of Yugadhi represents a beautiful mix of tradition and modernity, and brings human and nature together!

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
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for more information

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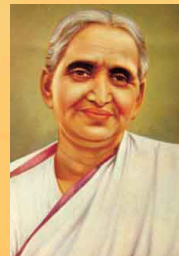
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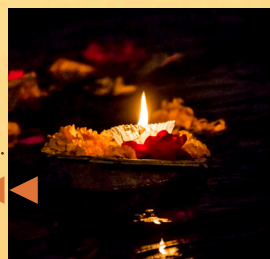
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By Richa Yadav

These days whenever we meet people or talk to each other, one of the common questions that readily occurs is, 'did you get the vaccine?' Phew...we feel relieved that eventually, we will be landing in a safe zone. We are encouraging each other to get vaccinated fast; after all, it's about bodily integrity- for one's own safety and for the common good. It is certainly one of the most important things on our 'to-do' list. However, life is so much beyond this.

The pandemic did disrupt us in ways unforeseen, causing unimaginable mental anguish. Where to find and restore one's integrity in this time of oceanic turbulence? Another day heard someone hum these beautiful lines of Prarthana of Rashtriya Sewa Samiti- 'Susheela, Sudheera, Samartha, and Sameta'. Just four words encompass so much for us to think and act. 'Susheela' means a person with a calm demeanor and good character. The strength of character and composure is difficult in a world where every moment we face a new challenge, and our patience is tested. How can we keep the 'susheela' in us alive? It doesn't require anything external; it's neither about your achievements, nor about what you choose to wear or possess, and how you look. It's about your inner self; It's about how you harmonize your natural tendencies to absorb shocks and refine your reactions towards unfavorable situations and people when brought under the sway of these external challenges.

‘Susheelā’ is the one who has the intense emotional power and mental grit that could drive you to maintain your internal harmony, stay calm, and think in a righteous way, speak with softness, come what may.

Don't let any moment of your inner integrity waste away. Act. On self, now!

Richa Yadav is from Sanskar Shakha, Flower Mound,TX. She loves reading and writing.



Meaning:

With the neem-jaggery, Our body will be healthy and strong as a Diamond and it takes away all difficulties and improves our health.

shataayurvajradEhaaya sarvasampatkaraaya cha |
sarvaariShTavinaashaaya nimbakadaLabhakShaNam ||

Yoga

What is Yoga?

By Vidya Nahar



Yoga is an invitation from the cosmic consciousness to celebrate our inner blissful state. The invitation is presented to us when we're ready to accept it. This celebration party is always on, and we can show up just the way we are, wherever we are, whenever we want!

As Bhagavad Gita and many Upanishads guide us, we can take different routes to arrive at this party. Emotional people may walk the path of Bhakti Yoga embracing love, surrender, and devotion to the divine. For action-oriented people, the path is Karma Yoga, embracing service to society. For intellectuals, the journey is via Jnaana yoga, studying scriptures and self, embracing knowledge.

People of strong willpower may enjoy Raaj Yoga - Ashtanga Yoga, embracing the 8 limbs of Yoga as described by Maharshi Patanjali in his Yoga Sutra -

- Yama (Don'ts/restraints when dealing with the external world - Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (self-control),
- Niyama (Do's or personal observances) - Shaucha (cleanliness of mind-body - physical surroundings), Santosha (contentment), Tap (austerities), Svaadhyaay (self-study), Ishwar PraNidhaana (surrendering the fruit of one's action to whatever higher power one believes in),
- Asana (physical practice to keep the body fit for this journey),
- PranaNaayaama (slowing down

and elongation of breath to slow down the expenditure of the vital energy),

- Pratyahaara (withdrawal of senses, turning the awareness inward),
- Dhaaranaa (focusing on a single object, shape, idea, sound, deity),
- Dhyana (meditation - the effortless flow of single-pointedness), and
- Samaadhi (ultimate renunciation of the personal ego/identity and merging with the cosmic consciousness)!

There are also the paths of Japa Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Naada Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Kriya Yoga, that one can avail of as per one's personality/nature/Svabhaava. While we can take this journey together, everybody's journey will be different, the length of the journey will be different - it may be completed in this lifetime, or it may take many more lifetimes, as we continue evolving on this journey.

On this inward journey, the body is our vehicle, Praana(vital energy force, not just oxygen that we take in) is our fuel, Aatman is the traveler! The destination is the ultimate union of the individual consciousness (Jeevaatma) with the universal consciousness (Paramatma). There are many who have completed this journey before and shared their guidance. Yoga is an empirical science, embodied philosophy, which can be taught to, practiced by, and experienced by any human being. It is not merely a belief system or pure logic for the sake of arguing. That's why Yoga has survived, thrived, grown as a live teach-

er - disciple/Guru-ShiShya Parampara/tradition for at least 10,000 years in all corners of the world, without anybody actively owning it/ patenting it/forcing it on others through conversion or violence.

Most of the modern diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer are stress or life-style related. Yoga is a front-line defense against all such psychosomatic diseases arising out of constantly chattering hyperactive minds, and dull bodies. Yoga teaches us to listen to our body, to train it to stabilize at ease for a long time. This helps us open up the energy pathways (Naadis), through which Praana can flow freely, so that we're not distracted by bodily discomforts or energy deficit, and work on taming the mind, as mentioned in Yoga Vasishtha -

Manah prashamanopayah
yoga ityabhidhiyate (मनः प्रशमनोपाय योग इत्यभिधीयते ||)

Patanjali says YogashchittaVrutti Nirodhaha (योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः) - Yoga is mastery over the circular thought patterns.

Bhagavad Gita says samatvam Yog Uchyate (समत्वं योग उच्यते||) - equanimity amidst polarities of rise and fall, life and death, happiness and sorrow, light and darkness is yoga.

Vidya Nahar lives in Chicago. Her hobbies include Astrology, gardening, walking, reading, playing table-tennis, chess and board games.

A Way of life

By Ruchi Saxena



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I want to share a discussion I recently had with a non-Indian friend about the Hindu way of life and how it encompasses universal welfare in everyday life. A while ago, during a call to find out how everyone among my office mates was doing, she asked me a few questions about Hindu dharma and some Hindu practices. She saw some messages over the internet about the Namaste greeting, turmeric and other herbal drinks which are more commonly used these days, especially in the context of Coronavirus.

As the conversation went on, there were times when I emphasized our rituals and daily routine being focused around natural energies and natural resources. She also asked about our way of celebrating the Earth day. I also helped explain the differences between Sanatan, Hindu, and Indian.

Today, I will shed some light on what is commonly known as the “Sanatan” way. Other commonly used words like “Hindu” or “Indian” were coined by foreigners, and Sanatan was a term coined by ancient saints. Sanatan literally means the eternal path. What a fast-paced lifestyle we started following recently! So now have a single Earth day only. Our ancestors had the concept of divinity in the form of Prakriti. Early morning, before sunrise, as soon as I open my eyes, I say the prayer –

कराग्रे वसते लक्ष्मिः करमध्ये सरस्वती ।

करमूले तु गोविन्दः प्रभाते करदर्शनम् ॥

Karaagre Vasate Lakshmih Karamadhye Sarasvati |

Karamule Tu Govindah Prabhaate Karadarshanam ||

This prayer reminds us that all divine powers are within us. The knowledge, wealth, and connection to the divine starts from our hands. This is probably also the reason our art depicts enlightened personalities, Gurus, and Devas with rays emanating from their hands.

As we wake-up and put our feet down, touch the floor

to ask forgiveness from Bhoodevi –

समुद्रवसने देवि पर्वतस्तनमण्डले ।

विष्णुपत्नि नमस्तुभ्यं पादस्पर्श क्षमस्वमे ॥

Samudra-Vasane Devi Parvata-Stana-Manndale |

Vissnu-Patni Namas-Tubhyam Paada-Sparsham

Kssamasva-Me ||

We now know about “orthostatic hypotension” that is a sudden drop in blood pressure when we stand from a seated/prone (lying down) position. Perhaps our rishis wanted us to be mindful and gentle upon waking up and not invite such sudden position changes.

Our rituals serve as reminders that we need to be grateful to all-natural resources. Following our ancient wisdom, many Hindus practice atvik eating habits with plant-based foods; build houses air-flowing based on directional science (Vastu Shastra), and practice sustainable farming. There is so much to learn from our ancestors about sustainable lifestyles.

Our ancestors envisioned their journey through life to be aligned with natural cycles of energy and time. We knew that our lives are dependent upon the natural resources. We do not control nature but are always on the receiving end. Our grandparents diverted their waste to yards, to livestock, and for composting. We offered our first Roti to our cows, food crumbs for birds, and last bites for crows and pigeons. On a daily basis, we cared for our surroundings bringing more benefits to us.

Sri Krishna guides in Bhagwad Gita that the world is like a big banyan tree with unlimited branches under which all the species of animals, humans, and demigods wander. We should take whatever is needed and live a sensible and controlled life keeping in mind Karma and our Dharma. The Hin-

du vision of living is that human beings must have certain limitations so that the natural order can be preserved.

Every action performed creates its own chain of reactions/events. Some of the events take a long time to surface. All kinds of environmental pollution result from our collective Karma.

The notion of the welfare of all beings is present in our daily mantras which I chant -

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः , सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु , मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah ,
Sarve Santu Nir-Aamayaah |

Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu ,
Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet |

सर्वमङ्गलमाङ्गल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके ।
शरण्ये त्र्यम्बके गौरि नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

Sarva-Manggala-Maanggalye

Shive Sarvaartha-Saadhike |

Sharannye Trya[i-A]mbake Gauri
Naaraayanni Namoah astuTe ||

The Prithvi Sukta or Bhumi Sukta hymn in the Atharva Veda says "Earth is my mother. I am her child." Bhumi Devi is the Goddess who personifies Mother Earth.

Upnishads tell us that resources are given to mankind for their living. Knowledge of using them is necessary. A profound utterance -

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

"Whatever is there in this ephemeral world, all that must be enveloped by God. The whole universe, it tells us, is filled with the spirit of God. Our experience of the sense world must be seen in the light of this abiding truth!"

Daily pranayam & yoga are prescribed in Hindu life as a part of pu-

ja-prarthana, to instill the habit of deep breathing, and silent salutation to the GOD.

Remembering a quote from Sri-mad Bhagavatam - "Ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions, trees, plants, rivers, and seas, are like the organs of the Divine.. Remembering this, a devotee respects all species."

Those gestures and constant efforts to infuse gratitude, kindness, and coherence is the way of life in Sanatan Dharma. Remember, Sanatan literally means Eternal; the inclusive path for every life in the universe.

Ruchi Saxena goes to Bhaskar Shakha, Arlington Hts, IL. She is interested in having deeper knowledge of Sanatan Sanskriti and contributing to it's revival by small actions in daily life.



Ingredients

- 4 to 5 black pepper
- 7 to 8 cloves
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 1 small piece of ginger
- ¼ cup jaggery
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 4 to 5 tulsi leaves
- 2 to 3 leaves of lemongrass

Method

- Take two big glasses of water to make 3 cups of KADHA. Add each of the ingredients one at a time and then boil for 15 minutes.
- Stir every few minutes on medium flame to keep the mixture moving.
- Finally, sieve and drink it once a day (one cup) warm.
- This kadha will boost your immunity. It will help you in the rainy and cold seasons as well. It is also good for kids and when making it for them, take one glass of warm water and add 2 to 3 spoonfuls of kadha and add a little bit of jaggery or honey to make it sweet.

Bindoo Talati is from Springfield shakha, Springfield, Illinois. She likes to read, dance and cook favorite food for her family.

Snippets

Immunity-Boosting Kadha for Coronavirus

By Bindoo Talati

Hindu Women From History

Vandaniya Mousiji Kelkar (1905-1978)

Founder - Rashtra Sevika Samiti

By Rasika Jahagirdar Panat



“I won't go to that school ever again!” exclaimed little Kamal. The excitement of joining school had subsided. Kamal had already started detesting going to mission school as they didn't respect Hindu gods and culture. That day, when students were asked to close their eyes during prayer, Kamal slowly peeped to check if preachers are practicing the rule or not. They were not! So, she boldly questioned it and she was punished.

This brave girl was born into the Datey family in the Mahal area of Nagpur, Maharashtra on July 6th, 1905. Kamal used to accompany elders in the campaign to save cows. She observed that sometimes you have to tolerate insults while serving for a good cause. It was as if she was getting trained for the future mission of establishing Rashtra Sevika Samiti (RSS).

When Kamal entered adolescence and her family started to look for a groom for her, she firmly told her parents that she won't marry a dowry-hungry person. Her parents soon realized that this 14-year-old is serious about it and it is her strong determination, not just her temporary obstinacy. She married Mr. Purushottamrao Kelkar from a reputed family in Wardha district of Maharashtra and became Mrs. Lakshmi Bai Kelkar. She also became an affectionate mother towards her husband's two daughters from his first marriage.

The environment in her new home was totally different from her parent's home. The Datey family was always ready to work for social causes and were supporters of the Indian independence movement. On the other hand, Purushottam Rao was anglicized and supported British rule. Additionally, he was quite conservative about his homely and familial matter. Her husband expected her to mingle with ladies of the same status as his family. Slowly, she started interacting with these ladies and observed that their free time was mostly wasted in playing bridge.

The natural leader that she was, she convinced other ladies that when the freedom fighters are sacrificing their lives for the nation, the ladies should not waste their time over meaningless activity. Slowly, the ladies club was converted into a group that read newspapers and periodicals. Soon, the ladies started discussing national issues. Lakshmi Bai, the lady of extraordinary memory and grasping power, studied Ramayana and Mahabharata devoutly. Remember, these were the days when it was believed that women should not read books. After reading the scriptures, she realized the

issue related to the safety of women in society is deep-rooted.

Her empathetic soul was pained at every idea of atrocity against women. She knew that the spiritual, physical, intellectual progress of women is necessary so that they can protect themselves instead of waiting for a rescuer. But where could they begin? The opportunity for which she was waiting soon came knocking on her door. As her son started going to a nearby Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) shakha, she noticed he became more disciplined and patriotic. Soon, her son told her that Sarsanghchalak Dr. Hedgewar (Doctor ji) was planning to meet male guardians of all Swayamsevak. Lakshmi Bai still went on to attend the meeting with the permission of the person in charge.

She was hesitant initially but the serene and calm personality of Pujaniya Doctorji helped her speak her mind out about the injustices in society and atrocities against women. Acknowledging that while the Sangh does good work on all-round development of men, she went on to say that women were in dire need of empowerment, and so the Sangh should not be restricted to men only. After listening to her patiently, Doctorji suggested that she should take the lead and start a separate wing for women. Thus, the idea of Rashtra Sevika Samiti came into existence.

At a time when women were not supposed to cross the threshold of their homes, Mousiji (a title that Lakshmi Bai inherits later in life) worked relentlessly and moved that threshold itself in the creation of Akhil Bhartiya Rashtra Sevika Samiti. She encouraged women not only to empower themselves but to serve the entire motherland, considering it as their shared home.

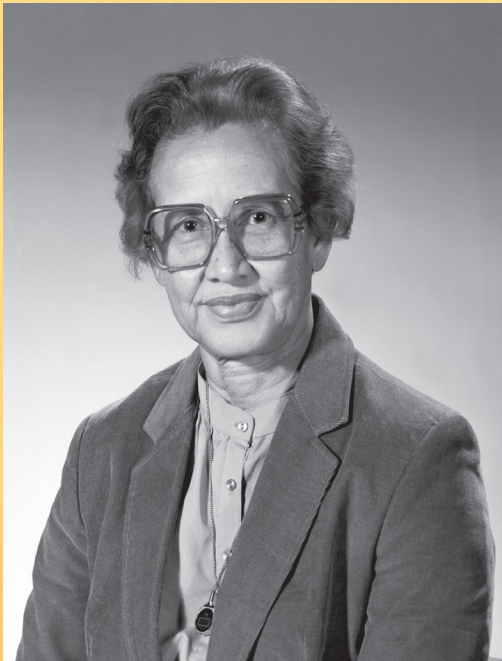
This iron-willed lady taught us not to compromise any values and principles for temporary comforts. Mousiji touched so many lives and ignited the spark of patriotism and independence in women.

Rasika Jahagirdar Panat is from Subramania Bharati Shakha, Bellevue, WA. Her new found hobby is to learn more about Ayurveda.

American Women I Admire

Katherine Johnson: The NASA's Human Computer

By Anvi Shevade



On May 5, 1961, Alan Shepard became the first American man in space. On February 10, 1962, John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth. And on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the Moon. While these missions were quite remarkable, there were many people crucial to the mission who helped achieve the success of these missions. Among those was Katherine Johnson, one of the first women and women of color to take part in such groundbreaking missions.

As the youngest of four, Katherine grew up in West Virginia. Growing up, she had a deep interest in Math, resulting in her acceleration through school at a young age. At age fourteen, she graduated high school, and at age eighteen she graduated from West Virginia State, taking every math course offered and earning a Summa Cum Laude. She went on to Graduate school at West Virginia University, becoming the first African- American woman to attend the university. Though the field was hard to enter, Katherine decided to pursue a career in research mathematics.

Katherine applied for the position as a Mathematician at the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory. Throughout her work, she and her group were referred to as the "color computers" and were segregated throughout the area, with divisions of bathrooms,

lunch units, and work areas. Katherine, not only calculated formulas, but also actively took interest in learning about NASA's work and future goals. Katherine would attend the meetings in which she would be the only woman and of color. With segregation and civil rights movements taking place, she broke many racial barriers within her work to help NASA.

In 1958, Katherine worked alongside many men, to help calculate the trajectories of Alan Shepard's mission to space. Were it not for her calculations, the mission would not have run smoothly. As segregation was fading, she was the first woman to ever take part in such a mission and help with it. With her work, she also became the first woman to have her name on the mission's report, as women working for NASA were not allowed to author papers until then.

In 1962, Katherine worked on the trajectories for John Glenn's orbit of the Earth and was crucial in ensuring the safe landing of the mission. While digital computers had been newly introduced, it was Katherine who was to make sure the readings were accurate. As a result, John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth, while Katherine represented Black professionals who were critical to the mission's success. She continued on to make great findings to help the Apollo 11 mission, in which the first man set foot on the Moon.

Until her retirement in 1986, Katherine Johnson worked greatly in many missions like the launching of the Space Station and the planning of the Mission to Mars. In total, Katherine co-authored 26 scientific papers and was important for many discoveries in space science. In 2015, she received the Presidential

Medal of Freedom by then-President, Barack Obama. She also received the Silver Snoopy award, given to the individuals who contributed to the safety and success of missions. Today, there are two NASA facilities named after her.. Her character is also depicted in the movie, Hidden Figures, displaying the success stories of three African American Women.

Katherine's legacy lives on today as she is an inspiration to all for her hard work and remarkable formulations. As my personal hero, she has inspired me to break racial and gender barriers, and advance in the fields of math and science, being my personal hero. She was a real contributor towards many successful space missions, and were it not for her research & brilliance, many great scientific discoveries might not have been made. While she is among many hidden and sometimes forgotten figures in history, for me, she is truly the greatest hero who continues to inspire.

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Anvi Shevade is from Vivekananda Shakha In Naperville, Illinois. She likes to read, write, and volunteer to serve the community.

Image credits: NASA, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6d/Katherine_Johnson_1983.jpg

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Festivals of India : MahaShivratri

By Poornima Koppa

MahaShivratri is an auspicious day dedicated to Bhagwan Shiva in India, Nepal, and all around the world by millions of devotees who celebrate it as one of the most important festivals.

Bhagwan Shiva is known as the auspicious one, the destroyer of evil, atman of the universe, omniscient yogi on the Kailash parvat, Rudra as stated in Rig Veda, Nataraja, Parvati Pate, and so on and so forth. MahaShivratri is one of the most important days for all His devotees to celebrate. It is a festival symbolizing divinity, spirituality, and devotion throughout the day including night.

People chant the Panchakshara Mantra with the sound of bells ringing filling the air and the sight of devotees performing abhishekas. Devotees clad in traditional attire, move through temples and streets chanting the Panchakshara Mantra with the jingling of bells, and performing abhishekas. It is a magnificent sight.

Occurrence of MahaShivratri

Every lunar month on Chaturdashi (14th day), the day before Amavasya (new moon night) is referred to



as Shivratri. Annually, there are twelve

Shivratri. The Shivratri that occurs in the Indian (lunar) month of Phalguna/Magha maasa (month), is called Mahashivratri because it is the most powerful of the twelve Shivratri.

The Origin of the festival and some beliefs

There are various stories believed by different people for what marked this day as MahaShivratri. It is believed that Bhagwan Shiva appeared in His Lingodbhava Murthi at midnight on MahaShivratri. Our Puranas say that during Samudra Manthana, a pot of deadly poison emerged and Bhagwan Shiva drank the poison to protect the world, thus He is called 'Neelakanth'. Another one of the beliefs is that Bhagwan Shankara married Devi Parvati on this auspicious day. Married and unmarried women perform Shiv and Parvati (Gauri) Puja with sincerity for a prosperous married life.

It is believed that one who performs Shiva Puja on MahaShivratri is liberated from the cycle of birth and death and attains moksha. Irrespective of various beliefs and stories, the festival is celebrated by Shiva's devotees throughout with unity.

MahaShivratri Puja Vidhi

Devotees visit the temple in the morning, perform abhisheka and other puja rituals, and they make a Sankalp to perform Jaagaran (keep awake) throughout the night. Devotees can have only milk, fruits, and water throughout the day; however, after sunset consumption of food is prohibited. Devotees can either perform a single puja at midnight or divide it into 4 Praharas to perform puja. During the Jaagaran, devotees stay awake with Shiva Bhajans, recitation of Vedic mantras, stotras, etc.

Special Offerings to The Bhagwan



Shiva during Puja are called *Panchagavya and **Panchamruta. Also, Bilva patre, Datura fruit, and flowers are sacred offerings to Bhagwan Shiva. Parana (Consumption of prasada/food) is observed on a consequent day. However, regional differences in Puja Vidhi /Prasada are common.

Science behind Shivratri

Though not many results of scientific research on MahaShivratri have reached the public, it is said that there is a natural tendency and support by Mother Earth (in the northern hemisphere in this duration) for upward movement of energy.

Let's all celebrate this auspicious festival wishing peace throughout the world.

Sathyam Shivam Sundaram

*Panchagavya - milk, sour milk, goudmutra, butter, and dung of the Cow because these products have medicinal benefits
**Panchamruta - milk, clarified butter, curd, honey, and sugar

Poornima Koppa is from Parashuram Shaka, Burbank, California. She is interested in Classical dance.

Book review

Self-Unfoldment by Swami Chinmayananda

By Archana Bolleddula

Namaste Dear Sakhis,
I'm very glad to share my thoughts about "Self-Unfoldment", a book written by Swami Chinmayananda.

This beautiful book is a complete manual for our inner unraveling by acquiring fundamental knowledge of the Vedanta. The book is a manual of twenty simple and small chapters. Each chapter ends with a study and reflections section that readers can use for further contemplation and understanding. I will do my best to put forth the concepts discussed in this book briefly.

Everything in this world belongs to a beautiful and harmonious whole, of which you are also a part. Every human being is in the pursuit of happiness, but his very own essence is "Ananda (Joy)". He does not understand this due to Maya (illusion). We never recognize the outer world as it is, but only as our mind and intellect interpret it. We experience the world according to the constitution of our mind: sad mind, sad world; happy mind, happy world; agitated mind, agitated world.

We lose energy when we regret a dead past and become anxious about an imagined future, or agitated present. This results in body aches, tiredness, confusion, or laziness. We can stop the loss of energy with our head, heart, and hands working fully in unison. We then can receive our reward that is the indescribable feeling of fulfillment and joy. Happiness and peace become the nature of the individual who has trained their mind to react positively at all times, even if the outer world remains full of imperfections and sorrows. Nothing then has the power to upset such a person. Nothing can be added to this individual's world to make it better. It will be perfect as it is.

Vedanta holds that the Self or Brahman is the same in all human beings, regardless of their nationality, caste, or

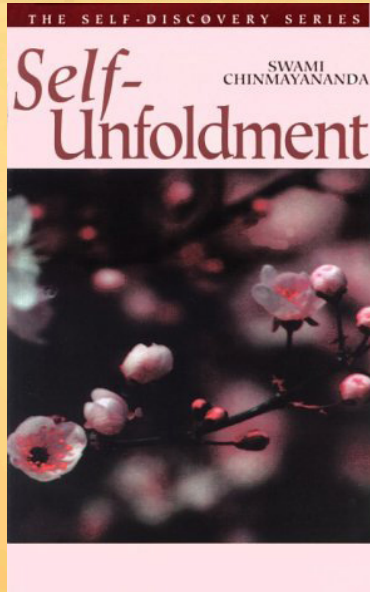
creed. One divine principle holds the varied objects of this universe together, as a string holds flowers of different shapes and colors to form one beautiful garland.

The Supreme Self, Iswara is "Brahman+Maya". Maya is described as an inexplicable power inherent in Brahman, just as the heat is inherent in the fire. Fire and heat are inseparable like the two sides of a coin. So too are Brahman, "the supreme Reality" and Maya "the seed of all creation". Maya manifests itself in the world as Satvik, rajsik, and tamsika. Brahman has neither any quality nor any expression of Its own. However, when pure Consciousness is reflected by a "thought pool," it manifests itself as intelligence or knowledge. This Pure Self is distinct from Its body, mind, intellect. It (Atman) is encased by pancha koshas or five sheaths: annamaya kosha (food sheath), pranamaya kosha (vital-air sheath), manomaya kosha (mental sheath), vijñanamaya kosha (intellectual sheath), anandamaya kosha (bliss sheath). A spiritual student transcends from gross (food sheath) to subtlest state (bliss sheath) through various practices as prescribed by our scriptures such as discrimination (viveka), detachment (vairagya), yoga, breathing techniques (pranayama), chanting of mantra (mantra japa), and meditation (dhyāna).

Once the student discovers his true Self as "SatChitAnanda" then you are no longer a victim of the external forces but are ever rooted in your Pure Self, which is the Self everywhere.

Recognition of the Self is the crowning victory in life. I pray to the Divine that we all attain such victory!

Archana Bolleddula is from Mountain House Shaka, Mountain House, CA. Her hobbies include reading books, listening to discourses, chanting, and meditation.



Food: Way to Positive Energy

By Geeta Bhandakkar

COVID-19 Global Pandemic made waves in 2020 and turned life upside-down for all on planet Earth. This has been a very difficult time in our fast-paced lives. It was difficult to slow down and live socially distanced.

I have taken the Covid-19 pandemic with a positive mindset. When everyone was stuck inside the house with lots of restrictions, access to social media saved me. I was now able to catch up on the world's news. Aspects of life that were fast vanishing from our fast-paced lives prior to the pandemic such as eating together, spending time together, caring for our body and mind, and enjoying our traditional food now became possible

While everyone was talking about depression, phobia, and loneliness, my positive mind and spirit were inspired by Dr. Rujuta Diwekar. A girl from a typical middle-class Maharashtrian family, Rujuta has now become a motivational speaker followed by many on social media platforms.

I found Rujuta's daily motivational videos on social media platforms. She talks about how our Hindu culture is full of positive energy and how our values guide us in solving the problems we face no matter how complicated they are. She talks about how we don't need expensive medicine and fancy brand name to keep our mind, body, and immunity intact.

She talks about the practice of Yoga. The information that Rujuta's entire family practiced yoga as a way of life has been a big positive influence on me and my family. Rujuta also learned yoga and Vedanta along with Ayurveda. Her teachings are very simple and rooted in our culture.

Our culture evolved over thousands of years and recognizes the role of nutritional food and yoga in uplifting our minds and bodies. After going over her challenge programs, we learned basics about nutritional food and asanas (suryanamaskar) that are helpful for our lives. "FIRST EAT RIGHT" is the principle of our life. We went back and started to eat traditional breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Most importantly, all my grandma's recipes came back into my kitchen, for instance, gajar ka halwa.

She has explained so nicely that many of our traditional regional recipes are healthier than western fast food, such as burgers and pizza. During the pandemic lockdown, almost everyone got to eat homemade healthy food like ladoos and other homemade snacks. It was an amazing transformation in my family.

I learned that we could use this time to bring traditional recipes back into our lives, learn and practice new skills, and make them a part of our daily lives. I learned that there is no one thing that is going to make everything okay. One has to work at it throughout the day. One needs to build a robust lifestyle and not just follow a diet for your cousin's wedding. I learned that I must do it for the rest of my life. Not just until the pandemic is over.

Everyone thinks ten times before they eat something. In the old days, people used to relish their food. What do you think brought this drastic change? Rujuta's lines from an interview can make everyone think twice: "We have to live with our bodies and one cannot afford to have such a casual approach towards them. We need to respect our bodies, work on them, and invest in them. I think people got caught in some wrong fads, which steered them away from real wellness."

Our real wellness lies in our cultural roots. Our ancestors managed to put ancient wisdom in a way that is still relevant in today's world.

Geeta Bhandakkar is from Keshav Shakha, Fremont, CA. She is interested in farming and learning new languages.



States Of India

Punjab

By Sushma Johar

"Punjabiyaan di Shaan Vakhri"

(The Majesty of Punjabi's is Unique)

Punjab is a land of Sikh Gurus, Sufis, saints, warriors, freedom fighters, poets. Punjab is also known for its rich cultural heritage, great history, and diversity. It is also known for its brave, helpful, hospitable, cheerful, determined, highly energetic, and fun-loving people. Punjabis love everything, that is, over the top- colorful dresses, foot-tapping music, and undying love for food.

It is located in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent and is bounded by the Indian union territory of Jammu and Kashmir to the north, states of Himachal Pradesh to the northeast, Haryana to the south and southeast, and Rajasthan to the southwest, and by the country of Pakistan to the west. Punjab, in its present form, came into existence on November 1, 1966, when most of its predominantly Hindi-speaking areas were separated to form the new state of Haryana. The beautiful and well-planned city of Chandigarh (union territory) is the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.

The culture of Punjab encompasses the spoken language, literature, cuisine, science, technology, military warfare, architecture, traditions, sacrifices, values, and history of the Punjabi people native to the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. The term 'Punjabi' can mean both a person who lives in Punjab and also a speaker of the Punjabi language. This name originates from the Persian language 'panj' (five), and 'ab' (water). In Rig-Vedic times, this area was called Sapta Sindhu or 'Seven Rivers' (illustrating the extent of Undivided Punjab). Indus river (the largest river in this seven river system) and the other rivers (Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas) to the south eventually join Indus or merge into it



later in the downstream of the Punjab valley. All the rivers start and flow out of the Himalayas.

The culture of Punjab in the middle ages was extremely diverse, dependent upon an individual's caste, community, religion, and village. An array of cultures can be found historically. The main cultures that arose in Punjab during the medieval age, at the beginning of this era, were of strong Indo-Aryan dominance.

Due to the large number of Punjabi people distributed throughout the world, many people are increasingly experiencing the culture and becoming influenced by it. Glimpses of traditional Punjabi culture can be seen in the Western world (the U.S, the UK, the EU, Canada, Australia, Africa, and the Middle East). Naturally, people influence each other wherever they settle and live.

About one-third of Punjab's population lives in cities and towns. Its major cities are Ludhiana (known as Manchester of India), Amritsar, Jalandhar (famous for sports and leather industry), Patiala, Bathinda, Malerkotla, and Kapurthala.

About two-fifth of Punjab's population is engaged in the agricultural sector, which accounts for a significant segment of the state's gross product. Punjab produces an important portion of India's foodgrain and contributes a major share of wheat and rice. Much of the state's agricultural progress and productivity is attributable to the so-called Green Revolution, an international movement launched in the 1960s that introduced not only new agricultural technologies but also high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice.

Besides corn (maize), barley and pearl millet are important cereal products of Punjab. Other major crops include cotton, sugarcane, oilseeds, chickpeas, peanuts, and vegetables. With almost the entire cultivated area receiving irrigation, Punjab is among India's most widely irrigated states.

The manufacturing sector (including construction) has expanded notably since the late 20th century. Industries with the largest number of workers include those producing silk, wool, and other textiles, processed foods and beverages, metal products and machinery, transport equipment, and furniture. Other important manufactures include leather goods, chemicals, rubber and plastics, and hosiery.

Punjab is a land of love and war, fairs and festivals, dancing, music, art, and Punjabi literature is among the character-





istic expressions of the state's cultural life. The origins of Punjabi literature trace to the mystical and religious verse of the 13th century Sufi Sheikh Farīd, founder of the Sikh faith Guru Nanak and those figures were the first to use Punjabi extensively as a medium of poetic expression. The works of Sufi poet Waris Shah and Bullah Shah greatly enriched Punjabi literature in the second half of the 18th century. Contemporary 20th and early 21st century's Punjabi literature found some of its greatest poets, authors, and painters like Bhai Vir Singh and the poets, Puran Singh, Dhani Ram Chatrik, Shiv Kumar Batalvi, Amrita Pritam, Shobha Singh, and Amrita Sher-Gill.

The city of Amritsar is home to the craft of brass and copper metal work done by the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, which is enlisted on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Years of neglect had caused this craft to die out, and the listing prompted the Government of Punjab to undertake a craft revival effort under the Project Virasat.

Punjab holds numerous religious and seasonal festivals, such as Dussehra, Diwali, Baisakhi, Lohri, Maghi, and Teeyan. There also are numerous anniversary celebrations in honor of the Gurus (the ten historical leaders of Sikhism) and various saints.

Owing to the long history of the Punjabi culture and of the Punjabi people, there are many dances, normally per-

formed at times of celebration, including harvests, festivals, and weddings. The particular background of the dances can be non-religious and religious. The overall style can range from the high-energy "bhangra" men's dance to the more reserved "jhumar," the "gidha" women's dance, and "Malwai Gidha" which is a form of dance that can be performed by both men and women together.

Punjabi wedding traditions and ceremonies are traditionally conducted and are a strong reflection of Punjabi culture. Punjabi weddings have many rituals and ceremonies that have evolved since traditional times.

The traditional dress for Punjabi men is the kurta and tehmat, which is being replaced by the kurta and pajama, especially the popular muktsari style in India. The traditional dress for women is the salwar suit which replaced the traditional Punjabi ghagra. The Patiala salwar is also very popular.

Punjabi Food is world famous and this cuisine has a rich tradition of many distinct and local ways of cooking. One is a special form of tandoori cooking that is now famous in other parts of India and in many parts of the world.

The local cuisine of Punjab is heavily influenced by the agriculture and farming lifestyle prevalent from the times of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization. Locally grown staple foods form a major part of the local cuisine. Distinctively, Punjabi cuisine is known for its rich, buttery flavors along with extensive dishes. Main dishes include Sarso da saag, makki di roti, Punjabi kadhi, daal makhani, rajma, chole kulche, shahi paneer, chana masala, paranthe, bhatoora, Amritsari kulcha, dahi vade, raita and chutneys, Amritsari vadi, papad, and the list is endless. Dairy products are a staple in Punjabi cuisine like lassi, chaas, ghee, makhan, khoa, rabri, malpua, kulfi, phirni, kheer, and a lot of other vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes are included in Punjabi cuisine.

The state's outstanding architectural monument is the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar. Other important buildings include the Martyr's Memorial at Jallianwala Bagh (a park in Amritsar), the Hindu Temple of Durgiana (also in Amritsar), the so-called Moorish Mosque in Kapurthala, the old forts of Bathinda, Bahadurgarh, and Patiala.

Punjab is the motherland of great personalities, revolutionaries, and freedom fighters like Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, Bhai Mati Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhagat Singh, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Udham Singh, and great women's like Mata Gujri, Mai Bhago, Bibi Nanki, Bibi Sahib Kaur who were the greatest examples from the history of Punjab.

Next time when you visit India, try to visit Punjab and experience its rich culture and great heritage.

Sushma Johar is from Vivekanand shakha , Surrey, B.C, Canada. Her hobbies include travelling, learning about ancient heritage and culture, Ayurveda, gardening, and making new things from waste.

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Home Away From Home

By Shrestha Kandpal

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My time as a vistarika was split between two cities in Southern California: Cerritos and Irvine. In the fifteen days that I spent there, I met many new people, conducted Balagokulam activities, and Kishore Shakhas, and developed strong leadership skills. Initially, I was very nervous to begin this journey and step into an unknown territory where I did not know anyone. But, it did not take me long to feel comfortable as everyone was very welcoming towards me.

My first week was spent in Cerritos, a city with only one Shakha. In hopes of expanding the Shakha, I conducted a Balagokulam at a local park. We faced the obstacle of inspiring children and parents to join the Balagokulam but it was very encouraging when children would enjoy and show interest in the activities. Each day we would organize small sessions of different activities including games, shlokas, and stories. Even though the sankhya at the Balagokulam was small, it was exciting to see that I had inspired one new family to join Shakha. Overall, my stay in Cerritos was very rewarding as I pushed myself out of my comfort zone and interacted with wonderful people while growing tremendously through the process.

During my time in Irvine, I conducted a Balagokulam and Kishore Shakha at a local park. Lots of new children joined each day, participating in several activities including games, niyudh, and charcha. Each day was a new learning experience for the children as well as for me, especially as I put energy towards preparing new activities for each day. We would all enjoy games at the start and end our Shakha with

a thought-provoking charcha topic that prompted our kishore to speak about their ideas and experiences and gave a chance for everyone to learn from each other.

I learned many new skills during my vistarikship as well, including time management, adaptability, and leadership. During a Nivasi Varg that I conducted, several unexpected events required me to think on my feet and quickly create a new plan so that activities ran smoothly. Nonetheless, the Varg ran seamlessly as everyone cooperated graciously and appreciated the experience. The Nivasi Varg was a huge learning curve for me but I was left encouraged by it since it was filled with learning, bonding, teamwork, and enjoyment. It was fulfilling to learn that the Kishore Shakhas and Nivasi Varg inspired new kishores to regularly come to Shakha.

Overall, my experience as a vistarika was extraordinary and tremendously fulfilling. I was able to meet many new and wonderful people and learned a lot from them. I learned about the subtle differences each Shakha has but also how similar and delightfully predictable each one is, filled with inspiring, hardworking, and dedicated karyakartas. I had the opportunity to enjoy food from different parts of India. I even participated in a cooking competition at our Nivasi Varg! Each day helped me grow and embark on a new adventure as I attended new Shakhas and conducted activities. I will now be able to take this experience and apply my learnings both at Shakha and in college, as a stronger leader, a more confident speaker, and a dedicated team member.

Shrestha Kandpal is from Santa Clara Vibhag; San Jose; California. She enjoys singing, reading, and traveling.

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Ayurveda

Basics of Ayurveda

By Vasudha Rathaur

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The term Ayurveda is a contraction of two Sanskrit words: Ayur and Veda. Ayur means life and Veda is knowledge.

Ayurveda is a medical science of ancient India that takes a philosophical approach to holistic living and healing. It uses the experiential ("how you experience") and experimental ("make new choices") basis to promote life-long wellness while focusing on prevention and the treatment of diseases.

Ayurveda is being agile with your lifestyle. It is mindful living with your energy and environment. It promotes accepting some basic facts of life like your body type, livelihood, place of living. It encourages you to find your definition of a fulfilling life, and to find your (personal) balance in the life you live. If you are not feeling well in any of these aspects, it recommends making small deliberate choices in your daily life to steer away from things that disturb the harmony of your body, mind, and spirit.

At the core of Ayurveda are the efforts to prevent diseases by choosing supportive food for the body, thoughts for the mind, and emotions for the soul. However, if your past incorrect choices have resulted in a health issue or imbalances in the three core pillars of your (body, mind, and spirit), Ayurveda offers remediation and recovery paths for you as well.

Before you begin ayurvedic awareness, one thing to remember is that Ayurveda does not challenge any other forms of medicine. There is a misconception that Ayurveda opposes western medicine. This is incorrect. Ayurveda is, in fact, a beautiful complement to western methods. Ayurveda's focus is to understand the root causes of diseases and to treat those imbalanc-

es uniquely for each individual. It starts by analyzing issues from the inside out. Western medicine, on the other hand, primarily seeks to understand and treat symptoms first and then to find what the root cause is.

Our contemporary lifestyle in the US has exposed us to tremendous health hazards.

Sedentary jobs have increased 83% since 1950 according to the American Heart Association. Some Johns Hopkins researchers have contended that "Physically active jobs now make up less than 20% of the U.S. workforce, down from roughly half of jobs in 1960." Fast food is cheaper and more easily available. The kind of news and entertainment that flood our daily life, promotes negativity and sensationalization. The hustle of daily life, irregular eating habits, consumption of junk food, improper postural issues, insufficient sleep, competitive mindsets, are making lives either too stressful or too dull. There is no scope for people to relax a little and rejuvenate their body and mind. They are diagnosed with a new problem or symptom every day.

Ayurveda can help us reclaim our health with balanced dietary guidelines, effective sleep patterns, home remedies, daily routines, yoga, detoxification, and exercise patterns. Heightened concentration levels through yoga, meditation, herbal intake, and adequate sleep help re-calibrate mental and physical needs.

Ayurvedic practices are ancient wisdom can blend very gently with our modern lifestyle and reorient our health habits. It is not necessary to shock our system with extreme weight loss, dieting, HIIT training, or any other form of acute measures to get quick results, at

the risk of rebounding weight gain, excessive eating, and laziness.

Ayurveda is a gentle prompt to the body and mind to move towards subtle positivity, an approach that reaps great health and calmness in a short period without the risk of extreme setbacks. Also, there is no penalty for applying Ayurveda to your daily life because it has no side effects and can be very easily incorporated along with existing allopathic medicines, treatments, or therapies.

Just like our unique fingerprints, Ayurveda begins by understanding body composition from the structure of energies in a pattern called "Dosha" that is acquired by birth. Each "dosha" reacts uniquely to food it consumes, the stress it combats, and the environment that it resides in. Therefore, an Ayurvedic assessment begins with a very detailed examination of body conditions. Many people generally know what food upsets their digestion or what keeps them awake at night. Identification of "dosha" is a preliminary step in the classification of your body and is used to identify what personalized steps will promote an individual's health. This assessment can also predict the possible diseases that one may be prone to. Ayurveda is unique in that it rarely offers the same treatment for two individuals.

There has never been a more appropriate time than now to talk about Ayurveda. Western medicine is scrambling to create some magic pill to cure COVID-19, claiming there was just not enough time to gather data and collect evidence to do it sooner. It took a toll on several thousand lives and the world's economy shut down for almost a year. It uprooted our known "normal" before we saw a vaccine that is 95% effective. There is no guarantee of a future in

which another novel virus would not make an appearance again. Are we prepared for it? Can our experience with COVID-19 help us fight a new mutation that may occur in a year or a decade or two? Well, we cannot be certain but we can build our immunity and prepare our bodies for success in fighting any virus that it comes across.

It is time to appraise and gain benefits from what the ancient rishis and sages recommended for society. They undertook a multi-millennia evolution of the understanding of the human body, mind, and spirit and delivered what we experience in modern times as Ayurveda.

Vasudha Rathaur is from Sri Krishna shakha, Folsom, CA.

She loves to cook and spend a lot of time to give home cooked healthy food to her family.

Snippets

Don't always run! Take a pause!!

Ekta Bangur



"Time is a storm in which we are all lost."

- William Carols Williams

सूर्य संवेदना पुष्पेः, दीप्ति
कारुण्यगंधने।
लब्ध्वा शुभम् नववर्षेऽस्मिन्
कुर्यात्सर्वस्य मंगलम् ॥

sūrya saṁvedanā puṣpe, dīpti
kāruṇyagaṁdhane ।
labdhvā śubhaṁ nava-
varṣe'smina kuryātsarvasya
maṁgalaṁ ॥

Meaning: As the sun gives light, the sensation gives birth to compassion, and the flowers always spread their fragrance.

The same way, may our new year be a pleasant one for you every day, every moment.

As a working mother, time has always been a challenge for me, and the above statement holds so true.

Recently, my kids have made me realize that it's not time that is running, rather it's me who is running against the time. They have taught me to pause and enjoy little things with them. The time spent in small activities with them has created bigger smiles for us.

Many times, joy and happiness lie in little things which we sometimes ignore in our day-to-day lives. I realized that in trying to be a perfect mother, wife, employee, daughter-in-law, I had forgotten and missed many things.

Therefore, to all my friends, who are running against time—take a pause—look back on what you may have missed in the rush. Do not try to be perfect--- Just enjoy the moments (especially with your kids) perfectly!

"The bad news is time flies - the good news is you're the pilot."

- Michael Altkshuler

Ekta Bangur is from Bhairavi Sakha, British Columbia, Canada. She likes to spend time with family and friends and personally enjoys swimming as an activity.



Snippets

TIPS FOR SAVING

By Falguni Patel

The topic of discussion is tips for saving, but I believe that the art of saving comes naturally to a woman. We grow up watching our grandmothers or mothers save. Methods like hiding money in grain jars or putting aside some money from the monthly budget may be old but the concept still lives on. The idea was, and still remains, that some savings are available for use when most needed. Times have changed, and so have the ways of saving. Saving does not depend on how much one makes, but how efficient one is in planning and managing the money.

The focus of my discussion is not about systematic ways of investment like the stock market or mutual funds; rather it is to share simple habits that can cause a whole lot of difference. What I am about to share is based on my personal experience.

Have a separate checking and/or saving account and leave it untouched. I deposit my salary in a different account than my husband's so that it stays untouched for routine expenses. If that is not possible, I aim to save a minimum of 25% of earnings every month. The goal of saving helps me stay focused.

- In India, I set my account to convert the idle money to a fixed deposit and when needed I swept the money back in my account.
- In the US, one can set an auto transfer from checking to savings account depending on the saving goal.
- Have a cut off on credit card spending and pay-off the debt.
- To stay on track, my family has set a limit on our spending. Secondly, we pay-off the debt and don't let it build up. We just keep two credit cards so that it is easy to keep track of the spending.

Have a monthly budget

- It is helpful to work on a budget. Knowing our spending patterns and peak periods have helped me to apportion the spending throughout the year.
- I prefer going out with a shopping list rather than going down every aisle. You end up spending more money and time checking out all aisles every time you go shopping.

Spend a little less than you can afford

Living frugally has given us peace of mind. Difference is not noticeable in smaller things but if this is applied to big ticket items, this idea will make sense.

Overcome temptations

- Often we check ourselves if we are spending on things that we like and want than what we really need.
- At the same time, we've learnt not to get carried away by what others around us are buying.
- This habit can save our time and can save up a good amount over a long period. We do reward ourselves at times.

Teach children to save out of their pocket money or gifts that they receive.

- Learning to use their resources judiciously leads to good habits that will help our children in the long run. They will know how to manage their finances and not succumb to peer pressure.
- I had opened a bank account to deposit my savings while I was in elementary school. Small savings as little as in denominations of ten or twenty can build a substantial amount over time

There is a difference between being a miser and saving. Until saving becomes habitual, it may appear that you are compromising. The moment it becomes a routine practice, it will start making sense. We have never felt that our needs are not met.

Some of the tips I have given above may seem to be trivial, but they will surely pay off. Try it out to believe it! It is aptly said that little drops of water make the mighty ocean. Simple habits inculcated in me from childhood have helped me in staying disciplined and it has surprised me many times with the outcome. We can use the saved money for donations, helping someone in need, in handling personal emergencies, for pursuing a satisfying hobby or anything else of importance. Lastly, I'll say that not all the tips may be of relevance for you, but you may choose to follow what is feasible or applicable in your situation and enjoy the benefits.

Falguni Patel is from Arundati Shakha, Ardenwood, CA. "Mountains attract me," says Falguni who loves being amidst nature.

Vandaneeya Mausiji's discourses on the Ramayana

By Kadambini Dharap

In March-April 2020, during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh had organized reading sessions of Vandaneeya Mousiji's (Lakshmi Bai Kelkar) discourses on the Ramayana. The discourse series was read in various Indian languages. I attended the Marathi audio series and was very impressed by the knowledge and foresight of Vandaneeya Mousiji. At that time, a proposal emerged to further translate the series in English to make this treasure of wisdom accessible to the next generation of Hindu yuva born and brought up in western countries. I was very much interested to be a part of the translation project. Under the guidance of Anjaliji Patel, National Sevika Pramukh, HSS USA, a team was formed to complete the project. It was my privilege to be a part of the team. It took us about six months to complete the translation of a 219-page book titled, "कै. वं. मावशी तथा लक्ष्मीबाई केळकर यांची वाल्मिकी रामायणावरील प्रवचने".

Translating the book was quite a challenging task, but also a great learning experience for me. It enhanced my knowledge of both Marathi and English. Mousiji had aptly used Marathi idioms and proverbs to connect with her audience. It was a pleasant experience for me to read Marathi idioms and proverbs after a long time. She had also referred to some historical and contemporary events and shared many stories of the ancient rishis (saints) and kings to explain her point to the audience. I didn't even know some of the stories mentioned in the book. For example, the story of Bhagwan Shankar distributing the shlokas of the Ramayana among devas, danavas, and manavas or the story of King Dahir's daughters.

The process of translation was quite tough, but also very enriching for me personally. As a child, I had heard the story of Ramayana many times. While growing up, I even questioned some of Rama's actions from the perspective of a typical modern woman. As I grew more mature, I realized that I needed to examine Rama's character in the context of the ancient times he was born and raised in. When I read Mousiji's book, many of my questions from a younger age were answered. In the book, she seamlessly connects the values of the ancient culture to the modern culture of the present day. She asks thought-provoking questions to the readers from time to time to show them another side of a particular perspective. Mousiji's knowledge and foresight gave me new insight into the remarkable characters of Bhagwan Ramachandra and Sitadevi. I now have a stronger and deeper understanding of the strength and harmony of their relationship.

It was indeed a humbling and enriching journey. I hope this English translation of Vandaneeya Mousiji's discourses based on the Valmiki Ramayana, reaches every nook and corner of the world and inspires the youth to study the Ramayana in-depth and understand the relevance of the ancient values in modern times. The Ramayana has been inspiring Indian people since ancient times. Let it be a beacon of morality and virtuousness to the vibrant young minds of the modern world.

Jai Shriram!

Kadambini Dharap is from Subramanya Bharthi shakha, Bellevue, WA . She loves playing tennis and doing painting in oil as well as pencil drawings.



By Monika Khas

Dear Sakhis,

COVID has impacted all of us in ways we never imagined. As we learn more about how the pandemic has changed peoples' lives over the last year, it becomes clearer that it has impacted people unequally. For example, statistics show that COVID-19 has impacted women more severely than men. We are raised to be strong foundations for our families, and we are taught that a house is only as strong as its foundation. But in our efforts to support our homes, sometimes we forget that our foundations need support too. Taking care of family and taking care of ourselves should not be mutually exclusive.



We can take better care of our families if we are physically as well as mentally healthy. Remember the annual checkup you have been postponing for some time – please schedule it NOW. Exercising every day is as important as cleaning our house. We can walk, jog, dance, follow YouTube exercise videos, or workout virtually with a trainer. There are endless opportunities and we can plan these as bonding activities with your kids. If kids see that we take exercise seriously, they will take it seriously too. Healthy habits are the best gifts we could give to our kids. Mental health is often seen as a taboo in our society but it is real. If you feel something is bothering you, reach out to a friend, seek advice from a professional, or at a minimum write it out. We all go through mental health issues at times, raising a family with a minimal support system in a culturally different environment is not easy. Don't be hard on yourself; seeking help does not make you less of a human.

Someone rightly said that a healthy outside starts from a healthy inside. Cooking meals at home gives us better control of our health. One does not have to be an excellent chef to prepare simple everyday meals. In my experience, cooking is twenty percent work and eighty percent planning. If we plan and invest in the right tools, everyday simple nutritious meals are possible. Involve your kids and spouse in kitchen activities. It is an important life skill that everyone must learn. We



teach our kids to get perfect scores, even on those subjects that they are never going to use then why not teach them an important life skill that they will need for the rest of their lives. The earlier you start training them the better it is for them. We also need to come out of the mentality that cooking is a skill for girls only, our boys need it too.

Are you one of those moms who spend every evening driving kids to different classes? Covid has given you an opportunity to step back,



take a pause and ask yourself, "What do I like to do?" Your kids will grow up in a few years and they will move out – let this reality sink in. So, spend time finding your passion – NOW. Try devoting some time every

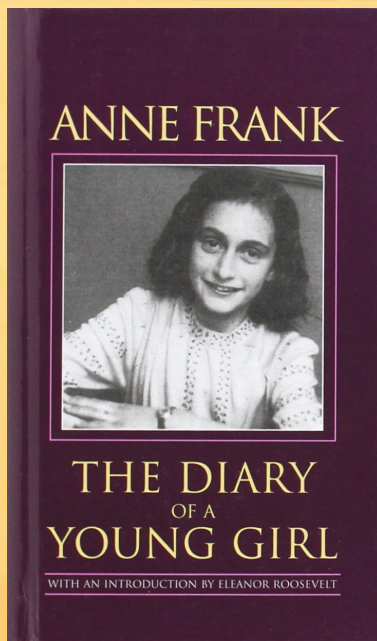
week to your passion. It can be anything like hiking, biking, art, dance, reading, singing, meditating, acting, coding, gardening, etcetera. Have some "me" time to learn skills that will prepare you for the life ahead.

You all are the reason for our strong community. Our community is as healthy, as skilled, and as efficient as you are. So, give a pat on your back and start thinking about yourself - NOW!

Monika Khas is from Subramanya Bharthi shakha, Bellevue, WA. She loves to paint and sketch everything related to Indian Culture, Indian gods and goddesses, architecture, old monuments, textile designs, and Indian costumes.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

By Anvi Prajapati



"The Diary of a Young Girl" is about a 13-year-old Jewish girl named Anne Frank, who is in hiding from the Nazis and Adolf Hitler during the Holocaust. Anne

is why her parents gifted her a diary- so she could write about her experiences and collect her thoughts.

I specifically liked the book as a diary because it gives me the message that the book is written with raw honesty. It lets the readers know how people were treated during the Holocaust. Other than diaries and other first-hand accounts of the Holocaust, there is not much evidence of what went on during that time because the Nazis destroyed most of the Jews' belongings. In addition, the Nazis tried to convince the non-Jewish citizens and the younger generations that they were working to create a better world with their actions.

Overall, there was nothing that I did not like about the book. It is informational, suspenseful, focuses on its points, clear, and is detailed enough to give readers a clear understanding of the Frank Family's experience during the Holocaust.

I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in reading history, mystery, and war books. This book would be suitable for people aged eleven years or older as it has some depressing moments. I would rate this book 4.5 according to what the context is about. With that being said, the book is very educational, has positive messages and role models. It references violence from World War 2 and concentration camps; as a teenager, she talks about her puberty and about drinking and smoking with the people who were living in the Secret Annex.

Again, I highly recommend reading this book, and when you finish reading the book, think about how lucky you are to have certain resources and opportunities many Jews didn't have then, and how different your life might have been if you were a Jew during the Holocaust.

Anvi Prajapati is from Abhimanyu Shakha, Schaumburg, IL. She is in Grade 8 and her hobbies include photography.

and her family's hiding place was called the "Secret Annex," which was a small room inside an old office building hidden behind a bookcase. Avoiding any communications from the outside world, they overcame boredom, hunger, and the most tragic moments of their lives.

Q. What was your favorite part of the book, and why?

A. I would say the time when Anne Frank got her diary, so at the very beginning was my favorite part. This is because she was introducing us to her normal everyday life and then the reader can see the drastic changes.

Q. Did the story keep you guessing?

A. Not exactly! Every diary entry was like a chapter. She started off by introducing the reader to a topic, then started adding on to it. One could say that there was a little suspense during each chapter, but then she ended her entries with a conclusion, leaving little room for the reader to make opinions at the end.

Q. Were certain types of scenes written particularly well - for example, sad scenes, tense scenes, mysterious ones?

A. Anne was amazing at telling what she was feeling. She talks about her family, as well as the family they were in hiding with, which is a big part of the reason that her diary is famous around the world. She never hesitated to write what she wanted, and she always hoped that her diary would be published someday. She wanted to become a writer, and that

"This is the gist of all worship – to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples."

– Swami Vivekananda

By Saanvi Srivastava

One of my favorite childhood memories was listening to my grandparents and other elders tell me ancient Puranic, Panchatantra, and Ramayana stories. Later, I learned stories of the Mahabharata through TV serials. These tales of distant kingdoms, brave warriors and deep devotion served as the first glimpse of my Hindu roots, a gateway to a more interesting world and important ideals.

Stories are an important part of Hinduism and storytelling is believed to be an art form called Katha. There are multiple unique methods of storytelling in Hindu culture - not all of those methods involve speaking but much more than that!

For instance, did you know puppetry is a major method of storytelling in India? Kathputli is storytelling done through puppets that are controlled by strings and is performed in North India. Tholu Bommalata is shadow puppetry done in Andhra Pradesh, where leather puppets cast shadows on a white screen with the help of oil lamps.



states, but all styles of dance use footwork and body movements to tell stories of different devtas or stories of devotion and praise.

Some methods of Indian storytelling are used to teach others good qualities and habits. Purana-Pravachana was storytelling done by gurus at a gurukul or ashram where the guru would recite stories from the Puranas to his stu-

dents. Then he and his students would discuss the stories and the lessons they learned. Satsang uses singing combined with narration to deliver stories of devotion and morals to a crowd.

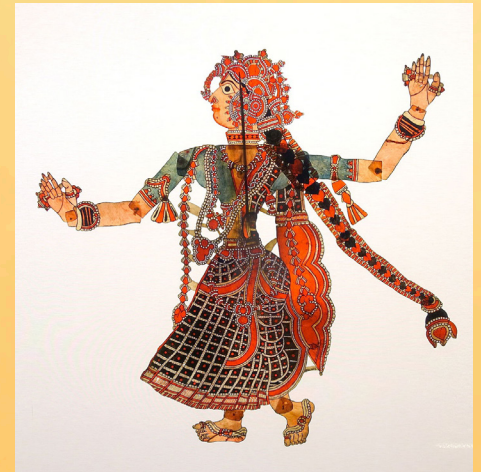
Storytelling saved our civilization in times of invasions. When the Mughals and the British attacked India, they burned scriptures, books, libraries, universities, and gurukuls. The number of educated people declined, but our civilization was still able to continue. Storytelling was still an art practiced at homes. It helped us to practice, preserve, and protect our cultural values.

Storytellers must act out or speak to promote their message to their audience, which means that they are listening and practicing values daily. Stories are a way for values and culture to be passed down from older generations to the young generation.

Stories are very similar to a locked-and-guarded safe. No one can come between the stories of civilization, just as no one can unlock the safe without the key. Stories keep the values and culture of a civilization safe, just as the locked safe keeps the treasure or valuables safe from robbers. So, the next time an elder is telling us a story, let's pay attention.

Saanvi Srivastava is from Bhaskar Shakha, Arlington Heights, IL, and North Midwest Kishore Shakha. She is a high school sophomore and her hobbies include Reading, Writing, and Bharatanatyam.

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Next Generation Asks



How can I maintain my culture after graduating from college and entering the workforce?

Entering into the workforce is one of the major transitions in life. Childhood is left behind. Putting behind the days of fun, freedom, and friends, life starts with new responsibilities and challenges. The workplace is something where “professionalism” is extremely important.

In my opinion, maintaining your culture should not be difficult. Maintaining culture doesn't essentially mean wearing bindi at the workplace. Maintaining the culture means how you lead your life.

Your culture is reflected in small things. It is said that culture is reflected in language, clothing, food, and prayers. Having a place to get blessings, positive energy, and a sense of surrender in pooja ghar. You can have a big pooja ghar or just a murthi or pratima in the room where you can sit and chant for some time, or just do namaskar once a day. The most important is the recognition of a higher power and the sense of surrender. This can keep you connected to your roots, home, and beliefs. Celebrating Indian festivals and making some traditional seasonal food around that day is a good idea. Then you can be proud that you too can cook like your mom!

Wearing an Indian outfit and being “different”, “unique”, or “traditional” occasionally when you are celebrating a festival will not be a bad idea. Or you can do it just to please your mom!

The culture is not just what you do with your family. It is about our society as well. It is our social responsibility to advance our culture.

What is really important is to identify and recognize all those aspects of your culture and traditions that you are proud of and that should be passed on to the next generation. Asking yourself what makes you more connected to your culture is important. Our ancestors did it by adopting a way of life.

Now it is our turn to pass on these good cultural values and traditions to our next generation. Our next generation should not say that they were deprived of a connection to their rich heritage and traditions because their parents did not care and broke away. It is certainly a better idea to learn about our culture and traditions from family and society, and not from history books.

आपदामपहर्तारं दातारं सर्वसम्पदाम् ।
लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयो-भूयो नामाम्यहम् ॥

Āpadāmapahartāraṁ dātārāṁ sarvasampadām |
lōkābhirāmaṁ śrīrāmaṁ bhūyō-bhūyō nāmāmyaham ||

Meaning:

Who removes all types of adversity and agony of Jiva (living beings);
Who bestows all types of favour, honour and wealth;
By looking at whom, the world feel very pleased;
to that Śrī Rāma, I bow again and again.



Interview

My Inspiration-My journey

By Sabitha Hebbar

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A short interview of Dharini Dixit, President of KCA-SC (Karnataka Cultural Association of Southern California); VP of IT at Farmers Insurance; volunteer at Habitat for Humanity Int., Families Forward (backpack program for the needy), and community food banks; has credentials in Organizational Leadership and Communication from UCI and has coordinated various cultural events.

Sabitha ji: Namaskar Dharini ji. Thank you for this opportunity to know something about yourself. How were you motivated and inspired to do all that you do?

Dharini ji: Growing up in Bengaluru, all the strong women in my family were my mentors. My aunt was the chairwoman of the Social Welfare board, and one of the founding members of the Vidya Vardhaka Sangha. She had been involved in many women-related organizations. My mother was a treasurer, a volunteer, and a mentor for women led groups and all these inspired me to do something for society too. As a small girl, I always used to see these women helping with projects to uplift women and girls in their villages and communities. My mother and my mother-in-law always encouraged women to become financially independent and outgoing.

Sabitha ji: In this country, you raised two kids and managed a demanding job. How did you manage it all?

Dharini ji: My parents and mother-in-law took turns and stayed with me during the first ten years of my children's

lives. My husband was very supportive and always filled in for me at home when I had to travel for work. He was also a very socially active person and was involved in the community. My kids experienced love, care, and a culturally rich upbringing. I believe that you should be actively present in the first 2-3 years of your child's life. My initial years in this country as a student, as a mother, as a working woman climbing the career ladder, and to top it all, and getting involved in socio-cultural programs was all very enriching experience. Community activities like the Backpack program (school supplies for the needy) as part of 'Families forward,' volunteering at food banks, and helping organize language classes, and several cultural programs kept me going. I never faced any conflict as all these activities gave me more encouragement and happiness. My friends and community support helped me with so many of the activities. Yoga, walking, and hiking have been my stress busters.

Sabitha ji: What would be your message for the younger generation?

Dharini ji: First of all, what I had learned growing up was to always be there for people around you, your co-workers, your community, and particularly to help other women in reaching their goals. Secondly, stand up for what is right and what you believe in. For example, if you are vegetarian, boldly announce it when necessary. You will realize that others will respect you for that. Talk about your special festivals, related celebration practices, food, etcetera with your American friends and neighbors. They appreciate our cultural richness more when you portray them positively. Thirdly, take forward your family values, something you learned as a ritual from your parents and grandparents and practice it.

Sabitha Hebbar is from Veer Savarkar shakha, Thousand Oaks, CA. Her hobbies include dot mandala art, singing (bhajans and folk music), and handicrafts (stitching, kids crafts).

रामाय रामभद्राय रामचन्द्राय वेधसे ।
रघुनाथाय नाथाय सीतायाः पतये नमः ॥

Rāmāya rāmabhadraya rāmacandraya vēdhasē |
raghunāthāya nāthāya sītāyāḥ patayē namaḥ ||

Meaning:

To the great Rama, Raghunatha, Ramabhadra (Different names to Lord Rama) the Lord who is the consort of Goddess Seeta, my salutations to you.

I Want to Share Draupadi's Anguish : a poem

By Meenu Kulkarni

How can he lose me in a game?

I stood in my room,

Not aware of the awaiting doom.

A roll of the dice led to defeat,

And my life hung by a thin thread of deceit.

How can he lose me in a game?

I need answers for this shame!!!

Not a word did they heed,

Bur drag me to court for the vultures to feed.

In the court, I stood my ground,

Not one mighty soul I found.

Who can answer for this shame?

How can he lose me in a game?

Then the melodious sound of the flute,

Saved me from the clutches of the brute.

Now, the rage in me burned bright,

And I overcame my fright.

I cursed the men who brought me shame,

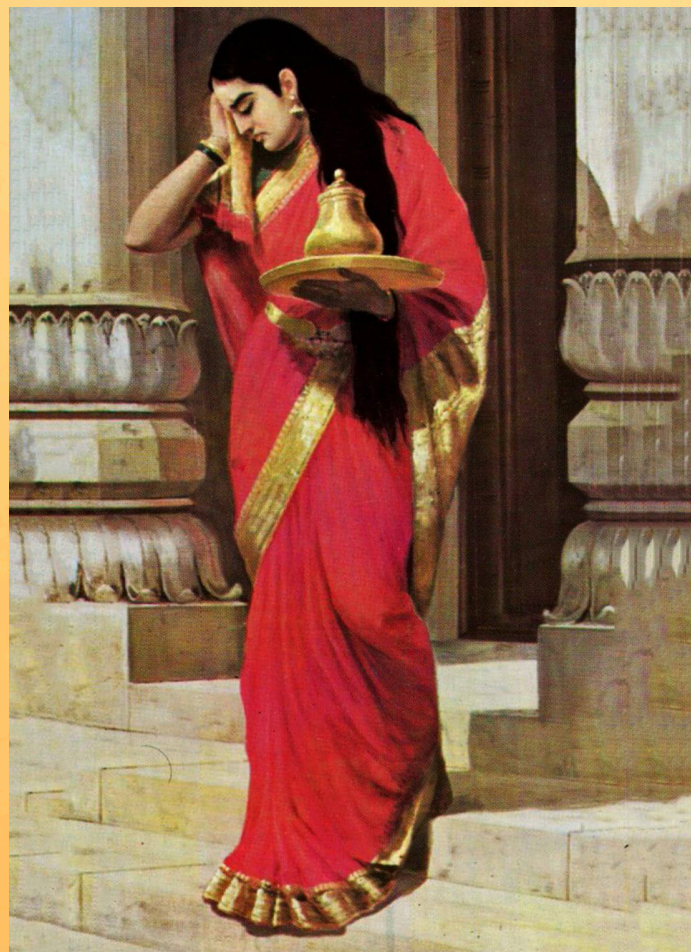
How can he lose me in a game?

I wiped my tear,

As this was no time to lament and fear.

It's time for the inner strength to be awakened,

And the foundation of this shame to be shaken.



As I was still looking for answers to my shame,

How can he lose me in a game?

And the foundation did shake,

Causing relations to break.

For brothers fought,

As I sought.

Answers to my shame,

How can he lose me in a game?

Meenu Kulkarni is from Kesari Shakha, Chandler, Arizona. Her hobbies include Writing, embroidering, singing, and dancing.

By Shruti Pattekar

A stroke is like a brain attack, similar to a heart attack. There are two types of strokes: hemorrhagic (bleeding in the brain) and ischemic (compromised blood flow to a part of the brain). A stroke can be as mild as symptoms lasting for a few minutes, or it can be as devastating as permanent loss of function to a part or most of the body.

Remember that strokes happen in young people, as well. In fact, the numbers are increasing because people think they are too young or healthy to have a stroke, and they do not look out for warning signs, which can significantly decrease the long-term damage of a stroke.

Are you at risk for a stroke?

There are countless possible risk factors for stroke, which if controlled, could decrease the chances of a stroke. Anyone with the following risk factors could have a stroke:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease Diabetes
- Smoking Birth
- control pills (oral contraceptives)
- High red blood cell count
- Untreated sleep apnea
- High blood cholesterol and lipids
- Lack of exercise
- Obesity
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Cardiac structural abnormalities
- Excessive alcohol use or illegal drugs

(Johns Hopkins Medicine)

Although there is no particular cut-off point for blood pressure elevation, the current recommendation is to control the blood pressure as close as possible to 120/80. In addition, sleep apnea is more common than you would think. If you are experiencing loud snoring, often waking up at night, episodes of no breathing, loud breathing, or breathing through the mouth, you may have sleep apnea and should get yourself checked as soon as possible (Mayo Clinic).

Another type of stroke to look out for is called a transient ischemic attack (TIA), also called a mini-stroke. These

last only a few minutes, and happen when the blood supply to a part of the brain is briefly blocked. A TIA does not cause permanent damage; however, it is a helpful sign to look out for a future stroke. The symptoms are pretty much the same as a regular stroke. 1 in 3 people who have a TIA will have another stroke, possibly within a year (Mayo Clinic).

How to recognize a stroke:

A helpful acronym to remember is F.A.S.T.

- Face - Drooping smile? Drooping eyelid?
- Arms - Can you raise your arms? Is there a drooping arm?
- Speech - Slurred words? Are you able to repeat a simple phrase (like "the grass is green")?
- Time - Time is the essence. If these signs are present, CALL 911 NOW!

Other symptoms you may also get are trouble seeing from one or both eyes, confusion, a difficult time understanding others, problems keeping balance while walking, dizziness, and severe headache (WebMD).

What to do when you get a stroke?

Again, CALL 911! Even if you're not sure.

Finally, remember, a stroke is not the end of the world. Partial as well as complete recovery is possible based on the size of the lesion, baseline health, age, and motivation of the patient, as well as the supporting family members and friends.

Teach the FAST acronym to your children, spouse, and friends. Each year ~800,000 people in the U.S. have a stroke, and ~140,000 people die from it (WebMD). Knowing how to prevent and deal with one could save a life or limb.

Shruti Pattekar is a Neuroscience Major and Hindu YUVA President at Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL. She likes playing Sangh Geets on the piano.

Who I Admire: Today's Successful Women

By Mayuri Desai

As a healthcare professional and a teacher, I find it important to keep in touch with what is important to the younger generation. I am proud of my culture and my heritage and want the next generation to be well acquainted with what they will inherit in this respect. I want to speak about the younger generation of Indian females whom I admire, so that I can proudly talk to my daughters about them and say that these women are good role models.

One woman I admire is Archana Mundhe, who is the creator of the Ministry of Curry. She is not only a wife and a mother but also an avid chef who has written a cookbook. She posts on Instagram every day and has a blog with all of her recipes. It isn't easy to come to the US from India and become as popular as her. I admire her stamina, her determination, and her ongoing dedication to what she has chosen to do. There is so much competition in the area of food online, and she has really done a great job in getting ahead.

Another woman I admire, who is on different social media outlets is Avani Modi, Sarkar of Modi Toys. She started the business of making and selling stuffed Ganesha, Hanuman, and Krishna toys that sing mantras. She was recently featured in Forbes's next 1000 honorees. What an honor for an Indian woman to be included in that list. She has worked hard to make her dream of owning a business in this country come true. Not only has she started a great business, but she is reaching out to so many people to encourage them to

teach their children about our culture and religion.

The third woman I admire and who is also on social media is Dr. Poonam Desai. She is an ER doctor who not only saves lives through her profession, but also educates the public in different topics of healthcare, nutrition, and exercise. She reaches out to thousands of followers every day. She is married and has a daughter, but still finds time to make sure she reaches out to people with information every day.

What do these three Indian females have in common? They have become successful on social media in a way that many only dream of. Encouraging people to follow our traditions, our culture, and our religion is important in many people's lives, and nowadays, it has become harder to pass these on to the newer generations.

I admire these women because of the hardships they have faced and how they have overcome those hardships to be where they are now; respected in their own separate fields. They have not only acquired success but are teachers of our culture and religion. They are women I feel proud to talk to my daughters about. We should also remember that when one becomes successful online, they aren't just reaching people in the US but all over the world. These and many more are the new faces that our children will follow and look up to.

Mayuri Desai is from Abhimanyu Shaka, California.

Snippets

TIPS FOR KITCHEN

By Suneetha Kola

- Chop and keep vegetables like beans, cabbage, carrots, etc in advance and store them in the freezer.
- Clean cilantro (coriander), mint and other herbs with water, pat dry overnight on a cloth and finally store them in a container; they will stay fresh longer.
- Make fresh masalas and keep them in an airtight container. Every time you can enjoy scrumptious dishes using fresh flavors of spices.
- To make hotel-style vadas at home, make the batter ready in advance (at least 8 hrs) and store it in the fridge.
- Drink hot water all day, it has a lot of health benefits than cold water.
- Don't drink tap water directly. Fill the water and keep it for a while in a vessel or jar.
- Eating on a banana leaf is good for health as it has antibacterial properties that can kill any germs in the food.
- To avoid excessive oil in curries or fries, bake vegetables in the oven.
- To engage kids without gadgets, involve them in cleaning dishes, cleaning and decorating the house, and chopping vegetables.

Idlis are one of the best and healthiest breakfast items, so here is a healthy recipe for you all.

- 1 cup Urad dal, 2 cups of millet (any type, but do not use pearl millet), 1 cup red rice, 1 cup idli rice, and 2 teaspoons of fenugreek seeds, soak all these ingredients for 2-4 hrs, grind them and ferment the batter overnight or 8 hours.
- Steam hot idlis and serve them with coconut chutney or sambar.

Suneetha Kola is from Bhagat Singh Shakha, Sammamish, WA. Her hobbies include creating best from waste.

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Growing up With Mantras, Shlokas, and Stotras

By Sumithra Basavarajappa

We nourish our bodies with good food and exercise for our physical well-being. How about our mind and soul? We nourish our minds and soul by chanting mantras and shlokas.

The word “mantra” can be broken down into two components: “man,” which means mind, and “tra,” which means transport. In other words, a mantra is a powerful sound or vibration that you can utilize to enter a deep state of meditation.

When I was younger, every day felt like a celebration, from waking up early in the morning, gathering flowers for pooja, drawing a rangoli in front of the house, and sometimes visiting temples. Listening to the melodious Venkateswara Suprabhatam by M.S. Amma gave me pleasure and peace. At that time, I was not aware of the meaning of a mantra or shloka. Why do we chant or sing? I didn't have any questions about that. Just as one would breathe, eat, and sleep, one would chant mantras and shlokas. It came naturally to me.

Mantras have spiritual power. Chanting mantras made me feel a unique vibration within myself. Certain syllables enabled me to enter a deeper meditative state. Repeating the mantras in the same frequency, rhythm, and tempo helped me experience a deeper state of inner peace. It calmed my mind and soul and gave me positive energy. Some of the powerful mantras such as Maha Mrityunjaya mantra, Gayatri mantra, and Omkara allowed me to experience a sense of blissful energy and vibrations that rejuvenated body and mind.. Mantras helped me increase my ability to concentrate. Chanting mantras brought me confidence, courage, and firm faith in our values. Most importantly, mantras gave me the invisible power to lead me onto the right path in my life. These mantras work like a medicine for the overall well-being, to inculcate good behavior, improve the brainpower, and individual character.

A good example of the power of Mantras is how the mantras helped Sage Valmiki transform his life. The story goes that Sage Valmiki used to hurt and rob people. Upon meeting Rishi Narada and reciting the mantra of 'Rama' many times, he was enlightened. Valmiki changed his approach and became a very knowledgeable person. He went on to write the Ramayana. This just goes to show how greatly mantras can transmute a person's life.

Chanting specific shlokas and mantras can have different effects on your life, depending on the shloka and its meaning. A famous example is “Om Gam Ganapataye Nama-ha,” a Sanskrit mantra dedicated to the God Ganesha. Chanting this mantra can remove obstacles in your mind and life. There are stotras containing only one shloka verse ex: Shuklam Bharadharam, Saraswati Namastubhyam to mention a few. These stotras are composed in such a manner that their proper reciting creates particular sound waves and frequency. These waves surely create a positive vibe in the mind and the mind becomes pure and all-encompassing.

Having understood this, it is essential to make time to chant shloka and mantra in our busy lives. Let us be role models to our children.

OM SHANTI SHANTI SHANTI

Sumithra Basavarajappa is from Durga shakha, Dublin, CA



My art project

By Mayuri Praveen

My mom was my role model when I was growing up. She was a hard-working mother. When she was pregnant with me (her first baby), she learned knitting from a neighbor. She then knitted a sweater, socks, and an overcoat. It showed us all the love she put in making these woolens. When I grew up and learned about this, I had made up my mind to do something similar when I would become a mother.

My thought of making a memorable masterpiece for my children came to me from when I got pregnant with my first child. Circumstances did not favor me to crochet when I was a first-time mom. I got another golden opportunity to fulfill my dream to knit or crochet for my child the second time. I wanted to take up and start a project when I got pregnant with her but could not start as I was studying Early Childhood Education at Diablo Valley College in California. With extended lockdown and with more hands sharing the workload, I was encouraged to do swadhyay on crochet/knitting and successfully complete my project. I could not have accomplished it without the motivation and help from my husband, son, and daughter.

The sense of satisfaction after the conclusion of a project is very high and it cannot be explained in words. For my art project, I could successfully learn to crochet from the beginning and complete a frock for my daughter who is now eleven months old. I now hope that my daughter would continue this tradition that started with a neighbor. My dream is to make many more of such crocheted clothing items for children and nieces and nephews yet to arrive.



Mayuri Praveen is from Chanakya Shaka, San Ramon, CA. Her hobbies include reading books, traveling, and learning something new.