

Samarpan

an offering....

Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota

President's Note

Concept of Ishta Devata or Personal God

In the Bhakti Yoga section of the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 12), Arjuna asks Lord Krishna, "Dear Lord, Who is better versed in Yoga - the one who worships You in constant devotion in your human form (*saguna saakaara* Brahman) or the one who worships You as the formless attributeless One (*nirguna niraakaara* Brahman)?" Lord Krishna, in his inimitable style, replies that both types of devotees are dear to Him, but warns that it is very difficult for the human mind to understand and surrender to a concept of God that is formless, changeless, imperishable and omnipresent.

In *Vibhuti Yoga* (Chapter 10), Lord Krishna describes some of his myriad forms in the material world, all which are worthy of worship as they represent Divinity in Name and Form. While God's manifestations are many, there is one form that is near and dear to each devotee on the path of *Bhakti Yoga*. When a devotee meditates, worships the Lord in that Form, he or she finds that their troubles, anxieties and pain dissolve and they experience a sense of peace. They have found their *Ishta Devata* or Personal God. It is not uncommon in a Hindu household for the various family members to have different *Ishta Devatas*. For example, while the mother may find peace and solace by taking the name of Lord Rama, the father may be a devout *bhaktha* (devotee) of Lord Hanuman. The *Ishta Devata* is the devotee's friend, philosopher and mentor. The *Ishta Devata's* name is their mantra, usually preceded by *Pranava* or OM.

The devotee expresses his or her love for the *Ishta Devata* by reciting morning and evening prayers, *Na-*

masmarana (remembrance of the Lord's name) during the day, celebration of holy days, and performing Puja at home and at the Temple. Some of the popular Hindu *Ishta Devatas* include Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesha, Lord Muruga, Lord Hanuman, Ma Durga and Ma Saraswathi and their many incarnations. In modern times *Shirdi* and *Sathya Sai Baba* are worshipped by millions of devotees as their *Ishta Devata*.

Last month we discussed how easy it was to arrange a Puja at home for your *Ishta Devata*. This month we would like to inform you that we will be starting monthly pujas for all the deities in the Temple (please see calendar for details). You can sponsor a Puja to your *Ishta Devata(s)* for one or more months of the year. Sponsorship involves a small fee, *dakshina* for priest, bringing fruit, flowers and, if possible, *Prasadam*.

May your love and devotion for your *Ishta Devata* grow with each passing day!

Sincerely,

Suresh Chari

President, Hindu Samaj Temple

May Issue



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Editor's Note

Rajani Sohni

The *Samarpan* team wishes all our readers a Very Happy Mothers Day! Our best wishes to all the mothers in our community.

Srinivaasa Kalyaana Utsavam celebrations will be conducted at the Temple on May 15th, 2011. The significance of this festivity is described in this issue.

This edition contains homage to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who is no longer physically among us.

In addition, this issue carries a tribute to our favorite Uncle Pai, the creator of *Amar Chitra Katha*.

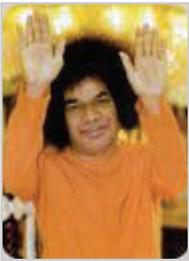
This is the fifth issue of *Samarpan* and the response from our readers has been encouraging. Interested contributors are invited to submit original unpublished articles for inclusion in future issues of the magazine. *Samarpan* will soon start a "Letters to the Editor" section. Please send your contributions and feedback to the following e-mail address: editors@histemplemn.org.



Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba- Forever remembered.



Shantal Maharaj Valluri



Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba left his physical body at 7:40 a.m. on April 24th 2011. Devotees of Sai Baba will forever remember 27th April, 2011 with deep sadness as they had witnessed their Divine Master's samadhi. Sri Sathya Sai Baba was a world spiritual teacher who taught that all religions are equal and preached "the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man". He inspired his devotees by his service to humanity and his phenomenal contributions in education, health care, provision of drinking water and poverty alleviation in India. He has inspired others in over 170 countries worldwide through his personal example to do the same.

Sathya Sai Baba devotees of Rochester, MN, honored the life of this great master through daily Satsangs, Sai Gayatri Havan, Rudram chanting, Study circles and Service activities for the underprivileged from April 24th through May 06 2011.

Sri Sathya Sai Mandali of Rochester, MN, meets every Friday for Education in Human Values Classes, Sai Study Circle and devotional singing from 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Srinivaasa KalyaNaUtsavam

Bhaskar Iyengar

There are many ways of worshipping divinity. *Sanaatana Dharma* or Hinduism strictly advocates the freedom of expression in ones ways of worship. Thus the manifold forms of deities and the manifold forms of celebrations. We worship God in animal forms like Garuda and Nandi, in human forms like Rama, in morphed forms like Narasimha and also as the formless Shiva Linga. We have celebrations of birth such as Krishna Janmashtami and celebrations of victory of good over evil like Deepavali. We also worship gods as elements of Nature, like the Sun and the Moon. All forms of ritual worship carry within it an essence of spiritual communion as well.

One popular and spiritual form of worship that is common in South India is the *KalyaNa Utsavam* that literally translates to Wedding Ceremony. This celebration is akin to celebrating the graduation of your child from High School or College. With this ceremony, one derives the same pleasure, satisfaction and pride that are personal and heartfelt.

In this form of celebration – the *Srinivaasa KalyaNa Utsavam* - we re-enact the wedding of Lord Srinivaasa (also known as Venkatesha, Balaji, or Vishnu) with his two spouses – Sri Devi and Bhoo Devi.

As with any major worship, we first ask Lord Ganesha to ensure that the occasion is a success. Watch the priest closely as he performs any event, particularly the upcoming Kalyaana Utsavam. He will first pray to Ganesha for his blessing to make the event a success. He will then invite many Gods and Goddesses. For each of the invitees he will offer seating, water, flowers, prasadam, and heaps of prayers. The invitees are witnesses and participants at the wedding ceremonies. As in all weddings, you will see Lord Srinivaasa exchange garlands with his spouses, tie the Mangal Sutra (holy thread) to each of his spouses, rock on the *Jhoola* (swing) with them. As the wedding ceremonies conclude, all the invitees will be formally thanked.

Lord Srinivaasa is an embodiment of the Supreme God, the ParamAtman, and the all-pervading Brahman. Sri Devi represents all the heavenly aspects – including prosperity, success and health. Bhoo Devi represents the earthly aspects of emotions, natural elements, family and relational bondages that keep us tied within the illusory and dual-natured *Maya*. The Oneness axiom, that all creation is manifest of Brahman, is forgotten due to *Maya*. The union of the heavenly and earthly aspects with the Supreme is the ultimate goal; so that we may realize the oneness of all and our oneness with Brahman. That is the only way we shed *Maya* and get liberated.

Performing and attending the *KalyaNa Utsavam* acts as a reminder of the dual aspect, that which resides in us and that which surrounds us deluding us into believing that we are individuals and different from the rest of creation. As we commemorate the coming together of the ParamAtman with the Devis, we affirm ourselves to the ultimate purpose of unification and realization of our One identity.

We can choose to perceive the *KalyaNa Utsavam* as a ritualistic playing-house activity enacting the wedding ceremony of Lord Srinivaasa, or as a philosophical treatment of our understanding of our place in creation.

As we rejoice, witness and experience the momentous and special occasion of *KalyaNa Utsavam* we are filled with an inner peace and an admiration at the beauty and harmony our heritage beholds. Enjoy this ceremony as that of your own child. It cannot get any more personal. And thus you express your love and admiration to Lord Srinivaasa.

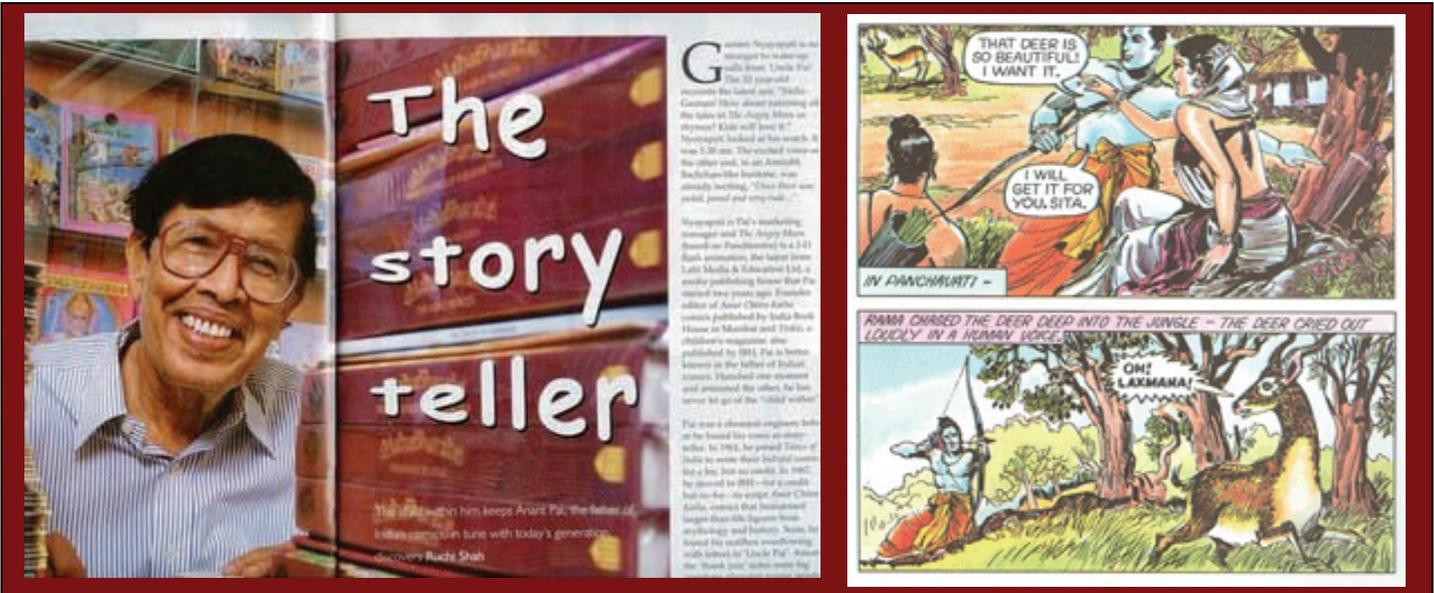


MY COMIC BOOK HERO

Shyamala Bhat

Anant Pai, the creator of the hugely successful Amar Chitra Katha series of comic books, died in Mumbai, India, on 14th February 2011 at age 81. All leading Indian newspapers, most television channels in India, and The New York Times carried obituary pieces. All of them gave him glowing tributes, and talked about his humble beginnings, his calling, his eventual fame, and his spartan living until the very end.

In homage to the departed soul, I hope to convey the gratitude of my generation and excitement of times spent in the company of priceless translations of Indian and foreign cultures and specifically in Hindu mythology.



The story goes that during a quiz show in 1967, Pai was appalled to see that young contestants did not know who the mother of Lord Rama was and in that moment was born his desire to educate children through entertainment. He never missed the mark in the next 44 years.

Personally, the numerous hours spent in the company of *Amar Chitra Katha* (ACK) comics and with *Tinkle* in the '90s as a young adult are indelible for me. Fresh in my mind is "*Dashavatar*", where the cover picture had Lord Vishnu seated on multi-hooded *Sesha* on the ocean with Lakshmi as his consort. The special edition was about 88 pages long and was available for a princely Rs.7.50. India Book House published 24 ACK each year and though we did not get our hands on every one of them, we devoured the ones we got with great relish never once suspecting that we were being educated! Who can forget "*Parashurama*", "*Krishna*", "*Vivekananda*" or "*Chanakya*" for their colorful pictures and lively anecdotes or "*Purandara Dasa*", the compelling biography of a musician-saint, and "*Krishna and Jarasandha*" for the intrigue and depiction of flawed characters?

All comics had a similar structure: a colorful illustration on the cover page and catchy advertisements on the back cover with the inside of the last page featuring contests for children sponsored by Camel colors or Binaca toothpaste. Pai kept the comic under 40 pages, and made the illustrations clear and dialogue simple. He also did well not to strain the young mind with adult philosophy. However, thumbing through several issues of ACK at home a few days ago, I was struck by how Uncle Pai (a name he coined for himself) would lend each comic a serious note with a brief commentary on the inside of the front page – always respectful but full of scholarship – something that as children we almost certainly missed in our enthusiasm to read the comic. Some of these commentaries were written by people who were experts in their area. "*Elephanta*" was introduced by Shaktantala Jagannathan, the then Director of the Government of India Tourism Office in Mumbai and "*Vivekananda*" was introduced by Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Math.

If you are reading this piece and were not children of the 70s, 80s and 90s growing up in India, try the iPhone version that's available now.

Uncle Pai brought Gods of all religions, legends from different cultures and brave warriors down to earth in multiple languages so mortals like us could feel at home with them. When will ACK publish "Uncle Pai"?

May he RIP.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/01/world/asia/01pai.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anant_Pai#The_Amar_Chitra_Katha_years

Upcoming Events :

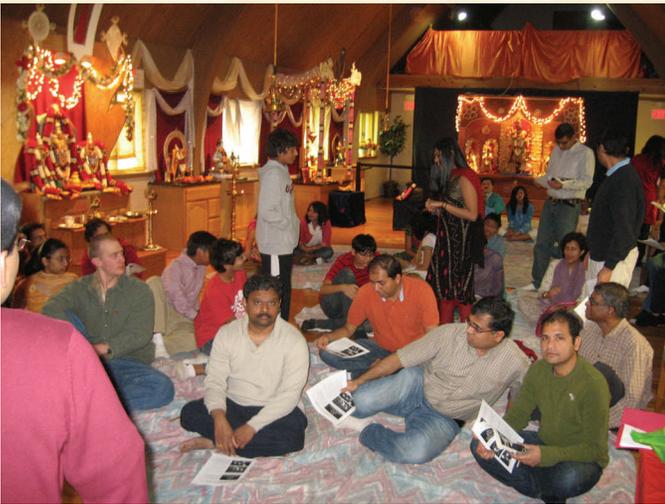
05-01-2011	Masa Shivaratri
05-03-2011	Hanuman Abhishekam
05-08-2011	Sankara Jayanthi
05-14-2011	Pradosham, Dr. Sree Nair's Talk on Aging.
05-15-2011	Balaji Kalyanotsavam, Nrusimha Jayanthi
05-16-2011	Sri Satya Narayana Vratham
05-20-2011	Sankata Hara Chaturthi (Sri Ganesh Abhishekam in the evening)
05-29-2011	Pradosham
05-31-2011	Masa Shivaratri
06-07-2011	Hanuman Abhishekam
06-13-2011	Pradosham
06-14-2011	Sri Satya Narayana Vratham
06-18-2011	Sankata Hara Chaturthi
06-28-2011	Pradosham
06-29-2011	Masa Shivaratri



Learn more in the Upcoming Events section from www.histemplemn.org

Dr. Amit Sood's Talk - My Perspective

Abhishek Chandra (9th grade)



On Saturday, the 30th of May, I had the opportunity to hear Dr. Amit Sood present a lecture on Resilience in the face of stress. The presentation was thought provoking and all who attended took some new knowledge away from it. Dr. Sood spoke in a way that was entertaining, yet informative. The entire audience could relate to his words. We learned about different parts of the brain and how activation of different circuits in different situations controlled our thoughts and attitudes, and made us act in certain ways. Dr. Sood also taught us how to control our thought by simple mental exercises and meditation. He taught us not to become overwhelmed with the stress of daily life, but instead to focus on the good attributes in people. He taught us to consider gratitude and practice forgiveness. I particularly enjoyed Dr. Amit Sood's speech, and am very appreciative of the time he took to come to the temple and educate all of us.

Shishu's Contribution

Vaishali Joshi

On the occasion of Sri Rama Navami and Hanuman Jayanthi, the Balagokulam children answered the following question: "Who is your favorite character from the Ramayana and why?"



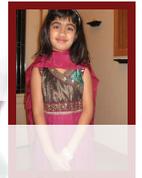
Himaja Alvakonda

Favorite character - Sri Rama

"Lord Rama saved the universe by killing Ravana. Ravana was a demon king and he had kidnapped Goddess Sita."

Kirthi Manivannan

"I like Sita because she is Goddess Lakshmi."



Sohumi Joshi

"Hanuman is my favorite because he is strong and smart. He is always ready to fight for Rama. He helped Rama by finding Sita. He destroyed Ravana's gardens and burnt down Lanka to show Ravana the power of Rama. He saved Lakshmana's life by bringing the mountain with the Sanjeevani plant. I like to say the Hanuman Chalisa before I go to sleep every day."

Parmita Das

"I like Lakshman because he sacrificed his life and everything else for his brother Rama. He worshiped his brother Rama like God."



Arhan Mehta

"I like Rama because he went all the way to Sri Lanka to save Sita and slayed Ravana that gave happiness to the world."



Sarvika Dasari

"Hanuman likes Rama very much, he prays to Rama every day. And he helped Rama to find Sita. He lifted the Sanjeevani mountain to find sanjeevani plant."



Rishikesh Unnikrishnan

"Lakshmana is Rama's brother. He loves and respects him the most. He tried to protect Sita in the jungle by drawing "Lakshman Rekha/circle" around Sita's house. In the battle between Rama and Ravana, when Lakshmana was hit by an arrow he was brought back to life with the help of herb Sanjeevani. Lakshmana fought along with Rama to defeat Ravana and save Sita. Lakshmana is an example of devotion and brotherly love."

Chaitanya Ghatty

"I like Rama because he has a special arrow called Brahmastra that is red and has special fire in it. when it gets into Ravana, it has a special white laser beam around it that kills Ravana. Then Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Hanuman and the Vanara sena go home happily for Diwali."



Aditya Ghatty

"I like Lakshmana because he always saves Rama, Amma, Nanna, Chaitanya, and everybody. I am deciding a play and I will be Lakshmana."

Festivals

Telugu Association of Rochester, Minnesota celebrated Telugu new year on April 10th, 2011. The celebrations were telecasted in India on TV9. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URNARbLYRwE>)



Newly formed TARMN Committee members wel-



Medley performed by the ladies was one of the highlights of the



Young girls thrilled the audience with their scintillating dance performance.



Balas (ages 3-5) recited slokas



Sumedha Bandi 's performance



Kids singing patriotic songs

Sri Rama Navami and Hanuman Jayanthi Celebrated at Hindu Samaj Temple

Surya Ghatty

The festivals of Sri Rama Navami (April 12th) and Hanuman Jayanthi (April 17th) were celebrated with ardent devotion and religious fervor at the Hindu Samaj Temple.

Rama Navami which marks the birth day of Lord Sri Rama, was celebrated on April 12th. Rama, the 7th incarnation (avatar) of Lord Vishnu, is considered to be the ideal son, husband, father, and a great human being. He was born on the 9th day of the month of *Chaitra*, according to the Hindu lunar calendar. Devotees gathered at the Temple on April 12th to celebrate Ram Navami with utmost devotion. Priest Shri Hari Krishna Ji performed *Archana* which was followed by Rama bhajans and Vishnu Sahasra Nama chanting by devotees.

Hanuman Jayanthi celebrations followed the monthly Sri Satyanarayana Vratham puja on April 17th. Devotees from various sections of the community chanted Hanuman Chalisa while volunteers made *Vada Mala* (garland of Vadas) for Lord Hanuman. Priest Shri Hari Krishna Ji performed Hanuman Abhishekam and chanted the 108 names of Lord Hanuman. Devotees sang Bhajans of Hanuman and Sri Rama while Hari Krishna Ji was performing *Alankara* (decoration) of Lord Hanuman's deity.

Indian Community participating in the Rochester World Festival 2011



Members of the Indian community participated in the World Festival presented by the Rochester International Association that was held on April 15th and 16th, 2011, at Mayo High School.

The Festival showcased music and dances from different countries on Friday night. The program included Semi-classical and folk dances from India. Saturday's programs included a fashion show and dance from India, as well as exhibits from different regions of the Indian sub-continent. Talented members from our community participated in this event with great enthusiasm and pride!

A priest and bus driver lived together and one day they also died together. They go to the gatekeeper standing before heaven gate. He allows the bus driver to go to one of the highest heavens but the priest has to wait. He waits for long time and finally goes to the gatekeeper and asks: "Why could that bus driver go to the highest heaven and I, who all my life spoke about God, have to wait for such a long time?" The gatekeeper said: "When you were speaking to the people at your church everybody was sleeping, but when that bus driver was driving everybody prayed!"

What did the Yogi say when he walked into the Zen Pizza Parlor?"Make me one with everything." When the Yogi got the pizza, he gave the proprietor a \$20 bill. The proprietor pocketed the bill. The Yogi said "Don't I get change?" The proprietor said, "Change must come from within."

Contributed by Vaishali Joshi



Swaralaya Presents...

Swaralaya is proud to Present the first ever Double Header Concert featuring Pooja Goswami who is well known for her rendition of Thumri, Dadra, Ghazal, Bhajans and various folk inspired genres.

The main event will feature Tabla Maestro Pandit Anindo Chatterjee, one of the greatest musicians of our times and renowned for his power, speed, clarity, melody, vast knowledge of repertoire and ability to improvise.

The concert will be held at the Presbyterian church in Rochester, MN, on Saturday, June 18th, 2011, at 5:30 pm.

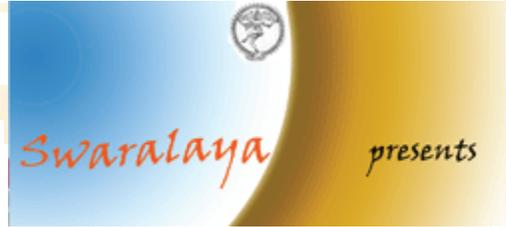
Following is the tentative Agenda:

5:30 p.m.: Pooja Goswami in Concert

7:00 p.m.: Dinner (catered for a nominal fee)

7:30 p.m.: Pandit Anindo Chatterjee

Please call Swaralaya at 507-867-8768 or watch this space for more details!!



Samarpan Editorial Board

Shyamala Bhat

Surya Ghatty

Unni krishnan

Vaishali Joshi

Jyothi Muthyala

Anantha Santhanam

Rajani Sohni

Nisha Unni

This is your space. Please contribute and make this newsletter a delight for the community.

Answers For March

Shiva
Kosala
Solar
Rsyamukha
Vayu and Anjani
Sushena
9th day, Chaithra
Aravallis
Moghra
Torah

Mark the odd one out

Kausalya
Sugriva
Guha
Mandodari

Lighter Side of Life



A man was climbing a tree when suddenly he slipped, then grabbed at a branch and was hanging there. After an hour or so had passed he felt himself getting exhausted and looked up to the heavens and cried out: "God, help me, please, help me." All of a sudden the clouds parted and a voice boomed out from on high. "Let Go!" said the voice.

-Contributed by Vaishali Joshi

