

Samarpan

an offering....

Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota

March-April 2013

President's Note

Dear Community Members,

It is with mixed feelings that I am accepting this position as President of the Hindu Samaj Temple. Excitement, as I look forward to laying the groundwork for a new Temple for the Hindu community of Rochester, and Apprehension, at the enormous task ahead of me. I could never fill the big shoes of Dr. Suresh Chari, our outgoing President, who has set the bar of service very high. It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Dr. Dev Mukhopadhyay, our outgoing Vice President. He has been the Policeman of the team, making sure we follow the Bylaws to the book. I am glad that Suresh ji will be leading the New Temple Development and Dev ji will continue to advise us, though from a distance.

The New Board is making some changes to get prepared for the ever expanding needs of the Temple and Community, and also for the long journey ahead of us. We are in the process of assigning Specific Offices for our team and hope to streamline processes. This would make us more efficient and productive. I will introduce my team and their offices in detail in the upcoming issues. All said and done, we will need the community's support to reach our goal of a new Temple. I encourage the Community to challenge us, and it is in meeting the challenges that we grow both Religiously and Culturally.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

Santhi Subramaniam



Editor's Note

Rajani Sohni

Holi, Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, Vishu, Baisakhi, Bengali and Tamil New Year Greetings to All!

One of the best things about India is that there are events to celebrate each month. People I know from around the world are fascinated by our festivals, food and celebrations, and have often expressed an interest in being able to attend and participate in our cultural activities. They applaud and appreciate the strong sense of togetherness and community spirit shown by the Indian community in Rochester and surrounding cities.

Our Temple is active and busy as ever and we hope to continue the trend as the new management takes over this month. Let's all join in to support our Temple committee members who will be introduced by our President, Santhi Subramaniam, in future issues of Samarpan.

The month of April is full of festivals with New Year celebrations for many States in India, as well as Baisakhi, Sri Rama Navami and Mahavir Jayanti. The Temple calendar will have a list of all Temple events and email notifications will be sent out.

We would love to hear from you! Please submit your thoughts and articles for publication in Samarpan. We look forward to receiving articles from children as well as adults on any topic related to Hinduism, Spirituality, Hindu Mythology or the Cultural Heritage of India. Please e-mail your articles to editors@histemplemn.org.

Enjoy the Spring season and looking forward to warmer days ahead!

Priest's Column Significance of Ugadi

By Sri Hari Krishna ji

Ugadi, Yugadi or Samvatsaradi as it is called, is the New Year's Day for the people of many states in India.

The name is derived from Sanskrit words "Yuga" (Age) and "Adi" (Beginning). It falls generally in March and occasionally in April. The Hindu calendar is Lunisolar (a calendar based on both lunar and solar cycles) and the year begins with the month Chaitra. It is the first month in the Pan-changam, or the Almanac.

The festival is observed on the same day by different terms; Ugadi in Andhra Pradesh, Yugadi in Karnataka, Gudi padwa in Maharastra, Thapna in Rajasthan, Cheti chand in Sindh, Baishakhi in Punjab, Puttandu in Tamil Nadu, except it is observed on a different day in Tamil Nadu.

The eating of a specific mixture of Shad Ruchi (six tastes) called Ugadi Pachadi in Andhra Pradesh or Bevu-Bella (Neem and Jaggery) in Karnataka, symbolizes the fact that life is a mixture of different experiences.

The special mixture consists of:

- Neem buds/flowers for its bitterness, signifying Sadness
- Jaggery and ripe banana pieces for sweetness, signifying Happiness
- Green chilli/Peppers for hot taste, signifying Anger
- Salt for saltiness, signifying Fear
- Tamarind juice for sourness, signifying Disgust
- Unripe Mango for its tanginess, signifying Surprise



The festival is celebrated with great fanfare, gathering of extended family and a feast consisting of Bobbatlu, or Holige/Pooran Poli.

This festival is also observed by Hindus in Mauritius, Bali and Indonesia to celebrate their New Year called Nyepi.

The upcoming year is called Vijaya Naama Samvatsaram.



Daffodils Drive

By Vivek Prasad



On March 11, 2013, my brothers and I had the opportunity to pack daffodils at Channel One for cancer patients. The daffodils that we packed will be given out to patients with the hope that the flowers would offer some joy to those who are suffering from cancer. My brothers and I had never packed daffodils before, but we quickly began to enjoy the experience. We formed small assembly lines to get the flowers packed efficiently. The time seemed to pass very quickly and before we knew it, five to six boxes of daffodils had been packed and it was time to go. My brothers and I really enjoyed the experience, and though it will not be happening next year, I would be happy to be involved in these projects again.



Holi

By Ashrita Singh

Holi is an ancient festival, celebrated not only in India, but across the globe. People come together despite their cast, creed, color, race, status or gender to celebrate the start of spring and erasing evil and stress in their life. By the sprinkling of colors it attempts to make everyone look the same, so universal brotherhood is obtained. This year on March 30, 2013, at the Hindu Samaj Temple, about 150 people from around the town of Rochester got together to celebrate Holi. In spite of the gloomy weather, everyone enjoyed the throwing of colors. We all started the day with a pooja, thanking Lord Vishnu. Next, Holika Dahan was performed, followed by getting together to eat delicious Indian dishes. This was followed by playing colors with each other, outside the temple. One could see faces with mix of yellow, green, blue and red color. Everybody had a wonderful time.



Holika Dahan signifies the burning of evils in a fire. It is stated that during the Vedic period the sacred fire of Holi was burnt amidst the chanting of specific mantras which were intended for the destruction of the demonic forces. It was originally derived from the mythological legend of Holika and the demon king Hiranyakashyap. Hiranyakashyap wanted everybody in his kingdom to worship only him but to his disappointment, his son, Prahlad became an enthusiastic devotee of Lord Vishnu. Hiranyakashyap instructed his sister, Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlad in her lap. Holika had a boon that she could enter fire without any damage to herself. However, she was not aware that the boon worked only when she entered the fire alone. As a result, she paid a price for her sinister desires, while Prahlad was saved by the grace of the god for his extreme devotion.

The central ritual of Holi is the throwing and applying of colored water and powders on friends and family, which gives the holiday its common name "Festival of Colors." This ritual is said to be based on the above story of Krishna and Radha as well as on Krishna's playful splashing of the maids with water, but most of all it celebrates the coming of spring with all its beautiful colors and vibrant life. The festival, therefore, celebrates the victory of good over evil and also the triumph of devotion.

Sources:

<http://www.religionfacts.com/hinduism/holidays/holi.htm#sthash.1cncoQLD.dpuf>



<http://www.holifestival.org/legend-holika-prahlad.html>



POVERTY

By Ojas Bhagra

Poverty is a horrible passage of life for some people,
For many people it is like someone ripping up their life.

Taking away everything they have,
From one piece, to another, and to another.

Until they have nothing.

Some people are optimists and find that life was, is and will always be...
wonderful.

Shivaratri Celebrations at the Hindu Samaj Temple

By Surya Ghatty



Devotees from South Eastern Minnesota celebrated the festival of Maha Shivaratri on March 9th, 2013, at the Hindu Samaj Temple. Profound serenity surrounded the temple as devotees offered prayers and ablutions to Lord Shiva. Chantings and Bhajans by various Satsang groups throughout the night filled the temple with positive vibrations.

The story of Shiva Ratri:

Shiva means auspicious. Lord Shiva is “Mangala Kaaraka” – one who brings auspiciousness. He is Bhola Shankar, always exuding kindness and innocence. He is Sachchidananda, always happy. He is also called Rudra. Rud or Rukh in Sanskrit means sorrow or affliction. Draavayathi is to mitigate. The following verse “rukha draavayathi, iti rudraha” means that Rudra is the one who removes our sorrows.

Shiva is Swayambhu - Self manifested. Shivaratri, the night of Lord Shiva, marks the auspicious day when Shiva appeared in the form of a massive column glowing with light (Jyotirlinga) to dispel darkness in the world. When the column appeared, it was so huge that Brahma and Vishnu themselves could not find the two ends of it. Vishnu took the form of a wild boar (Varaha) to dig down to Paathala (netherworld), while Brahma took the form of a Swan and flew into the sky, but neither of them were successful in finding the beginning or end of this column. The Jyotirlinga was all pervading. The whole Universe was within him. The ever compassionate Lord Shiva then reduced himself into a form of a smaller Linga to allow the gods and humans to worship him.

Nature of Shiva and Shivaratri:

Shiva is “easily pleased”. This is the reason HE is called Ashutosh. He is there to give boons. This is probably why all the demons flocked to Shiva to get boons.

The auspicious day on which Shiva manifested himself is celebrated by Hindus all over the world as Shivaratri. Shiva granted liberation to an innocent hunter who performed Abhisheka to him on this day, by carrying water in his mouth as his hands were full. This story shows that Shiva is easily pleased. One may worship HIM with anything they can afford – be it milk, curd, ghee, sugar, ash, chandan or leaves, as long as the worship is performed with utmost devotion.



Significance of Shiva Linga and Abhisheka:

As mentioned earlier, the word Shiva in Sanskrit means “auspicious”. The word Lingam or Linga means “symbol”. Shiva Linga, then, is a symbol of auspiciousness.

Shiva Linga is round, with a projection of a circle. Just as a circle encompasses all things within it, the entire Universe lies within the Shiva Linga, and there is nothing in the universe that is not Shiva.

Lord Shiva is Abhisheka priya, lover of ablutions. Performing Abhisheka (or ablutions) to Shiva Linga, would equal performing ablutions to the entire Universe. Hindus believe that performing Abhisheka has the power to cause timely rains, and to mitigate our daily sorrows. Hindus also believe that performing Abhisheka has a cooling effect on the Universe and helps with global warming.





Significance of Holi

By Forrest Dailey

By celebrating the Holi festival, we celebrate the victory of good over evil. Different Hindu traditions have different scriptural references explaining the roots of Holi. Take for instance the Vaisnava story of Prahlada and Holika, told in the Puranas.

For the full story though, we have to go back to the third Avatar of Vishnu, Varaha. Varaha killed the demon Hiranyaksha. His brother Hiranyakashipu sought revenge on Lord Vishnu, only to be killed by Narasimha, Vishnu's next Avatar. Ego re-emerges under different guises, hence the two brothers.

King Hiranyakashipu had a child, Prahlada who was a devotee of Lord Narayana/Vishnu. The king hated Vishnu, and possessed by ego he demanded that his people worship him only. The king's sister Holika could not be hurt by fire, so he conspired with her to kill his son by carrying the child into an inferno. The fire devoured Holika, while Prahlada came away unharmed.

Just as in the Gita with the Kauravas, Lord Vishnu had given the miscreant King Hiranyakashipu every opportunity to reform, but when he did not, Vishnu came in the form of Narasimha, and devoured him.

The king's ego made him think he had outsmarted Vishnu by asking for a boon whereby he could not be killed (1) by man or animal, (2) during the day or at night, (3) inside the home or outside, (4) on the earth or in the sky, (5) by any weapons. That is why Narasimha was half-man and half-lion, why he devoured the evil king at twilight, and on the doorstep of the king's home (with one foot touching the earth, and one not). Narasimha's finding loopholes in the "trap" set by Hiranyakashipu evokes the meditative goal of bridging duality and attaining Oneness.

Narasimha is often depicted in the act of slaughtering His enemy, King Hiranyakashipu. But for today's devotees, Narasimha is the destroyer of internal enemies, ego and evil-tendencies, not of people. The fact that after Narasimha there were five more major Avatars of Vishnu, with one yet to come, reminds us that life is an on-going battle. Yet we celebrate, as we should, like it has already been won.

Aum Narasimhadev Namah!



Visit to the Buddhist Temple

By Amrita Bhagia

Recently, on March 8th, the Bala Vikas students of Rochester, MN, visited the Buddhist Temple, in SE Rochester. Many of the students, teachers, and parents were surprised to know that there was in fact a Buddhist temple here in Rochester. As we approached the holy place we were amazed to see numerous flags surrounding the area, traditional decorations from Cambodia. We later found out they were prayer flags, used to bless and purify the surroundings. As we entered the temple, we saw that it was quite similar to any other place of worship, with mats covering the floor and an idol in the front. We met one of the monks, and he introduced us to Buddhism. He told us his own story, about how he became a monk, and taught us some Buddhist ideals and rules. The Monk explained that the goal of a Buddhist, or anyone, is to become a Buddha. He said, "Buddhists aim to reach happiness." He also said that he found it quite interesting that one could never tell whether a get-together was a funeral or a birthday. He said that since Buddhists understand that death is the end of suffering and the beginning of happiness, that people are equally happy during the two celebrations. The Monk also told us the tale of Siddhartha, which was illustrated by tapestries along the wall. He told us of the young prince Siddhartha who was spared of seeing any evil or sickness until he saw a man lying dead along the street. This altered his mind so much that he left to become a sage, looking for a way to end suffering and find happiness. Finally, after much meditation, Siddhartha saw the path to true happiness with God and became the Enlightened One - Buddha.

After hearing the story of Buddha, the Monk encouraged us to try meditation with him for 10 minutes. However, he told us that we could not sit cross-legged because only monks were allowed to show their feet to



Buddha. Together we performed guided meditation, in which a bell rings every minute to keep one's mind focused. He also told us to keep our minds clear by saying "Nehi" to keep stray thoughts away. We then moved to the smaller temple where we saw the monk's living cell and living space. Another Cambodian monk came to meet us and gave us a traditional Buddhist blessing for happiness in our lives. After the visit, we all felt incredibly calm and purified. We got a chance to experience a new religion and way of life. We were exposed to a new way of thinking, with thoughts and actions we could easily implement in our lives. Furthermore, all of us realized just how important it is to be happy in our everyday lives.



Journey of Peace

By Suresh Chari



There have been concerted efforts to foster interfaith dialog in Rochester for a number of years. It started many years ago with the "Tent of Abraham" which involved the three Abrahamic faiths. Later, to be more inclusive, it was called "The Tent of All People". The event was held once a year when those interested gathered at a place of worship and went together on foot to other places of worship exchanging thoughts and ideas as they moved from place to place.

For the past few years, the Sisters of St. Francis have taken a leading role in developing this concept further and called it the "Journey of Peace". A meeting of all faiths is held at the beautiful Franciscan Church each October. Following this, monthly meetings are scheduled at different places of worship to allow interaction and understanding of each other's faiths.

The "Journey of Peace" traveled to the Hindu Temple on March 16th, 2013. The theme was "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - The World is one Family". After welcome and introductions, BalaVikas children led by Kavita Prasad and Nisha Unni sang bhajans. Then Suresh Chari introduced the audience to the concept of "yoga", the union of the individual self to the Universal Self. The paths of Devotion - (Bhakti Yoga), Selfless service (Karma Yoga) and Knowledge (Jnana Yoga), were introduced by Ganga Gopalkrishnan, Unnikrishnan Gopinathan and Ajay Singh, respectively. Swami Vivekananda was introduced to the audience as one of the first monks to introduce Yoga to the United States. Finally, Suresh Chari wrapped it up by saying that all paths lead to a Universal God whom all faiths worship and praise.



“Let the different faiths exist.
 Let them flourish and
 Let the glory of God be sung
 In all the languages of the world
 And in a variety of tunes.
 Respect the differences between the faiths
 And recognize them as valid
 As long as they do not extinguish
 The flame of unity.”

By Sri Sathya Sai Baba

A question and answer session followed in which the audience enthusiastically participated. Finally everyone shared Indian tea with snacks. The Journey of Peace moves to the B'nai Israel Synagogue on Sunday, April 28 from 2 to 4 p.m. All are welcome.





Puran Poli Recipe

By Anuradha Dhumne



Puran Poli is made in Maharashtra during Holi and Gudi Padwa festivals. I continue to follow this tradition here in Rochester.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups Chana Dal
- 2 cups Grated Jaggery
- 2 cups Wheat Flour (Chapati Atta)
- 4 teaspoons Canola Oil
- 10 pods Cardamom
- ½ teaspoon Nutmeg Powder
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 12 teaspoons Ghee



Soak chana dal in water for two hours. After two hours, rinse it thoroughly. Add 4 cups of water and chana dal in a pot and boil it on a stove for one hour on medium heat. Make sure chana dal is fully cooked, and ready to strain.

Strain chana dal and remove all water. Add chana dal and jaggery into another pot and cook over medium heat. Keep stirring for 15 minutes or until dal and jaggery is melted and mixed well. Crush cardamom seeds into powder and add to the mixture. Add nutmeg powder to the mixture.

Remove the mixture from heat and grind it finely in Puran Maker while it is hot. This mixture is used as stuffing in a puran poli. Make 1.5 inch balls of the stuffing.

Mix wheat flour, salt and oil together in a bowl. Add water gradually and knead the dough until it becomes smooth and consistent. Divide the dough into 12 even portions. Roll each one out on a lightly floured surface into a circle of about 3-inch diameter. Put a stuffing ball on it. Spread the dough gently over the stuffing ball with fingers and cover it. Roll out the puran poli again. Use dry flour if needed. Heat a tawa (heavy based pan); cook the puran poli on to it. Move it gently over the pan and make sure that it is evenly exposed to the heat. Roast for about a minute on both sides over medium heat. Remove from the pan and brush it with one teaspoon of the ghee. Serve hot.

North South Foundation Educational Contests

By Bhavani Anandarao

North South Foundation (NSF) Educational contests for Math and Science bees for the Rochester chapter were held on March 24, 2013. Children ages 6-14 participated in the Math and Science bees at various levels. Kudos to all the children who participated.

Registration for Spelling and Vocabulary bee contests is still open and will be held on April 28, 2013. The registration will close on 4/14/2013. Please encourage your children to participate. The fee paid towards the contests gives brilliant, but needy children in India hope and helps them achieve their dream. Two thirds of the fee paid towards the contests is tax deductible.

Visit <http://www.northsouth.org> to register now.

For any questions regarding the contests, please contact Usha Asirvatham at 358 9552 (ushaasirvatham@hotmail.com) or Bhavani Anandarao at 282 7385 (bhavani05@gmail.com).





Quiz - Food for thought

By Nisha Kurup

- These faiths are all considered Abrahamic faiths, except:
 - Islam
 - Buddhism
 - Christianity
 - Judaism
 - Bahai faith
- These are all included in the five pillars of Islam except:
 - Declaration of faith
 - praying 5 times a day
 - forgiving someone
 - fasting
 - Charity
- The languages used in the Old and the New testaments of the Holy Bible are:
 - Aramic, Hebrew, Latin
 - Latin, Persian, Hebrew
 - Hebrew, Aramic, Greek
 - Greek, Arabic, Latin
- These facts are all true for Holi, except:
 - People throw colors at each other
 - It is a spring festival
 - People celebrate it by lighting lamps and fasting
 - People make bonfire on the day before Holi
 - Children are allowed to play pranks during Holika dahan
- These are all legends of Holi, except
 - The story of Prahlad and Hinyakashipu
 - The return of Rama to Ayodhya
 - Krishna started this by applying colors on Radha to make her look like him
 - Demon Dhundhi was chased away by children
 - Kamadeva was reduced to ashes by Lord Shiva and restored back at the request of Rati.
- How can we celebrate Holi in an eco-friendly manner?
 - Use Gentian violet for making wet colors
 - Using Gulal for dry colors
 - Use Henna leaves to make dry green color
 - Making a number of bonfires and burning wood in the neighborhood for Holika Dahan
- "We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live, they travel far." Whose words are these?
 - Gandhi
 - Swami Vivekananda
 - Goutama Buddha
 - Sri Krishna
- "Know me to be the eternal seed of all existences. I am the intelligence of the intelligent, the energy of the energetic." This is a translation from a significant text. Who spoke these words to whom and in which text?
 - Buddha in "Buddhist Suttas" to his disciples.
 - Words of Jesus as retold by his disciples in "The Bible"
 - Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagawad Gita chapter 7
 - Sri Ramakrishna to Narendra in the "Gospel"
- A religious belief that does not use the service of a priest
 - Islam
 - Christianity
 - Hinduism
 - Sikhism
- Which book of infinite knowledge states the importance of herbs and its role in optimal health and well being?
 - Sama Veda
 - Charaka Samhita
 - Ashtanga Samgraha
 - Rig Veda



Please email your answers to quizmaster@histemplemn.org with the title "Food for Thought".

Please send your feedbacks about Samarpan to editors@histemplemn.org

