

Prerana

e-zine

An inspiration to Hindu women



Let's come together and celebrate the festival while inspiring each other with our Prerana!

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About the magazine

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

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

On the Cover



We are delighted to present a magazine with a cover with a clay pot- kalash, an earthen lamp- diya, bowls full of rice, banana leaf and the fruit, a colorful kite, a beautiful rangoli in the background that reflects the essence of Hindu life. Gudi Padwa symbolizes the celebration of the first day of the Chaitra month to mark the beginning of the Hindu new year, a new beginning, Ugadi. This beautiful cover depicts how our lives signify auspiciousness and wellbeing, health and wealth, beauty and festivity.

Let's come together and celebrate the festival while inspiring each other with our Prerana!



Write to Prerana

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

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

About HSS

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

Visit
www.hssus.org
for more information

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'Streetva'

By Anjali Patel



“
There is so much strength in just being a woman!
”

This year, on March 8th, we celebrated International Women’s Day and the cultural, political, social, and economic achievements of women. Today, I welcome you to join me in thinking about the work that we have accomplished as Hindu women and the work that remains to be done in the 21st century.

When I think of the 19th century, my heart fills with pride. I’m reminded of Queen of Kittur, Channama and Queen of Jhansi, Rani Laxmibai. These two royals were widows, but they fought furious battles with the British to save their territories. They built battalions of women to fight for their land. As my heart fills with pride, I feel disheartened thinking about Hindu women who were forced to stay at home, follow rigid rules, and lead a horrible, male-dominated life.

The 20th century saw feminism take root in the minds of women all over the world. What is feminism? This word originated in the 1840s. Its dictionary meaning is: The doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men; An organized movement for the attainment of such rights for women. As we try to appreciate and protect women’s rights, we must also learn the qualities of women that need to be cherished such as their capacity to bear a whole new life in their womb, their capacity to forgive, and to be the source of inspiration and energy. Prerana! These qualities are their quintessential ‘womanness,’ or “streetva!”

Before I got married, I was a bit rebellious and I always used to wonder, “Why am I a woman?!” I thought that being a man must

be better and more powerful. As I got older, I started seeing things differently. The whole new dimension of “streetva” was waiting for me when I became a mother and gave birth to a baby girl. I felt powerful and thanked god for making me a woman.

Later in life I realized that birth of a child is a very small part of womanhood and motherhood. There is so much strength in just being a woman!

According to Hindu philosophy, the feminine form of God is “shakti”, or strength. When I learned this, all the Devi stotras started making more sense to me. I appreciated how the stotras spoke about the qualities of women: grace and strength, inspiration and softness, determination and compassion, and warrior-spirit and love. These stotras taught me the range of qualities women can have.

It is time to nurture the “streetva” keeping up with the world. It is time to try to strike the perfect balance of tenderness and strength! Streetva is a blessing from god, all of us who are born with it should enjoy and nurture it.

Anjali Patel is from Dallas, Texas. She is currently the National ‘Sevika’ Coordinator for HSS, US. She is also a certified Yoga Teacher and certified Life Coach. She loves working with people, reading and cooking. Travelling is in her bucket list.

To the Prerana reader and my sakhis:

Warm greetings on the auspicious occasion of Ugadi! ("Varsha Pratipada," "Gudhi Padva") उगादी की हार्दिक शुभ कामनाएं! Nav-Varsh ki Shubh Kamanaye!

It is my pleasure to present the 1st issue of Prerana to our readers after a gap of nearly 7 years. Prerana means "inspiration". The tremendous response we received from you to our initial call for articles inspires and energizes us. We hope to keep the momentum going with your support and encouragement.

Prerana magazine is shaped by your experiences as Hindu women.

Love,
Editor Team,
Prerana e-zine

Throughout history, humans have sought ways to achieve a state of complete happiness and tranquility with different approaches - by overexerting themselves in a gym or by ingesting substances that change the chemistry of their body to make themselves feel a certain way. But the questions remain. What is happiness? And is it everlasting or permanent? Happiness is a state that can be achieved by bringing balance, awareness, and a sense of harmony within and with others. This pursuit of happiness is Yoga.

Yoga is not a religion or a set of asanas but it is a way of life. It is a philosophy that is over 5000 years old, that includes various techniques of exercises, breathing, meditation, diet, and relaxation with a goal to achieve harmony of the body, mind, and spirit of an individual with themselves and their surroundings.

The word 'Yoga' comes from the root word 'Yuj' which means to unite or to yoke. It is the union of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. In other words, yoga is the union of the jivatma with Paramatma.

Although the practice of yoga is rooted in Hinduism, its knowledge transcends all religions and cultures. Yoga is for everyone and is universal in its application. There is no single definition of yoga. In order to experience the truth through yoga, we must study its classical definitions and reflect on our own understanding of it. Here are some of the definitions of Yoga from some of the classical texts on Philosophy:

Samatvam Yoga Uchhyate - From the Bhagavad Gita, "Evenness is verily Yoga."

Yogah karmasu kaushalam - The Bhagvad Gita also defines Yoga as "Excellence in action."

Yogah chitta vritti nirodaha - Maharishi Patanjali's definition of Yoga is, "The cessation of the thought waves."

Manaha prashamanah upayah yogah - "Yoga is the skillful trick to calm the mind," from Yoga Vasishtha.

Taam yogamiti manyate sthiram indriya dharanama - And finally, "Yoga is a state of mastery over the senses and the mind," as found in the Kathopani-shad.

While these definitions are quite broad and varied, they all talk about keeping the mind and senses in a balanced equanimous and alert state. Yoga is a process of becoming more aware of who we are. Yoga is a process of self-discovery. But we have to remember not to become armchair yogis. We can never be part-time yogis and part-time "bhogis." We need to practice yoga 24/7, on the mat and off the mat. Every time we are eating, drinking, doing any work, or interacting with everyone, we need to be conscious, aware and mindful of ourselves. According to

Yoga

Achieving Harmony

By Shobha Krishna

the Sankhya Philosophy, our true nature is Nithya (eternal), Shuchi (pure), Sukha (bliss) and Atma (indestructible). We have to practice seeing the same divinity in every living being around us.

Everything we do can become yoga if it is done with awareness. Awareness is the key to discovering all the mysteries of who we truly are. Yoga reveals the luminous intelligence and the beauty that lies within us.

There are many styles of yoga such as Kundalini yoga, Hatha yoga, Laya yoga, Bikram yoga, Iyengar yoga, Shivananda yoga, and Power yoga among many others. Yoga is a holistic system which includes practices like "yama," "niyama," "asana," "pranayama," "dhyana," "mudras," "bandhas," "kriyas," "mantras," "japa," and relaxation.

Yoga is a way to achieve harmony and balance. There may be many ways to arrive at this final goal. According to Swami Vivekananda, there are four streams of Yoga: Raja yoga, Karma yoga, Jnana



yoga, and Bhakti yoga. Raja yoga is the path of yoga to discipline the mind through different techniques and meditation. Karma yoga is the performance of worldly duties ("swadharma") with an attitude of detachment ("nishkama karma"). Jnana yoga is the path of Philosophy to sharpen the intellect through reading, listening and introspection while Bhakti yoga is the path of devotion using "nama smarana," "japa," "bhajans," and "kirtan."

Swami Vivekananda says, "Each soul is potentially divine." The goal of life is to manifest that Divinity within by controlling nature: internal and external. Do it by Work (Karma yoga), Worship (Bhakti yoga), Philosophy (Jnana yoga) or Psychic control (Raja yoga), by one or more or all of these and be FREE...

Shobha Krishna is from Kapila Shakha, Cupertino, CA. She is passionate about yoga, Ayurveda, Sanskritam and loves to read books and listen to good soulful music.

Mindful Eating

By Kavitha Vennelakanti

We are told that "health is wealth." We are told to eat the right food, to get a good amount of exercise and a good amount of sleep every single day. But in reality, when was the last time you enjoyed and appreciated a meal and its ingredients? When was the last time you tasted each grain in a spoonful of rice? Or when was the last time you appreciated the aroma of your food?

Often, we're too busy with technology and its demands. This means we often go the extra mile to participate in the newest dieting fads. Whether it's intermittent fasting or the fast metabolism diet, we want to do what's quick and easy.

I want to understand how our parents and grandparents were healthy all their lives without all of these things. My parents are healthier than ever. My father, at 84, does

Continued on page 7

Let's Save The World

By Smita Kinshikar



Namaste,

My name is Smita and I am from San Ramon, CA. I would like to share my experience on how I transitioned to an eco-friendly lifestyle.

I have always been concerned about the environment. Some of my friends used to call me out on this but regardless of their comments, I felt that the community needed to better understand how to deal with waste.

Then, a few years ago, I stumbled upon a truly horrifying and gruesome video and understood the magnitude of this problem even better. The video showed a turtle that was being pulled out of the ocean when a marine biologist noticed that something was stuck in the turtle's nose making the turtle sneeze constantly. The biologist took his tools and pulled out an object through the turtle's nose - a plastic straw.

Although the biologist saved the turtle, the event was extremely distressing for me. The pain that the straw inflicted on the turtle resonated with me and would not let me rest. It was at this point I realized that I needed to be more mindful about my choices and bring more awareness about adopting an eco-friendly lifestyle and leading a life free of plastic. (The video of the sea turtle is available here: -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-2J2qdOrW44>)

A brief history of plastic :

Can you imagine our world without plastic? From revolutionizing travel and medicine, to the day-to-day convenience of straws and water bottles, plastic has transformed our lives. It seems like we are drowning in plastic, but it wasn't always that way. Plastic was invented in the 19th century and only made it to our shelves in 1950.

Though one of the reasons plastic was invented was to save wildlife, it is now unfortunately associated with the destruction of the planet. Previously, objects such as combs, pianos, billiard balls, or dressers, used to be made from ivory, which put the poor elephants at the risk of extinction. In 1867, a billiard company offered 10,000 scholarships to find a substitute for ivory. It was then that a young scientist John Wesley Hyatt started the plastic revolution.

Plastic was still not available to ordinary people, but World War II changed that. Plastic is credited with helping the Allies win the war as their helmets, guns, lightweight aircraft, and parachutes were made of plastic. Eventually, plastic became an essential part of the household. For example, saran wrap, containers, diapers, sanitary pads, and toys are all made of plastic. You name an object and it probably has plastic in it! The worst part is the single-use plastic culture.

Since 1950 we have manufactured 8.3

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billion tons of plastic. This is roughly equal to the weight of 822,000 Eiffel towers. Yes, you read it correctly! Out of this, 91% has never been recycled. It is just sitting in landfills or



SAY NO TO PLASTIC

ends up in the ocean, killing thousands of marine animals every year. Because of its chemical composition, Plastic takes hundreds of years to decompose and to break up into small tiny particles that further hang around for centuries.

I was surprised to learn that half of the plastic waste comes from single-use plastic and packaging.

My journey to explore more eco-friendly options:

Most of the time, we are busy talking about the problem and are less focused on finding the right solutions. I knew that I needed to be “walking” the talk, although, in the beginning, my journey was not easy. But the more I contemplated my sankalpa, the more I became aware of my choices and options available. So, I started small.

I always reminded myself of the in-depth meaning of the song, “ Chote chote sanskaro se baat badi ban jati hai.” My first goal was to avoid any single-use plastic products. It started with using a reusable grocery bag, a biodegradable bamboo brush, a reusable water bottle, and reusable cloth sanitary pads. And the experience was excellent. Eventually, I stopped using kitchen paper towels and instead used cloth towels. I felt more confident about my sankalpa.

As a shakha, we have come up with a unique concept. All the karyakartas have their own bhojan kit which they bring to shakha for every Utsav and that reduces a great amount of waste from disposable utensils. I think through and prepare in advance for the shopping.

The challenges I faced:

I am still struggling to find Indian groceries that come with eco-friendly packaging as most prepackaged items tend to use thick plastic packaging.

Lessons learned and some tips:

1. Prepare in advance.
2. Say NO to single-use plastic.
3. Say NO to styrofoam (as it is non-biodegradable).
4. Recycle (and educate yourself about how to recycle including E-waste).
5. Reduce consumption and promote reuse.
6. Make your own laundry soap (as it's easy and lots of videos are available on Youtube).
7. Shampoo bars and soap bars are an excellent idea to add to the list.
8. Carry your own cutlery.

9. Have a Bhojan kit for shakha utsav.
10. Go to the farmers market as most of the vegetables are not packaged in plastic.
11. Encourage yourself to use eco-friendly feminine hygiene products such as menstrual cups, reusable cloth pads, and biodegradable sanitary pads.
12. Carry your own water bottle.
13. Carry your own cup to coffee shops.
14. Use kitchen cloth towels instead of paper towels.
15. Use natural products with eco-friendly packaging.
16. Use eco-friendly products for arts and crafts.
17. Use eco-friendly products for arts and crafts.
18. Try to prepare snacks at home to avoid store-bought snacks covered in plastic packaging.
19. Try to prepare snacks at home to avoid store-bought snacks covered in plastic packaging.
20. Avoid zip locks.
21. Most importantly, lead by example.

Make it your lifestyle. I have found that people are eager to learn, but they need an example to follow. Don't shy away from sharing your experiences with others and creating awareness about living an eco friendly lifestyle. If we can inspire others through our actions, then we have made a wide-spread impact.



Dhanyawaad.

Smita KINHILAR is from San Ramon shakha, San Ramon ,CA.

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yoga with the athleticism of a 25-year-old every morning, and my mother, at 76, still has the energy to run her household. Where do they get this energy? How do they attain perfect health without obsessively counting calories and calculating their macros? My parents and grandparents were able to do this because they ate mindfully, 100% of their attention focused on what they were eating. What is “mindful eating” and why can't we do the same?

Mindful eating is eating with our consciousness

Some tips to engage in Mindful eating:

- Try eating with no distractions like TV or phone
- Make time to appreciate your meal
- Eat with every one of your senses.
- Eat only when you are hungry.
- Eat fresh and cook at home, even if it means eating one dish instead of multiple.

Although it definitely seems hard in the beginning, all it takes is repeated practice for us and our families to be in better health.

Kavita Vennelakanti is from Mountain House shakha, Mountain House, CA.

Hindu Women from History

Akka Mahadevi (1130 - 1160 C.E.)

By Vrinda Vijayan

Many years ago, in a small village called Udutadi in Shimoga district- Karnataka, there lived a man and his wife who were devotees of God Shiva. They had a little daughter named Mahadevi. From a very young age, Mahadevi was a great devotee of God Shiva. She wrote poetry and sang songs in praise of God Shiva whom she dearly referred to as "Chenna Mallikarjuna". In a few years, Mahadevi grew up to be a beautiful young lady. In a desire to be close to God Shiva himself, she made friends with animals, birds, flowers, and started having no interaction with her own family and people around.

One day, King Kaushika- the local ruler - saw Mahadevi in deep devotion to God Shiva. He immediately fell in love with her and wanted to marry her. Mahadevi agreed to marry King Kaushika with conditions that she would continue to be the ardent devotee of God Shiva and she would engage in debates and discussions with saints and philosophers on spirituality in the court. King Kaushika was in deep love with Mahadevi and agreed to her conditions without thinking. After their marriage, Mahadevi never paid attention to her husband and was always busy writing poems and chanting praises of her favorite God. She got into active discussions with philosophers and saints and was engaged in spiritual activities. This enraged King Kaushika and he challenged her beliefs and activities in the palace. Mahadevi realized that the palace was not a place for her devotion. She renounced everything and walked out of the king's palace.

She went straight to Anubhava Mantapa, a school of highly knowledgeable saints and philosophers for discussion on spirituality and religion, headed by Saint Allama Prabhu. Here she also met great knowledgeable and devotional philoso-



phers and saints like herself - Basavanna, Siddharama, Chanabasavanna, Sarvajna and Palkuriki Somanatha. Mahadevi was able to actively participate in the debates and philosophies that earned her respect from the best of philosophers.

Here, she earned the title, "Akka," meaning elder sister by the philosophers at Anubhava Mantapa.

With Allamma Prabhu's guidance, she wrote many poems or vachanas which are relevant and widely respected even today.

In her last days of life, she went to Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh and spent the rest of her life in a cave with complete devotion to her God 'Chenna Mallikarjuna'.

Akka Mahadevi led her life with courage and faith. She was a revolutionary, a social reformer, an ardent devotee, and a great poet. Her vachanas or poems stun the reader with their simplicity and appropriateness.

Illustration By : Vrinda Vijayan

Vrinda Vijayan is from Sri Ram Shakha, Roseville, CA. She produces Indian short stories for children on YouTube, and loves drinking Tea.

Tips for Safety

By Radha Fadnavis

Safety literally means, 'being protected from harm or other non-desirable outcomes.' It can also refer to the control of recognized hazards in order to achieve an acceptable level of risk.

Safety comes in many forms: internet safety, safety while driving, kitchen safety, occupational safety, safety at workplace, home safety, health safety or sports safety, etc. As they say "Safety first is safety always."

Here are some tips to be safe:

- * Know what the danger is.
- * Get as much done as possible before something happens.
- * Avoid life-threatening situations.
- * Know best practices.

- * Avoid the most common mistakes that people make.
- * Be alert when handling tools, gadgets, and equipment.
- * Always keep emergency first aid kits up to date.
- * Have all the emergency contact numbers handy.

For safety at home, keep some basic self-defense tools around, something familiar and easy to handle. At home as well as out and about, the best way to deal with a dangerous situation is to maintain situational awareness and avoid danger, not confront it.

Radha Fadnavis is from Mountain House shakha, Mountain House, CA.

American Women I Admire

Ruth Bader Ginsburg

By Indu Nair

Growing up, I did not have a specific person whom I admired. I always looked at good or bad attributes in people and tried to imbibe the good qualities. There are several great American women who I now admire, but Ruth Bader Ginsburg holds a special place due to her numerous fights for gender equality and women rights. Ruth Bader Ginsburg is the second woman to serve as a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ginsburg studied at the Harvard School of Law and was one of the few women in her class. She eventually graduated from Columbia Law School after transferring there from Harvard. She worked as a law professor before becoming a lawyer. Ginsburg encountered difficulty in finding employment even after graduating as the highest-ranking female student in her class. She lost many opportunities because of her gender. These obstacles did not stop her from pursuing her dream career in law. She went on to become the greatest advocate for gender equality. My first takeaway from Ruth is:

“Never give up.”

Ruth Bader Ginsburg co-founded the Women’s Rights Law Reporter, the first law journal in the U.S. to focus exclusively on women’s rights, in 1970. In 1972, Ginsburg also co-founded the Women’s Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). She argued for six gender discrimination cases before the Supreme Court, winning most of them. Ginsburg’s legal victories discouraged legislatures from treating women and men differently under the law. This is something I admire about her the most, as she continued the battle for gender equality. She gave hope to both men and women to dream of a world where gender is just a word, and nobody is discriminated based on gender.

“Break the mold.”

is what comes to my mind when I learned more about Ginsburg’s efforts in bringing gender equality.

Ginsburg became an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court on June 14, 1993. Her historic judgment on the United States Vs Virginia Military Institute (VMI) will remain one of the most influential judgements in the country. VMI is a prestigious, state-run, military-inspired institution that did not admit women. For Ginsburg, VMI could not use gender as a reason to deny women the opportunity to attend VMI and experience its unique educational methods. Ginsburg expressed her support for the “MeToo” movement, which encourages women to speak up about their experiences with sexual harassment at work, or other settings. Here comes a third learning point from her actions-

“Be yourself, don’t be sacred to express your thoughts.”

Ginsburg always thought of how to make the judicial system in the United States better, and she advocated the use of International laws and norms to shape U.S. law. She is a visionary who supported using different interpretations of law for persuasive value and possible wisdom.

How Ginsburg balanced her personal life along with professional life is something inspirational. She and her husband went through turbulent times in their early married life when her husband was diagnosed with cancer. Both were law students at the time, and, Ginsburg attended classes and took notes for her husband as well as for herself, cared for their daughter, took care of her sick husband – all while making the Harvard Law Review. She herself underwent multiple surgeries for can-

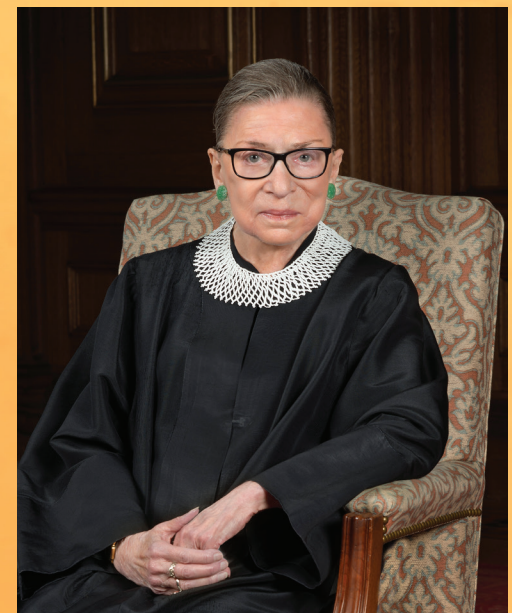
cer but managed to maintain the highest level of professionalism and never missed a day on bench during the process of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. What an inspirational work ethic! On January 7, 2020 Ginsburg reported that she was cancer free.

Ginsburg is the fourth-oldest serving Supreme Court Justice ever, at age 86! What else can I think of other than,

“Create Space.”

knowing how Ginsburg managed her personal and professional life by giving importance to the family and friends along with career.

Let’s learn from Ginsburg’s success, take in what we can, and do our part in making this world a better place for ev-



eryone.

Indu Nair is from Rani Laxmi Bai Shakha, Sun Prairie, WI. She is passionate about understanding our true history and love reading and gardening.

Festivals of India

Ugadi

By Dr. Kripa Rao



Ugadi is a festival celebrated in many states of Bharat. It is known by different names such as “Yugadhi” or “Gudi Padwa,” in different regions.

Ugadi marks the beginning of the new year for Hindus of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana states. In other parts of Bharat, it is celebrated with different names: Sindhis celebrate the same day as Cheti Chand, while Marwaris or Rajasthanis celebrate it as Thapna. In Manipur, it is celebrated as Sajibu Nongma Panba. Ugadi is observed not just in Bharat, but internationally. The Hindus of Bali and Indonesia celebrate their new year on the same day as Nyepi. The festival is the same, but the great diversity of Bharat-varsha has interpreted it with many different names, rituals, customs, and, of course, food. According to the Hindu calendar, this festival is celebrated in the Indian month of Chaithra, or as per the Gregorian calendar in March or April.

My personal memories of this festival celebrated in Bharat are about the young summer with its pungent aroma of raw mangoes, neem, or of the wafting smells of hot, melt-in-your-mouth Puran-polis being cooked by my mother with hymns and shlokas being chanted. These memories for me invoke the warming of the weather, the lengthening of the days, and the shortening of the nights.

The name Ugadi is derived from the Sanskrit words yuga (age) and ādi (beginning): which translates to ‘the beginning of a new age’. It is believed that Lord Brahma, the creator of the Universe, created days, months, years, and the vital elements of nature. Ugadi refers specifically to the Yuga in which the current generation lives i.e. the Kaliyuga for all of us. The Panchang or almanac of the new year is studied on this day and I remember my mother procuring the new panchang and reading it for a general forecast of the year to come.

As it is a custom with most Hindu festivals, the preparation of Ugadi typically begins with the cleaning of homes (very similar to spring cleaning here in the West). The homes are decorated with torans and mango leaves on the outside of the house to welcome the new season. Rangolis or kolams are drawn on the doorsteps.

In Maharashtra, the festival is celebrated as Gudi Padwa, where gudi refers to a cloth tied at the top of a long bamboo, topped with neem, mango leaves, flowers, and capped with a copper handi(pot). The gudi is believed to invite prosperity to the home for the year.

No festival is complete without the foods associated with it. As can be expected, seasonal ingredients have made their way into the festive foods, like mango and jaggery made with a fresh crop of sugarcane. In Karnataka/Andhra/Telangana, a unique dish called Ugadhi-pachadi is prepared that combines all flavors – sweet, sour, salty, and bitter in one complete dish. It is a symbolic reminder that one must expect all kinds of good and bad experiences in the new year and be prepared for them. Other delicacies include mango pickles, rice dishes, Puran-poli, and regional dishes.



In the USA, this festival is celebrated by the Indian diaspora who try their best to continue their own traditions. The children growing up here will see these celebrations and likely form their own memories. There will probably be a natural hybridization of the festivities in response to the current lifestyle. With each generation, who celebrate this festival, however, the spirit of the festival will undyingly remain the same.

Dr. Kripa Rao is from Ardenwood Shakha, Fremont, CA. She is a mom, a bibliophile (both technical and fiction), a budding cook and a hiker.

Book review

"Kosala"

By Shilpa Deshpande

It is rightly said that an hour spent reading is one stolen from paradise. From a crazy bookworm to a conscious book lover, I have spent hours in this paradise.

In each phase of my life, I have come across wonderful books! Some of them are truly timeless. Every time I read them, I get something new.

'Kosala' (Cocoon) is one of them. Published in 1963, this Marathi novel written by Bhalachandra Nemade, was a big sensation not only in Marathi but Indian literature due to its unconventional, realistic, and informal writing style and content. 'Kosala' was translated to English and other Indian languages. Even after so many years, it can be easily related to modern life's contexts.

The storyline of this novel can be described in just one sentence- It is a self-narration of protagonist Pandurang Sangvikar from his adolescence to the age of twenty-five.

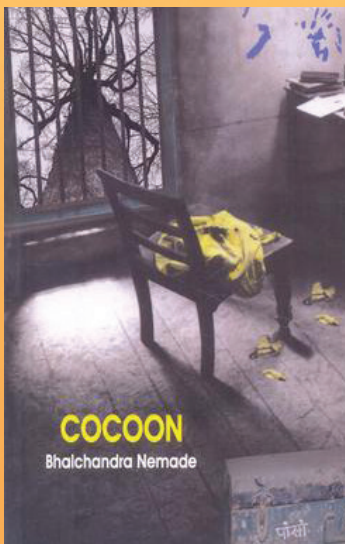
"I am Pandurang Sangvikar. Today, for example, (I'm) twenty-five years old. This is the only thing, for example, I have worth telling you, etc." This is the starting sentence of the novel.

This undertone of reluctance can be observed throughout the book. But the hidden layer of this language brilliantly points out the bigotry and pretentious mindset of society.

A small-town boy from Sangvi, Pandurang grows up watching his rich and dominating father, a hard-working mother, and a stagnant repetition of village life. He wants nothing of this meaningless lifestyle and wants to achieve something 'great'. After completing high

school, he goes to Pune, a larger city, to further his education as per the suggestion of relatives and other adults. Pandurang decides to improve his personality and earn acclaim. He starts making friends, gets elected as a hostel cafeteria ("mess") manager, and a variety program secretary. He participates in elocutions and tries to follow learned professors to seek 'great' knowledge. But he is soon disillusioned by the hollowness of all established and respectable figures of the society.

At the end, he finds himself deceived by friends he trusted upon. He bears a huge financial loss in the cafeteria account that he has to pay from his own pocket. He then tries to concentrate on studies but false impotent ideologies of society and former ideas of success don't motivate him further. He finds the same stagnant repetition in urban life too. Finally the defeated, depressed, and disillusioned Pandurang goes back to the village. Eventually, he accepts life as it is.



Nemade uses very unorthodox language to convey the content sharply. Reality lying under satire brings smiles



and restlessness at the same time to the readers. Pandurang and his hostel-mate Suresh talk about today's civilization from the point of view of nineteenth-century historians demonstrating the hollowness of social standards and make us rethink individuality and freedom. Cynicism reaches its peak at a time, e.g. "Just that our ancestors were not destined for impotence. Hence this birth must be suffered". Often the witty language with puns turns very tender and philosophical as Pandurang introspects. Especially when his five-year-old sister dies and he visits Ajanta, he recalls Buddha's thoughts about immortality and suffering, e.g. "What is entirely new in this world? Only death is new and fresh because its experience destroys the one who experiences it."

It is said that no two persons ever read the same book. 'Kosala' faced criticism too. According to some critics, there is nothing but the narration of events. But life is the same. And the moment we start realizing it, our inward journey begins.

Good books always give this sense of enlightenment!

Shilpa Deshpande is from Bhaskar Shakha, Arlington Heights, IL. She holds a Master's degree in literature and enjoys exploring different genres to read and write.



Ayurveda

Untold Benefits of 'Dinacharya'

By Dnyanada Pawar

When we read the word AYURVEDA, the first thing that comes to mind is that it is the oldest healing science, "The Science of Life." The knowledge which originated in India more than 5,000 years ago and is often called the "Mother of All Healing" stems from the ancient Vedic culture and was taught for many thousands of years in an oral tradition by accomplished masters to their disciples. Or we can also imagine a sage sitting in the open with lots of roots, herbs, leaves flowers, grinding in a mortar and pestle!

All this is very true and that is what Ayurveda is! But for me personally, Ayurveda is not just this or the Kadhas (decoction of herbs boiled together) or the fine powders distributed by these "Vaidyas" (Ayurveda doctors) or the shlokas written in Veda Puranas and decoded by who know Sanskritam.

For me, Ayurveda is a way of life which we all Hindus live and follow on day to day basis without even realizing we are really following the rules of Ayurveda. To lead this day to day life, we don't need to learn Sanskritam or study Ayurveda separately. We have been doing this through our rituals, festivals and even our day to day Dinacharya (daily routine).

Indians have been following this "dinacharya" on a daily basis for generations. These practices are very good for our bodies as they align us with nature's rhythms each day. For example, the Indian ancient wisdom suggests that waking up early in the morning before sunrise is better for your health. The ancient practice of brushing teeth with neem sticks is better than using the plastic toothbrushes. Bathing with herbs and oils gives our bodies glowing healthy skins. Then doing the Surya Namaskars (sun salutations) in the sun rays of the rising sun makes you stronger and healthier. Indian women practiced watering Tulsi plant right after bath and do Pradikshana (walk around the plant) to offer prayers. Being in close proximity with the Tulsi plant gives us the natural goodness of this holy basil. Plucking flowers and leaves for the pooja in the morning allows us to inhale fresh oxygen emitted by the

trees. Walking barefoot in the lush green grass helps in emitting the heat out of our body. And this is just the beginning of the morning ritual! We still have the entire day to talk about! Each and every moment of the day has something or the other to contribute to our wellbeing. Taking a nap in the afternoon (Wamkushi) helps with digestion and allows the body the time it needs to relax.

Even our festivals are informed by traditional knowledge. The festival of Sankranti which falls in the winter month of January is celebrated with distributing laddoos made with Til (sesame seeds) and Gul (jaggery) as Til and Gul both are Ushna Pravrutti (have heat tendency) which is good for our body in the winter.

We unknowingly follow our rituals and gain the benefits without any special effort. These foods are seasonal and keep us healthy for the entire year.

Our wise elders always gave tips: don't drink water while standing; don't bath after having food; if you eat cashews, have some raisins along with it". We follow their advice and do many things unknowingly.

By choosing the ancient practices informed by the Ayurveda, we can aim to live a high energy lifestyle, conducive to mindful living and harmonious with principles for wellbeing!

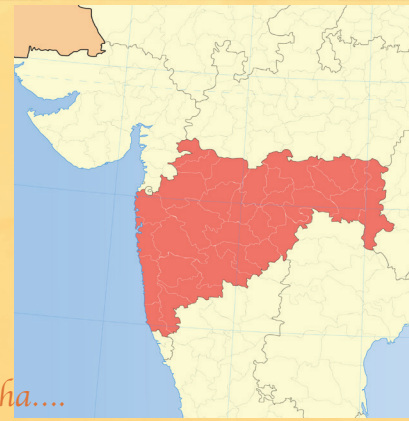
Dnyanada Pawar is from Bhaskar Shakha, Arlington Heights, IL. She describes Creativity as not only her hobby, but, as her way of life. Her Creativity helps her write and experience things in a new way.



States Of India

Maharashtra

By Meghal Vaidya



“जय जय महाराष्ट्र माझा गर्जा महाराष्ट्र माझा”

Jay Jay Maharashtra Majha, Garja Maharashtra Majha....

Maharashtra is a state in the western peninsular region of India, bordered by the Arabian Sea to the west, the Indian states of Karnataka and Goa to the south, Telangana to the southeast, and Chhattisgarh to the east, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh to the north, and the Indian union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli to the northwest.

Maharashtra is spread over 307,713 km² (118,809 sq mi) and has a tropical climate. The Godavari and the Krishna are the two major rivers in the state. The Narmada and Tapi Rivers flow near the border between Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Sahyadri mountain ranges are the physical backbone and pride of Maharashtra.

Maharashtra is the third-most urbanized state of India with a total of 34 districts which comprises rural, suburban, and urban areas. Before the British rule ended in India in 1947, Maharashtra was chronologically ruled by the Satavahana dynasty, Rashtrakuta dynasty, Western Chalukyas, Deccan sultanates, the Mughals, the Marathas, and the British. Ruins, monuments, tombs, forts, and places of worship left by these rulers are dotted around the



state. They include the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Ajanta and Ellora caves. Maharashtra is home to numerous forts that are associated with the life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Mumbai, the capital city of Maha-

ashtra, is not only India's financial and commercial center but also a major entertainment hub. Nagpur is the second

capital of the state and the largest city in central India, as well as a future global city.

Maharashtra is ranked the second-most populous state of India with over 126 million people. The primary language is Marathi but Hindi is also widely spoken across the state.

Agriculture includes crops, horticulture, milk and animal husbandry, aquaculture, fishing, sericulture, aviculture, forestry, and related activities. Although Maharashtra is a highly industrialized state of India, agriculture continues to be the main occupation in the state.

Sports are an important part of Maharashtra culture. Kabaddi, Hockey, Kho kho, Badminton, Cricket and Table Tennis are some of the very popular sports in the state.

Wheat, rice, jowar, bajri, vegetables, lentils, and fruit are dietary staples.

Peanuts and cashews are often served with vegetables. Popular traditional Maharashtrian dishes include Thali-peeth, Pithla, Bhakri, Pu-



ran Poli, Ukadiche Modak, Usal, Batata Vada, to name a few. The urban population in metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Pune, and others are influenced by cuisine from other parts of India and abroad. For example, Udupi dishes such as idli and dosa, as well as Chinese and Western dishes, are quite popular in home cooking and restaurants.

Traditional clothes for Maharashtra include the dhoti, also known as dhotar and pheta, while a choli and nine-yard saree locally known as Nauwari saadi is for women and parkar-polka for little girls. Traditional clothing

is worn typically by people who live in rural areas but many who live in cities enjoy wearing such clothing on special occasions.

Maharashtra is the wealthiest state by all major economic parameters. It is also the most industrialized state in India. The state continues to be the single largest contributor to the national economy and is the pride of India.

Meghal Vaidya is from Rani Laxmi Bai Shakra, Sun Prairie, WI. She likes being connected to people and enjoy art, dance, yoga and meditation.

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Next Generation Asks



Q: What sort of challenges have you faced as a woman in the workplace and how do you handle them?

A: A major misconception in the workplace about women is that they are not prepared for higher responsibilities because they have other responsibilities towards family members. I believe that such concerns can be resolved if women express their desires and interests clearly.

Then it also depends on how we project ourselves. If we project a professional image and do not provide excuses we will get different results. It's a fine balance of priorities.

For a long time, I did not demonstrate interest in a career as I defined my own priorities and boundaries. Once I started prioritizing and being assertive about my interests, things became easier. This is based on my personal experience at an engineering company where I am in a professional role which does not require customer contact.

Q: What is one healthy or self-care habit you think is important for young women to develop?

A: Health is not limited to physical health. Life is complex and multidimensional. You think of doing something and you can have a mind-boggling number of options. The biggest challenge today is making a choice, or choosing an option.

One healthy habit that I think everyone can develop is to think, write, and share their own learning with others.

When we reflect on the day's experiences, we can convert negative experiences to learning. If we write what we learned each day, we can create a great journal of our own learning for the future. Third, if we share what we learn then we create a bond with another person. This makes the other person a

Q: How to navigate the relation with your parents into the transition into adulthood?

A: The relationship with the parents is both never-changing and always changing in nature.

As children grow, both parents and children go through

A friend of mine says that sometimes your professional role and company culture drive such decisions. For example, women who are in customer-facing roles can find that their customers prefer to speak with their male counterparts.

I am fortunate to be working in an environment where I see more women in leadership roles than men. Yet, some women can fall behind on their path to leadership if they cannot find their voice and get their ideas heard by those in power. Women tend to also lose career development opportunities if they are not given projects that can position them for future success. For these reasons, I believe it is important early on to find a good mentor and to find your own voice.

witness to your growth. In good times and bad, this person can help you. This simple habit of reflecting, writing and sharing can help you maintain your intellectual, emotional, and spiritual health.

One healthy habit that I think everyone can benefit from is going for long walks preferably where one can be close to nature. Walking clears your mind, connects you to the world outside, removes doubts, and brings a sense of greater health and wellbeing.

growing pains. Parents say, "you know nothing." In the same breath, they say, "you've grown-up." Same thing happens with children. Having an open and trustworthy relation is very important. Responsibility is on both sides.

Today, we are in the age of technology. Parents are no longer the only source of information, nor the only source of money. By God's grace, many of our children are earning well. But even for them, parents should still be sources of experience and security.

Remember also that as you go to adulthood, your parents too enter a different phase of life. It is important to keep in mind that their definition and expression of respect, love, family, is little different from yours.

While entering adulthood, it is important to understand the perspectives of your parents. Learn how their experience can light your path. Let them know you are capable of helping them too.

Team Prerana seeks to expand our team of editors, reviewers, designers and proof-readers.

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Home away from Home

By Shruti Pattekar

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It is quite difficult for many people to understand the concept of flying to a state where one knows not a single person, staying in homes of people one has never met, and spending an entire month there, conducting activities and meeting more people who are almost strangers to you. The summer after my freshman year of college, I had the opportunity to live in Seattle for a month as a 'Vistarika', a person who temporarily travels from home to home, meeting different people, and conducting different activities, for the betterment of society and to unite the Hindu community.

I may have landed in Washington not knowing anyone, but I definitely left the city as part of a big family. Every home I lived in became my home. They may have been different in several ways, but they also shared many similarities: humility, unselfishness, kindness, and love. Everyone I met, regardless of age, inspired me in one way or another. I looked up to everyone and was motivated to become a better person. I was treated like one of their children, whether that meant scolding me for wasting water from the kitchen sink, shaking heads at me for being too clumsy, telling me to water the plants, taking me along in car rides to pick up kids from tennis practice, or taking me to my favorite ice cream place. Although the five homes I stayed in made me feel extremely at home, I must clarify that everyone else I met had an enormous effect on making Seattle my home as well. Feeling at home does not necessarily refer to a specific home. Feeling at home refers to the interactions you have with people, the way others treat you, and the unconditional love people show you. Although this was the longest I had been away from my family in Peoria, IL, I never felt homesick. I never felt deprived of family or friends. I was the happiest version of myself during that trip. Friends became siblings, so and so 'ji's, as we address people in our community became Maushis and Kakas, and Seattle became my home away from home.

Shruti Pattekar is from Wesleyan University Hindu Yuva Shakha, Bloomington, IL. Her interests include Bharatanatyam, singing, piano, drawing/painting, teaching children, and interacting with people from a wide variety of backgrounds.



Being a part of AINA, NSS, I had close interaction with people from various sections of our society such as slums, tribal areas, remote villages, NGOs, civil societies, IAS officers, Sarpanch, and more. The main motivation for me was to understand India and I am still not finished.

Here is my view on the road to glorified India shaped from the Swadesh trips, Srijan teaching, Vision India foundation and NSS:

India is sitting on a demographic dividend and expected to become the world's youngest country by 2020 with 64% of its population, roughly 800 million people, of working age. But our country cannot become a global powerhouse unless we resolve the contradictions and bridge the gaps that distort our society. India will be at the pinnacle of its glory when it enables each of India's 1.2 billion citizens to realize their aspirations. There are different aspirations of different people

and for the glory of our country, every aspiration is important. Broadly there are 5 grand challenges namely Education, Healthcare, Justice, Energy Generation sector and voting reforms that India need to overcome. To solve these challenges, India needs to identify a series of citizen-friendly, high tech public institutions which can deliver low-cost solutions to India's grand challenges.



"Padhega India Tabhie to Badhega India"

In Feb. 2015, the state of Maharashtra held its annual evaluation tests for nearly 400,000 teachers of government-run schools, who taught either primary school(classes 1-5) or upper primary school(classes 6-8). Of all the teachers, only 1% and 5% passed in respective primary and upper primary school. Quite bluntly, this means that 99% of primary school and 95% of upper primary school teachers are unfit to teach. For this government needs to 'flip' its focus i.e., invest in early childhood education and liberalize higher education. The concept of flipped classrooms is important for learning where students watch lectures at home and do homework in class. This approach is learner-centric, technology and gamification play a vital role to improve learning. Teachers play the con-

necting role between technology and students and for that teachers need to be trained. The government needs to move from being a funder to an enabler which leads to the concept of school vouchers. The idea grants the power of choice to the consumer, and funds students instead of schools. Rather than pouring money only into government schools, a fraction of the funds can be used to grant school vouchers, which students can then use to pay for their education at a school of their choice. Currently, the government focuses on the Right to Education. To regulate its status, there can be a software platform that allows schools and students to be matched in keeping with RTE norms.



"When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied."

India has suffered from years of public health policies so inert as to be practically comatose. The situation continues to be grim. As per the economic survey of 2013-14, India's central government spends a measly 1.2% of GDP on healthcare, compared to 3% in China and 8.3% in the United States; Our public health spending is among the lowest in the world, and only 33 of this expenditure is funded by public sources. For India's poor, a single health emergency can be sufficient to ensure a lifetime of crippling debt. India's public healthcare system is in desperate need of a massive overhaul. While our existing medical facilities, especially in rural areas, are inadequate to serve the needs of the population, they are also underutilized by those who prefer private health care.

Reforming our healthcare system will require a change in policy- including a greater investment from the government, upgrading existing facilities and expanding the reach of public hospitals, clinics and primary health care centers. A way to reach underserved and remote rural areas is by providing medical services over the centre's internet or by phone. The implementation of telemedicine facilities across the hospital chains, allowing doctors to directly interact with and diagnose patients sitting thousands of away. While broadening the reach and quality of medical facilities within the country, a second priority for our healthcare system must be focused on lowering costs. This will also help in regulating data of medicine a person has taken for his health safety.



"At his best, man is noblest of all animals, separated from law and justice he is the worst."

(* Sentence is gender neutral)

The Indian Judicial system is in trouble. By any measure we choose, our judiciary is a woeful underperformer, whether it is in the number of judges and courts available to us or the speedy disposal of cases placed before them. If the judiciary at existing strength were to roll up its sleeves and tackle the herculean task of resolving all the cases pending across the country, it is estimated that it would take 320 years to clear the backlog. The technology-based system can handle the everyday minutiae of the legal process. Nearly 90% of the work involved in preparing a case for trial doesn't need judicial intervention. These type of activities can easily be systematized and speeded up by developing technology-based applications. Digitization of documents and electronic tagging of evidence is to be made to allow easy movement between courts. Justice delayed is justice denied and technology can clean the mess.



"It is time for a sustainable energy policy which puts the consumers, the environment, human health and peace first."

Energy resource management is an essential component of economic growth. India has grown to become the world's 4th-largest energy consumer, heavily reliant on foreign imports to meet its energy requirements. Our energy economy is largely dependent on fossil fuels. The alarming increase in carbon dioxide emission and climate change are now global concerns, providing an impetus for the development of alternative energy resources. Instead of depending only on traditional modes of power generation, like coal, gas, and energy systems will also need to integrate energy production from renewable resources such as hydroelectric power plants, wind turbines, solar panels, biofuels, geothermal, tidal and ocean thermal sources.



"The right of voting for representatives is the primary right by which other rights are protected. To take away this right is to reduce a man to slavery."

There are many instances which show that millions of fake, defunct voter cards exist leading to fraudulent voting and on the other hand voices of migrant citizens remain unheard since the franchise is tied to a single location. The process of getting a new voter ID is a tedious task. A centralized voter management system can solve all the above three problems leading to a transparent voting system.

"A healthily educated India switched on sustainable energy resources living with justice in a democracy is my envisioned India."

Kritika Sharma is from Chanakya Shakha, St. Louis, MO. She has a strong desire to work at the frontiers of impactful research, which has inspired her to choose research as her career. Her hobbies are reading books, dancing and cooking.

Tips for Saving

By Ranju Maheshwari

Save money by being smart about taxes! Here are a few tips that you can use in 2020 to save some money:

Invest in college education plans for yourself or your children ("529 plans"). Reduce your state tax. Earnings are tax-free if money withdrawn is used for tuition and qualified expenses.

Contribute to a Health Savings Account (HSA) with a high deductible health plan. The HSA is a triple benefit account that allows you to (1) save taxes on your contributions, (2) earnings and withdrawals are tax free as long as they are used for qualified medical expenses, and (3) unlike FSA ("use it or lose it"), you can use anytime in the future.

Maximize your 401(k) contribution to save taxes. For 2020, the contribution limit is \$19,500. Additional \$6,500 if you are above 50.

Invest in a Roth IRA. Gains are tax-free, unlike in a traditional IRA or 401k. If your employer offers you a Roth 401(k), consider that as well.

If you have your own business, consider small business retirement plans to save taxes!

Money saved is money earned!

Ranju Maheshwari is from Aurora Shakha, Naperville, IL. She is an Enrolled Agent, Realtor, Notary lives in Naperville, Illinois. She loves spending time with family playing board games, cards; and is gradually trying to practice more yoga and meditation.

Wise Traditions

By Ruchi Saxena



Yesterday, a friendly colleague offered me a drink containing milk, honey, and almonds with a topping of lemon zest. I was thankful for her efforts - obliged to taste the drink - knowing that she made it especially for me and that she hardly goes into the kitchen. But I could not hold myself from informing her that it is unhealthy to consume milk with any acidic things like lemon or vinegar. With a confused look, she shot a question: "How do you know? I made it at my home with all organic materials and not even any single chemical inside. What is the problem then?"

"I grew up listening to these rules from my mother about what to eat, when to eat, how to eat, and which food should not be eaten with other types," I said.

She laughed, "It will only make yogurt in our tummy if it is harming milk." And I had to say, "Just as iron is needed for our body but we cannot eat iron nails for lunch, our body needs lemon and milk both but we should avoid having them together. I'm sure there must be something in this piece of wisdom which modern science will acknowledge in the future."

This was enough to upset her. "But your mother is not a doctor. Is she?", she asked.

"No, but she learned from her mother," I smiled and she continued, "Was your grandmother a doctor?"

Now came the time to speak more about it. I began, "For knowing such things, we did not go to any medical school. Most of us were passed down the skills of preparing food by rightly storing, combining, mixing & heating the right ingredients. Food affects our intellect, so many precautions are required at the physical level, psychological level, and at the spiritual level."

I tried my best to convince her about being careful with what we eat and how we eat. Hundreds of cookbooks are available in the market, written by modern chefs. These books do not teach how to preserve and enhance the satvikta (purity) of the food when cooking. Hindu culture encourages the use of satvik ingredients and satvik cooking processes. Grains, pulses, sun-dried herbs, numerous spices, and vegetables are the most important in our kitchen. We sing bhajans when cleaning and storing grains; chant mantras when preparing vegetables; and use copper/iron/clay pots to cook. A kitchen is a sacred place and cooking is a form of prayer.



According to the traditional wisdom passed on to us by our mothers and grandmothers, there are some simple daily observed rules to follow: A watermelon should not be eaten in morning with an empty stomach; water should not be consumed with fruits; fruits

should not be eaten with a meal but prior to a meal; milk should not be taken with dinner or lunch; and certain spice combinations are better. We know that food is best eaten with a calm mind and in a sitting position; that water stored in an earthen pot at room temperature is nectar; that warm milk is good after eating mangoes; that milk from our happy Desi cow is divine.

We were trained by passing down the knowledge of healthy cooking rules, controlled eating habits and rules of Ayurveda (knowledge of longevity). These rules/guidelines were good for the whole ecosystem as well as for our health. Not everyone has read a book on Ayurveda to cook, but Indian mothers passed this knowledge to the next generations through daily practice.

Fresh cooked food is a must in each house. I hope that we continue doing it despite the McDonalds or the Burger King being easily available. The fresh produce allows the local farmer to make a living. Buying fresh ingredients in reasonable quantities meant that unnecessary storage or tons of cardboard/plastic packages were not needed. That keeps our environment clean.

Modern doctors have only recently begun to prescribe turmeric/garlic tablets to their patients. But we've always

cooked with turmeric, garlic, and herbs. Our traditional cooking has kept us healthy for ages. Our cooking activities keep us physically active and therefore without an expensive gym membership, we are physically fit.

I concluded, "This way of life in which the mind-body-soul is all nourished without

harming any other life on this planet is one of the most divine knowledge of the Sanatan Dharma!" My friend had been listening. She looked satisfied with my explanation and promised me to follow some of these basic rules of food consumption.

Ruchi Saxena is from Bhaskar Shakha, Arlington Heights, IL. She is very passionate about reading ancient texts and practicing those in daily life via Karma and Bhakti!



Kids are little wonders. They are full of fun, curiosity, and energy! We know that at a young age, one can grasp more things and learn quickly. For this reason, when children are young, it is easier to guide them in the right direction and to develop better attitudes. We can teach them many things when they are young so that they can be healthier: emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. Here are some tips to nurture your children to bring out the best in them:

1. Teach them gratefulness

Teach kids how to be grateful. We all should be grateful for food, water, nature, parents, and friends! When kids know people or things they should be grateful for, they know their value. Such kids can then be kinder, appreciative, and more thoughtful in their life.

2. Teach kids how to greet others

Now that they appreciate things and people, slowly start teaching them how to greet someone they approach, whether it's a guest, someone on the phone, or someone at school. Make sure that they use the magic words every time! Teach them that others have feelings and that they should respect those.

3. Introduce their relatives

Our generation, the "Generation X", is very fortunate as we grew up among our relatives and could spend time with brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, grandparents. We even met our distant relatives on occasions! Many of those who belong to Generation Z have no close family ties left with their distant relatives. To change this, we can :

- Explain to kids all kinds of close and distant relationships in a family.
- Telling them the names of their relatives, showing photos, and sharing old memories.
- Taking them to at least one of their relatives on each holiday.

Our families are becoming nuclear and isolated. Our kids

Insightful Parenting

By Soumya Potturi

should know who they can reach out to when they need help. They should nurture many beautiful relationships as these boost their confidence and hope.

4. Tell stories

Stories can shape attitudes. Individuals with the right attitudes can make wonders! Here are a few examples: Swami Vivekananda, Abdul Kalam, or even Malala! Tell them the stories of such great leaders. Recite poems and explain hidden messages. Teach them "subashitams". Bed time is the best time to tell a story!

5. Introduce them to our culture

So far we have only discussed topics that do not involve culture or religion. This is for those parents who want their kids to respect their own culture and religion. If you are such a parent, create a daily routine of activities that kids can learn from. For example,

- Take kids to a temple each week. Tell them great qualities of each god.
- Celebrate each festival with them!
- On each birthday, teach them to receive blessings from adults and to serve others.

Finally, a word to the parents:

Before we can teach our kids, we ourselves must learn to follow the above practices. Kids learn from parents. They pick up their cues from our actions every day. Young age is the right age to impart the values to bring out the best in them and to sow the seeds of goodness! All the best, parents!

Soumya Potturi is from Keshav Shakha, Fremont, CA. Her world revolves around herself, nature, her children and sunshine. Every day she tries to distribute her time outside with kids, and also to have some "me" time in a day.

Book review

Swami Vivekananda and Modern Women

By Manjula Thakur

“Purity, courage and intellect are the hallmarks of Indian women.”

These are the words of Swami Vivekananda. In “Swami Vivekananda and Modern Women” by Manjula, the author shows how Swamiji took the first step to present a complete and comprehensive picture of Indian women to the society.

Swamiji insisted that women are the makers of society. He reinstated the status of Hindu women as Brahmavadini (woman who chooses to continue her academics to acquire knowledge for the welfare of society) and as Sadhyovadhu (woman who chooses to be married, raises a family, and dedicates her life to the welfare of her family).

The author eloquently explains how Swamiji, with the help of Sister Nivedita, convinced society that educating women was crucial for the growth of our nation. I like this book as it is concise and presents a precise picture of how the women’s world evolved. The author emphasizes Swami Vivekananda’s perspective on a woman’s role in vyakti nirman (making a better human being) and rashtra nirman (nation-building).

This book has helped change my perspective towards women and has taught me to be more proud of myself. At the same time, the author has reminded me of my daayitva (responsibility) as a woman.

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.”
-Swami Vivekanada

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Instapot ‘Muthiya’

By Bindoo Talati

INGREDIENTS

2 cups finely shredded bottle gourd (“loki”, “dudhi”)

1 cup finely shredded carrots

2 cups wheat roti flour

1 cup fine (not coarse) soji

2 tablespoons any preferred oil

DRY INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon sesame seeds

1 tablespoon sugar

1 teaspoon turmeric powder

3 tablespoons coriander powder

1/4 teaspoon asafetida (“hing”)

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 cup curd

salt per taste

cut green chilies, ginger paste, and garlic paste as per taste

METHOD:

In a bowl, add wheat flour, soji, and 2 ta-

blespoons of oil. Mix well. Add other dry ingredients and mix well again.

Now add wet ingredients: curd, green chilies, ginger, garlic paste, bottle gourd, and carrots. Do not add water because bottle-gourd has enough water in it.

Mix well to make a dough. The consistency of your dough should be similar to the roti dough. The dough should not be sticky nor too firm. Make sure it is malleable enough to roll it into a cylindrical shape for the muthiya. Now begin making cylindrical pieces of dough.

Step 1: Set your Instant Pot (“Instapot”) on steam mode (push the “steam” button).

Step 2: Add 2 cups of water to the pot

and bring the water to a boil.

Step 3: While the water is boiling, take a steel plate and properly grease with oil.

Step 4: Place the cylindrical shape of dough in the plate and steam the muthiya for 12 minutes.

Step 5: Adjust the vent of your Instapot in a sealing position.

Step 6: Once it is cooled down, cut the muthiya into smaller pieces and give a “tadaka” with oil, mustard seeds, and sesame seeds.

Enjoy with a “chutney” or a hot cup of tea!

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