



PRERANA



An Inspiration To Hindu Women

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PRERANA

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Please email your suggestions to :
prerana@hssworld.org

Editorial Team

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Ashwini Surpur	Column Coordinator
Shruti Pant	Column Coordinator

EDITORIAL: Are Indians in America facing dilemma about their ethnicity? (By Neha Shah, Westboro, MA)

Are Indians in America facing a dilemma about their ethnicity?

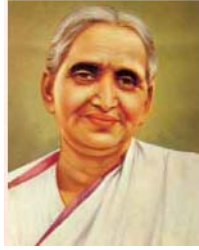
As an Indian born and raised with a blend of individualist freethinking and traditional cultural and religious norms; living here in the US has brought challenges that I did not foresee I would have to tackle. I cannot imagine that I am an isolated case, for I see many a friends facing the same challenges. From our food habits to our ethnicity, our generation has been steeped in our traditions enough to follow them and yet we are different than our parents in that we are also the product of a scientific generation that questions.

Living as first generation immigrants here in the United States, life has been very different in its pace than it would probably have been in India. Most of us live in single-family units where most often than not both partners work full time jobs. When children are added to that equation, most couple still wants to imbibe in them the roots of our ethnicity as we were. And yet constraints of time and resources available restrict us. Unlike India, there are no support structures of grandparents to pass on cultural and religious heritages neither are there helping hands of maids. However immigration was a personal choice for most Indian Americans and we now have to accept the ramifications of that decision. That does not make our jobs any less nail biting. One of the articles in this issue of Prerana helps us to better navigate the culinary choices we make as Indians and make better, healthier choices that are still ethnic. It also illustrates the completeness of Indian food. In this day of fortified proteins and folic acid intake, we do not need to have to pop vitamin substitutes neither should we have to be told that we need to eat meat proteins for a complete meal. Indian food, even the simplest ones have been a complete culinary experience from taste buds to health ramifications. We have sort of fallen trap to popular culture that makes Indian food seem just an experience of the mouth, and very often we also interpret it as greasy, very high in fat kind of food. Sneha Jaisingh's articles dispel these myths. Vegetarianism or Non-vegetarianism is a choice and it should remain so.

The popular culture also extends itself to Indian culture as a whole. The year 2005 saw a surge of Indian Fashions being very hot here in the US. I find it amusing and little sad that many Indians chose to own up to the source of these fashions as Indians and feeling sense of pride in it only when popular culture made it acceptable. For decades the sari has been "cumbersome" clothing as has been salwar suits. But when Madonna and other material celebrities make it hip to have Indian fashions, suddenly entire hordes of Indians begin to imbibe it. Pride of being all things Indian should be more of an intrinsic part of who we are. Different does not mean any less. And there is nothing wrong with western clothes, for most part they are supremely practical for our lives. And I do not advocate being Indian just because you are one. However don't own to everything Indian out of the blue just because it is a part of popular culture. I recently joined the workforce again after a hiatus of 3 years. One of the interesting experiences I have had has been of an Indian gentleman being rude to me on the phone just because he thought I was located in India. My first reaction was to lash out, however within a few minutes of cooling down, I realized that the problem was with him and not how I was. It is indeed a pity that Indians feel the need to put down their own just to feel a part of this country. It is sadder because America is a country where by and large people are accepted for who they are. Sure there are bigots everywhere, and one cannot go around bringing all of them around, neither should we take up that mantle.

Hoids on Italians, Irish, Jews and Dutch who are now a blend of American milieu, were once in the same boat as we are right now. These are a people that have contributed immensely to this country in every field and yet as immigrants they faced the same challenges that we do today. The Japanese in this country faced immense bigotry after WW2 and yet they persevered, not by putting down their own or forgetting their legacies. Instead they chose to cater it to their needs, tweak it little and make it a part of American culture. Isn't it time we did that? Isn't it time to stop feeling guilty for being whom we are and what it is that we stand for? Should we apologise for our accents and traditions any more? Is that the kind of message we want our children to learn? Sure, "the woods are lovely, dark and deep but I have promises to keep; and miles to go before I sleep"

OUR PRERANA: Vandaniya Mousiji (By Shruti Pant, Fremont,CA)



In the last article we understood the reasons behind Vandaniya Mausiji's desire to study Ramayan. Upon completion of her study, she started giving public discourses on Ramayan. Her speeches would continue for straight ten days. Her stage was very simple but pious. She would wear 9 yard white Sari, and would have a picture of Lord Shri Ram besides her accompanied by a simple oil lamp (diya). The program would start with a song from Geet Ramayan, followed by her main discourse. During the first day she would tell different stories from the books on Ramayan which she had studied and researched. She would explain that the narration or commentaries on Ramayan depicted social belief system from that particular era. She would give several examples to that effect.

For example, to explain the philosophy of Shri Nath "Bhavartha Ramayan", she described that the society during those times was engulfed with the thoughts of Nirvana. Even when the nation was being crushed under foreign rule by Mughal kings, general population was ignorant. It was as if we had stopped thinking clearly. The general thought was that if our body and the world is perishable, then it was fruitless to protect it. The only way out was to attain Moksha - permanent freedom from all worldly worries. It was a common belief of the well-educated people that it does not make any difference whether the king was our own or a foreigner. Naturally the society faced consequences of this ignorant attitude. Shri Nathji was also influenced by this thought process and hence he gave a spiritual outlook to his commentary on Ramayan.

Similarly, foreign attackers were actually invading Bharat during the era of Shri Goswami Tulsidas. In order to restore faith in our dharma and brotherhood in society, Shri Tulsidas started writing the Ramcharit Manas – a beautiful commentary full of Bhakti rasa – devotion for God.

One more example is the work done by Shridhar Swamiji. Through his commentary and stories of Ramayan, Shridhar Swamiji narrated examples of Hindu cultural philosophy. I will share one example here. When Shri Ram went to the ashrama of Rishi Agastya, Sita and Lakshman were also with him. Rishi Agastya welcomed all of them with lots of respect and love. But, when Shri Ram went to meet him after the kidnapping of Sita, Rishi Agastya refused to meet him. Naturally Lakshman got very angry at this behavior. He thought that when we came with Sitaji, Rishi welcomed us but when we are in need of help, he refuses to even meet us. Again, after Ravana's demise, Rishi Agastya welcomed them to their Ashram. The Rishi explained this change to Shri Ram saying, "When you came earlier I refused to meet you because you were not "Shriyut" meaning Sitaji was not with you. I refused to welcome you because I don't see an "apoorna" person meaning incomplete person". He told Shri Ram that without Prakriti, Purush is incomplete. This is an example of the profound philosophy of our Hindu Dharma and culture. Shridhar Swami explained this concept with a simple example from the Ramayan.

Mousiji's deep study of Ramayan and its commentaries, enabled her to provide a correct prospective on various social and cultural issues during different periods in our history.

YOGA: PRANAYAMA TECHNIQUES (By Daksha Shah, Houston, TX)

In this article we will continue the various breathing techniques otherwise known as Pranayam, from our previous issue in October of 2005

Cooling Pranayamas

Sitali Pranayama, Sitkari Pranayama and Sadanta Pranayama.

Sitali Pranayama:

- Sit in Vajrasana posture
- Place the palms resting on the thighs
- Stretch the tongue forward partly out of the mouth and fold it so resemble the beak of a crow
- Slowly suck in the air through the beak and feel the jet of cool air passing down the throat into lungs.
- Slowly exhale through the nostrils, feeling the movements of warm air all the way up from the lungs through the throat and the nasal passages.
- This completes one round.

Repeat nine rounds.

Sitkari Pranayama:

- Sit in Vajrasana posture
- Place the palms resting on the thighs
- Fold the tip of the tongue inwards horizontally. The folded tongue slightly comes between the two rows of teeth and provides a narrow opening on both sides
- Slowly suck in the air through the two sides of the tongue and feel the cool stream of the air diffusing throughout the mouth and throat into the lungs.
- Slowly exhale through the both nostrils. Feel the warmth of the exhaled air.
- This completes one round.

Repeat nine rounds.

Sadanta Pranayama:

- Sit in Vajrasana posture
- Place the palms resting on the thighs
- Let the upper set of teeth touch the lower set of teeth.
- Keep the tip of the tongue just behind the teeth.
- Inhale through the crevices of the teeth and feel the cool air moving slowly and continuously in to the mouth and passing down the throat into the lungs.
- Slowly exhale the warm air through the both nostrils. Feel the warmth of the exhaled air.
- This completes one round.

Repeat nine rounds.

Benefits:

- They soothen the eyes, ears and purify the blood.
- They quench the thirst, appease hunger and generate a feeling of satisfaction.
- Help in reducing tensions and stresses and induce mental tranquility
- Keep teeth and gum healthy.

Help reduces blood pressure and acid stomach.

YOGA: PRANAYAMA TECHNIQUES (Continued.....)

Limitations:

People with low B.P., cold, sore throat and bronchitis should avoid. Avoid in cool climate.

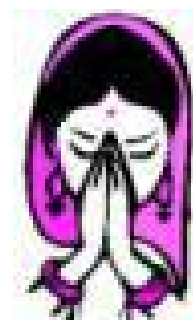
Bhramari Pranayama:

- Sit in Vajrasana posture
- Place the palms resting on the thighs
- Inhale slowly and completely
- While exhaling Chant 'MMM' sound in low pitch.
- Feel the sound resonance in the entire head region.
- Repeat nine times.

Benefits:

- Relieves Stress and Mental Tensions.
- Reduces Anger, Anxiety and insomnia and blood pressure.
- Speeds up the healing of the body tissue & so may be practiced after surgery.

Why do we do namaste?



Hindus greet each other with "namaste". The two palms are placed together in front of the chest and the head bows while saying the word "namaste". This greeting is for all - people younger than us, of our own age, those older than us, friends, and even strangers. Namaste could be just a casual or formal greeting, a cultural convention or an act of worship. However there is much more to it than meets the eye. In Sanskrit namah + te = namaste. It means - I bow to you - my greetings, salutations or prostration to you. Namaha can also be literally interpreted as "na ma" (not mine). It has a spiritual significance of negating or reducing one's ego in the presence of another. The real meeting between people is the meeting of their minds. When we greet another, we do so with namaste, which means, "may our minds meet" indicated by the folded palms placed before the chest. The bowing down of the head is a gracious form of extending friendship in love and humility. The spiritual meaning is even deeper. The life force, the divinity, the Self or the Lord in me is the same in all. Recognizing this oneness with the meeting of the palms, we salute with head bowed to the Divinity in the person we meet. That is why sometimes, we close our eyes as we do namaste to a revered person or the Lord as if to look within. The gesture is often accompanied by words like "Ram Ram", "Jai Shri Krishna", "Jai Siya Ram", "Om Shanti" etc. indicating the recognition of this divinity. When we know this significance, our greeting does not remain just a superficial gesture or word but paves the way for a deeper communion with another in an atmosphere of love and respect.

AYURVEDA : “ARTHRITIS (Painful Joints)” (By Usha Pappu, Cupertino, CA)

Arthritis is one of the most common ailments for which Ayurvedic help is being sought these days.

Disease process in Arthritis:

According to *Ayurveda* mostly pains are caused by the aggravation of *Vata* (air) *Dosha*. Arthritis is a condition which is caused by accumulation of *ama* and aggravation of *vata*. (*Ama* is a toxic by-product of improper digestion.) This *ama* circulates in the whole body and deposits or gets collected at the sites which are weaker. When it deposits in the joints and at the same time there is aggravation of *Vata*, it results in a disease called *amavata*. This *amavata* is arthritis.

Remedies:

- As described above *ama* and *vata* are the main causes, so efforts should be made to digest *ama* and to reduce the *vata*. The digestion should be improved so that no further *ama* is produced. Efforts should be made to relieve the pain and inflammation. This is the line of treatment according to *Ayurveda*.
- Fasting is very beneficial for digesting the *ama*. The fasting be complete or partial depending on the strength of the person, season and place. Two tea spoons of lemon juice mixed in 250 ml. of warm water and a tea spoon of honey is good to take twice a day -morning and evening.
- body massage with sesame or mustard oil helps to reduce the *vata* and thus reduce the pain. The joints affected by pain can be massaged for longer time.
- Light exercise is useful but you must know your limits: as a general rule if any exercise, including walking, causes pain after one hour, you have crossed your limit.
- Liberal intake of orange juice or sweet lime juice or Vitamin C enhances the efficacy of any anti rheumatic drug, since Vitamin C can reduce skeletal pain.

Guggul is a very helpful herb for curing arthritis. If available it can be taken in one to 3 gm dose twice a day after meals with warm water. Contra-indications: Not recommended for people with kidney disease or acute rashes.

Diet and Regimen:

- Foods which are easily digestible and do not make wind or gas are good. Vegetable juices and soups are good. A juice of carrot, beat root and cucumber mixed together is also beneficial. Green salad with a dressing of lemon juice and a little salt is also good. Fruits like apples, oranges, grapes and papaya can be taken. Cooked vegetables like squash, zucchini and pumpkin are good. Cooking with spices like cumin, coriander, ginger, asafetida, garlic, fennel and turmeric also helps a lot.
- Avoid eating hot, spicy and fried foods, sweets, wind forming foods like cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, broccoli, okra and potatoes should be prohibited. Avoid taking too much tea, coffee, alcohol, white sugar, yogurt, chocolate and cocoa, excessive smoking
Sleeping during day time, staying up late in the night and mental tensions like worry, anxiety, fear, stress and grief etc., should be given up. Regular physical exercise and every day massage with oil, once or twice a week, should form an important part of life style.

PRIDE OF STATE : MANIPUR



Manipur is one of the easternmost states of our country India. Manipur, popularly known as the "land of jewels" splits up naturally into two parts - the hills and the plains. Imphal, the capital of the easternmost state of Manipur, is the center of all cultural, commercial and political activities. The inhabitants of these two divisions have their own distinctive dialects, customs and tribal costumes. The green state of Manipur, and Imphal its capital, has all the fine, merged, tints of a water colour. Faiths and traditions and life styles seem to flow into each other with a soft edged grace so that it is impossible to know where one ends and the other begins.

The so- called Manipur valley is really a plateau about 700 meters high, watered by rivers threading out of the dark, mist-topped, ranges. Bright green fields stretch all the way to the distant mountains. And the character of the terrain changes from parts resembling the delicate valley of Kangra, north of the plains of Punjab, to that of the flat-sub-mountain lands of Kerala deep in the warm south of India. Like the Nair women of Kerala the women of Manipur are trained in the fierce local Martial art known as Thang-ta. Both the men and women are dressed in black and they wield their swords like slicing, flashing, and propellers; and when their swords clash, sparks fly. They look like lithe, vicious, felines. And all the while, drums grumble and murmur ominously.

In marked contrast, is the delicate, marionette-like, Manipuri dance. The choreographers of this very feminine dance must ensure that the faces of the women are veiled at all times, that there is no gesture or eye-contact between the dancers and their audience, that the movements of the lower part of the body are minimal, that the bottom half of the costumes are heavy and concealing, and that the mudra gestures and movements merely suggest the relationship between the dancers and their Divine Master, Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna in his manifestation as Govindji is the presiding deity in the revered Sri Govindji Temple with its twin golden domes. The principal deity here is carved out of a jackfruit tree in response to a dream, which Rajarshi Bhagyachandra had in the 18th century. Older forms of worship, however, continue to exist in the veneration of forest deities known as Umang Lais. They are represented as metal masks, similar to the deities of other Himalayan people such as the Himachalis of Kulu. Thus Imphal gives a fascinating insight into an archetypal Indian trend: multiple ethno - cultural streams merging into patterns like a gently blended watercolor.

Though small in area, Manipur is rich in its culture, traditions, festivals, dances, handlooms and handicrafts. The population for Manipur state is near about 25 lakhs. The spoken Languages are Manipuri, Hindi and English. The best season to visit Manipur state is from October to February.

Places of interest: There are lots of places where you can visit.

SHRI GOVINDAJEE TEMPLE: This temple, adjoining the palace of the former rulers of Manipur, is a historic center for Vaishnavites.

KHWAIRAMBAND BAZAR: The market is very special because all the stall-holders are women.

MANIPUR STATE MUSEUM: This interesting museum near the polo grounds has a fairly good display of Manipur's tribal heritage and a collection of portraits of Manipur's former rulers.

THE OLD PALACE: In the heart of the town, and in grounds now occupied by the para-military forces for their training, there are interesting ruins of an old fortress wall and a palace. The sentry at the gate stops vehicles but visitors are permitted to enter once the guard is assured that they have come to see the ruins.

WAR CEMETERIES: The British and Indian Army Cemeteries commemorating those who died in the 2nd World War are serene and well-maintained with little stone markers and bronze plaques recording their anguish and sacrifice.

MANIPUR ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN: This zoological garden at Iroishemba on the Imphal-Kangchup road. **KHONGHAMPAT ORCHIDARIUM:** The Orchid Yard of the Forest Department, is another place of interest. Peak season is April-May.

SAHEED MINAR: The Minar at Bir Tikendrajit Park in the heart of Imphal commemorates the indomitable spirit of Manipur martyrs who sacrificed their lives while fighting against the British in 1891.

LANGTHABAND: 8 km down the Indo-Burma road lays this small hill feature with the relics of an old historic palace.

BISHNUPUR: The single-celled, conical roofed temple of Vishnu.

MOIRANG: From Imphal to the south is one of the ancient villages of Manipur contributing much to her culture. Traditional "Moirang Lai Haraoba" is celebrated sometime in the month of May every year from the olden days. During the festival, men and women in hundreds dance and sing in honour of Thangjing. On the time of Second World War Moirang was the H. Q. of the Azad Hind Fouz where Netaji hoisted for the first time the flag of I. N. A. on the Indian soil. Moirang offers I.N.A. memorial with the Statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

LOKTAK LAKE : The largest fresh water lake in the North-Eastern India. Its vast expanse of water with both resident & migratory birds offers scope for shooting, fishing and boating. The importance of Loktak Lake is the little Islands Thanga and Karang in the centre of the lake, labyrinth of boat routes amidst the floating marshes.

SENDRA: An islet in the middle of Loktak Lake is a viewpoint overlooking the lake and its surroundings. A telescope is to be installed here to watch the animals in their natural habits in Keibul Lamjao National Park

KEIBUL LAMJAO NATIONAL PARK: Inside the famous Loktak Lake, the only floating National Park of its kind in India. It is the natural habitat of the rare Browntelored deer found nowhere else.

KOUBRU HILL: 8404 feet high Koubru Hill is a pilgrim center.

MAO: The place is rich in Mao Naga culture.

UKHRUL: This is the hill station of Manipur.

KAINA: A beautiful hillock, can be reached by bus.

WAI THOU LAKE: On Indo-Burma road by the side of the lake is a picturesque village famous for its pineapples.

KHONGJOM: On Indo-Burma road it is a place of great historic importance. Here Major Genrl. Paona Brajabashi one of the great warriors of Manipur, proved his valour against the invading British Army in 1891. The hillock at the foot of which he laid down his life in defence of his motherland. A war memorial on the top of this hill feature adds charm to this historic site. Khongjom Day is celebrated as a state function every year on April 23.

TENGNUPAL: Highest point of the Imphal-Burma road and from here one can have a full view of the valley of Manipur.

MOREH: The border town of India on the Indo-Burma road.

I WANT TO SHARE : (By Anjali Patel, Cupertino, CA)

When I was asked to write about textbook project of Hindu Education foundation (HEF) in the column, “I want to share”, I was very excited because, it was very different experience. I started working on this project of HEF from its initial days.

I want to share this experience because it is a learning experience as parent, and a learning experience as member of society. The most important **thing** I realized is, we all have a role to play in school and we are *unaware* of what we can do First, we should be proud Hindus and should know little more about Hinduism. Most of us work in school as volunteers, *rarely participate actively* in PTA or any decision making processes. We very rarely try to **interact with** teachers with our believes, or inform them about our culture. Many times, we just pay attention to Math and Science subjects, but rarely find out about History or English. I realized we should be more involved in the school activities and must increase our relations with teachers. When I started this project, I never expected the depth and complexity of this project.

In California, sixth grade students study about India and Hinduism in their History and Social Studies curriculum under the topic “Ancient Civilization”. The books contain a lot of derogatory, inaccurate, and biased information about History of India and Hinduism. As the new books were coming, HEF decided to take up this task and correct the textbook. The new textbooks will be used for next six years in school. The process of textbook adoption is very open here. The publishers write and submit their books to California Department of Education (CDE), and then the department puts the books for public display at certain places throughout the state. Public can go and write comments on the books. HEF took a major role in this process. We asked experts like Dr. Tilak, Dr. Subhash Kak, Linda Johnsen , to write the detailed reviews about the India and Hinduism part. We submitted this detail review to CDE. These reviews are treated as public comments. There were public hearings and public meetings where we as residents of state, participated and expressed our concerns. HEF attended all the meetings with good numbers. I made seven trips to Sacramento for HEF in last 7 months, before that I visited just once to Sacramento. In the meetings, CDE discussed the proposed changes and gave their decision about which changes to take. The final meeting was on 2nd December and they took most of the changes proposed by HEF. This is not major victory, but these are just the cosmetic changes because there are some limitations to the number of edits and corrections. The major work is in coming few years.

HEF has done following tasks

- Procured the books from publishers
- Reviewed the books
- Interacted with the CDE officials
- Attended all the public hearing in Sacramento
- Contacted School superintendents’ for supports

Working with people for signature campaign

We procure the books from the publishers because the books are yet not printed. It was a blind follow up with publishers because; until we received the book, we were never sure they would send it. Reviewing these books through the experts was another enlightening experience. I interacted with many individuals who are very knowledgable and willing to work for Hindu cause. We are very fortunate to have all these intellects supporting our work, and wrote detail review. combine To express our concerns we arranged meetings with CDE officials, maintained continuous communication with CDE was long-term job. We attended all the meeting with support from all our people. All these meeting lasted for whole day. It was a very stressful and different experience. Speaking to the commissioners was very different then giving boudhik in shakha. We contacted many school superintendents for supporting our position, after talking to them most of them supported. We gathered on-line and in person signature campaign from public to support this cause. In all these process some time, we had good and bad experiences with everyone. There was a group of people who opposed our changes. Because of that, we had a setback, but it is not complete failure.

At the end, I would like to tell all of you to be more active in the school. If anyone wants to be active then please contact HEF at join_us@hindueducation.org or talktoanjali@hotmail.com take time to visit our site at www.hindueducation.org

HINDU WOMAN : Maitreyi and Sudha Murthy

Maitreyi, the Philosopher



Maitreyi is well known as great scholars of Vedic scriptures. The *Rig Veda* contains about one thousand hymns, of which about ten are accredited to Maitreyi, the woman seer and philosopher. She contributed towards the enhancement of her sage-husband Yajnavalkya's personality and the flowering of his spiritual thoughts. Yajnavalkya had two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani. While Maitreyi was well-versed in the Hindu scriptures and was a 'brahmavadini', Katyayani was an ordinary woman. One day the sage decided to make a settlement of his worldly possessions between his two wives and renounce the world by taking up ascetic vows. He asked his wives their wishes. The learned Maitreyi asked her husband if all the wealth in the world would make her immortal. The sage replied that wealth could only make one rich, nothing else. She then asked for the wealth of immortality. Yajnavalkya was happy to hear this and imparted to Maitreyi the doctrine of the soul and his knowledge of attaining immortality.

Sudha Murthy, Founder of the Infosys Foundation



Sudha Murthy, one of the first ladies of IT industry and wife of N R Narayana Murthy, the chairman of Infosys Technologies Ltd., the largest software organisation in the country. She has an M Tech degree in computer science. After topping the class in computer science from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, she came across a job advertisement in February 1974, which said Telco (Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company) wanted bright young graduates.

However, much to her disappointment, she found in the footnote it was written "female candidates need not apply." Her ego deeply hurt, she shot off a 'postcard' to JRD Tata asking him how a leading and progressive house like the Tatas, "which always thought ahead of time, could put such a restriction." "After posting it I forgot about it," she said. A pleasant surprise awaited her. A telegram soon arrived asking her to appear for an interview "with a promise of reimbursement of first class fare both ways," she said.

She got selected as a GT (graduate trainee) and as the first lady technical officer at Telco, she was first posted to Pune.

Sudha Murthy, for that matter, could be chairman of Infosys herself! and was the one who gave the first Rs 10,000 to start her husband's company. She worked for Infosys in its early years and was disappointed when her husband decided that only one of them should be in the firm. But she did give up her job and instead of heading Infosys, Sudha now leads the Infosys Foundation, an organisation she created in 1997 to provide health, education and social rehabilitation for the poor. She has very little contact with the high tech world today. She spends between 15 to 20 days every month travelling to rural areas in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Orissa.

STORY : CRACKED_POT (By Anuradha Khadkekar, Fremont, CA)

This is a very interesting story of two large clay pots. They were living in a poor man's house in a small village of India. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and was always thought of itself as the best of them.

Mohan that poor man used to work as a water bearer to earn his bread-n-butter. He used to carry these two pots, each one hung on each end of a pole which he carried across his neck. Perfect pot always delivered full of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the bearer's master's house. The cracked pot arrived only half full.

This went on daily for a full two years, with Mohan delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made.

But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to Mohan, the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

Why?" asked Mohan.

"What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

Mohan felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some.

But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to Mohan for its failure.

Mohan said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side?"

That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Similarly each of us has our own unique flaws. We all are like that cracked pot. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take each person for what they are, and look for the good in them. There is a lot of good out there.

There are lot of good qualities in us with some flaws!

Remember to appreciate all the different people in your life!

Healthy Nuggets for a busy life (By Sneh Jaising, MS. Human Nutrition)

Coming from a family of Medical professionals and having breathed around spiritually aware people, I was always exposed to the significance of nutrition from both scientific and spiritual aspects. Despite the knowledge, following a healthy lifestyle along with balancing both personal and professional worlds posed quiet a challenge; especially here in the US with little domestic help available.

A quick recap on the status of Immigrant Indians

Food, the source of life energy is greatly influenced by Culture and Weather, which, by the way, in the US is a complete contrast from our tropical land, India.

In the last Fifty years, millions of Indians migrated to the US for various reasons. Coming under the influence of the western lifestyle and severe weather, we made some necessary adjustments to fit in. We altered our accent, started wearing layered clothing, made dietary changes like, altering vegetarian status, meal patterns, increased usage of fast foods, frozen and ready-to-eat food, etc.

Also, with the so called “convenient” and “comfortable” lifestyle, our physical activity level dropped to a bare minimum, resulting in a low BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate).

The Consequence

Research shows today,

- Many of Immigrant Indians have an intense prevalence of coronary heart disease, diabetes, low HDL, high cholesterol and triglycerides, hypertension. The prevalence of Coronary artery disease is three times higher in Asian Indian women than in women in US as a whole.
- In India only one in 40 women get breast cancer but in US out of every 8 Asian Indian women will get the disease; the highest incidence in the world, according to the American Cancer Society.
- Asian Indian women are a high risk for osteoporosis, according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation.

What can we do about it?

All of us have gathered enough knowledge about Nutrition. What we lack is a “road-map” to implement that knowledge in our lives. So let’s start by looking at some fundamental things, which are called the **ABC’s of Health**. Here are some simple and practical lifestyle modifications which will aid you in living fit.

A: Aim for fitness

Health experts suggest that along with dietary changes one should also adhere to an exercise routine. I would say that start with increasing your physical activity and applying necessary dietary changes will become easier. Here are some simple and effective suggestions to help increase your daily activity:

Here are some simple and effective suggestions to help increase your daily activity:

1. Take the stairs instead of the elevator at work, home, mall, etc.
2. If the weather permits, park the car to the farthest parking spot and walk.
3. Leave the shopping carts outside the store and walk with the grocery bags to your car; engages muscles to a small workout.
4. While making long conversations on phone, especially those leisured weekend calls, walk around the house or go up and down the stairs, instead of sitting on the couch.
5. Socializing is more fun when there is something more than food and regular conversations. Come up with innovative ideas, like playing games indoor/outdoor, depending on the weather.

6. Call out invitations for an evening of exercise for fun; be it ballet or kickboxing, instead of those rather motiveless gatherings.
7. Instead of watching those regular soaps on TV, it is healthy and refreshing to play with the little ones. E.g.: Hide-n-seek can be interactive and recreational.
8. Staying organized keeps you fit and focused in both personal and professional lives.
9. Helping around in the house (laundry, doing the dishes, cooking, cleaning, gardening, and vacuuming) is a great way to exercise.
10. If going to the gym becomes stressful, home exercise videos can be very effective. E.g.: Am. -Pm. Yoga -Denise Austin, Walk away the pounds - 2 mile walk-Leslie Sansone.

B = Build a healthy base

Developing a solid foundation is like a blueprint for a healthy life. Some tips to achieve that:

1. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Here are some practical breakfast suggestions:
 - a) Cereals with milk, Carnation breakfast, Quakers oatmeal, cream of wheat, etc.
 - b) Vegetable sandwich, cheese toast, Peanut butter jelly sandwich.
 - c) Boiled egg/omelet with bread.
 - d) Cereal bars
 - e) Boiled corn, fruits (Dole ready to eat-no sugar), Handful of nuts (almond, walnut, cashew, etc)
 - f) Yogurt with fruit at the bottom and cereals
 - g) Smoothies or milkshakes or a glass of milk with some protein supplement like bornvita.
2. Variety is spice of life: Eat a varied diet, rather than any one particular food or group of foods. Variety means that we should eat a mixture of foods across the range of food groups.
3. Make fruits and vegetables a key part of your daily diet. They are packed with variety of rich nutrients and fiber. Choose whole or cut fruits and vegetables rather than juices most often. Juices contain little or no fiber. Unless it says "lots of pulp". Did you know fiber helps lower cholesterol and also help loose weight?
4. Follow the 'Green Rule': Eat a bowl full of salad as the first course of your meal. Go easy on the dressing.
5. While eating outside opt for extra helping of veggies. Eg: when you order a sandwich cut down on the extra cheese and ask for lots of veggies. You don't really need to finish your entire order; get it packed and have it later. Opt for a small burger, small fries; ask for water instead of soda or thick shakes. This makes fast food work for you instead of against you.
6. Choose from a variety of whole grains like brown rice, whole wheat, oats, instead of refined grains.
7. Avoid too much of tea, coffee (not more than 2 cups/day), sodas, sugary juices. Instead, go for water, ice-tea with no sugar added, sparkling water, or a glass of butter-milk.
8. Drink plenty of water; atleast 8-10 glasses per day.
9. Include dairy products in your daily diet. They're good sources of calcium and other essential nutrients. Choose 2% milk or low fat products, if required.
10. If you lead a busy life, following are some good pointers for you:
 - a) Cook in bulk whenever you get time. Bring the food to room temperature and pack in small single-serve containers and refrigerate for later use.
 - b) Knead the chapatti/paratha dough in the food processor and pack in small single-serve Ziploc bags and refrigerate.
 - c) Make idli/dosa batter and refrigerate.
 - d) Roast Rava and keep in airtight container for a quick upma snack.

Note: Recipes for Quick-fix healthy meals/snacks coming soon.

11. It's OK to enjoy junk/ rich foods occasionally. However, limit the portion size.
12. Eat lean portions of meat. Do not eat raw or undercooked meat, poultry, eggs, fish, etc.
13. If you do drink, drink occasionally.
14. Go for 6 small meals instead of 3 large meals. One of the best ways to stay trim is to "Eat small, Eat often".
15. Multivitamins: You don't need a vitamin or mineral supplement if you eat a varied and balanced diet.

C = Choose Sensibly

We'll discuss this in detail in the articles to follow. These would include Indian food guide pyramid, understanding serving sizes, choosing the right oil, understanding Nutrition labels, to name a few.

Until next time, Stay Healthy!

Please feel free to write to me at sneh@nutriage.org or visit my web-site at <http://www.nutriage.org>.

SEVIKA SAMMELAN

The three-day 15th national convention of Rashtra Sevika Samiti, which was held in Nagpur from November 6 to 8, left a lasting effect in the minds and hearts of the people of the city. One of the unique features of the convention was that the whole event was managed by women themselves. It also infused a sense of confidence into women that they can do anything they resolve. The preparations for the event had been going on for the last one year. The convention formally began with the inauguration of an exhibition at Matrudham complex, Gorakshan Maidan, Khapri, about 17 km from Nagpur. A total of 10,297 Sevikas from across the country including 35 Sevikas from Nepal, South Africa, Kenya, Mauritius and Sri Lanka participated in the convention.

The Gorakashan Maidan, where the convention was held, was named as Matrudhami½Mothers Abodei½a symbol of sanctity and affection, sacrifice and caring attitude. A total of 11 dhams in 700 tents were erected on the 83-acre land. All the dhams were named after popular goddesses like Vaishno Devi, Kanyakumari, Kamakhyaa, Ambaji, Tulaja, Chamundi, etc.



From left Smt Ushatai Chati, Swami Ramdev, Shri K.S. Sudarshan, Smt Pramilitai Medhe and other dignitaries at the inaugural ceremony

The bhoomipoojan ceremony witnessed heavy rains, which occurred many times before the convention could begin. Swamini Brahmaprakashananda and RSS Sarkaryavah Shri Mohan Bhagwat were present at the bhoomipoojan ceremony. Sarsanghachalak Shri K.S. Sudarshan also visited the venue on October 13 to see the preparations. Despite various difficulties and heavy rains, the Martrudham complex was ready to receive the participants who had started reaching on November 4 itself. Bharatiya Stree Shakti, ABVP and Sevika Samiti had planned a safe transportation from railway station.

Dr Amrapali Marchant, vice-chancellor of Dr Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad, who visited the convention on November 5, was so moved with the work of the Samiti that she expressed her desire to associate herself with the Samiti. Besides Sarsanghachalak Shri K.S. Sudarshan, Dr Amrapali Marchant and Smt Umatai Pawar, a Vanvasi woman, were present at the inauguration of the exhibition. The exhibition was based on the Samiti's daily prayer. Its words were picturised in a very nice way. The map of Akhand Bharat in rangoli, flower arrangement expressing matrutav and unity in diversity, the pillars of Samiti's work at initial stages, Mausiji Kelkari's photos, etc. were the main attractions of the exhibition. Near the exit gate, there was a picture of Bharat Mata drawn or salt, which attracted everybody.



A view of the pathsanchalan

It was also for the first time that the Sarsanghachalak stayed at the convention full time. On November 6, noted Yogacharya Swami Ramdev organised an exclusive class of yoga for the participants. It included seven pranayams, some yogasans for women with his apt comments regarding swadeshi and role of women in nation building. In his inaugural address also he insisted that women need not go on begging for 33 per cent reservations. ½Beggars have no choice and self-respect. If women demonstrate glare like fire, speed like air, patience like earth, coolness like water and broadness like space, they will be respected by all,½ he said.

The symposium, Bharat 2020, developed the feeling among Sevikas that India can achieve the glorious place in the world by the year 2020. The speakers at the symposium included Smt Sumitra Mahajan, former minister, Smt. Kusumlata Kedia, director, Gandhi Adhyayan Kendra, Varanasi, Smt. Indumati Katdare, convener, Vidvat Parishad of Vidya Bharati and Dr Madhavrao Chitley, an eminent scientist. ½All of us have to contribute all our might and intelligence to realise the dream of a strong prosperous Bharat,½ said Smt Sumitra Mahajan in her speech. Smt. Sushilatai Abhankar, Akhil Bharatiya Bouddhik Pramukh, delivered a very inspiring speech on Hindutva in global scenario.

Taking out 10,000 Sevikas in seven different parts of Nagpur, five pathsanchalans and two shobhayatras were conducted with careful homework. The distance covered varied from 4 to 24 kms. All the pathsanchalans culminated in different meetings, which were addressed by distinguished persons like Shri Bhaiyaji Joshi, Sadhvi Ritambhara, Smt. Vasundhara Raje, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, Smt. Jaywantiben Mehta, Smt. Maya Singh and Smt. Vasanta Kumari Ramarao.



Smt Sumitra Mahajan, Smt Pramilatai Medhe and other dignitaries at the convention

The cultural programmes under the guidance of noted film director Shri Rajdutt moved the audiences. They truly represented the feeling of unity in diversity. Five books were also released in different sessions.

The valedictory function was presided over by Dr Kamini Rao, an eminent doctor from Bangalore. The chief guest was Smt. Dolma Gairi, Deputy Speaker, Tibetan Parliament in exile, who reminded of the old cultural ties between Tibet and Bharat. Dr Kamini Rao expressed her concern over female foeticide, which is posing a threat to national strata. Smt. Ushatai Chati, Pramukh Sanchalika of the Samiti, Smt. Pramilatai Medhe, Sah-Pramukh Sanchalika, Smt. Shanttakka, Akhil Bharatiya Karyavahika, Smt. Rukmini Akka, Sah Karyavahika, Smt. Sumantai Sarnaik, chairman, Devi Ahilya Mandir, also guided the Sevikas.



Smt Dolma Gairi, Smt Pramilatai Medhe and Smt Vasundhara Raje at the convention