

Samarpan

an offering....

Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota

Nov-Dec 2012

President's Note

Land Ahoy!

Just as weary sea mariners of old would be delighted to spot land after months of seafaring, our community will be delighted to hear that the Temple purchased a parcel of land. On the auspicious day of Deepavali, we and MinnWest Bank signed a purchase agreement for the purchase of 7.69 acres of land for a sum of \$150,000 (bare land cost) and the deal was closed on November 30th. The land is on 48th St NE, a mile north of Shopko North on Highway 63.

You are all invited on December 15th to a Ganesh Puja for Shubh Arambh, a presentation about the purchase and future direction. This will be followed by a tour of the property and neighborhood. We will be sending the details of program itinerary shortly. We hope you will attend.

As all those who attended the Deepavali celebrations at the Temple on Tuesday November 12th would have noticed, there was standing room only in the Temple. Many have approached us to hasten the process of building a new Temple. You have given us a list of things you wish we had: a more spacious worship space, a larger fellowship area, meditation room, class rooms, a proper kitchen, etc. This collective dream can come true only with your help and support.

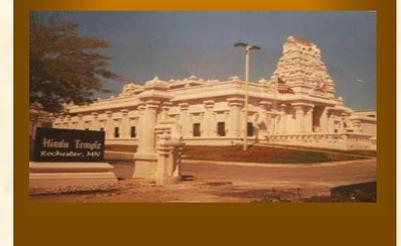
We have the resources in our community to make this happen if each one of us who sees value and benefit to having a Temple does their part. Therefore, before you ring in the New Year, please consider making a year-end charitable gift to the Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota. You can receive a break on your 2012 taxes and at the same time help us in our mission of serving our community in Rochester and neighboring cities.

With regards and best wishes for a happy and healthy Holiday Season!

Sincerely,

Suresh Chari

President, Hindu Samaj Temple



Did you know?

Vahanas: Vehicles of the Hindu Deities

Hamsa, the swan, symbolizing intelligence and discrimination, is the vahana of Lord Brahma.

Garuda, lord of birds and remover of obstacles, is the vahana of Lord Vishnu.

Nandi, the bull, symbolizing inner strength, is the vahana of Lord Shiva.

Musaka, the mouse, is the vahana of Lord Ganesha. The great paradox of a mouse bearing an elephantine god like Ganesh is a source of much theological exploration.

The Owl, representing spiritual wisdom and the blindness associated with seeking worldly rather than spiritual wealth, is the vahana of Goddess Lakshmi.

The Lion, symbolizing fearlessness, is the vahana of Goddess Parvati.

The Swan is also the vahana of Goddess Saraswati. She is sometimes accompanied by a Peacock.



Editor's Note

By Rajani Sohni

Wow! What an amazing month of festivities this has been! The Rochester Indian community has hosted and attended multiple Diwali celebrations in November. The Diwali cultural program and lunch on the 4th organized by the Hindu Samaj Temple and Rochester Vidhyalaya, followed by Diwali puja at the temple on the 13th saw record numbers of attendees at both events. With an expanding community the first step towards addressing the need for a larger temple and cultural center has been taken with the purchase of land as detailed in the President's note. Just like marriage, the remaining steps cannot be taken alone by one person or one group of people – this has to be a community effort for us to collectively succeed in our endeavors.

November, being the month of Thanksgiving, we, at Samarpan, hope that all our readers had a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday. We are thankful for the community we live in that has become family to many of us.

Thank you to our contributors and we hope to continue the trend by encouraging more of our community members to submit articles to Samarpan. We would love to hear from you. Please send your contributions and feedback to the following e-mail address: editors@histemplemn.org.

Wishing you all a very happy holiday season from the Samarpan team!

Rajani Sohni
Shyamala Bhat
Surya Ghatty
Jayasri Narra
Unni krishnan



2012 Diwali Celebration

By Keerthi Manikonda, 7th Grade

All of us know how the celebration of Diwali went this year. Many of us in the Indian community attended, and each and every one of us has an opinion about it. Many thought this celebration was a great success, and the performances were very much liked. The stage decoration was very neatly organized. The design was simple, yet pleasant and nice. As people entered the venue, I noticed that everyone was enthusiastic and ready to watch the performances. The classical musicians performed for one hour straight! Yes, it is an achievement to play this long. There were many talented dancers and singers that went on stage this year. All of the dances were fabulous! I really liked the one where couples danced to a mash up, and for the last song, they had one of my favorites - Gangnam style! I loved all the children's dances too. My favorite dance that the children performed was the mash-up with the 4-7 year old boys, with songs from Dabangg, Desi Boys, and Rowdy Rathore. The choreography and costumes were awesome!

I think that celebrations like this bring together family and friends. The lunch was delicious! The anchors were enthusiastic, and congratulations to the competition winners announced at the celebration. And after the celebration, the DJ was a blast! There were people coming up with great moves!

All in all, I thought the celebration was a success! What do you think?

Did you know?

Vahanas: Vehicles of the Hindu Demigods

Airavat, lord of elephants, is the vahana of Indra, king among the demigods.

The crocodile, is the vahana of Varuna, lord of the seas and waters.

The ram is the vahana of Agni, the lord of fire.

The antelope is the vahana of Vayu, lord of wind and air.

The buffalo is the vahana of Yama, the god of death.

courtesy: <http://www.funtrivia.com>





Diwali: Spiritual Wealth, Strength and Victory!

By Forrest Dailey

Diwali is the time when we celebrate the victory of Good over Evil in all forms. One cannot recognize the victory of light over darkness if they do not feel a sense of spiritual wealth and enlightenment. Without this sense of wealth, one can never feel the unflinching sense of prosperity and strength in its purest form. In celebrating the first day of Diwali, Dhanteras, one is fortified with spiritual wealth that cannot be spent, lost or stolen away.

Dhanteras is a day when we pray to the Lord in the form of Ma Lakshmi for wealth and prosperity, often material wealth (Artha) which is one of the four Purusharthas, or goals of life. Each is a necessary rung on the ladder toward the end, Moksha. But Ma Lakshmi is an ideal of spiritual wealth as well.

If Dhanteras reminds us of the spiritual wealth that leads to victory over darkness, then the second day, Naraka Chaturdasi shows us how that spiritual wealth gives us empowerment. An empowerment which helps us break out of darkness. On Naraka Chaturdasi, we celebrate Sri Krishna's victory over the demon Naraka. Naraka had imprisoned 16000 women, and was a thief who went to war with none less than Indra, the King of Heaven. And Lord Krishna defeated him!

Naraka Chaturdasi demonstrates that when one lives with Lord Krishna/Vishnu as one's charioteer going through life's many Kurukshetras, one is empowered by that which comes "not from physical strength but from an indomitable will" as Gandhi said. And how could evil in any form resist such strength? This is the perfect lead-in to day three, the day of Light and Victory, Diwali.

Day four revisits that indomitable will and inner strength in the celebration of the day that Lord Krishna lifted Mount Govardhan to shelter the world from a storm. After the main Diwali celebration, we are reminded to maintain this strength throughout the coming year. Day four and five are also dedicated to reconnecting with loved ones whether it is with spouses or siblings. We are now refreshed, renewed and spiritually re-invigorated.



Thanksgiving

By Natasha Sohni, 9th grade



Thanksgiving is a much celebrated holiday in our family! We combine American traditions and add an Indian flair as well.

Every year we have a party on Thanksgiving day – this holiday also coincides with my brother's birthday. This is a day we all look forward to every year- the excitement we receive from all the preparation is incomparable to anything else! We invite our Indian friends that have become family to us. We are thankful for each and every one of them!

In addition to the typical Thanksgiving meal, we have Indian food also. Our guests contribute greatly and bring lots and lots of food. We are eating all this even days after the party- this year we had a huge amount of pies, not that I'm complaining!

We all have a grand time. We chat, play games, and just have fun. It is a great opportunity to catch up with friends that we don't get to see very often as everyone is always very busy. Our spirits are lifted with that light cheeriness in the air. It is the beginning of the holiday season!



Visit to Kedarnath & Badrinath in India

By Ashrita Singh, 10th grade

On our last visit to India, my family and I went to many different places, but the most memorable of them were Joshimath, Kedarnath, Badrinath, and some other places in that area. These places are located in the northern region of India called Uttarakhand. Set in the Himalayan Mountains in India, this place is called "Land of Gods", due to many Hindu temples and pilgrimage places. From the moment that we entered the region, I was just amazed. The scenery was absolute magnificent, surrounded by trees, mountains, rivers, and hills.

We first started from Dehradun, where my grandparents live. My dad had rented a car and we set off on our journey. "How many hours is it" my brother asked as usual. "Seven hours" my dad replied. We both sighed at the same time. We had been doing a lot of traveling in India, but we knew it would all be repaid in the end by meeting family, going to cool places and eating delicious food.

After hours of sleeping, eating, talking, and doing nothing in the car we arrived in Rudrapur. My brother and I stepped out of the car and looked around us. I had one word - breathtaking! Huge mountains encircled us. My brother and I walked over to a ledge and we realized we were on top of the mountain, and below us was the intersection of Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers. We looked around and I caught a glimpse of a small temple below us. It is believed that to master the mysteries of music, the sage Narad worshipped Lord Shiva, who appeared in his Rudra incarnation to bless the sage. It was here, also, that Shiva's wife Sati, was reborn after her self immolation because her father humiliated her husband. In her new life, as the daughter of Himalaya, she did penance here to ask the boon of Shiva as a husband once again. The ancient temple of Rudranathji is dedicated to Lord Shiva.



We went to the temple and offered our prayers to Lord Shiva. My aunt, uncle, and cousin had decided to meet us there and then travel with us to one of our many destinations, Joshimath.

We took pictures, and after a bit we had a meal, and shortly it was time for us to go. My brother and I slowly got in to the car and we departed on a new journey. Five minutes into the car ride I got my iPod out, and my brother turned on his GameBoy. The car ride dragged on.

Then, we FINALLY arrived in Joshimath. First we went to our cousin's house. It was a small house, but the Shivalik mountains in the background were priceless. You could even see a bit of snow on the peaks of the mountains. It was absolutely great.

The next day we went to the Badrinath temple. It was definitely overcrowded, but since my uncle was in the army we got a pass to skip all the lines and get into the temple first. As soon as we stepped inside I noticed how beautiful it was. Different colors

and garlands covered the gods. It was spectacular. The Badrinath area is referred to as Badari or Badarikaashram in Hindu scriptures. It is a place sacred to Lord Vishnu. At Badarinath Lord MahaVishnu is believed to have done his penance. Seeing the Lord doing his penance in the open, Goddess Mahalaxmi is believed to have assumed the form of Badari tree to provide him shelter to face the onslaught of the adverse weather conditions, therefore the name Badari Narayan. It is believed that Lord Vishnu revealed to Narad rishi that Nar & Narayan forms were his own. It is also believed that Narad rishi, who also did his penance here, is even now worshipping the supreme God with Ashtakshara mantras.

One of our next destinations was Mana, a beautiful village located the closest to the India and China border. One thing that I really liked about it was that we got to get out of the car and travel up part of the mountain and visit a temple. The Saraswati river originates from Mana. It was amazing to see how the Saraswati river starts and disappears under the ground.

Visit to Kedarnath & Badrinath in India

By Ashrita Singh



Next we visited the Kedarnath Temple. We went to Kedarnath by helicopter. We traveled through the mountains, looking down on the beautiful scenery. I had the privilege to ride right in the front of the helicopter next to the pilot. It was grand.

This temple was actually different. Instead of there being many gods covered in decorations and garlands, there was a sacred rock. It is said that Lord Shiva manifested in the form of Jyotirlingam or the cosmic light. Kedarnath is highest among the 12 Jyotirlingas. According to legends, the Pandavas sought the blessings of lord Shiva to atone their sin after the battle of Mahabharata. Lord Shiva eluded them repeatedly and while fleeing took refuge at Kedarnath in the form of a bull. On being followed, he dived into ground leaving behind his hump on the surface. Outside the temple door a large statue of the Nandi Bull stands as guard. A conical rock formation inside the temple is worshipped as Lord Shiva in his Sadashiva form.

After that was all over we hopped back in the car together. On our way back we decided to see Devprayag, where Alaknanda and Bhagirathi join to form the river Ganges (Ganga). We also visited the Lakshman Jhoola bridge at Rishikesh. It was somewhat of a long walk, and a very hot and humid day, but eventually we made it. The word "jhoola" means "swing" in English. So basically it was the Lakshman Bridge which swings. In was quite long and crowded, we took many pictures and sat back in the car.

On the ride back to Dehradun, we sat thinking about all the moments my brother and I could never forget about. If I had a chance to go to India and visit these places again, I most definitely would.



Bibliography-

<http://wikipedia.org>

<http://www.badarikedar.org>

Laughter the best medicine

-Unni

