

PRERANA

e-zine

AN INSPIRATION TO HINDU WOMEN



शुभ गुरु पूर्णिमा

PRERANA

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

We, as women, are always busy with personal and professional commitments. Our day mostly begins with household chores and continues until late evening, doing a number of routine jobs for people around us. At times, it seems that we are working like machines, going on without rest. And then, without realizing, disappointment, despair, and loneliness seep in and we begin to question: why am I 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 our own self to find our inner '*prerana*', the motivation to continue working ceaselessly, but with clarity and a 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 us bring out the beauty in each other, support each other, and thrive together!

ON THE COVER



Guru Purnima(गुरु पुर्णिमा) is celebrated on the full moon day or *Purnima*(पुर्णिमा) in the month of *Ashadha* (आषाढ़) of the Hindu calendar. It falls in the months of July-August of the English calendar.

Among Hindus, this day is dedicated to the worshipping of one's guru who acts as the guiding light in his/her life.

WRITE TO PRERANA

Have something to share? You can write about your experiences in HSS, Art and Craft projects, book reviews, recipes or about any topic that appeals to you.

Not sure whether your article's topic fits *Prerana*? Each issue has articles under the titles 'Americans I admire', 'Hindu women from History', 'What inspires me', 'The book that changed my life', 'I want to share' and many others. Hope this gives you *Prerana* to write to us. Send in your articles, questions and comments to:

prerana.feedback@gmail.com

Check out the previous issues of *Prerana* here:

<https://www.hssus.org/prerana-e-zine>

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh



Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) USA is a voluntary, non-profit, social and cultural organization. It aims to organize the Hindu community in order to preserve, practice and promote Hindu ideals and values.

HSS conducts structured programs of regular athletic and academic activities to develop strong character and leadership skills in its members, and encourage maintaining Hindu cultural identity in harmony with the larger community.

Visit www.hssus.org for more information

Sudheera (सुधीरा)

Dear Reader,

To me, courage is a quality which one needs to be successful in life. It is the ability to take charge of one's own life, make decisions when needed, challenge oneself and others, take ownership, be brave, work hard for success, have confidence, think about the larger good, and much more. In the *prarthana* given by Rashtra Sevika Samiti same quality is called सुधीरा(sudheera)! In my opinion, *Sudheera* is the one who makes wise choices in the time of conflict, chaos, or confusion and can handle the situation with utmost patience. Everyone is *Sudheera* at one or the other times, but being *Sudheera* all the time might be very challenging.

It takes a lot of courage to deal with the testing times. Several women from the history of Bharat like Jijabai and Kitur Chennamma, not only took care of their kingdoms in the time of adversity but also, as true leaders, safeguarded them from enemies, fighting a tough battle. They rose up and took responsibility for something way beyond their traditional feminine roles. What it needs is confidence, courage, and commitment. Similarly, in today's times, when women are taking the more challenging roles at home and outside, it has become even more important for a girl and woman to cultivate the quality of being *Sudheera*: to love and care for the family with patience and dedication but also singly, secure one's self-esteem and never let someone abuse them in any way.



EDITORIAL



Patience is an antonym for every negative feeling: greed, failure, anger, fear, disappointment, jealousy, and loneliness. This requires true inner courage to understand and analyze your negative feelings, get over them, accept them and work on them.

Today, frontline doctors, nurses, and volunteers, policewomen are enlivening the ideal of *Sudheera*. I salute each one of them for being there for all of us to be safe and healthy. Their courage to serve is commendable. They have put their duty first, and everything else later. Sincerity to our purpose gives us confidence and commitment. And paves the way to impersonate *Sudheera*!

Anjali Patel.

Maitri Shakha, Frisco, TX.

Anjali ji loves reading, writing, Yoga and painting.

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SHLOKA I GREW UP WITH

Saraswati Mantra



WRITTEN BY: RADHIKA GOKHALE

Let me take you back in time to my childhood (sounds like the Avengers – End Game doesn't it?). I was lucky to grow up with my grandparents. They not only showered me with lots of love and affection, but also taught me and my brothers valuable *Shlokas* and *Geeta Adhyay*, mostly in Marathi and Sanskrit.

My Grandmother used to motivate us to take part in the *Shloka/Geeta* competition at religious gatherings. I had learnt many shlokas like *Shubham Karoti*, *Rama Raksha* and *Saraswati stotram*.

If I have to pick my favorite then that would be the following one:



या कुन्देन्दुतुषारहारधवला या शुभ्रवस्त्रावृता
या वीणावरदण्डमण्डितकरा या श्वेतपद्मासना ।
या ब्रह्माच्युतशंकरप्रभृतिभिर्देवैः सदा वन्दिता
सा मां पातु सरस्वती भगवती निःशेषजाड्यापहा ॥

Meaning

I salute Mother Saraswati who is pure and white like a jasmine, the Moon and a garland of pearls. She wears sparkling white garments, her hands are adorned with the Veena and she is seated on a pure white lotus. She is worshipped by Brahma (the creator), Achyuta (Vishnu), Shankara (Shiva) and all the devas (gods). Oh Mother Saraswati, the divine one, protect me and dispel all my ignorance.

There may be several variations of the meaning on the internet, but the above meaning is what I understand. After many years, I got to know that this shloka is just the first part of *saraswati stotram* composed by Sage Agastya.

Shlokas help sharpen young minds. I think children in the age K-2 can easily memorize shlokas. This age is also perfect to learn pronunciation of Sanskrit words and phrases. However, understanding the true meaning of these shlokas may not happen in that age. That comes later.

In my observation, nobody bothers to teach the meaning of shlokas in the beginning – not even in our Shakhah! This does not matter as our shlokas are so profound that only by reciting them, you get positive vibrations and feel an attachment to our age-old Hindu heritage. It is, however, important to teach the child the meaning of the shloka.

I do believe that knowledge is a never-diminishing wealth. It is never wasted and it only keeps growing. In today's world, Dharmic/spiritual wealth is not given preference as it does not give any monetary gain. In our society of billionaires, business owners and actors becoming celebrities, not much importance is given to those who impart moral values and good character. This needs to change. I hope our Sangh activities will help to bring this positive and much needed change.

I have always encouraged my son Shreyas to recite different shlokas. He is not as lucky as I was to have his grandparents around. May Goddess Saraswati bestow him with her blessings and wishing that Goddess Lakshmi will follow.



Radhika Gokhale

Omkar Shakha, Herndon, Sterling, VA

Hobby: Teaching kids, making crafts & reading

HOME AWAY FROM HOME



WRITTEN BY : ESHA PATIL

Home is not defined by the structure of the building you live in; whether that be a house, an apartment, or even a dorm room. Home is a place where you feel loved, respected, and cared for. It is made of people who build a safe environment that allows you to grow, makes you feel comfortable being vulnerable and safe expressing your struggles and issues. Normally when I think of a home and my family, I think of the house that I live in and the people I live with. In reality, my home and family are much bigger. It extends to include all the Sangh families I know in New York and in the *Purvi Sambhag* (North East).

During my *vistarikship*, my home and family grew even larger. Although being associated with Sangh was the only connection I first shared with the *karyakartas* in NC, it was easy for me to feel comfortable and feel safe around them. Our conversations did not feel like I was getting to know someone for the first time but like I was catching up with friends I had not spoken with in years.

Most of the *shakhas* I attended during my *vistarikship* met on Saturdays and Sundays. My weekends were always busy. The *Sangh Parivar* I was staying with would always give Mondays "off". Being an introvert, I really valued this because it was a great way for me to relax, and reflect on the *shakhas*. I would spend the day reading a book or doing some art. At the time, I did not understand why they gave me Mondays to relax, but now I realize that this act made me feel respected and cared for. The fact that they understood that I needed a break without me asking for it made me feel like I was part of the family and not just someone who helped out in the area.



Throughout my *vistarikship*, I was invited to many private events such as pujas, birthday parties and celebrations. At the end of some of these events, I would hang out with the *yuvas*, just like I would have at an event at home. Spending time with the *yuvas*, whether it was after a puja or during the day, was helpful especially at the beginning of my *vistarikship* as it helped me settle in easily. I remember that for one of the *sevika pujas*, I wore a sari for the first time. This made the time I spent with the *sevikas* more special. Being invited to private events made me feel like I was more than just someone visiting the area.

I realized the true meaning of being a *vistarika* over the course of my *Vistarikaship*. At first, I thought it was someone who visited an area and helped with Sangh events. In the end, I realized that being a *vistarika* is about being part of a family you didn't know you had.

Esha Patil

Yuva Shakha, Stony Brook, NY
One of Esha's hobbies is doing Digital art.



About Vistarikaship

One of the many missions of HSS is Vistarikaship. Students live in other HSS volunteer's home (Shakha Parivar) and volunteer for various activities.

AMERICAN WOMEN I ADMIRE



Michelle Obama

WRITTEN BY: RAJESHWARI HIREMATH

Since childhood, my mother has been my inspiration for the outstanding work-life balance she had. In the later years of my life, I have learned about many such women who have sacrificed a lot for the young generation.

I got to know more about Michelle Barack Obama around 2008-2009. At that time, we were in New York. She is a lawyer and a writer and was the First Lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017. As the First Lady, she focused her attention on social issues such as poverty, healthy living, and education. I find Michelle Obama to be very inspiring. I look up to her and feel motivated to help my community in every way.

Early life and education

Michelle was born on January 17, 1964, in Chicago, Illinois. Fraser Robinson, Michelle's father, was a city pump operator and a Democratic precinct captain. Her mother Marian was a secretary at Spiegel's. Her brother is Craig. Michelle was in her school's gifted program in grade six. She learned French and completed the accelerated course in biology. She graduated in 1985 with a Bachelor's in sociology at Princeton University. After graduating from Harvard law school in 1988, she joined the Chicago law firm Sidley & Austin, where she later met Barack Obama who would become the love of her life. A few years later, Mrs. Obama decided her true calling was working with people to serve their communities. She was Assistant Commissioner of Planning and Development in Chicago's City Hall, before becoming the founding Executive Director of the Chicago Chapter of Public Allies, an



AmeriCorps program that prepares young people for public services. She developed the university's first community science program. In 2002 she went to work for the University of Chicago's Medical Center, where in 2005 she became the Vice President of Community and External Affairs.

Some of her programs:



Let's move program (2010) : As a first lady, Mrs. Obama initiated 'Let's Move' program aiming to end childhood obesity within a generation by bringing together community leaders, educators, medical professionals, parents, and others in a nationwide effort.



Joining Forces (2011) : Mrs. Obama and Dr. Jill Biden came together to launch joining forces, a nationwide initiative calling all Americans to rally around service members, veterans, and their families and support them through wellness, education, and employment opportunities.



Reach Higher (2014) : She launched reach higher initiative, an effort to inspire young people across America to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school, whether at a professional learning program, a community college or a four-year college or university.



LET *
GIRLS
LEARN

Let Girls Learn (2015) : Mrs. Obama joined President Obama to launch 'Let Girls Learn' a US govt wide initiative to help girls around the world go to school and stay in school.

Not only is Michelle Obama a fashion icon, she is intelligent and passionate about her beliefs and values. Looking at her, I feel inspired and motivated to volunteer during my free time and contribute to the society.

These are just a few of the many initiatives which made a huge difference in our society. Through her work, Michelle Obama has shown that even the smallest actions can have a great impact for those in need.

Rajeshwari Hiremath

Hobbies: Baking, Writing, Dancing.

Rajeshwari loves hiking with her family and volunteering in school and other places.

TIPS FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY SUMMER



WRITTEN BY : MONIKA ADAWI

Summer is knocking on our doors; for some of us, it is a welcome change from the cold winters. Finally, we can step out and explore the beautiful outdoors. We look forward to enjoying the long days of sunshine. Summer is also the time for kids and for families to take a break from the hectic routines. Sunlight has immense benefits but exposure to excessive sunlight can also be harmful. The hot humid summer days can aggravate our pitta dosha. Therefore, while we set out to enjoy this season, we should still continue to focus on our health.

Here are some tips that we can all add to our dinacharya (daily routine) to stay bright, happy, and healthy this summer. Using these simple tips should help keep you cool, calm, and relaxed as you enjoy this summer.

Cont'd ...



FOOD

- Summer offers us plenty of options for fresh vegetables, and pitta-pacifying foods such as leafy greens and cucumbers must be included in the diet.
- Also include lots of fresh fruits like berries, watermelons, and cantaloupes; you may also pick up pomegranates and delicious Indian mangoes from your Indian grocery stores.
- These days there are several options for healthy juices and smoothies that are locally available but also remember the drinks that your grandmother gave you growing up such as coconut water, jal jeera, kokum sharbat, buttermilk, and aam panna. The heat-resisting properties in these drinks control the pitta aggravation.



SKINCARE

- Try to wear clothes made from natural fabrics like cotton linen. These will help you stay cool.
- Use natural products like sandalwood, aloe vera gel, and witch hazel. Sandalwood paste has a soothing and calming effect on the skin. Aloe vera and witch hazel are used for treating any sunburns.
- Coconut oil has a cooling effect on the body. Apply a little coconut oil on the bottom of your feet every night, not only does it help moisturize but also reduces stress and helps you sleep better.

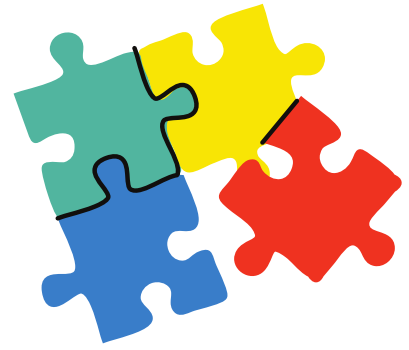
FITNESS

- For those who prefer outdoor exercise, try to get it done early in the morning before the day gets too hot.
- A good indoor exercise option would be to practice some gentle yoga exercises.
- Pranayama is effective in cooling and calming the body.
- Adding a 5-10 minute daily meditation routine will help cool you and calm your mind.



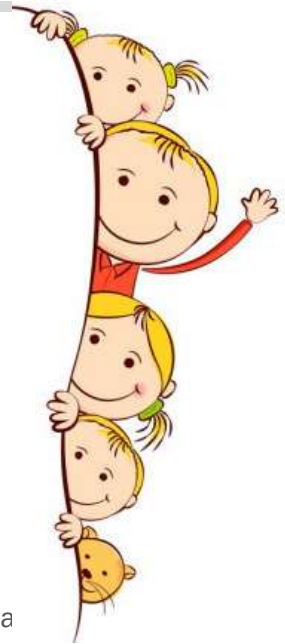
Monika Adawi

Omkar Shakha, Louisville, KY



WRITTEN BY: RADHIKA RAMNATH

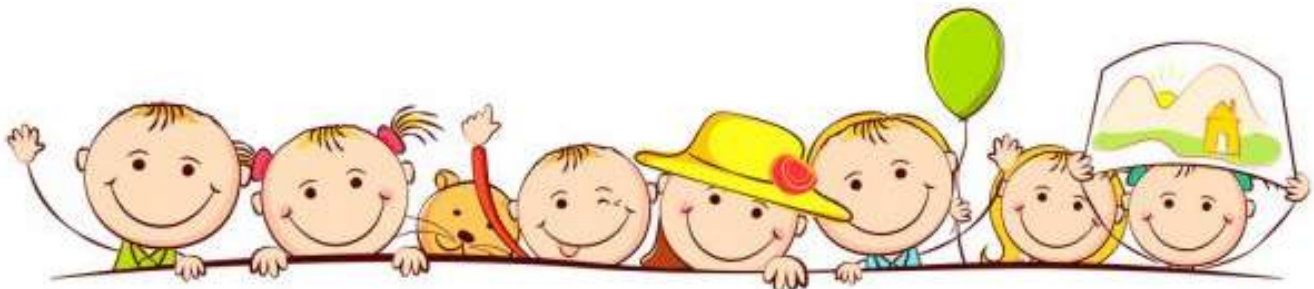
1. Name the Hindu God of wisdom who has the head of of an Elephant?
2. Who is the Hindu God of Creation?
3. Name Hindu God of Protection.
4. Who is the Hindu God of Destruction?
5. Name the Hindu God of Rain.
6. Who is the Hindu God of Fire?
7. Name the Hindu Goddess of Wealth, Prosperity and Fortune?
8. Name the wife of Lord Ram?
9. Name the seventh avatar of Hindu God Vishnu?
10. Name the eight incarnation of the Hindu deity of Lord Vishnu?
11. Name the holy book of Dharma?
12. Who wrote Ramayana?
13. Hanuman is the incarnation of which God?
14. Name the incarnation of lord Vishnu who saved his great devotee Prahalad?
15. Name the two-great epics of the Indian mythology?
16. Name the incarnation of Lord Vishnu who asked three parts of the land from King Maha
17. Name the incarnation of Lord Vishnu who will come in both Ramayana and Mahabharata?
18. Name the avatar of following forms : Fish , Tortoise, Wild boar , Half lion-half human
19. Which is the last incarnation of lord Vishnu?
20. Name Krishna's childhood friend whom he adores and admires a lot and sets an example of friendship?



Radhika Ramnath

Vijaya Shakha, Irving, TX

Radhika ji likes to draw sketches of Gods like Sai Baba, Mahadev.





VARALAKSHMI POOJA



WRITTEN BY : ROSHINI SELVAKUMAR

August is around the corner and millions of Hindus look forward to the auspicious and joyful occasion of Varalakshmi Pooja. It falls in the month of *Shravana* on Friday. This year Varalakshmi Pooja will be observed on August 20th. It is celebrated for Varalakshmi which means goddess who grants "varas" or boons. Lakshmi is one of the most important Hindu goddesses and represents wealth, health, and prosperity. Participating in the worship of Varalakshmi on this special day is believed to be equal to worshipping the *Ashta Lakshmi* or the eight manifestations of Lakshmi Devi as each of them is said to preside over wealth and prosperity.



Different stories surround this festival but the most well-known one is the story of Charumati. She lived a humble life in a village and was very devoted to her family and *Bhagavan*. She was very hardworking, affectionate, and compassionate to the people of the village. Mahalakshmi was very impressed by this pious and righteous woman and appeared in Charumati's dream, instructing her to observe a pooja to Varalakshmi on a specific Friday. Charumati happily agreed and made preparations for the pooja with her family and friends. All the villagers took part in this pooja and offered sweets, flowers, and leaves to the goddess along with devotional chants and songs. Soon their homes were filled with jewels, grain, and wealth. They were all blessed with good health, prosperity, and happiness. Gradually it became a tradition and is continuing to this day.

Before observing this pooja, houses are cleaned and torans adorn the house's entrance. Coconut and leaves are placed on the sacred Kalash or pot. The *kalasa* is decorated using jewelry, a silk sari, and flowers before the goddess is invoked. The pooja begins with the worship of Lord Ganesha which can be made from turmeric. He is worshipped using chants, akshat, and flowers. Then begins the main Varalakshmi Pooja where devotees sing various devotional hymns while performing sacred rituals. Various prasadam like Pongal is also offered to Lakshmi Devi. When Charumati was asked to perform this pooja she worried that she wouldn't be able to afford everything needed, but Lakshmi Devi assured her that a simple Pongal made with devotion and love will be enough. This tradition of offering Pongal as prasadam is continued by many families to this day. Families also invite their friends to receive the prasadam, kumkum, and the goddess's blessings.

Let's all celebrate Varalakshmi pooja this year with friends and spread wealth, health, and happiness to everyone."

Roshini Selvakumar

Adi Shakthi Shakha, Charlotte, NC

Hobbies: Reading books and learning about history

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

INTERVIEW

Dr. Swati Mohan



WRITTEN BY: KANAKA TIRUMALE



You were born to immigrant parents and raised in the United States. What part of your upbringing influenced you to choose a career at NASA?

My parents were strong supporters of education, particularly in science and technology. They encouraged me to go into engineering, having noticed that my personality would suit. My upbringing helped me with the focus, commitment, and motivation to work hard to achieve my goals.

What part of your work gives you the most pleasure?

I love working with others for the common goal of increasing human understanding of the universe. Every day on the job is a new discovery.

What message would you like us to share for Indian Americans raising young children in the United States now?

Though difficult, Indian Americans have the opportunity to blend the best of two unique and different cultures. It's up to us as parents to teach our children to know who they are and where they come from. Understanding and appreciating their heritage builds strength of character and helps them to understand themselves better.

What do your children think about your achievements?

I am blessed that my children are proud of me and intrigued by the work I do. It was the best feeling in the world to come home from landing day to their excited and loving faces.

Dr. Swati Mohan joined NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory first in 2004, after completing her B.S from Cornell University in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering. After working as a systems engineer on Cassini during Saturn Orbit Insertion and Huygens Probe release, she returned to graduate school in 2005 to MIT.

Dr. Mohan received her M.S. and Ph.D in Aeronautics/Astronautics from the MIT Space Systems Laboratory.

Since her return to JPL in 2010, Dr. Mohan has worked on multiple missions such as GRAIL and OCO-3. Swati also co-founded and manages the Small Satellite Dynamics Testbed.

For the past 8 years, she has been the Lead Guidance, Navigation, and Controls Systems Engineer for Mars 2020 Perseverance rover, focusing on Cruise and EDL.

For the last year, her role was the Mars 2020 Guidance, Navigation, and Controls Operations Lead. Dr. Mohan was the mission commentator for the landing of the Perseverance rover on February 18, 2021.

She is currently the supervisor for the Guidance, Navigation, and Controls Systems Engineering group at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory.



Kanaka Tirumale

Maitri Shakha, Frisco, TX

Kanaka ji loves reading, travelling,
cooking and teaching children

THE STORY OF INDIANA

The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly



WRITTEN BY: SUSMITA SINGH



Indiana means "the land of the Indians". The state of Indiana was carved out of the Indiana Territory in 1817. Indiana Territory constituted present-day Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and parts of Minnesota. The natives of the state, call themselves "Hoosiers".

Economy and education

The economy of Indiana is primarily sustained by agriculture.

Corn, soy, and dairy products contribute the most to the economy. Indiana is known for its tomatoes! Numerous varieties of tomatoes are grown, and they are, undoubtedly, the tastiest! Indiana is home to many prestigious public and private colleges, such as Indiana University, Purdue University, Notre Dame, Ball State to name a few.

What makes Indiana exciting!

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis and the Indianapolis Zoo are popular among children. Indiana is home to 24 state parks within which are contained vast areas of fish and wildlife preserves. Lake Patoka and Lake Monroe offer plenty of adventures to fishing and boating enthusiasts. Brown County, Turkey Run, Fort Harrison are some parks that have great trails hugging creeks filled with cool clear waters.

Versailles state park holds a special place in the hearts of Chetak Vibhag's Sangh family. Many fond memories were made in its campgrounds during its family camps.

THE GOOD



The Levi Coffin Home in Newport(now Fountain City), IN

This eight-room home (image on the left) is one of the top 25 historic sites in the nation! It served as a haven for more than 1,000 freedom seekers on their journey to Canada. This is Levi and Catherine Coffin's home that provided food, shelter, and transportation to slaves. It came to be known as "The Grand Central Station of the Underground Railroad," and was successful in transporting every single freedom seeker to safety!

Slaves were hidden in false bottom wagons (image on the right) and transported to the next safe house.

"I had already risked everything in the work – life, property and reputation – and did not feel bound to respect Human Laws that came in direct contact with the Law of God." - Levi Coffin

Cont'd ...

THE BAD

On October 6, 1866, the two brothers John and Simeon Reno staged the first train robbery in American history, making off with \$13,000 from an Ohio and Mississippi railroad train in Jackson County, Indiana. Train robberies were not a new act. But Reno brothers improvised this feat by stopping moving trains in isolated areas in the vast mid-west and then robbing them. This innovation cemented their place in criminal history.



THE UGLY



1915: The Indiana branch of the Ku Klux Klan is formed in Evansville, IN.

There was a time in the 1920s when being seen as a good, upstanding Hoosier meant joining the Ku Klux Klan. Some joined the Klan because they believed in its anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic message, others because being on good terms with the Klan was necessary for their business or political aspirations.

At its peak, it had the Governor of Indiana, more than half the state legislature, and more than 250,000 Hoosiers in its ranks. At the time it was the largest organization in the nation promoting hate against Catholics, Jews, and African Americans.

About my hometown, Carmel, IN



I live in Carmel, IN and I find the city and its people, marvelous! Carmel has been ranked as the number one place in the nation, to live and raise a family. It is a very well-designed city. Over the past decade, the city has eliminated stoplights and introduced roundabouts to ease traffic. Ironically, Carmel was the first city in the nation to have a traffic stoplight. Seeing out-of-town residents befuddled while navigating roundabouts is always a source of amusement for Carmel residents!

The city has an elaborate network of bike trails. Carmel's residents are fitness enthusiasts and enjoy running and biking on these trails.

Carmel resident and Great Lakes Sambhag Sah-Karyavaha is an avid marathoner. You might just catch him on any of these trails, practicing for the upcoming Boston Marathon!

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Susmita Singh

Sadhana Shakha, Carmel, IN

Susmita loves to cook and try out new recipes for friends & family.

HOLISTIC YOGA AND HEALTH

Pancha Kosha



WRITTEN BY: JAYMALA SHAH

Yoga is derived from Sanskrit root word “युज्”, which means ‘to join’. Yoga joins the individual self or consciousness with universal/divine self or consciousness. It unites the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our being. A person who seeks this union is called a yogin or yogi.

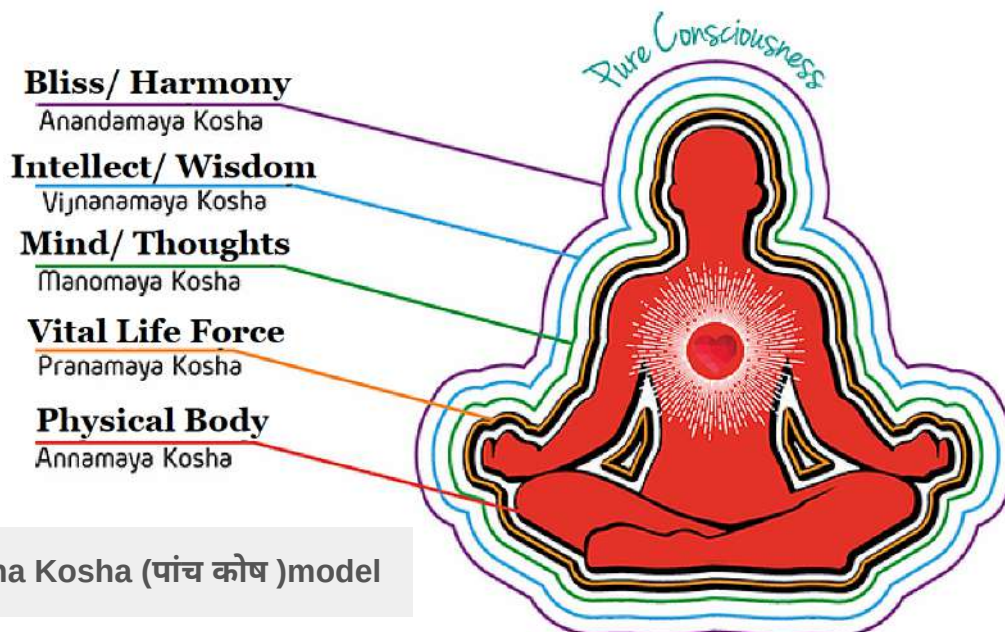
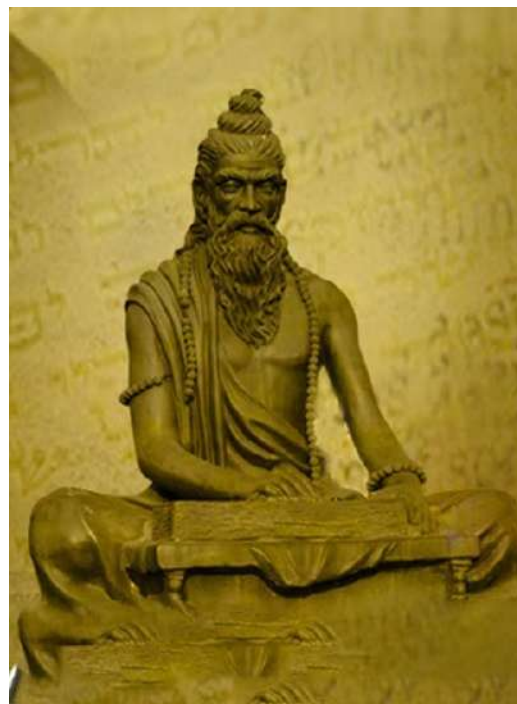
Sage Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutra, defines Yoga as ‘योगः चित्त वृत्ति निरोधः’ (Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah) which means Yoga is the calming of the fluctuations of the mind.

Patanjali YogaSutra also explains in detail, how the subtler senses and organs can be developed by person who seek God who is none other than their own true innermost conscious being. To achieve this, a whole science of yoga has been developed.

Today, in this materialistic world where everyone leads a stressful, sedentary, and a busy life, it's important to understand the Yogic way that helps our bodies get aligned with nature.

According to the yoga tradition, every one of us has five sheaths of consciousness, each made of increasingly finer grades of energy. Only the physical body is made of matter (human body) as we know it; the other four are energy states invisible to the physical eye, though their presence inside us can be easily sensed when we pay close attention. Once we develop understanding of the five sheaths (koshas), it helps us slowly peel these off and bring close to our true identity.

Taittiriya Upanishad has given us the systematic representation of these five sheaths of existence. It is also known as *Pancha Kosha* model meaning five illusionary energy states. Let us try to understand little about them.



The Pancha Kosha (पांच कोष) model

Cont'd ...

ANNAMAYA KOŚHA

Annamaya-kośha consists of the physical, material body, the most visible part of our existence. It is nourished by the food we eat. It consists of five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, wind, and space. It is usually the sheath with which we identify the most because it is the outermost layer we sense, feel, and move. Yoga asanas, as well as a healthy diet, helps to keep this physical layer in optimal condition so that we can experience life through our bodies with ease, free from disease.

PRANAMAYA KOSHA

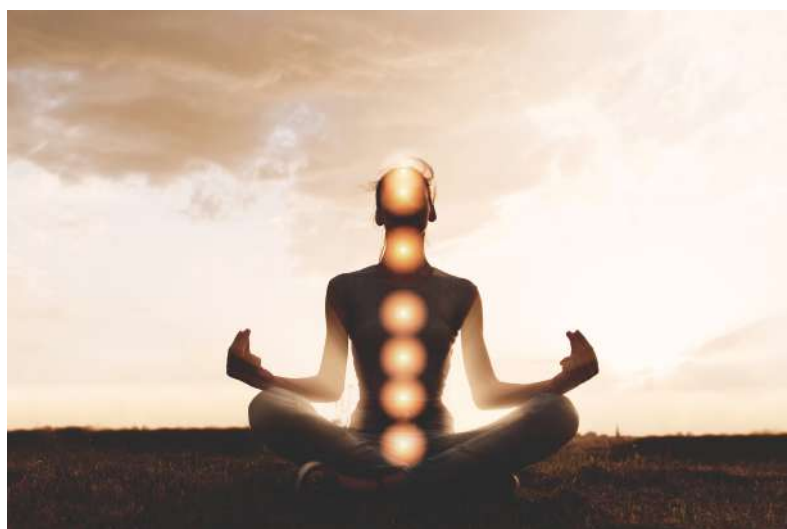
'Prana' means vital energy. This kosha is the vital life force that moves through the body. It consists of the breath and the five pranas, namely: prana, Apana, Udana, Samana, and Vyana. These forms of prana control various functions within the physical body, and without it, the body would be lifeless, and unable to move or think. It is the prana that makes the blood flow, carries impulses through the nerves from our body to the brain and back. Prana also circulates between the physical body and the different sheaths through the agency of the nadis. It is what allows us to travel from gross, to subtle, and causal bodies.

MANOMAYA KOSHA

'Manah' means mind. This kosha is made up of our thoughts, feelings, emotions. Mind functions on three levels:

- Conscious: mind connects the outer world to the brain
- Subconscious: mind stores of all the experiences
- Unconscious: the 'Real Self' or 'Atman'

This Kosha is where the rapid recycling of emotions (subtle or unsubtle) takes place and gathers momentum. It is this emotion that is the root cause of all human joy and distress. When it becomes powerful, it starts governing our actions against consciousness. This going against cosmic laws leads to imbalances of what we call stress.



VIJNYNAMAYA KOSHA

'Vijnana' means subtle knowledge or wisdom. This Kosha helps reach higher levels of consciousness. The conscience within us continually guides us on what to do and what not to do. It is this component of the mind that is developed in the human race greatly which differentiates humans from animals. Practices such as Dharana, (mental focus on an object) and Dhyana, (meditation on the divine,) are inner disciplines that progressively help us to channel our focus towards a deeper level of wisdom.

ANANDMAYA KOSHA

'Ananda' means bliss. It is the spiritual or causal state, where finally you become one with the "divine spark," which is true consciousness. This kosha is connected to the unconscious

or superconscious mind. It is only when the higher mind fuses with the superconscious mind (or unconscious mind) when one awakens to the present with a sense of connection to all. It is the highest level of vibration one can attain. A state to total silence- a state of complete harmony and perfect health. Very few people have managed to reach Anandamaya kosha, only saints and realized souls. This is the road map that ancient seers have left us with to help us understand our journey back to wholeness so that we can break free from all bonds.

Jaymala Shah

Kailash Shakha, Katy, TX

Jaymala likes to make quill art greeting cards and earrings

I WANT TO SHARE

My experience with Rama Katha

PATHADARSHINI



WRITTEN BY: NEHA MEHTA ROY

Rumi has rightly said, "What you seek is seeking you."

I always wanted to learn the practical teachings of Ramayana. When I got to know about a ten-day audio discourse of Rama Katha being planned by HSS based on the book 'Pathadarshini' by Vandaniya Lakshmibai Kelkarji, Mausiji, I gladly volunteered myself for Hindi recitation of the book.

This book is based on Mausiji's discourses on Rama Katha which analyze and describe 'How Rama Katha is relevant today'. This was exactly what I wanted to learn. The teachings of Rama Katha not only help us live peacefully, do our duties well, and be content but also helps to build a great nation. I would like to share some of the key takeaways from Mausiji's discourses, which I found most thoughtful and relevant:

मनुष्य स्वयं ही अपना उद्धार और अपना नाश करता है। अन्य कोई भी यह नहीं कर सकता।

Man, on his own, saves and destroys himself. No one else can do this.

जब संस्कृति के प्रति अभिमान आदर नहीं होता है, तब राष्ट्र नष्ट होता है।

When there is no respect for culture, then the nation is destroyed.

राम राज्य के लिए केवल शासक के ही सद्गुणी होने से काम नहीं होगा। उनके सहयोगी मंत्री और प्रजा, सभी का सद्गुणी और कर्तव्य - परायण होना नितान्त आवश्यक है।

For an ideal kingdom, the mere virtuosity of a ruler will not work. His associate ministers and subjects, all have to be virtuous and dutiful.

दिया हुआ वचन दूसरे के लिए नहीं, अपने लिए पालन करना चाहिए। सत्य के लिए पालन करना चाहिए।

A given promise should be kept. Do it not for others but to be truthful to your own self.

जब हम किसी विषय पर एकाग्रचित दृष्टिपूर्वक विचार करने लगते हैं, तब हमें अपने अंतःकरण की आवाज़ सुनाई देती है।

Until we imbibe the scriptures of life, the real progress of our country is not possible.



जब हम किसी विषय पर एकाग्रचित दृष्टिपूर्वक विचार करने लगते हैं, तब हमें अपने अंतःकरण की आवाज़ सुनाई देती है। यानि अंतःकरण और बुद्धि का तादात्म्य हो कर मनुष्य उचित निर्णय लेता है।

When we begin to truly concentrate on any topic, we are able to hear the voice of our conscience. After taking cognizance and identification of the intellect and conscience, a person makes appropriate decisions.

चित्त एकाग्र करने की क्षमता जितनी अधिक होगी, उतना अचूक निर्णय प्राप्त होने की सम्भावना अधिक है।

The higher the ability of the mind to be able to focus, the greater is the chance of making correct decisions.

समाज को केवल आर्थिक सहायता देने से काम नहीं होगा, इस समाज पर अच्छे संस्कार होने चाहिए।

Only providing financial help to a society does not work. One needs to have good values and morals as well.

दूसरे ने कितनी भी सहायता की, पर स्वयं को अपनी उन्नति की आस नहीं है, तो उन्नति कैसे हो सकती है।

No matter how much others help you, if you do not have the self-determination to succeed, then how will there be progress?

Cont'd ...

अपनी प्रशंसा कब करना और लीनत्व कब धारण करना, इस कूटनीति का ज्ञान मनुष्य को होना अत्यंत आवश्यक है।

It is important that one knows when to praise oneself and when to be humble.

Besides the above-mentioned lessons, Vandaniya Mausiji presents Sita ji as an ideal for all women of Rashtriya Sevika Samiti and describes how we can learn from Sitaji's devotion, love, sacrifice, will power and motherhood.

In conclusion, the values and virtues of our great scriptures have empowered us with mechanisms to attain the quality of life, health, and overall well-being.

Neha Mehta Roy

Vishwashanti Shakha, Lone, CO

Hobbies: Traveling, exploring nature, spending time with her kids, music & reading



THIS IS WHAT INSPIRES ME

The Elephant Whisperer



WRITTEN BY: SHWETA CHAKRADEO

The year 2020 was a big roller-coaster ride for all of us, and is ongoing. In this difficult time, everyone needs some inspiration to stay positive and keep them going. Inspiration comes in various forms; sometimes one could be walking on the road and may see a random act of kindness which may inspire and initiate a chain of random small acts of kindness. Some other time, inspiration could be a person, a book, a movie, or a person.

Inspiration can do wonders, sometimes they push us to do a little bit better than what we could have done or sometimes they give us enough motivation and strength to achieve bigger things. I read this quote a few months back, inspirations can come from anywhere and anytime. This is such a true statement, some inspirations are short-lived whereas some can shape our lives forever.

A book named, 'An Elephant Whisperer' has inspired me from time to time to look outside my window, step out, listen to birds singing, a squirrel hurrying to grab food, a groundhog lounging in sun after a long winter, to listen to this constant chit chat, and music that goes on in nature, continuously. Sometimes movies have inspired me to look beyond what is right and wrong and have broadened my range of thoughts. All these little inspirations have taught me to look beyond black and white, and observe all those shades of grey that oscillate in between. At this juncture, let me introduce a huge inspiration that happened recently.

It is said that by lifting others you rise. When #SewaDiwali efforts started in 2020, for the first time many hands came together in our local chapter to help homeless and less

THE ELEPHANT WHISPERER



privileged people in our community. Amidst the corona wave in the US, people unknown to each other coming together was quite inspiring for everyone to do more and to request people to donate more. This actually created momentum across the community, inspiring many of us to do more and continue doing it. Personally, #SewaDiwali did work wonders for me. I may go anywhere in the world but will always dedicate my time to community service. I am grateful for this inspiration that gave me the strength to keep going in tough times. May we all get inspired and keep inspiring others.

Shweta Chakradeo

Veer Hanuman Shakha, Pittsburgh, PA

HINDU WOMAN LEADER

An Exemplary Business Woman: *Indra Nooyi*



WRITTEN BY: NEENA DUGGAL

Indra Nooyi is an Indian business executive, former chairperson, and CEO of PepsiCo. She was named one of Times 100 most influential people in the world, twice, making her the highest-ranking woman of Indian heritage in corporate America. During her tenure, PepsiCo grew its net revenue by more than 80%, and PepsiCo's total shareholder return was 162%.

Indra grew up in Chennai, Bharat in a middle-class conservative family. As a child, she played cricket and was the guitarist in an all-girl rock band. Her mother always encouraged her and her sister to be the best. At mealtimes, their mother would ask, "If you were prime minister of India, what would you do?"

Indra earned a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics from Madras Christian College, and after moving to the U.S., she received a Master's in public and private management from Yale School of Management.



In 1994, she joined PepsiCo as senior vice president of corporate strategy and development, and in 2006, was given the job of CEO, which she kept until 2018. While working for PepsiCo, she oversaw the acquisition of Tropicana products and a merger with Quaker Oats Co. as part of the company's strategy of diversifying into more healthful foods and drinks.

In an interview at the 2019 Women World Summit, Indra talked about her method of maintaining a work-life balance, explaining how she found time to be with her kids and do her job. Here is a snippet of her interview:

Indra: "If I was still at work after 5 o'clock, my girls were allowed to come to work and hang around, allowed to play, allowed to sleep. This was the price of having me work at PepsiCo."

Interviewer: "Your bosses were okay with that?"

Indra: "Did they have a choice? If you establish a niche for yourself, that you're competent, and make yourself indispensable based on competence, what can they do without you?"

She later says she had strong family support, particularly from her husband, who moved from Chicago to Connecticut so she could advance her career.

The average lifespan of a CEO is 5 years, but hers was 12. Indra truly devoted all her energy to her work and family, and although she wishes she had spent more time with her kids during their childhood, she has few regrets. Indra is a role model to young women today and shows them that it is possible to have it all.

Neena Duggal

Adi Shakti Shaka, Huntersville, NC

Neenaji really enjoy reading. Presently, she is reading the book 'Ram - Scion of Ikshvaku' by Amish Tripathi.

BOOK REVIEW

The Vision of Karma



WRITTEN BY: GARIMA AGARWAL

Growing up, my family had a huge poster in one of our rooms that depicted Lord Krishna with a golden crown in all his glory, holding the reins of white horses with Arjuna standing behind in the chariot. The poster had a shloka at the top right corner saying :

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

I must have read that shloka infinite times, each time wondering what it really meant.

Growing up, I became increasingly interested in Vedanta. Then one day, I came across a book that explained the meaning of the same shloka and a few others – “The Vision of Karma Yoga”, written by the scientist-turned-philosopher Mahamahopadhyaya Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati. This has been my favorite book ever since. The book lays out the underlying principles presented by Shri Krishna in

four key verses from the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita and then proceeds to show in great detail how they directly affect all aspects of our lives.

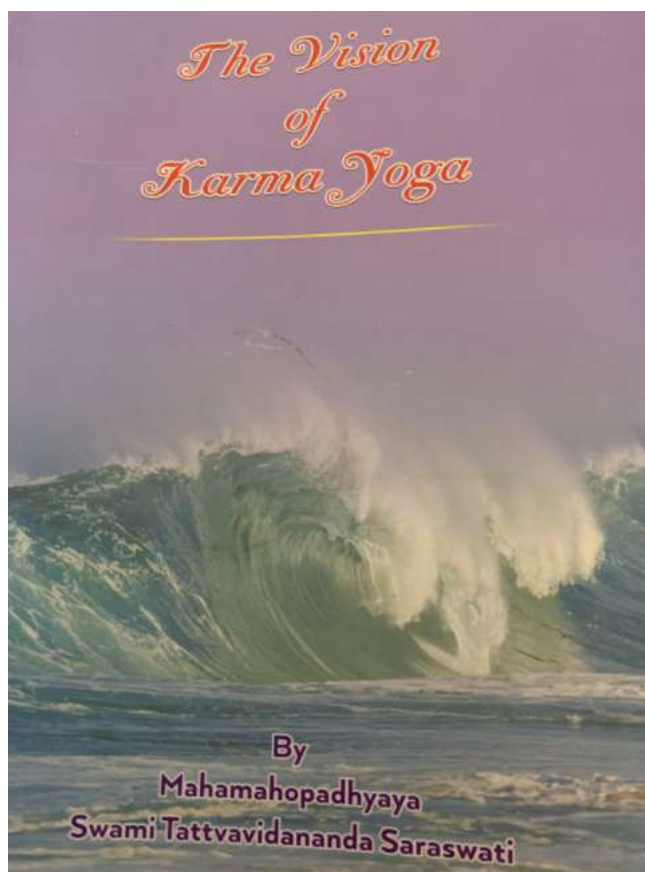
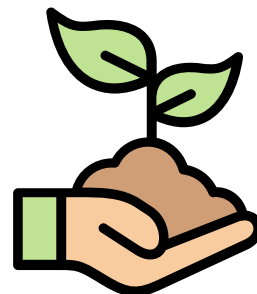
Different people have different (and sometimes unclear) ideas about what Karma Yoga really is. Some may wonder how one can act without expecting results. If I practice vairagya (dispassion), how can I do my work and support my family? What happens to the progress in a society if its people do not have ambitions? We may listen to the words of Sri Krishna in the Gita but they do not seem to connect to our life experiences.

The author explains that one should act without a motive but not without a purpose. There is a story that illustrates this: One day, Emperor Akbar was riding his horse. On his way, he saw an old man planting a mango sapling. Akbar was amused and stopped his horse. He felt the man was too old to be planting a tree. Akbar called out to the old man, laughingly, “O, foolish old man, when will you get the fruits from this tree?” The old man answered, “If your forefathers had thought the way you are thinking, you would not know what a mango is. I am not planting the sapling so that I can eat the fruits myself but because somebody will eat those one day.” This was an eye-opener for Akbar; he bowed his head and went away.

I feel we should be like that old man; we should do good work and perform actions not for the results,

but for prayojana (the purpose) and as an offering to the Ishvara.

All we have to do is completely eliminate selfish interests. Only we can realize our own completeness and the divinity within us.



Garima Agarwal

Vivekanand Shakha, Wilton, CT

Hobbies: Reading and Cooking. Garima reads fiction, non-fiction and religious books on Vedanta.

Garima enjoys exploring new recipes from all cuisines.

HEALTHY FOOD

Your spice box is your medicine cabinet



WRITTEN BY: DIVYA RANGI



Chanakya, one of the greatest teachers of Bharat, says "Lamp eats darkness and thus produces soot. Similarly, how a man behaves will depend upon what he eats."

No matter what we eat, spices play an important role in determining the flavor. So do spices only add flavor? Or is there a deeper meaning to adding them to our food?

A spice box is a prized possession in any Indian kitchen. Each spice uniquely contributes to the overall wellness and health of the family.

Haldi (turmeric) and **Rai (mustard seeds)** have been prescribed by Ayurveda to cure ailments like inflammation, cancer, Alzheimer's, and heart issues. Haldi is antibacterial and helps in reducing fever. It stops any bleeding from minor cuts.



Jeera (cumin) is aromatic and brings out a unique flavor when added to dishes. Remember drinking jaljeera as a kid? Yes, cumin is the ultimate cure for indigestion and many other food-borne illnesses and helps keep weight and cholesterol in check.

Methi (Fenugreek) and **Hing (Asafoetida)** are bitter or pungent in taste are hated by almost all kids with utmost sincerity! Little do they know that they prevent diabetes, control sugar levels in diabetics, help new mothers with enhanced milk production, boost testosterone, reduce cholesterol, and control the appetite.

Adrak (ginger) and **Lahsun (garlic)** go hand in hand in many dishes. Do you feel nausea, indigestion, flu, cold, morning sickness, or need help with weight loss, osteoarthritis, heart disease? Ginger can put you at ease. Garlic is potent in curing many ailments such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, Alzheimer's, dementia, toxicity, and also helps boost athletic performance. Honestly,



there is no such a thing as too much garlic!

The greatness of Ayurveda lies in the fact that all these spices are mandated to be used in cooking daily which reiterates the fact that Sage Charaka has written in Charaka Samhita: **food consumed in moderation is medicine.**

Divya Rangi

Arjun Shakha, Austin, TX

Divya makes Traditional Jewelry.

ART STATEMENT

My journey with painting



WRITTEN BY: TULASI GOLI

Right from childhood, I liked to draw the images found on greeting cards. Later, I learned to do some floral fabric painting, inspired by my cousins and my uncle, who is an artist himself. I had the privilege of meeting people with similar interests after moving to the United States. From one such friend, I got introduced to the traditional paintings of Bharat like Kalamkari, Madhubani, Warli, Kerala mural, and Phad. Recently I have started learning a few other forms of art from the original artists. I truly enjoy making this artwork and am intrigued into learning more of the other traditional arts as they keep me close to my country and culture. *I would like to share my artwork here.* I include two of my original

paintings. Both of these art forms are traditionally made as religious scrolls on a large piece of cloth with natural colors and are used for narrative purposes and storytelling performances. These vibrant visual representations are culturally significant, rich in local motifs, and use fine outlining. A unique aspect of these paintings is that the figures always face each other instead of facing the audience or the viewer. These art forms as 700-year-old legacies are passed down over generations. Today, there are very few families who practice this traditionally rich art. They have made a great effort to preserve and revive these art forms by teaching others.



PHAD FOLK ART

This style of painting is originally from the state of Rajasthan. As we all know, Rajasthan is known for its royalty, courage, and valor. These paintings are usually used to perform the stories of their local deities Devnarayanji (reincarnation of Vishnu) and Pabuji (a local hero). The Phad paintings would be unfolded after sunset for performing in front of people in the villages and hence the name "Phad" meaning 'fold' in local dialect. I have made a modern Phad painting with poster colors on paper that includes only one scene from a story. It depicts the Rajasthani Maharaja taking a ride on a royal elephant in the company of the elephant keeper (mahout). The royal elephants are usually decorated with colorful embroidered jhul (saddle cloth), anklets, bells and other jewelry.



CHERIYAL PAINTING

Earlier, these paintings were called Nakashi art. It was practiced in Telangana and Andhra states dated from the Vijayanagara dynasty. As these paintings are now confined to the Cheriya village of Telangana, they are called Cheriya scroll paintings. The background for Cheriya paintings is always red in color as the scrolls are used for storytelling during nighttime and to highlight the characters. These paintings portray epic stories from Indian mythology and other local customs and traditions. In my painting, I have used acrylic colors on paper. This artwork represents a scene of a serene and lively village atmosphere. The two women are carrying out a daily routine. As they sit in the shade of the tree, the two women chat and help each other grinding the grains with the two stones to make the flour. It also shows how village women dress up in the olden days, which is unique to their region. The cow's neck is decorated with bells and is taking rest in the backyard of the clay-roofed house.

Tulasi Goli

Parashuram Shakha, Clarks Summit, PA

Tulasiji loves Painting

CONSCIOUS LIVING

Well-balanced life is the key



WRITTEN BY: AMI DAVE PATEL

A well-balanced life is essential for personal effectiveness, peace of mind, and living well.

The first anuvaka from Upanishad is:

ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम् । तदेष्टाभ्युक्ता । सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म ।

One who knows Brahman(the Self), reaches the highest. Satya (reality, truth) is Brahman, Jnana (knowledge) is Brahman, Ananta (infinite) is Brahman.

— Taittiriya Upanishad, 2.1.1

Whether we work, go to school, or are retired, we all have responsibilities. There are always some things we want to do and things we must. The challenge is to balance what we must do with what we enjoy and choose to do. This is not easy. If, however, we are unable to reduce stress and manage a well-balanced life there can be physical and/or emotional health consequences.



TAKE CARE OF AND NURTURE YOURSELF

Get plenty of rest, exercise, and eat properly. Set time aside each day for an activity that you enjoy, such as nature walks, working out,

meditation, dancing, playing/listening to music. Or, allow yourself to unwind after a hectic day by reading or taking an aromatherapy warm bath. In the Vedic era, Upanishad's characterization of personal care shifted the focus from orthopraxy to orthodoxy. Self-care or self-compassion (स्वकारुण्य — svakāruṇya) as a form of worship develops not only insight into the nature of ātman-brahman. To take care of oneself, be intimately aware of the connection one has to nature and with that balance, life begins which sustains all lives around us.



KNOW WHAT YOUR PRIORITIES ARE

Balance doesn't entail cramming in every activity possible. Examine your value and decide what's important to you; then set your boundaries. You

may be in the process of building a career, starting a family, or recovering from life's unwanted stress. Depending on what stage you're at in life, your focus and energy will be different. Avoid becoming overwhelmed by juggling too many big projects in your life at once.

CREATE AN EFFICIENT MINDSET

Be organized and plan. Be sure to allow time for recreation and time for yourself and your family. Taking the time to connect with family and friends will recharge your energies and make you more efficient in the long run.



EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Rather than get stressed and upset, learn to roll with the punches when you have no control over something. You could get stuck in traffic, your computer could crash, or your child could get sick. Stuff happens. We've all experienced the unexpected. If you accept that anything can happen at any time, it's less likely it will throw you off your stride when it does. Adjust your game plan. Note also, that there are times when achieving balance may not be possible. For instance, you may have a family or career crisis that needs your immediate and undivided attention. It may require an exceptional amount of your time and resources. When that happens, do whatever it takes, and when things go back to normal take time to refresh and rejuvenate yourself.



MAINTAIN A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

Part of living a well-balanced life is learning how to deal with adversity, unforeseen events, and uncertainty. If you practice not letting things get to you, you will not only learn to live a well-balanced and less stressful life, you will learn to live in and savor the moment. Once you've done everything you can within your control, let your life unfold. Be prepared for the future, but don't worry about it.

While we can't anticipate and plan for everything in our lives, we can decide how, where, and when to concentrate our energies.

The Upanishads, the ancient Vedic text extolling the unity and wholeness value of consciousness, echoes the Veda that we maintain a positive overall attitude in life. Does this mean we should banish any negative thoughts immediately to recess our minds and hearts? Exercise tells us this doesn't work.

Cont'd ...

However, at some point we have a choice: we can work through our negative feelings, and circumstances as best we can, or hang on to them. Vedic tradition encourages us to try and resolve them, and move on to higher levels of happiness.

Begin each day with the positive intention of making the best and most of it. It may not always go as planned, but it can go more smoothly if you put it in perspective.

"Let us be radiating the truth, radiating the light of life. Never shall denounce, Never entertain Negativity."
- The Upanishads.

Ami Dave Patel

Vivekananda Shakha, Morrisville, NC

Amiji loves Digital content creation, reading, hiking, nature walks, yoga and Ayurvedic cooking

GOMATHA AND THE BENEFITS OF GOMAYAN

WRITTEN BY : BHARATHI KONDAREDDY

The Hindu scriptures refer to the cow as 'Gomatha' which means mother in Sanskrit. *Gomatha* is not merely an animal. She is so important that she is exemplified in the Rig Veda, the *Yajur Veda*, and the *Atharva Veda* with the following aphorisms:

गौ विश्वस्य मातरः

which means "Cows are the mothers in the Universe"; and

मातरः सर्वं भूतानां गवह सर्वं सुखप्रदाः

which means "Cows are the mothers for all living beings and the providers of all pleasures and happiness".

Gomatha is the manifestation of the virtue of a loving mother. *Gomatha*, therefore, is considered the pinnacle of Hindu culture and is treated with high respect. She forms a part of Dharma's innermost identity.

Gomatha is the cornerstone of agriculture, hygiene, and industry, among other things. Cow milk(दुग्धम्), curd(दधि), buttermilk(दधि तक्रम्/ दधिकम्), cow ghee(घृतम्), cow urine(गोपंचकम्), and cow dung(गोमयम्) are the most valuable products of *Gomatha* and are considered indispensable in the Ayurvedic medical system, farming, veterinary science, as well as other areas of human existence. *Gomayam* provides humans with nutrition and life. It is illogical to place a financial value on the part of cow dung. Ghee is the most significant contribution of *Gomatha*. We cannot perform *yagnas/homas* without cow ghee, an important practice in the ancient Indian belief system and mode of living.



Any paid human help will demand a raise, a promotion, and the right to protest. However, the cow, a silent yet potent source of sustenance does not expect anything in return. Thus, in Bharat, a cow is regarded not just as a source of milk products but is highly revered as 'Gomatha', the mother who sustains human living in many ways and 'Kamdhenu', the divine goddess of plenty.

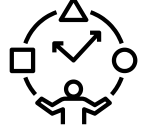
Bharathi Kondareddy

Lachit Shakha, Novi, MI

Hobbies: Cooking and learning about old Hindu practices and understanding the science behind them.

RUTUCHARYA

Human body ~ An integral part of the Universe



WRITTEN BY: RIYA RAHUL SAROLKAR

पिन्डी ते ब्रह्मांडी

What exists in the Universe (ब्रह्माण्ड) also exists in our body (पिन्डी).

One of the defining characteristics of Ayurveda, or the ancient Indian science of life, is the relationship that it has with nature. Ayurveda teaches us that our body does not exist without the natural world. In fact, we are an integral part of nature. Changes in the natural world affect our bodies.

In this modern age, we have kind of forgotten the organic and natural instinctive way of living that nourishes ourselves. Even though we are spending more to buy healthy and organic food, in reality, we are distancing away from a harmonious existence in nature. Ayurveda insists on the importance of following a *dinacharya* or daily routine. Similarly, Ayurveda also elaborates on the concept of *Rutucharya*. Let us understand what "Rutucharya" means.

Rutu (ऋतु) is a period of two months (द्वौ मासौ (*dvau māsau*). *Charya* (चर्य) is routine- नियम-अपरित्याग: is not giving up certain rules. It requires following certain आहार or food habits and विहार or physical activities.

Definition of Rutucharya in Ayurveda is -

ऋतुविशेषवशाच्च आहारविहारसेवानप्रतिपादनार्थं ऋतुचर्यायाः ।



Seasons bring about special changes in the environment and our own bodies, so certain foods and exercises are specifically prescribed for each *Rutu*. This approach or process is called *Rutucharya*.

Each season has a different effect on our bodies. Imagine having hot and spicy soup or curry on a hot summer afternoon, or having a cold salad for dinner on one of the colder winter nights. Sounds pretty unappetizing? There is a reason why our body reacts in a certain way to certain foods in certain seasons. There are six seasons in a year according to Ayurveda. Let's try to understand some basics of it.

कालो हि नाम भगवान्।

According to Ayurveda, *Kala* or time is divinity and it has neither a beginning nor an end. Time follows the accumulated effect of actions of the past. It is also the cause of the birth and death of all creatures. Similarly, the season, the potency of the substances, various effects of the *doshas*, and the body change with time. Here is how time is explained in our ancient sciences:

अक्षिनिमेष = १ मात्रा

१५ मात्रा = १ काष्ठ

३० काष्ठ = १ कला

२० १/२० कला = १ नाडिका

२ नाडिका = १ मुहूर्त

३ ३/४ मुहूर्त = १ यम

४ याम = १ अह । १ रात्री

१५ अहोरात्री = १ पक्ष

२ पक्ष = १ मास

२ मास = १ ऋतु

३ ऋतु = १ अयन

२ अयन = १ वर्ष

Akshinimesha = 1 matra

15 matras = 1 kashtha

30 kashtha = 1 kala

20 1/20 kala = 1 naadika

2 naadika = 1 muhurta (48 min)

3 3/4 muhurta = 1 yama (3hrs)

4 yamas = 1 aha/ 1 ratri

15 ahoratri = 1 paksha

2 paksha = 1 masa (month)

2 masa = 1 rutu (season)

3 rutu = 1 ayan (6 months)

2 ayan = 1 varsha (1 year)

There are six *Rutus* in a year. In the northern hemisphere, this is how we define seasonal changes.

Adaan Kaal/ Northern Solstice/ Uttarayana (14 January to 14 July)				
शिशिर	Shishir Rutu	Winter	mild	January to mid-March
वसन्त	Vasant Rutu	Spring	mild	mid-March to mid-May
ग्रीष्म	Greeshma Rutu	Summer	hot	May to mid-July

Visarga Kaal/ Southern Solstice/ Dakshinayana (14 July to 14 January)			
वर्षा	Varsha Rutu	Monsoon	mid-July to mid-Sept
शरद	Sharad Rutu	Autumn/Fall	mid-March to mid-May
हेमन्त	Hemant Rutu	Late Autumn/ Pre-winter	May to mid-July

Cont'd ...

They are divided into two groups:

- The *Rutus* of *Shishir*, *Vasant*, and *Greeshma* are characterized by the northern movement of the Sun also called *Aadaana Kaal* (आदान काल) as it is believed that the Sun absorbs strength from living beings during this time.
- Varsha*, *Sharad*, *Hemant* fall into *Dakshinayan* also called *Visarga Kaal* (विसर्ग काल) as all living beings slowly gain strength during this period.



What is Aadaan Kal(आदान काल)?

This is the अग्नि प्रधान काल or the heat-dominant period. During this time, days are warmer and winds are dryer and faster absorbing moisture from the earth. Thus the dryness and heat (अग्नि) are also increased in the human body.



What is Visarga kaal?

This is a सौम्य काल or cool period. Due to clouds, cold breeze, and rain, the Sun's capacity to affect the body is limited and the moon takes the

driving seat. As a result, human bodies gain strength and become powerful.

Effect on Doshas

According to Ayurveda, our body is made up of a unique combination of *Doshas* (Software of our body- वात(vata), पित्त (pitta), कफ(kapha) which determines our health. Mainly there are 3 kinds of changes.

चय (chaya)	प्रकोप (prakopa)	प्रशम (prashama)
Accumulation of doshas in its main site like वात दोष (Vata dosha) in the intestine.	Accumulation of deranged Doshas in other main seats in the body like Vata Dosha in the low back region	Dosha's coming back to normalcy after derangement

This is how the derangement occurs in order in respective rutus.

दोष (Dosha)	चय (Chaya)	प्रकोप (Prakopa)	प्रशम (Prasama)
वात (Vata) 	ग्रीष्म (Greeshma) (summer)	वर्षा (Varsha) (rainy)	शरद (Sharad) (Autumn)
पित्त (Pitta) 	वर्षा (Varsha) (Rainy)	शरद (Sharad) (Autumn)	हेमंत (Hemanta) (Early Winter)
कफ (kapha) 	शिशिर (Shishira) (Winter)	वसंत (Vasanta) (Spring)	ग्रीष्म (Greeshma) (Summer)

For example, *Vata dosha* is accumulated in the intestine in Summer(*greeshma*), then accumulated in the lower back in the rainy season(*varsha*), and finally becomes normal in Autumn(*Sharad*)

चय-प्रकोप-प्रशमः वायोः ग्रीष्मादिषु त्रिषु ।

वर्षादिषु तु पित्तस्य श्लेष्मणः शिशिरादिषु ॥

– अष्टांग हृदय सूत्र

So far, we have learned the basic understanding of *Rutus* (seasons) and how they might affect our minds and bodies due to the derangement of *doshas*.

Ayurveda always focuses on maintaining the health of a healthy person. Understanding the possibility and treating it before the disease makes its way. That is the reason, *Rutucharya* holds a very important role in maintaining the *Swasthya* (health).

Once we understand that, then wherever we go in the world, we can find harmony with nature.

We will be learning about *Rutucharya* and the connection of our festivals with that *rutucharya* in the coming article.

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चित् दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।

Riya Rahul Sarolkar

Matrushakha- Satsang Shakha (Greater Boston Vibhag)

Riya is learning to speak Sanskrit

KIDS ZONE

Quiz Answers

1. Lord Ganesh
2. Lord Brahma
3. Lord Vishnu
4. Lord Shiva
5. Indra
6. Agni
7. Goddess Lakshmi
8. Ma Sita Dev
9. Lord Rama
10. Lord Krishna
11. Bhagavad Gita
12. Sage Valmiki
13. Lord Shiva
14. Lord Narasimha
15. Ramayana & Mahabharata
16. Lord Vamana
17. Lord Parasurama
18. a. Matsya, b. Kurma, c. Varaha d. Narasimha
19. Lord Kalki
20. Sudamat

HINDU WOMEN FROM HISTORY

Amar chotto manush. Jana kon?



WRITTEN BY: DIVYA JAIN



SUSHILA SUNDARI (1879 - 1924)

The Great Bengal Circus! Oh, the highly charged atmosphere it created in those challenging times of India's war of independence!

It was the time when Indians were trying to free the country from the clutches of the power-hungry, authoritative, and atrocious British rulers. The revolt had already started in the Indian military where the Indians soldiers realized that the British were trying to hurt their religious sentiments. The torch bearer Mangal Pandey, Velu Nachiyar, the first Indian queen from Tamil Nadu to fight against East India Company, and innumerable, highly motivated soldiers from Bengal who had joined the army, were collectively inspiring people to play their role in the freedom struggle.

In those stressful times of massacre, killing, beating, what was soothing was the presence of people like Sushila Sundari! The name may not sound familiar, but we all must learn about her. She was India's first female trapeze artist.

The circus artists on the cycles or in the ring of fire, the colorful clowns, the giant elephants, the jugglers; this was the setup of 'The Great Bengal Circus'! It was owned by Professor Bose. Eventually, Sushila Sundari became the star performer of this circus. She was a trained trapeze artist and was known for the daring acts with tigers.

In 1896, the circus performed in the durbar of the Prince of Rewa. He was so pleased that he gifted them two tigers, named Lakshmi and Narayan. Sushila learned to master the tigers. She would enter the tiger cage with ease, make them growl, stand, and sit. She would arm wrestle with them. When one of the tigers died, she tried to perform the acts with an untrained tiger. During the performance, the tiger mauled her and she became disabled for the rest of her life.

The Hindu women, raised in a family of proud Hindus, had a great story behind their success. The strength and valor that they exhibited made Bengal and Sanatan Dharma proud. The feats performed by Sushila at the circus not only brought joy to the audience in the stressful time but also opened a way for women to enter a very offbeat field of the circus. Let that pride be the pride of today's Hindu women. Be it circus or any other field, let's exhibit our full potential as Hindu women with our dharmic and give our best to excel at, without any bounds while we also nurture our families along with dharma.

Divya Jain

Troy Shakha, Troy, MI

Divya is a Writer, Speaker, Bharatiya-shastriya-sangeet Singer & Nritya Lover.

PARKING LOT SAFETY



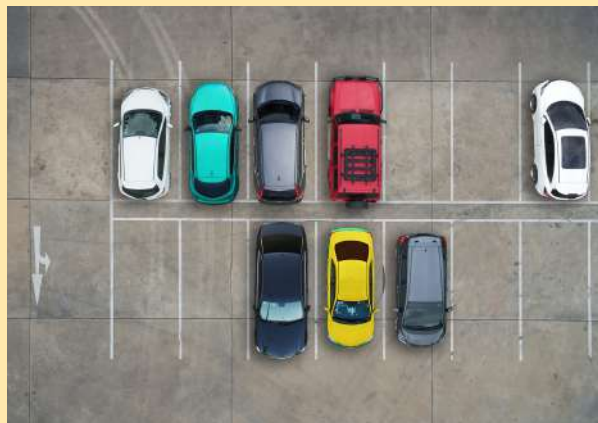
WRITTEN BY : SHIPRA KASHYAP SHARMA

With the COVID restrictions easing and the summer being in full swing, many of us are increasingly stepping out and traveling.

Amidst our steps towards normalcy, staying safe and keeping others safe is a collective responsibility for all of us! So let us take a quick look regarding parking lot safety, a small but nevertheless important part each time we head out in our cars. In the parking lot, safety is a concern for pedestrians and drivers alike.

Some quick tips -

- Stay in lane and do not cut across.
- Choose your parking spot wisely. A good lot is well lit, not secluded, easy to park, and exit.
- Lock your vehicle. This is an often forgotten step. Remember to hide away your belongings, take the keys and valuables with you.
- Watch out for others; be it for other drivers or pedestrians, while parking or walking. Be mindful of others backing out their vehicles.
- Save others from slips, trips, and falls. If you spot debris like plastic bags, nails, leftover food packets, and bottles, do not forget to inform the authorities.
- Be the caring one. If you are exiting a store, stow away your cart at the right spot after you take your belongings out. Carts left at the wrong spots are safety hazards. You could be potentially saving someone from getting accidentally hurt.
- Exit the parking lot with caution. When returning, have your keys handy. Do not multitask, stay off of technology like phones, GPS and avoid distractions. Drive out slowly with focus on the road for your and others' sake.



Shipra Kashyap Sharma
Chetana shakha, McKinney, TX

RECIPES TO TRY

Badam Pak



WRITTEN BY: ARUNA SONI

Sweet and scrumptious, these barfis make for the perfect snack.



Ingredients

- 500 g Almonds (grind it into powder)
- 150 g Ghee/ Clarified Butter
- 100 g Acacia gum
(called *Gond* in Hindi/ *Gunder* in Gujarati)
- 1 can Condensed Milk

Method

- Fry Gond in little Ghee until they turn puffy. Alternatively, it can be microwaved for about 1 min. Keep an eye. Gond burns quickly.
- Grind Gond into fine powder.
- Fry the almond powder in ghee until it changes its color slightly, and turns fragrant (about 5-7 min).
- Add condensed milk, then Gond powder, and mix. It will be a tight, doughy texture.
- Spread it in a greased, baking dish and pat it down well. Cut it into 'barfi' style bars.

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This recipe has been perfected by Arunaji over 25 years!
It is nutritious & works wonders on joint health!

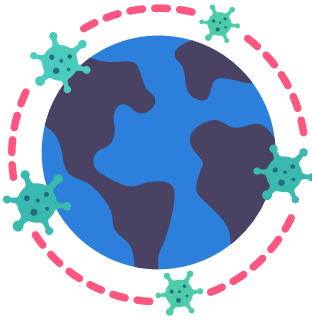
Aruna Soni
Omkar Shakha, Louisville, KY
Aruna ji loves gardening, yoga and reading

SEWA COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Pandemic Diaries



WRITTEN BY: SANDHYA KOLLURU



Nations struggled to cope when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world in early 2020. By March, sanitizers and masks were the new valuables as more people began to look to protect themselves. For a brief period between March and June, there was a push to not hoard

the medical masks as these were required by our frontline workers and healthcare professionals. The world needed time to react, plan, manufacture, and pump these valuables to where it was most needed.

Disaster relief is one of Sewa's main specializations. We were quick to respond to this situation. Sewa's national team began mask-making for wider distribution by guiding its local chapters. In San Antonio, a project started off with one individual making masks tirelessly while inspiring others to do the same. Soon, multiple organizations, individuals, and families from different walks of life came together and started making masks under the Sewa USA banner.



To begin with, a Whatsapp group was created. Word spread as more people joined the group. A blueprint for mask-design and instructions were laid out. Material handling and delivery standards were set.

The project grew and soon, three main teams emerged: cutting team, stitching team, and delivery/distribution team. Material procurement was challenging but people and

organizations chimed in with innovative ideas like using dhotis for the inner layer of the masks, repurposing bed sheets, making ties out of sarees etc.

After the 'Stay at Home' order was enforced, many volunteers were skeptical about pickup/ drop off of materials and stitched masks. High school students played a key role in transportation of materials and delivery of masks to a centralized location from where they were distributed to hospitals, senior care centers, City, frontlines, and SAPD, to name a few.



To put it in numbers, approximately 3,000 handmade masks were made from 300 yards of material within 45 days by about 45 volunteers serving over 15 organizations. Community impact was made! Many organizations and our Mayor recognized this timely effort in multiple ways.

The Mask project once again proved our Sewa motto – "Together we serve better!"



Sandhya Kolluru

Vivekananda Shakha, San Antonio, TX

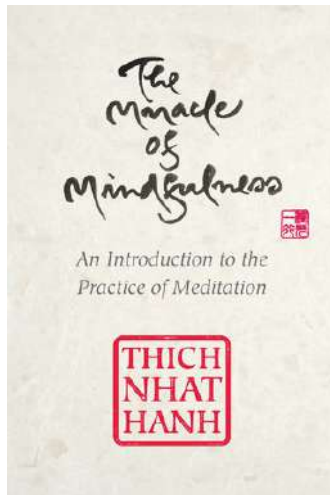
Hobbies: Biking & Experimenting with new cuisines.

THE BOOK THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

The miracle of mindfulness



WRITTEN BY: SEJAL MODY



"The Miracle of Mindfulness" by Thich Nhat Hanh is a description of an inspirational and spiritual journey that can be practiced in every phase of our lives. It is one of those books that compels you to read until the end.

This book has helped me change my outlook about life. It is about our mind, body, and soul and about being one with our thoughts. With mindful practice, we can transform negative thoughts into positive ones. The author Thich Nhat Hanh takes us on a journey to find joy in everything we do. He tells us how the human body and mind have become so mechanical that most of the time we are unaware of our actions.

The following excerpt is one of my favorites from the book as it makes me think about how living every moment is a miracle and how important it is to truly live each moment:

"People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: the blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child — our own two eyes. All is a miracle."

Thich Nhat Hanh tells us in simple terms how we take things for granted. The book takes us through a journey of being mindful at every point in our life. The book points out how important it is to be in the moment. When we walk, we should think about walking. The same goes for food. We should enjoy every morsel and taste every flavor.

This book has taught me to be mindful in every step of my life. I have learned to train my mind to enjoy 24 hours of everyday life. It is a tedious process when one is at work as one has to multitask. The most rewarding part of this book has been the ability to share the journey of mindfulness with my friends. I have raved about this book as it has changed my mindset. It has given me clarity and has enabled me to be in the moment. My mind does go astray at times, but I have been able to come back to the present and be mindful of every action.

This book is a must-read and can bring out the best in every person. It leaves you in awe. It is revitalizing to read this book over and over again. I am thankful to the person that suggested this book to me.

Sejal Mody

Sri Krishna City, Suwanee, GA

NEXT GEN ASK



What is the most important lesson about life that you have learned that you want to impart to the younger generation?

Today's generation believes in being opinionated and getting social approval or 'likes' for everything they do. However, one's real peace and happiness lies not in having an opinion on everything which goes around you, be it human relationships or any other events/episodes. Not reacting to everything and letting things go is the best way to save your energy for fulfilling your dreams and goals. Paradoxical, as it may sound, but one has to realize that one's opinion doesn't always matter because you can't change the world. So sometimes it's better to let things be the way they are, and let people go if they wish to. What you have to hold on and really 'like' is your own self. Life is better lived when you

don't center it on what's happening around you and when you don't seek other's approval but you center it on what's happening inside you. Work on yourself and your inner peace and you'll come to realize that not reacting to everything that bothers you is the first step to achieve happiness.

