

Prerana

e-zine

An inspiration to Hindu women



गुरुब्रह्मा
गुरुविष्णुः
गुरुदेवो
महेश्वरः ।

गुरुः साक्षात्
परं ब्रह्म
तस्मै श्री
गुरुवे नमः ॥

OM ।

SRI GURUBHYO NAMAH ॥

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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!



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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:
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About HSS

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

Visit
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On the Cover

We are delighted to present the Guru Purnima edition of Prerana. Guru Purnima, also known as Vyasa Purnima, marks the birthday of Maharshi Veda Vyasa. The festival is celebrated on the full moon day (Purnima) in the Hindu month of Ashadha. Guru Poornima is celebrated with spiritual activities and by honoring the Guru. Somebody must remind us of our real nature. He who does this is the Guru. So, the Guru helps us to illuminate ourselves by removing the false notions we have been entertaining about ourselves. Guru Purnima is a day to be

thankful to our teachers and mentors.

SRI GURUBHYO NAMAH |

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः |
गुरु साक्षात् परब्रह्मा तस्मै श्रीगुरुवे नमः ||



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Prerana Team

National Coordinators:

Anjali Patel
Suvidhya Rane

Editors:

Chitra Javdekar, Ph.D
Kanaka Tirumale
Richa Yadav, Ph.D

Design Team:

Anjali Desai
Anila Mantha



Courage

By Kanaka Tirumale



धैर्य (dhairya) is a common Sanskrit noun that means 'courage'.

Looking back, I am grateful that I was fortunate to have been brought up to believe that all are equal and to never let the external conditions, judgments, and expectations put my goals aside. Growing up, I could see that many girls around me struggled to even survive given their very difficult circumstances. Many were brave to overcome their struggles and succeed in their lives eventually. This is why I believe that women are born courageous.

There are many examples of courage in Hindu history and around us to observe, study and learn:

The Rani of Jhansi Regiment (RJR) was formed in Singapore by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943. His young recruits were from Indian families of the diasporas in Singapore, Malaya and Burma, and consisted entirely of civilian volunteers lacking any prior military training. These women soldiers, deployed to the steamy jungles of Burma during the two last years of World War II, were determined to follow their commander to victory and to the liberation of India. Their courage deserves our gratitude and respect.

Indra Nooyi, an Indian-born American executive was ranked No.4 on Forbes magazine's annual survey of the 100 most powerful women in the world. When she was the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of PepsiCo, she made a bold decision to overhaul the company's information technology (IT) systems. It was a \$1 billion project and she faced lots of skeptics. She overpowered her skeptics through courage, knowledge and competence. No one regretted her decision.

We generally believe that 'marriage is of two families' but it takes immense courage on the woman's part to leave her parents and her comfort zone. It takes courage to accept one's husband's family as our own and to adjust to this new family, the new environment, and new customs 'till death do us part'! Women map themselves to many unknowns when they do so.

Women courageously go forward to find both pain and joy in the experience of childbirth. The expectant mother displays extreme strength and dhairya as she gives birth to her child.

We all have an extraordinary inner strength, but sometimes we are so harsh and critical with ourselves that we do not even realize it. We are stronger than we think. Think about all the times in which life events have tested you and you managed to stand up to them, against all odds. You reacted with dhriti (determination) and dhairya (courage).

If you made it at that time, you'll make it again.

We, women manage and balance our personal and professional commitments and relationships while wearing multiple hats and multi-tasking. Family is empowered with a woman's love and courage. There is a poem in Samskrutam:

बालिका अहं बालिका नव युग जनिता अहं बालिका ।

नाहमबला दुर्बला आदिशक्ति अहमम्बिका ॥

Meaning: "I am a girl, a girl of modern times. I am not feeble nor powerless. I am Aadishakti, I am Ambika."

Someone has said that 'a strong woman understands that gifts such as logic, decisiveness, and strength are just as feminine as intuition and emotional connection. She values and uses all of her gifts'.

Let us all celebrate such courageous women and womanhood!

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Kanaka Tirumale is a software professional from Maitri Shakha, Dallas, TX. She loves reading, cooking and teaching children. Travelling is in her bucket list.
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Yoga

A Panacea For All Challenges

By Rasika Acharya



Yoga, or rightly known as “yog”, literally is derived from the Sanskrit word “yuj” meaning joining of the individual spirit to God. In simple words, it is not just various physical postures that make our body flexible, nor is it just breathing exercises that make us strong. It is in fact a perfect alignment of mind, body, and soul (spirit)! A union of all three brings each one of us in a perfect and happy state. It sounds simple, but it is very challenging to achieve! It’s challenging because our minds cannot be tamed easily. History reminds us that “Patanjali”, the founder of “yog”, coded all its aspects into one-hundred and ninety-six (196) verses (sutras) through the “Yoga Sutra”. This article will look at the “what”, “why”, and “when” of “yog” within our daily routine.

Since we already know the “what” of yog through this introduction, let me quickly walk you through the remaining two! Why yog? You may agree on numerous benefits such as increased body awareness, mental clarity, calmness, sharpened focus, and relaxation. However, the most crucial benefits are related to physical and mental health. For example, perfect posture, flexibility, bone, and muscle strength, increased blood circulation, immunity boost, prevention of cartilage/joints breakdown, improved metabolic rate, regulating adrenal glands, and lower blood sugar are some of the benefits. In addition, regular practice of yoga can rejuvenate the nervous system, improve balance, digestion, provide support to connec-

tive tissue, reduce allergies, and boost self-esteem and self-awareness. These health benefits can be cherished over a long time. Many yogis say that it serves as a “panacea” of all problems!

Yog can be practiced through various asanas every day. When should one do yog? The very best time to practice yog is first thing in the morning before eating. After emptying the bowels and taking a shower if you wish, you can commence the day with your regime of yog practice. Another good time to practice yog is early evening, around sunset, and before dinner.

It is not surprising that the more you practice yog, the faster you will get the benefits (most of the time). You will see the results much sooner if you practice for an hour every day than just an hour every weekend. Even a half-hour of daily practice is good, but the key is in being regular and consistent.

It is important that we set realistic goals. Yog should never be rushed. Everyone’s body adapts at different rates,

so trying to force progress is nearly always going to end in pain and injury. Be patient, listen to the body, and do not give up easily. Thank you to the advanced technology that offers free resources to learn yog at our fingertips available to us!

Now, that we know about the innumerable benefits and ease of including “yog” in our routine, why would anyone not do it?

Too busy? Yes, we have all heard that before.

Think of it as a “gift” we owe to ourselves. Sadhguru (Jaggi Vasudev) reminds us that the machine called “human body and mind” needs fixing to resolve every problem in this world!

In other words, as humans, we have for centuries ignored ourselves and focused on the external world. Yog can help us to connect with our mind, body, and soul help with knowing ourselves better and relate better to others, and to become better human beings in this process.

Rasika Acharya is from Bhairavi Shakha, British Columbia, Canada. Her hobbies include Indian classical and Bollywood dancing, henna designs, painting, music, and writing.



Life: An Interface Between Our Joys And Problems

By Dr. Nidhi Gupta



“Talking about our problems is our greatest addiction. Break the habit. Talk about your joys.” – Rita Schiano

Life, without problems of any kind, is improbable. Our attitude plays a key role in handling these so-called problems. It is human nature to talk or think more about problems instead of joys.

Talking or thinking less about problems keeps negative thoughts from overpowering the mind. Always talking about problems makes a person sound negative. People would be less interested in talking to that person. Not only this, but a person will also surely sound miserable to other people if one only talks about problems. And certainly, it wouldn't make a person fun or pleasant to be around.

Talking / thinking more about joys makes one happy, spreads positivity, and makes a person feel better not only physically but mentally too. Talking about joys doesn't always mean one should just forget about the problem; it's plainly how a person handles it.

I would like to share my own example. Every single evening on the way back home from work my biggest concern used to be: I have to go home and cook dinner, and on top of that what to cook? My entire drive used to be a bleak interpersonal conflict which often led me to emotional stress conquering my evenings. I had a talk to my husband and we both came up with a plan. Instead of going out for dinner on the weekend, we decided to go for dinner on a midweek day. And for the remaining days of the week, we built a menu together for each day. Honestly, it's been working great and I don't spend my time thinking about this frivolous problem anymore. There are several daily issues we consider as problems, but they can be resolved with a plan. Talking / thinking about problems without a plan will only make one more stressful.

Another example that I would like to share; earlier when we got home daily, we would talk for hours about all

the negativities such as incidents, colleagues, employers, people on the road, traffic, system, and on and on. Soon we realized that feeding problems with rage is not pleasant. Moreover, it was increasing our discomfort by making the problem bigger. We mutually decided every evening we will talk about at least one joy or positive thing that has happened to us that day. This practice has greatly helped in making us feel so much better.

Talking joys only doesn't mean a person has to stop wording the problems, but instead make a conscious effort to reposition the spotlight. It's really important for us to understand that we all have problems. Negative things occur and happen and they heal. Health and well-being are the most crucial things. Administering the problems with an adequate plan is a skill that is needed to live a calm and stress-free life.

I am sure orienting our life to the positive and joyous side of things will bring peace in our busy lives and hectic schedules. Eventually, we will notice how, little by little, many walls are broken and we feel happy and content.

“Find Joy in the Ordinary”- Max Lucado

Keep celebrating joys and be safe!

Dr. Nidhi Gupta goes to Shakha in Phoenix, AZ.

“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” Confucius

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Ayurveda

Concept Of The Tri Doshas

By Dr Sonika Laskar Desai



Ayurveda, 'the science of life', is the world's oldest holistic healing practice.

Ayurveda is also known as the science of self-knowledge. By knowing your unique nature or constitution, you can begin to learn how you interact with your environment. With this knowledge, you can make choices leading you toward greater health while maintaining perfect equilibrium with nature.

According to Ayurveda, the tridoshas are the energy forces that govern the physiological and spiritual functions of the human body. A balance of the doshas is necessary for optimal health. Any imbalance in the tridoshas is thought to be the reason for diseases.

The three doshas are Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Even though all three doshas are present in our body, only one is dominant and determines the Prakriti (body type/constitution). The other two doshas are subordinate. Prakriti is unique to each individual, just like their fingerprints. Doshas are associated with a child as soon as she is conceived in her mother's womb.

The human body is made up of the five elements (Panchamahabhuta) and so are the tridoshas. Vata is made up of air (vayu) and space (akaash). Pitta is made up of fire (agni) and water (jala). Kapha is made up of water (jala) and earth (prithvi). The prakriti of an indi-

vidual is characterized by a collection of qualities which are listed below:

Vata body type-

These individuals tend to be non-muscular, thin, and active. They are restless, enthusiastic, artistic, and creative. They have a quick gait, a quick mental understanding, light and interrupted sleep, and rapid speech. They can frequently change decisions and can lack the stamina for prolonged activity. Coarse, kinky, or curly hair, brown complexion, and cool, rough, dry, and cracked skin are common among those with Vata Prakriti. Their face is usually long and angular with irregular teeth, thin lips, and small eyes. They have an uncertain appetite and digestive efficiency.

Pitta body type -

The interplay of water and fire that is Pitta makes these people passionate and dedicated. Those with Pitta body type can be jealous, competitive, aggressive, intolerant, and irritable. They usually have well-developed bodies with muscular limbs and a stable gait. Their skin is soft, lustrous, warm, and tends to burn easily in the sun. They have fine, soft, reddish/brownish hair that tends to grey soon. Their face is heart-shaped with pointed chin and nose, and medium-sized lips. They have strong appetites and good metabolisms. They have loud and strong voices and precise and convincing speech. Discriminating and judgmental, they are precise, articulate, learned, and proud. Pitta people are strong decision-makers, organize affairs well. With selectively excellent

memory, they learn fast and argue with a sense of humor.

Kapha body type -

These individuals have thick, broad, well-developed bodies and large, long limbs that go well with pleasant, deep, and resonant voices and low, slow, rhythmic speech. Their skin is usually thick, oily, and cold. With thick hair, round face, large nose, attractive eyes, full lips, white and big teeth, they are stable and patient. They are slow to anger. Kapha people have low appetites. Due to slow digestion, they tend to consume less food but have a strong tendency to carry excess weight. Loyal, honest, calm, and forgiving, they can be lethargic. Their learning may be slow, but memory is strong. Long hours of deep sleep come naturally.

Most people fit predominantly into one body type and sometimes secondarily into another, and rarely into the third.

Optimal health is achieved through Ayurvedic Medicine when we are living in complete harmony with our environment. In order to live in harmony, we must first understand our own nature. Only then can we intelligently make choices that support us on our journey.

Dr Sonika Laskar Desai is from Abhimanyu Shakha, La Palma, CA. She loves outdoor activities, singing, and painting.

अज्ञानतिमिरान्धस्य ज्ञानाञ्जनशालाकया |
चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ||

Meaning: Ajnyaana timiraandhasya-darkness of ignorance from our blindness, Jnyaananajana Shalaakaya- by his eye of isdom (spiritual eye), Chakshurunmeelitam yena- our (spiritual) Eyes are Opened, Tasmai Shri Gurave Namah-Salutations to that Guru.

Hindu Women From History

Ubhaya Bharati (8th - 9th CE)

By Dr. Priyanka Tripathi

During the medieval period, Shri Adi Shankaracharya traveled across the Indian subcontinent to propagate his philosophy through discourses and debates with other thinkers. Starting on this mission of spiritual conquest of the whole of India, he went to meet Mandan Mishra, who was famous as the great exponent of ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas (Mimamsa School of Philosophy).

Mandan Mishra lived in the ancient Mahismati or Mithila region of the present Indian state of Bihar with his wife Ubhaya Bharati. Ubhaya Bharati was a woman of wisdom and was well-versed in the Vedic injunction. In the folklore of Mithila, Ubhaya Bharti was considered as an avatar of the Goddess Sarasvati. Shankaracharya and Mandan Mishra both agreed to choose Ubhaya Bharati to be the most appropriate judge for the debate. They started the Shastras with the condition that the loser of the debate would become the disciple of the winner. Ubhaya Bharati put a garland of flowers on the neck of both the contestants, declaring that the person whose garland withers will be considered defeated. According to the tradition, Shri Shankara defeated Mandan Mishra. After six months of debate, the wreath on Mandan Mishra's neck faded away. Ubhaya Bharati declared her husband's defeat. Mandan Mishra adopted sanyas and became Shri Sankara's disciple for the rest of his life.

Ubhaya Bharti praised Shri Shankara for his knowledge and asked, "Do you know that the sacred text enjoined that a wife forms one-half of a husband's body (Ardhangani), therefore you have defeated only half of him. Your victory can be complete only when you defeat me in the debate too." It was a situation for which Shri Shankara was not prepared.

At first, he wanted to avoid it and said, "Mother, a scholar of standing never desires to debate with women." Ubhaya Bharti replied, "The great sage Yagyavalkya did debate with Gargi. The royal sage Janak also entered into a debate with Sulbha, so why can't you? If you don't agree to a debate with me, then you must accept your defeat."

Finally, Shri Shankara agreed and then began the debate between Ubhaya Bharati and Shri Shankara. For seventeen days, a protracted debate continued. Finding Shri Shankara invincible in Vedic lore, philosophies, and other Sastras, she resolved to question him about the Kama-Sutra, the science



and art of love. Sri Shankara being celibate and therefore ignorant of the Kama Shastras. Feeling his reputation at stake, he requested Ubhaya Bharati to put off the discussion for some time. He wanted to prepare himself for the topic and then come back. Ubhaya Bharati granted him permission.

Legend says that through his yogic powers, Shri Shankara left his body and soul entered into the body of a king Amruka who had just died. King Amruka was the king of Kashmir. Shri Shankara, in his new form, spent a hundred days mastering the art of the erotic before returning to debate. He then came back to resume the discussion with Ubhaya Bharati. Ubhaya Bharati, now satisfied with the omniscience of Shri Shankara, declared him the master of all vidyas. Ubhaya Bharati wanted to end her avatar and renounce the physical world. Shri Shankara was very impressed with the scholarship and wisdom of Ubhaya Bharati. He prayed to her and requested her to bless people on earth. Later, he built a temple at Sringeri (Karnataka state) and dedicated it to her.

Shri Adi Shankaracharya is said to have written a very famous collection of erotic verses called Amaru-shataka, but we prefer to study Shankaracharya Advaitya philosophy rather than the erotic arts. It was Ubhaya Bharati who taught Shankaracharya that wisdom cannot be absolute without including the household, the body, and the woman. It is believed that Ubhaya Bharati blesses the devotees as Shardamba of Sringeri.

Dr. Priyanka Tripathi is from Krishnadevaraya Shakha, Irvine, CA. Her hobbies include writing articles on Ancient Indian Art, Culture, and women studies.

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*"Guru is the creator Brahma, Guru is the preserver Vishnu, Guru is the destroyer Shiva.
Guru is directly the supreme spirit — I offer my salutations to this Guru"*
- Adi Shankara



American Women I Admire

Bobbi Gibb

By Saudamini Paranjape

‘When there is a will, there is a way!’ We all are familiar with this proverb. It is this ‘will’ that empowered human beings to land on the moon. It is this ‘will’ that resulted in all great inventions. It is this ‘will’ that enabled even a physically challenged person to touch the summit of Mt. Everest. It was the same ‘will’ that Massachusetts born Bobbi Gibb pursued to become the first woman winner in the Boston Marathon in 1966.

As a child, Bobbi liked running as a hobby. Her athletic body and the lush green natural world around her house always encouraged her to run. Bobbi stated that she loved to run because it let her realize the beauty of life and nature. She ran to experience inner peace and satisfaction. This enthusiastic runner hadn’t realized yet that she could take her hobby to the next level as a competitive sport. She used to run just for her own joy.

However, a visit to the Boston Marathon as a spectator in 1964 triggered a thought: if she had been running since childhood, then she should also participate. Bobbi then began formal training and worked hard for the next two years to build up enough stamina. At one point she was running 40 miles at a stretch. Her application was rejected by the Marathon officials because women were not considered physiologically capable of running a distance of 26 miles in the Boston Marathon. According to the rules of the AAU at the time, women were not allowed to run more than a mile and a half competitively. Bobbi was shocked but realized that it was even more important to run now than ever to

prove that women were capable of running a marathon. For Bobbi, running in the Boston Marathon transformed from being just a personal challenge to a social responsibility.

Bobbi didn’t tell her parents about her decision to participate in the Boston Marathon until the day before the competition. When she finally disclosed it to them after reaching Massachusetts from San Diego just before the day of the race, her dad was quite upset. He feared that she would get arrested for not obeying the ban on female participation. However, Bobbi was determined. When the marathon began, Bobbi hid in the bushes near the running track and didn’t even start running for the first couple of minutes. She disguised herself as a man just to make sure that she wouldn’t be denied the chance to run. When she jumped onto the track and joined the race, initially nobody recognized Bobbi as a woman. However, after a while, her fellow runners figured her out. To Bobbi’s surprise, they encouraged her and cheered her on! Finally, she touched the finish line in 3 hours 21 minutes and 40 seconds, and was honored as the first woman to win

the Boston Marathon.

Bobbi is now a three-time winner of the Boston Marathon Women’s Division in the pre-sanctioned era (1966, 1967, and 1968). She wears many hats: she’s not only a scientific researcher for neurodegenerative diseases but also an attorney, athlete, and author.

I draw great inspiration from Bobbi’s life. I admire Bobbi not just for her incredible achievement as a woman but also because of her genuine love and dedication for running. She says, “Running is a meditation for me. I experience unification of body and mind while running and feel that it’s a celebration of life.”

Here I recall these words by Swami Vivekananda: “Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life. Think of it, dream of it. Live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.” To me, Bobbi embodies these words like no one else!

Saudamini Paranjape is from Hirkani Shakha, Portland, OR. She likes to read, cook, swim and hike.

अखण्डमण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम् ।
तत्पदं दर्शितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

Meaning: Akhandamandalaakaram-Salutations to the Guru Whose Form is the whole Indivisible physical manifestation (Universe), Vyaptam Yena Charaacharam-who pervades both in movable and immovable things, TatPadam Darshitam Yena-manifested his feet

Festivals of India

By Manasi S Palkar

Indians love celebrations and festivals!

Here are some Indian festivals that are celebrated with pomp and energy. While the local traditions and celebrations can vary based on the region, these festivals unite Indians and the spirit of India is evident during each of the festivals!

Month of Celebration	Festival Name	Tagline to remember	What is special
January	Makar Sankranti	Tilgul ghya-goat goat bola	Kite flying, Sun sankraman
January 26th	Republic Day	Satyamev Jayate	The day the Constitution of India came into effect. A grand Republic Day parade on Rajpath in New Delhi
February	Maha Shivaratri	Shambho Shankara	Bhagwan Shiva is worshipped.
March	Holi Poornima	End of Winter	Campfire to burn ego and evil thoughts
March-April	Rang Panchami	Rang Khelo	Welcoming Spring
April	Ugadi/Gudi Padwa	Hindu New Year	New plans for prosperity and victory
April	Ram Navami	9th day of Chaitra	Birth of Shri Ram
April	Hanumat Jayanthi		Birth of Hanuman
April	Akshaya Tritiya	Auspicious day	Brings prosperity
May 1st	Labour Day		Appreciation of Physical work
May	Budha Poornima	End of Vaishakha	Birth and enlightenment of Budha
July	Ashad Ekadasi	Maharashtra Vari	Varkaris walk to Pandharpur in huge numbers
August	Rakshabandhan	Rakhi tied	Symbolizes protection
August 15th	Independence day	Vande Mataram	India's independence from colonial rule
August	Janmashtami	Dahi Handi	Birth of Shri Krishna
August	Pola/ Pithori Amavas	Ashada	Bull respecting ceremony by farmers
September	Ganesh Chaturthi	Bhadrapada	Communal Ganesh Pooja celebrations Ganapati Bappa Moriya
September/October	Navratri	Celebrates Stri Shakti	Devi Jagaran and Stri Shakti pooja
	Dussera	Simolanghan	Celebrated for 9 days
November	Deepavali	Good over evil	Festival of lights
December	Datta Jayanthi	Tri guna Shakti	Birth of Dattatreya

Manasi S Palkar is from Bhagatsingh Shakha, Seattle, WA.

“May your Being blossom to bring Bliss and Beauty to all.
The Boundless Grace of the Guru is upon you”
- Sadhguru

Book review

Three Thousand Stiches By Sudha Murthy

By Anuranjani Raghuv eer

A room without a book is like a body without a soul. I am lucky to have grown up watching my dad read books from his own library of thousands of books. Watching him enjoy his reading motivated me to pick up the hobby and thus the journey started.

During this journey I came across fantastic writers but I especially admired the writings of Infosys chairperson, Mrs. Sudha Murthy, as most of her stories are from real life, not fiction. With great love and respect for Sudha Murthy, I am sharing thoughts from her book *Three Thousand Stiches*. Though the book has eleven stories, I have chosen to write on the one which inspired me the most.

Sudha Murthy started her philanthropy with the Infosys Foundation twenty-five years ago. She started with one initiative to eradicate the devadasi system of prostitution. As it is said, charity begins at home, so she started the work from a town called Devaragudda in North Karnataka, close to her native place and the epicenter of the devadasi system.

Her journey started with visits to Devaragudda where she attempted to understand the people. The first time she visited Devaragudda, naively wearing a pair of jeans and holding a pen and paper, she told them bravely that she wanted to eradicate the devadasi system. The devadasis gave her strange looks and asked, "How much are you going to pay us?" She then explained that she was not there to pay them but to make them aware of the disease called AIDS which could kill them if they continued to practice prostitution. To her dismay, the women

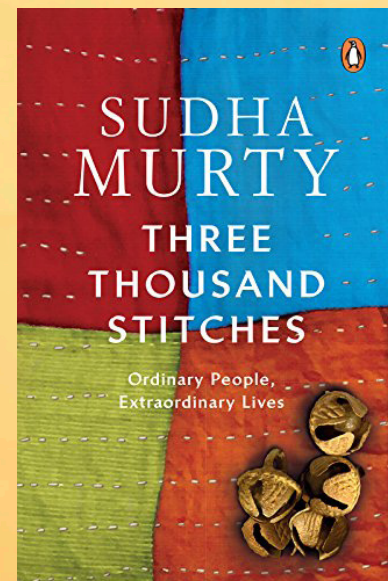
only got intimidated and threw slippers at Sudha Murthy.

She faced people who threw tomatoes at her when she visited a second time. Angered, she went back home and discussed her predicament with her father. He explained to Sudha how alcohol and prostitution had existed from ancient times. He told her that she could not eradicate them by herself, but that she could play a role in reducing the problem. He said, "Look at yourself, you with your bob-cut, wearing jeans and a t-shirt, you are not one among them." He explained that those women would not be able to trust her as she was not one of them. He also told Sudha to think deeply about her approach to solving the problem rather than only the results.

After ruminating on her father's thoughts, she visited the devadasis again after a few days. This time, she changed her attire to a saree and mangal sutra, also bringing along her father. Her father initiated a discussion and introduced her as a teacher, and said that she was there to help their children's education. Sudha Murthy



looked at her father quizzically. Later, when Sudha Murthy questioned her father, he explained, "The best way to a woman's heart is through her children,". Thus her journey started with



providing scholarships to the devadasis' children.

In total, it took about twenty years for Sudha Murthy and her team to reduce the spread of the devadasi system. During this process she received many threats of blackmail, but her journey never stopped. In fact, many kids who benefitted from her scholarships graduated from universities and earned their own livelihoods, with a few joining the police department, becoming teachers, and entering hospitals as nurses.

Sudha Murthy sponsored a total of three crores to three thousand devadasi families, allowing them to start their own business. With this money, devadasis started the wool business and the Infosys Foundation helped them to market all over Asia. This venture helped many devadasis start a new, normal life.

To show their gratitude, three thousand devadasis arranged a thanksgiving ceremony for Mrs. Sudha Murthy, where each one of them stitched a design on a blanket and presented it to her. Moved by this gesture, she found the inspiration for her book's title in this blanket of three thousand stitches. On the occasion of the ceremony, Mrs. Murthy uttered the following sloka from the Bhagavat:

Na tvahaṃ kāmāye rājyaṃ na svar-

gaṃ nāpunarbhavam ।

Kāmāye duḥkhataptānāṃ prāṇināṃ
ārtināśanam ॥

The sloka explains that one may acquire land, property, possessions, or even want to attain moksha so that he can escape the burden of life. But there is something much more desirable for any existing creature: freedom from pain. No pain is equated to happiness.

In the Parashara smṛiti, our Vedas also rightly state:

Tapah kruta yuge parahah, tretayam
gyan muchyate ।

Dwapare yagna mevahuhu, Dana me-
kum kaliyuge ॥

The meaning is that in Krutayuga, importance was given to meditation (tapah). In Tretayuga, it was given to knowledge (gyan) and in Dwapareyuga, it was havan (yagna). But it's only danam (charity) in Kaliyuga.

Dana (charity) is a simple way in Kaliyuga to attain peace which brings calmness to every individual, and in the long run, to the entire society. Is this not true, sevikas? When life provides an opportunity to help someone and change someone's life for good, then grab it! Because it is the most joyful and satisfying thing I have ever experienced and I'm sure you will too.

Anuranjani Raghuvēer is from Hirkani Shaka Portland, OR. Her hobbies are reading, learning, cooking and traveling.

विनयफलं शुश्रूषा गुरुशुश्रूषाफलं श्रुतं ज्ञानम् ।
ज्ञानस्य फलं विरतिः विरतिफलं चाश्रवनिरोधः ॥

गुरौ न प्राप्यते यत्तन्नान्यत्नापि हि लभ्यते ।
गुरुप्रसादात् सर्वं तु प्राप्नोत्येव न संशयः ॥

D I G E S T S

What Is Safety?

By Kamal Rishī

The word "safety" is derived from Latin and it means uninjured, whole, or well-kept.

"Safety" refers to the state of being safe and it also denotes security of body, employment, resources, morality, family, health, and property. Indeed, all individuals have the right to feel safe in all aspects, but we will focus on safety at home, in public places, and in workplaces.

Safety at home can be secured by taking simple precautions such as ensuring the stove is off before leaving the house, unplugging all electronic equipment, locking all windows and doors, and enabling a safety alarm, when applicable. Additionally, homes with small children must have safety locks on cupboards with hazardous material and medicines, and electronic outlets must be covered at all times. Furthermore, every household should stow a first aid kit and safety kit. It is pivotal for one family member to assume responsibility to ensure that all the material in the safety kit is checked and replenished frequently. Finally, all family members must know who to contact during emergency situations including police, medical, and fire.

Safety at work can be secured in a number of ways. One of the most significant ways to feel safe at work is to be receptive to workplace safety policies and being aware of your rights. You can create a positive work culture by offering help to others and being cautious during outdoor activities. Be aware that ensuring workplace safety can be extremely challenging initially, but it is not impossible.

Ensuring safety in public places can be arduous, but can be attained by taking some easy steps, which include remaining extra vigilant of your surroundings. There is also a demand to be mindful of what to do in certain situations and being aware of helplines and emergency contacts. Physical training for young girls is indispensable as it prepares them to take care of themselves if someone presents a physical risk to them. Most importantly, all family members must have transparent communication with each other. Such communication is especially important in order to know a family member's whereabouts when they are not home. Confidence and the ability to reach your loved ones as and when needed will lead to a greater sense of security.

To sum it up, ensuring safety through simple steps can lead to a stress-free life.

Kamal Rishi is from Chaankya Shakha, Surrey, BC.

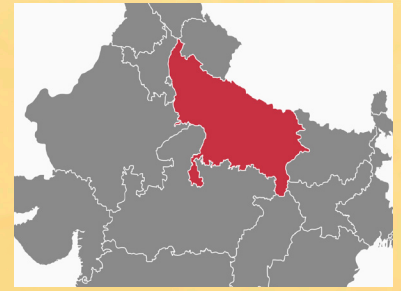
Meaning: Modesty yields service, service to the Guru yields knowledge, knowledge yields detachment, and detachment yields moksha.

Meaning: Whatever is not obtained from the Guru, cannot be obtained from elsewhere. With the grace of the Guru one indeed gets everything.

States Of India

Uttarpradesh

By Preeti Shukla



Milega yahan sara desh, dil se swadesh..... yeh hai Uttar Pradesh!

Uttar Pradesh (UP) is the most populous state in India, with over 200 million inhabitants. This northern state, with Lucknow as its capital city, has 18 divisions and 75 districts. It was known as the 'United Provinces of Agra and Oudh' under the British rule and was later renamed as 'Uttar Pradesh' in 1950. The state covers 243,290 square kilometers or 93,933 square miles of land, roughly about 7.34% of India, and is the fourth-largest Indian state by area. The state has more than 32 large and small rivers. Of these, the Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sarayu, Betwa, and Ghaghara rivers are larger and of religious importance in Hindu dharma. Hindi is the official language of the state.

The history of UP is very ancient and interesting. It is recognized in the later Vedic age as Brahmarshi Desha or Madhya Desha. Many great sages of the Vedic times such as Bhardwaj, Gautam, Yagyavalkya, Vashishtha, Vishwamitra, and Valmiki flourished in this state. Several sacred books of Hindus were also composed here. Two great epics of India, Ramayana and Mahabharata, appear to have been inspired by UP. Several centers in the UP like Ayodhya, Prayag, Varanasi, and Mathura became reputed centers of learning. During the medieval age, Indian poets and intellectuals such as Goswami Tulsidas, Surdas, Kabir contributed to the growth of Hindi and its major dialects such as Braj and Awadhi.

The UP was home to powerful empires of ancient and medieval India. The state has several historical, natural, and religious tourist destinations, such

as Agra, Ayodhya, Vrindavan, Lucknow, Mathura, Varanasi, Allahabad, and Gorakhpur. The UP is a favored tourist destination and ranks first in domestic tourist arrivals among all states of India owing to its rich and varied topography, vibrant culture, festivals, monuments, ancient places of worship, and viharas. UP is also home to many World Heritage sites. Millions gather at Allahabad to take part in the Magha Mela festival on the banks of the Ganga River. This festival is organized on a larger scale every 12th year and is called the Kumbh Mela, where over 10 million Hindu pilgrims congregate in one of the largest gatherings of people in the world.

The festival of Guru Purnima



is dedicated to Sage Vyasa, and also known as Vyasa Purnima as it is the day that is believed to be his birthday and also the day he divided the Vedas.

Hindi literature was modernized by authors such as Jaishankar Prasad, Maithili Sharan Gupt, Munshi Premchand, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, and Harivansh Rai Bachchan. The UP has produced musicians, including Girija Devi, Kishan Maharaj Naushad Ali,

Ravi Shankar, Vikash Maharaj, Anup Jalota, Shubha Mudgal, Siddheshwari Devi, Talat Mehmood, and Ustad Bismillah Khan. The region's folk heritage includes songs called rasiya (especially popular in Braj), which celebrate the divine love of Radha and Krishna. Other forms of music are kajari, sohar, qawwali, rasiya, thumri, birha, chaiti, and sawani. Kathak, a classical dance form, also owes its origin to the state of UP.

Traditional sports include wrestling, swimming, kabaddi, and track-sports or water-sports played according to local traditional rules and without modern equipment. Field hockey is popular and UP has produced some of the finest players in India, including Dhyan Chand and K.D. Singh "Babu".

A typical festive plate of food (thali) consists of puri, kachauri, sabji, pulav, papad, raita, salad, and desserts (such as sewai or kheer). The chaat in Lucknow and Banarasi paan is known across India for its flavors and ingredients. Awadhi and Mughlai cuisines are the most famous cuisines that originated in the state. Traditional styles of dress include colorful draped garments—such as sari for women and dhoti or lungi for men—and tailored clothes such as salwar kameez for women and kurta-pajama for men.

The UP has been a politically active state right from the starting and has given India the most number of Prime Ministers, notable being Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Preeti Shukla is from Shivaji Shakha, San Diego, CA.

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Home Away From Home

By Prajna Woonnimani

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concept, the Sangha connects people across the globe. Wherever we are, from whichever background we are, identifying with this concept unites us in more ways than one can imagine.

Coming from a Sangha family, I have grown up all too familiar with this idea. Regardless of the city that we would visit, there would be some one's house for us to stay in. As a child, I just thought my family had way too many friends, but as I grew up, I realized that every karyakartha has way too many friends. Connecting with this ideology connects you to so many people, that you have no other option than to have way too many friends. Despite growing up with this concept ingrained in me, I was still shocked by the extent to which the term Sangha Parivar can hold true; and no other moment seemed to teach me this better than in my vistarakship.

Last fall, I spent a month in Houston, moving from house to house, meeting random people, and trying my best to help Sangha work there. My job was to go and help grow Sangha work in Houston, but I believe Sangha in Houston had a greater role in making me grow. During my time in Houston, I spent only a day or two in each house before I moved again. Staying in the houses of karyakartas was something I was familiar with; I had done it with my family from a very young age. But this time was different. For the first time, I was out of my parents' shadow, in a place where I knew no one and no one knew me. In the beginning, as expected, meeting with new families was a challenge. But just a few days into the vistarakship, it was saying bye each time that was the true challenge. Soon enough, it was heartbreaking each time I left a house because although I had met them just a day before, they had become family. It was the small moments - like random nights where I stayed up till 3 a.m. talking to a karyakarta I had just met, or hearing parents tell me that their 3-year-old has been waiting all week for me to stay with them, or listening to a bala say that they want to be a vistarak like me when they grow up - that made me truly understand the magic of the Sangha parivar. In my 30 day vistarakship, I stayed in 21 different houses, conducted 3 events, attended 6 shakhas, and made countless memories.

Last fall, I left my family and went to Houston alone on a vistarakship, but a month later, I came back with infinite memories, several "come visit me"s, countless "we have to meet again"s, and an oversized Houston parivaar, that is living proof that with the concept of the Sangathan in your heart, anywhere you go is a home away from home.

Prajna Woonnimani is from Hirkani Shakha, Portland, OR. is a freshman in college, majoring in Microbiology. In her free time she loves to read, draw, and dance.

Kids Corner

By Prathibha Oleti

Namaste,

All of us have been listening to Ramayanam from our childhood. Let's play a fun and interesting game here.

Arrange the letters of the jumbled up words below to reveal a character from Ramayanam or a word used in Ramayanam. The words are:

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. JAAINYO | 7. TAMABJNAAVA | 13. LUSAARHCVA | 19. EREUTHSIKRT |
| 2. IMIAVLAK | 8. UAASLVKA | 14. UTUYRVPAA | 20. HAAL- |
| 3. ASSNEUH | 9. TSSAAIVH | 15. YJTAUAH | NAAMAAKCN |
| 4. KSIVUHAKA | 10. IDADOPNKNA | 16. RKAHCHYUSAAR | |
| 5. ANSDNAANDT | 11. LAMHIIT | 17. AYSANAAMRAAV | |
| 6. NIAAKPA | 12. NSRGUTAA | 18. KMSLAANHA | |

Pratibha Oleti is from Parashuram Shakha in Burbank, CA. Her hobbies are arts & crafts and cooking.

Book review

Siddhartha by Herman Hesse

By Sonia Sastry

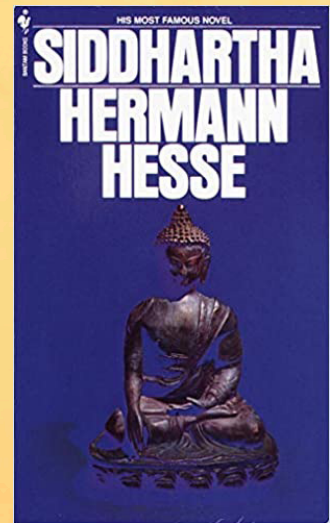
Siddhartha is a captivating tale of the spiritual journey of a fictional character, Siddhartha, during the age of Gautama Buddha. Born in a Brahmin family, Siddhartha is deeply immersed in Vedic knowledge and practices and sets out to find the meaning of life at a very young age. His quest is met with many obstacles, internal and external, which make Siddhartha question his path frequently and seek out new and different experiences. Additionally, Siddhartha is extremely fortunate to meet Gautama Buddha and listen to his teachings, though he chooses not to follow Buddha or any other guru due to his independent nature. The trials and tribulations of self-discovery involve many individuals who play significant roles in Siddhartha's life, though it is Siddhartha's ability to fully experience these life events that allow him to reach his desired destination.

Siddhartha's journey of enlightenment includes themes like the cycle of life and death, attachment to family, friends, and material pleasure/possessions, and unity in nature, among others. One theme that I related to greatly was the idea of being with and listening to nature as a way of finding a way back to the ultimate truth. Towards the later part of Siddhartha's life, he befriends a ferryman named Vasudeva, who takes passengers to and from the banks of the river. Vasudeva teaches Siddhartha to understand and listen to the river as a river, and Mother Nature as a whole, as it is always there to give message and advice to those who are willing to listen. Over time, Siddhartha learns to connect with the river and comes to the realization that time is an illusion and everything in nature is ultimately connected to one another. I found this thought to be incredibly powerful since I often feel that I don't have enough time in the day to finish all the tasks that I wish to finish, and then ruminate on these thoughts throughout the day and sometimes even at night. However, I noticed a shift in my thinking after I started to spend more time outdoors with nature in a mindful manner. Taking time to breathe in the fresh air and admire the beauty in the plants, animals, and the sky has made the idea of time feel less stressful, to the extent where there is less pressure to do "all the things". Being one with nature is equivalent to being one with the divine.

Although the book is just under 150 pages, Siddhartha captures the idea of searching for meaning in a way that is profound and applicable at all stages in life. It has a universal message that everyone is connected to the cosmic divinity and that each person, regardless of who and where they come from, can reach the divine. I can find myself re-reading Siddhartha when I need a dose of inspiration, as the knowledge in the book unravels like the layers of an onion, revealing profound messages as we evolve ourselves. I highly recommend Siddhartha for anyone seeking answers to the fundamental questions of life, as well as those with a penchant for understanding the mystery of existence.

Sonia Sastry is from Subramanya Bharati Shakha in Bellevue, WA. She enjoys dancing, cooking, reading, and helping others through counseling.

Image credits: <https://www.amazon.com/Siddhartha-Novel-Hermann-Hesse/dp/0553208845>



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

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If interested, drop us a note at,
prerana.feedback@gmail.com
by 31st of July.

Let us know the role, (editor, mentor, proof-reader or designer,) you are interested in.

Thriving on a plant based diet

By Dr. Sirisha Potluri



A plant-based diet is a powerful and pleasurable way to achieve good health. A plant-based diet means consuming no meat, fish, poultry, egg, or dairy. It also means eating only food that comes from the plant kingdom.

A plant-based diet can:

- Keep your heart healthy
- Lower blood pressure
- Control diabetes
- Prevent cancer
- Increase immunity
- Improve lung health
- Eliminate arthritis pain

A plant-based diet can provide the best defense for your immune system. People who are on a primarily plant-based/low-fat vegan diet have good gut microbiomes that help with the immune system. By choosing to eat more plant-based foods, you can drastically cut your carbon footprint, save precious water supplies, and help ensure that vital crop resources are fed to people, rather than livestock.

There are many reasons why we benefit from giving up milk. People trying to lose weight and diabetes, in particular, would benefit a lot by removing milk and milk products from their diet.

Many people with common nasal allergies having increased mucus production or with asthma have improved by eliminating milk from their diet. There are many options to replace it with plant-based milk such as oat, soy, almond, and coconut milk.

Millions of people are waking up to the health benefits of a plant-based lifestyle. And with the coronavirus threat

we face right now, staying healthy is more important than ever. We are all sheltered in, practicing social-distancing and washing our hands. We can strengthen our immune systems by eating nutritious food.

Try getting the following groups of antioxidants into your diet:

- B-Carotene (carrots, sweet potatoes, papayas, orange bell peppers)
- Vitamin C (all citrus fruits, broccoli, kale, and other greens)
- Vitamin E (raw nuts – especially walnuts and almonds - no more than an ounce per day)
- Zinc (beans)
- Vitamin D (sunlight or a supplement)

Please make sure to take Vitamin B12 supplement if you are strictly following a plant-based diet (most vegetarians and non-vegetarians are also found to be deficient in Vitamin B12). Evidence shows that whole-food, plant-based, no-oil, and no-added-sugar diets can help in preventing many chronic diseases and in maintaining good health.

Ways to strengthen your immune system:

- Eat a nutritious plant-based diet high in fruits and vegetables.
- Exercise regularly.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Minimize stress by learning better coping strategies (deep breathing, meditation).
- Get adequate sleep.
- Don't smoke or vape which deteriorates lung function.

- If you drink alcohol, minimize it.
- Take steps to avoid infection such as washing hands frequently and following strict social-distancing.

Here are a few recipes you can try:

Plant-based Yogurt (Curd):

Boil plain unsweetened soy milk on medium heat, and once it reaches the temperature to add the culture, add regular yogurt culture and green chili tops to set the yogurt.

Yogurt with peanut milk (Curd)

Ingredients: ½ liter peanut milk (soak raw peanuts overnight and blend with 1:2 ratio of water and make peanut milk), ½ teaspoon lime juice or green chili tops. **Method:** Stir the milk and boil slowly on low heat. Once it reaches room temperature, set the curd using chili tops or previous yogurt culture.

Nut-free cheese:

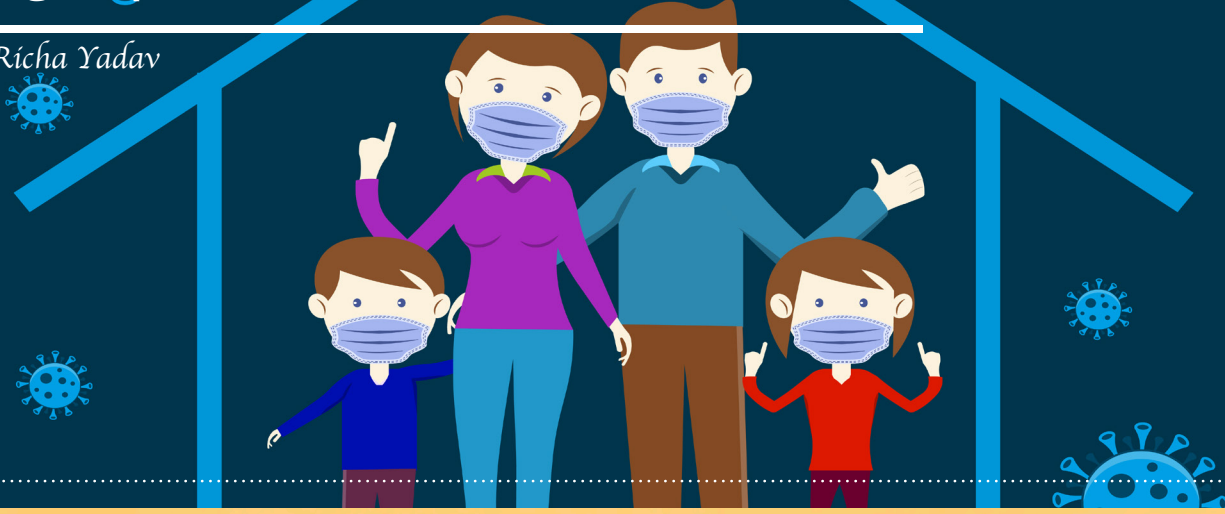
Ingredients: Two cups steamed diced potato, one cup steamed diced carrot, half cup water, 1-2 teaspoon salt, one tablespoon lemon juice, ½ cup nutritional yeast, ¼ cup onion powder, ¼ cup garlic powder. **Method:** Blend all these ingredients into a smooth creamy paste. Store in the refrigerator for one week. This cheese can be used in various recipes like mac and cheese, broccoli cheese bake, and pasta dishes.

Please consult your doctor before following any new diet.

Dr. Sirisha Potluri goes to Shakha in Los Angeles, CA.

Finding Hope In The New Normal

By Dr. Richa Yadav



Life has changed drastically in the past few months for all of us. We all have been experiencing different intensities of fear, despair, and aloofness generated due to the pandemic. But, don't you feel this 'imposed' social distancing has brought you closer to yourself? On the brighter side of the threat of covid-19, if any, we have learned to adapt to a new way, the latest and most modern style of living, to live with alertness, limitation, and simplicity. Isn't it a welcome change to bother less about our 'looks' and worry more about mental and physical health, and about keeping ourselves and the family more meaningfully engaged, within and together? We have witnessed a major paradigm shift- from the modern mantra of 'globalization' to the age-old Hindu value 'localization and swadeshi,' exploring new means to be on our own. I believe I have never lived a simpler life than in the past few months: fewer trips to the malls and grocery stores, less struggle with daily morning rush hours at home and on the road, and truly, less yelling at the family, I must confess!

Many of us, after a long time, turned toward ourselves and retrieved our forgotten hobbies- looked at our backyard, re-discovering our green thumbs; rediscovering dimensions of creativity, through art, craft, and literature; and last but not least, to timely change our 'yoga kal se hoga' attitude and get on our yoga mats because we had more time!

We connected more with people: we missed them, thought about them, called them, and talked a little more in the true sense of finding out how they were doing.

The pandemic did bring us together, putting the whole world on hold. While we were reminding ourselves, 'this too shall pass,' this 'togetherness' was shattered when all of a sudden 'black lives' took our attention and left a mark on the national fabric of American society. It's disappointing to see how skin color is still an issue in the twenty-first century!

With a great bang we were reminded of our basic value of 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam'.

While earth has given us a chance to reflect on the new reality, the new normal, we also need to brush up on our sense of love, compassion, understanding during our seemingly most challenging times. Let us continue with this new awakening, the spiritual process to connect with ourselves and others.

Richa Yadav, Ph.D is from Sanskar shakha, Flower Mound, TX . Her hobbies are writing and reading.

शरीरं सुरूपं तथा वा कलत्रं यशश्चारु चित्रं धनं मेरुतुल्यं |
मनश्चेन लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ||

Meaning: One's physique may be superb, one's consort likewise, one's reputation resplendent and renowned, and one's riches as high as Mount Meru; yet if one's mind be not centred upon the lotus feet of the Guru, what then, what then, what then?

कलत्रं धनं पुत्रपौत्रादि सर्वं गृहं बान्धवाः सर्वमेतद्धि जातम् |
मनश्चेन लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ||

Meaning: Wife, wealth, sons, grandsons and all such; home and kindred; all these things maybe there; yet if one's mind be not centred upon the lotus feet of the Guru, what then, what then, what then?

How Balagokulam Shaped My Childhood

By Anjali Gandhi

As a twenty-year-old girl who faces new challenges every day, I often find myself reflecting on my childhood days. I then realize that a big part of who I am today is because of how strongly rooted I am in my culture and heritage. From giving presentations in my university classes to organizing Hindu Yuva events, and even just simply connecting with people in the Hindu community, I am proud to say that Balagokulam has taught me many essential skills.

Growing up as a first-generation Canadian, I always felt that I was at a disadvantage compared to the rest of my family when it came to realizing and practicing the true beauty of Hinduism. Being so far away from Bharat, I never thought I could be as knowledgeable and cultured as my parents and grandparents. Watching my grandpa fast for Navratri and seeing him lead the local Hindi school in my community made me question why they did all of this. How does this benefit them at all, I thought.

It wasn't until my dad took me to a Balagokulam day camp where I met so many other Hindu kids like me that it finally clicked. I specifically remember hearing everyone introduce themselves by saying namaste first. That word itself really stuck with me. I became so fond of listening to

short stories based on the theme of Ramayan, playing sher-bakri with the balas, and singing geet together. I found myself looking forward to going to shakha every week.

I remember begging my parents to let me go to a seven-day Balagokulam camp. My family was hesitant at first, knowing that I would be nervous staying away from them, yet they knew that I would come to love it. For the first time, I felt responsible and independent. Every little activity we did in Balagokulam allowed me to become confident in speaking up and taking the lead. I finally felt like I was getting a grasp of my identity and background.

Through my Balagokulam family activities, I began to take part in speech competitions, dance performances, various shakha responsibilities, and most heartwarmingly, started making meaningful connections with people. As I grew older, I slowly understood the meaning of Hindu values and the reason why my family valued our mother tongue and traditions so much. The more I learned, the more comfortable I felt in my own skin. It was such a nice feeling to be able to read the road signs when visiting family in Bharat and being able to sing a bha-



jan in the mandir.

I loved being a part of a community whose members truly cared for one another. I was a part of something much bigger than the little world inside my own head. I started to believe and view the whole world as one big family. Sangha opened so many doors for me and will continue to do so for the rest of my life. I learned so much about myself as a person and with Sangha's guidance, I realize that I have the power to shape myself in whichever way I want to.

I am fortunate to be able to conduct activities for balas during shakha and various utsavs. There is no greater feeling than reliving the same experiences I had growing up, this time as a mentor for the most precious kids in our community.

These childhood memories will forever be close to my heart. I am so grateful that Balagokulam led me on the journey to understanding what it means to be a Hindu from within.

Anjali Gandhi is from Hindu Yuva UBC Vancouver BC.



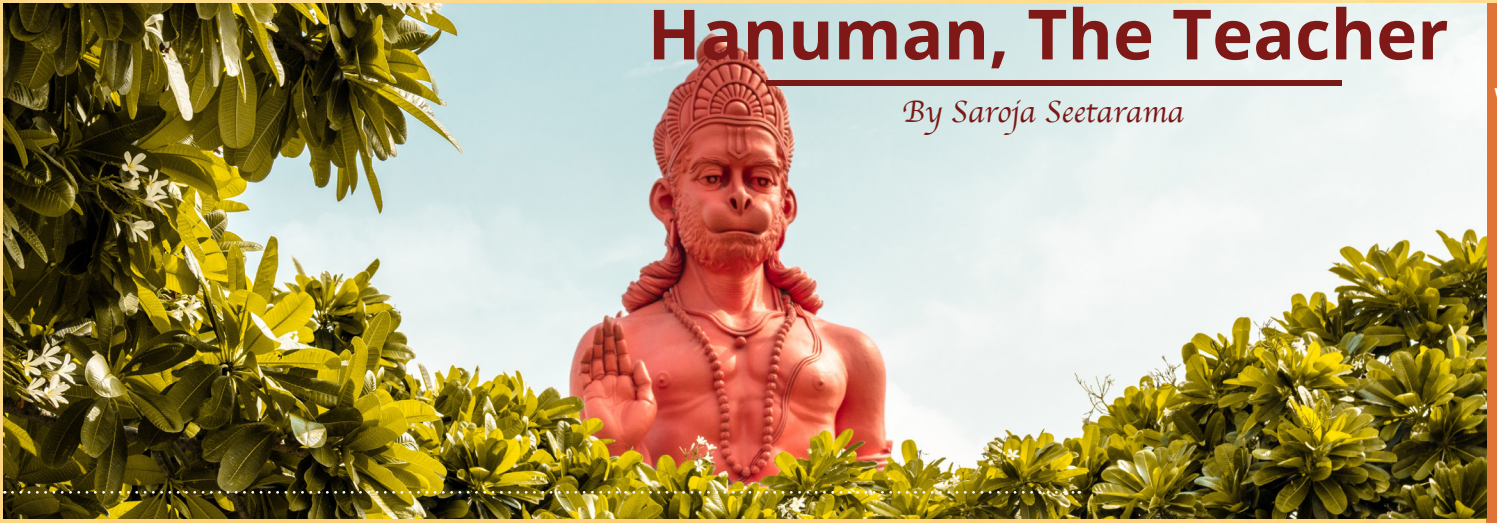
Answers to the puzzle on Page 14.

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. AYONIJA | 7. JAAMBAVANT | 13. SUVARCHALA | 19. SHRUTAKEERTI |
| 2. VALMIKI | 8. LAVAKUSA | 14. VAYUPUTRA | 20. KAANCHANAMAALA |
| 3. SUSENAH | 9. VASISTHA | 15. JHATAYU | |
| 4. IKSHVAAKU | 10. KODANDAPANI | 16. SHUKRACHARYA | |
| 5. SATAANANDA | 11. MITHILA | 17. ARANYAVAASAM | |
| 6. PINAACA | 12. SATRUGNA | 18. LAKSHMANA | |

Hanuman, The Teacher

By Saroja Seetarama

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The great epic Ramayana is a story filled with love, compassion, bravery, and honesty. 'Raamasya ayanam Ramayanam' – means Rama's journey of life and 'Raamaayaah ayanam Ramayanam' – means Sita's (or Raama's) journey of life. Hanuman, a great devotee of Lord Rama, played a very important role in the epic Ramayana. Hanuman is considered to be the eleventh incarnation of Lord Shiva, and is known to possess superhuman qualities. Hanuman is the most worshipped God for his strength and devotion, as a symbol for shakti and bhakti. He excels in self-control, knowledge (a great scholar of various scriptures and grammar), management skills, and music. The following are a few qualities and skills of Rama-bhakta Hanuman that we can all hope to acquire.

Strength (Sakti): Hanuman is extraordinarily strong, capable of lifting and carrying any burden for a cause. He is a symbol of mighty strength and powers. A strong body can achieve many wonders. One needs to strengthen the body so that diseases can be kept at the bay. Especially during emergencies such as now (virus COVID-19), prevention is the cure. Great immunity is the only vaccine for this deadly virus.

Devotion (Bhakti): Hanuman is the exemplary devotee (bhakta) of Rama and Sita. We find so many examples of Hanuman's devotion to Rama in Ramayana. For example, Sundara Kanda, the sixth chapter of Ramayana, is about Hanuman's bhakti and devotion to Rama and Sita. We need to develop respect and regard for our elders, gurus, teachers, and our culture which have made us who we are.

Knowledge: Valmiki and Saint Tulasidas describe Hanuman as a well-learned scholar of Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, Upanishads, a grammarian, a singer, and musician of par excellence. We need to learn our roots and practice them. We need to share learned knowledge with others without self-praise. We need to aspire and work hard to excel in any field of our interest.

Humbleness: Hanuman knows all shastras from his guru, none other than the Sun god. Hanuman is capable of change; his body size increases like a mountain or decreases to the size of a tiny insect as and when needed, changes into

any form, he flies to any distance and carries any weight on shoulders. Yet, because of his humble nature and self-control, he never shows off his mighty strength and powers. He uses them only when needed. Humbleness is his nature. From Hanuman we can learn that victory is not merely an outcome of competence, but humility and politeness are equally important.

Strategy: While crossing the sea, some devatas had sent Sursa to test Hanuman. Sursa tried to obstruct the way of Hanuman by stretching herself. Hanuman too stretched himself into an enormous form and humbly requested her to give him way because he had an important task to complete. After that, Hanuman transformed himself into his original form. This elated Sursa. Management officials see Hanuman as an exceptional strategist for overcoming all obstacles to attain a set goal. He is the pioneer of an improved version of the current SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats) analysis. Hanuman knows how to strategize success through fivefold wisdom - goal, means to achieve, obstacles, strengths, limitations!

Communication Skills: Hanuman met Sita first in Ashok Vatika. Sita was not able to recognize him immediately. But with Hanuman's remarkable communication skills, he assured Sita that he is the messenger of Rama. Also, after returning to Rama, Hanuman says, "saw Sita ma". He starts his sentence with the verb to appease Rama. As Rama is desperate to learn any news about Sita, he chooses an effective yet very concise way of communicating good news. Speaking and presentation skills are very essential to make an impact and assert oneself.

Leadership: While the Vanara sena (army of monkeys) is constructing the bridge on the sea, Hanuman's organizational and leadership skills motivate the mischievous ones in getting back to the task at hand and getting it done. As a true leader, he gets big boulders and drops them into the ocean. At the same time, he directs all vanara to focus on tasks. As a parent, we expect certain behavior from our kids while we do not reflect on our own behaviors. As a parent and a leader, we need to follow what we preach while providing necessary support for others to follow.

Focus and Concentration: In search of Sita, Hanuman leaps over the mighty ocean (100 yojanas - 1287 km). He encounters Mynaka mountain, which offers Hanuman a place to rest. But Hanuman refuses to take a break while he is on Rama-karya. Similarly, he encounters so many interruptions during his journey such as Surasa or Lankhini who try their best to stop him from moving ahead. He overcomes those and continues with his search for Sita. Each day, our progress in work, study or spiritual sadhana can be hindered due to interior and exterior factors. We need to learn to manage disruptions and if possible use them to our advantage to progress!

Problem-solving: After reaching Lanka, Hanuman doesn't know how to recognize Sita ma, having never met her. He patiently looks for her and finally finds her chanting Rama nama. Also during the Ram-Ravana war, Lakshmana gets hurt and becomes unconscious. In order to cure Lakshmana, Hanuman goes in search of an herb. Unable to recognize the right herb, he lifts and brings the whole Sanjeevini mountain. So instead of being dubious or complaining about the situation, we should try to find innovative and/or effective solutions to problems, be it in our personal or professional life.

Cautious risk-taking: After finding Sita in Lanka, Ha-

numan wants to check Ravana's army. He starts to destroy Ashoka Vatika to get the attention of Ravana and his ministers. Ravana's court sets his tail on fire and he uses that to destroy Lanka and Ravana's property. Then he meets Vibhishana who offers crucial assistance in winning the Rama-Ravana war. In life, we also need to challenge ourselves for progress. Opportunity knocks once, so leap forward and take safe chances to achieve more.



Uncompromising on values: In Lanka, at Ashok Vatika, when Meghnadha wants to stop and control Hanuman's destruction, so he releases powerful "Brahmastra". Hanuman had the power to stop the weapon, but he did not do so. As a respect for the Brahmastra he did surrender. As Hanuman respected higher power, we also need to respect our elders and our cultural values. We should not compromise our values and ideals.

Hanuman's fierce form can help us develop discernment, strength, and the ability to overcome many obstacles facing us today in our complex and stressful lives, in which the very structure of society and the future of our planet remains.

Saroja Seetarama is from Netaji Shakha, Irvine, CA. Her Hobbies are reading, learning, cooking and art.

Handy Tips And Tricks

By The Sevikas of Durga Shakha, Pasadena, CA

- For a runny nose or itchy throat, eat raw onion with your food. For kids, take one spoon of onion juice, mix it with honey, and give like medicine.
- A Mason Jar can be used on the regular grinder.
- A natural home remedy for dandruff using coconut oil and camphor: Heat 4 tbsp of coconut oil. Add 1 piece of camphor while it's heating. Mix well. Massage on the scalp when lukewarm before bedtime.
- 1 tsp of fresh raw ginger juice mixed with 1 tsp honey is good for coughing.
- While making chapati dough, mix in a little milk. The taste of chapati and parantha will improve.
- While making rice, drop 1-2 drops of lemon juice in it. Rice grains will not stick to each other and it will be fluffy.
- Home remedy for cough: boil flax seeds, coriander seeds, and cumin seeds in water. Wait until the water quantity reduces to half. Now drink this warm water.