

# Samarpan

an offering....

Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota

Jan-Feb 2014

## President's Note

Dear Community Members,

As we begin another new year, I look back on my first year as President of the Hindu Samaj Temple. We have had some exciting times and have come a long way. Buying the land for the New Temple was a major accomplishment and the Bhoomi (Land) Pooja was a major success in introducing it to the community. I would like to thank the overwhelming support we have had in raising funds towards building the New Temple. We are nearing the goal of \$250,000 for this year and I continue to welcome any support both in time and kind towards achieving our goal of a New Temple.

Along with Rochester Vidhalaya, we participated in Rochesterfest for the first time and this was a fun and rewarding experience. Sumathi Jayakumar, who leads the Religious committee, did a phenomenal job of organizing the two-day Bhoomi Pooja. Asha Jeevan, as Cultural Program Coordinator, and Prasaad Ayyanar, as the Food Committee Coordinator, have had some new and exciting learning experiences. Ajay Singh, Senthil Palaniappan and Somashekar Govindaraj lead the IT team and are in the process of revamping the website to add additional content and make it more informational. We are also trying to update the present Temple building with help of the community with Sridhar taking the lead on this initiative. We have formed a finance team with Diganta Borgohain, Sasi Venkat, and Mukesh Bhatia as members in preparation for the major work we anticipate with the New Temple. Suresh Chari is leading the efforts in achieving our goal of a New Temple both in fundraising and in getting the plans ready. I would like to thank the Board in their devotion to the cause and their hard work.

Once again, I would like to thank the community at large for their unwavering support and look forward to their continued participation in working towards the goal of a New Temple. Thank you.

WISHING YOU ALL A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Sincerely,

Santhi Subramaniam.



## Editor's Note

By *Rajani Sohni*

Greetings to all our readers!

Wishing all our readers a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year!

In 2013, we saw an increase in the number of visitors to the temple, along with improvements and initiatives in all Temple sponsored activities. We would like to thank all the devotees, volunteers, and our priest, Hari Krishna Ji, for the continued support and dedication.

The *Samarpan* Editorial Board is seeking articles for publication in our newsletter. We welcome contributions from adults as well as children. You are invited to write on any topic related to Mythology, History, Spirituality, or the Arts of India, with the goal of promoting Indian Heritage and Culture. The articles must be original, must be 1000 words or less, and should have references to any material borrowed from other sources.

In addition, we invite the community youth to be part of our events reporting team - to write about events and news within our community.

Please send your articles to [editors@histemple.org](mailto:editors@histemple.org). Our next newsletter will be published in March. To be considered for publication in the March issue, please submit your articles by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

Thank you to all our contributors in 2013 – you made the publication of *Samarpan* possible.

We are eager to hear from you. If you have any feedback, please send an email to: [editors@histemplemn.org](mailto:editors@histemplemn.org).

Looking forward to another great year and once again wishing everyone a Very Happy 2014 from the Samarpan Team!

*Unni krishnan*  
*Nisha Kurup*  
*Anantha Vijay Raghavan Santhanam*  
*Rajani Sohni*

## Temple Board Member Introductions

By Santhi Subramaniam  
President, Hindu Samaj

### Sasi Venkat, Finance Committee Member

Sasi moved to Rochester from Los Angeles in 1997 and has been living in United States for almost 17 years. She is originally from Tirunelveli, a city in Tamil Nadu, one of the southern states of India. Sasi is a Sales and Service Manager at US Bank. She is Married to Venkat, a Team Lead in IT at Mayo Clinic. They have 2 sons, Chandru & Sanjiv. Sasi joined the Temple board in 2012 as a Finance committee member and has been volunteering at the temple for several years. In her spare time, Sasi likes to read, watch movies and spend time with her family and friends.



## Priest's Column

### Makara Sankranti/Pongal

By Hari Krishnaji

**Sankranti** marks the transition of the Sun into Makara rashi (Capricorn) on its celestial path. Traditionally, this has been one of many harvest days in India.

#### Date and significance:

Sankranti is the Sanskrit word in Hindu Astrology which refers to the transmigration of the Sun from one Rāshi (sign of the zodiac) to another. Hence there are 12 such Sankrantis in all. The Makara Sankranti festival marks the transition of the Sun from Dhanu Rāshi (Sagittarius) to Makara Rāshi (Capricorn). The phenomenon of the apparent 'northward migration of the sun' is referred to as Uttarayana.

#### Scriptural and Cultural significance:

According to the Puranas, on this day Surya (Sun) visits the house of his son Shani (Saturn), who is the lord of the Makara Rāshi (Capricorn). Though the father and son duo did not get along well, Surya made it a point to meet his son on this day. He, in fact, comes to his son's house, for a month. This day thus symbolizes the importance of the special relationship between father and son.

From Makara Sankranti starts the 'day' of devatas (Gods), while Dakshinayana (southward movement of the sun) is said to be the 'night' of devatas, so most of the auspicious things are done during this time. Uttarayana is also called as Devayana, and the Dakshinayana' is called Pitrayana.

It was on this day when Lord Vishnu ended the ever increasing terror of the Asuras (Demons) by finishing them off and burying their heads under the Mandara Parvata. So this occasion also represents the end of 'negativities' and beginning of an era of righteous living.

#### Traditions, rituals and celebration:

**Makara Sankranti** is one of the most auspicious days for the Hindus and is celebrated in almost all parts of India in myriad cultural forms, with great devotion. It is celebrated with pomp in southern parts of India as Sankranti in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Pongal in Tamil Nadu, and in Punjab as Maghi.

In the western Indian state of Gujarat, the celebrations are even bigger. People offer thousands of their colorful oblations to the Sun in the form of beautiful kites. The act stands as a metaphor for reaching to their beloved God, the one who represents the best. In the rural and coastal areas, cock fights are held and is a prominent event of the festival. Makara Sankranti is also to honor, worship and to pay respect to Dhanya Lakshmi (Goddess of grains). At the start of this significant event, there is also worship for departed ancestors.

Owing to the vast geography and diversity of culture in India, this festival is celebrated for innumerable reasons and in innumerable ways depending on the climate, agricultural environment, cultural background and location.

*Compiled from Wikipedia and other sources.*

**On this auspicious occasion, may your life shine with the radiance of Prosperity, Happiness, and Good fortune.  
Happy Makara Sankranti!**

## Empowerment through service and connections

By Sneha Jain



*“Service without ideal of self, trains you to transcend all the artificial distinctions imposed by history and geography, and to realize that the human community is one and indivisible.” Sri Satya Sai baba*

As I descended into Rochester, MN, in October 2012, my heart was a mixed bag of emotions. The glimpses of the vast corn fields covered with spotless white snow carpets were just akin to my life, which was a clean white slate ....a new place, a new job, a new beginning and hopefully new friends. I was anxious, nervous and excited, and to be honest, scared too....It was just me, alone and my two packed bags, relocating to an entire new life..... Little did I know that within a year, this is the same place where I would find myself belonging to a family away from home. Rochester has been blessed with an ample Indian community. Familiar brown faces cross your path everywhere from work, at the grocery store, the gym and on the bus. But frequently, even in this sea of similitude there lies an unseen chasm – a chasm of connections – connections through the heart, the mind and spirit – the feeling of being one, the feeling of belonging the feeling of having an unique identity and the feeling of being able to keep your motherland alive, thousands of miles away from her.

*“Knowledge purifies the mind. Love purifies the heart. Seva (Service) purifies Karma.-“ Sri Sri Ravishankar*

Ever since childhood, I have been taught and have believed in giving back to the society in some shape or form. Even though I was brand new and only a couple of weeks old in Rochester, I jumped at an opportunity offered to me for volunteering at the Diwali festival in 2012. This was actually my second week in Rochester. Retrospectively, I can easily say this was one of the best things I did for my soul. All of sudden I found myself in the midst of waves of enthusiastic Indians, whose warmth negated the brutal coldness of the weather and my loneliness in a new city.

My spirit was suddenly blessed to be around with everyone who spoke Indian, wore Indian, ate Indian and laughed Indian.

Fast forward to the present - it's been 1 year and 3 months that I have lived in Rochester. Over the past 15 months, I have been an active part of the celebration of several festivals and events, thanks to the Indian community. Kudos to the Temple, Gurudwara, the Rochester Vidyalaya and all the other wonderful initiatives and people here in Rochester! I have managed to be an active part of my Indian traditions, even though I am on foreign soil.

It truly amazes me as to how strong the sense of being Indian and keeping our traditions alive resonates not only through the various activities and festivals, but has seemed to have transcended through the generations. Having lived in 6 states in the US, by far, this one is easily the place where I have felt and seen the Indian heritage so engrained so successfully in the younger generation. Makes me feel truly proud to be a part of Rochester! Be it the Temple, Church or Gurudwara, they all have always been a sanctuary for me, quiet peaceful places for individual reflection and contemplation, an environment of teaching and learning, to grow both spiritually and philosophically or be a social hub of meeting and engaging with new people.

As a relatively new and young entrant to this blissful community, I would like to bring forth a humble message here.

*Service is the highest spiritual discipline. Prayer and meditation, or knowledge of scripture and Vedanta (holy scriptures of India), cannot help you reach the goal as quickly as service can. Service has a double effect: it extinguishes the ego and gives bliss – Sri Sri Ravishankar*

Given how large and diverse the Indian community is here in Rochester, given how much of a difference these cultural events have made in my life, given how everyone around me is creating an environment so conducive to connecting and growing at multiple levels, given how everyone here is trying to keep our Mother India alive, I can only imagine what volunteering or donating time will do for all of my generation and the younger ones!!!

To all my colleagues, peers and my younger friends ....volunteering your time to the temple or any charitable organization can easily help you make a difference. They say that donating time and/or money is a selfless act, a noble gesture of generosity, given with no expectation of corresponding reward. But I feel it has a lot of tangible benefits to oneself and I would like to list some of them:

As a volunteer, you

- Make a positive difference in other's lives.
- Get to reach out, make new friends and forge new relationships.
- Get recognized for your good work and feel good about yourself.
- Get to actively strengthen your community and make it a better place.
- Create a strong support system for yourself.
- Become a good role model for your siblings or others.
- Get to value and appreciate what you have, especially when compared to those who are less fortunate.

So think about volunteering and donating your time or money to our cultural heritage ... ..it is one of the best gifts you will give to yourself, your family and your community!!!

## The Choice is Yours

By Unni krishnan

Don't be judgmental! – so say the ancient seers. To a common man this theory is so difficult to follow, especially in today's world. The media is bogged with analysis and critical thinking that it's very easy to take a position - black or white. When we interact with people in our daily life, we often think why one is behaving in a manner that doesn't become their personality. This feeling is also there when we read mythological stories or puranas.

For instance, in Ramayana, we often ask the question, why did Kaikeyi and Manthara plot against Sri Rama even though they acknowledged his true greatness? It's difficult to fathom the cruelty done to Sri Rama and one may think how people could act in such a manner. Was the rivalry with the other wives that led Kaikeyi to take the decision to banish Sri Rama to the forest? Can it be the love for her son that led to this unfair choice?

Kaikeyi was the daughter of King Ashwapati- an ally of the Kosala kingdom. When Dasaratha married Kaikeyi, a promise was made that the son would be made the king of Kosala. But the king could not have a son from his earlier marriages to Kausalya nor with Kaikeyi. The marriage to Sumitra too left his dreams unfulfilled. Without an heir apparent to the kingdom, a king is always in distress.

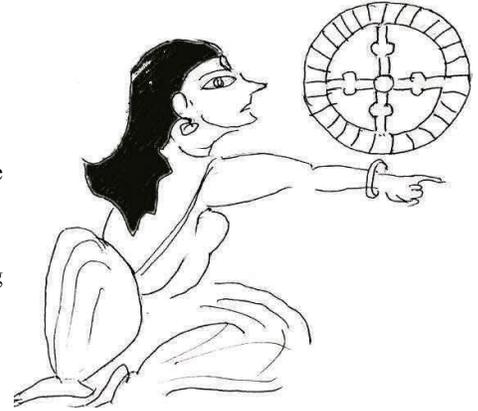
Kaikeyi was the only daughter to Ashwapati along with seven brothers. She was brought up without the presence of her mother. Her mother was banished from the kingdom due to a misunderstanding between her father and mother. Ashwapati had a rare boon – to understand the language of the birds—but he was not supposed to reveal it to anyone, lest he would lose his life. One day while enjoying a pleasant evening with the queen, he happened to hear a conversation between two swans. He was amused by the conversation and laughed loudly. The queen was so intrigued by it and asked the king the reason for his laughter. Though the queen was aware of the consequences of divulging the conversation, she persisted to know the matter. The king was surprised and shocked by this act and concluded that she was not fit for the well-being of the king and banished her from the kingdom.

Kaikeyi was brought up by the caretaker, Manthara. Since her childhood, she must have always been insecure. Even after her marriage, she harbored this insecurity while being one of the wives of King Dasaratha. She was soon able to win her husband's confidence by saving the king during a war by putting her own life in danger. King Dasaratha was pleased and offered her a boon which she saved for the right time.

The story goes that Ashwapati learned from the conversation between the swans that there were going to be many disasters that would overshadow humanity and that the Rakshashas (demons) would soon try to take over. They also talked about the advent of another Avatar of Vishnu, that of Sri Rama.

Everything seemed to have happened as predicted. When Sri Rama was asked by Vishwamitra to destroy the rakshashas, his father, Dasaratha, was reluctant to send his son as he was very young and still a minor. This was an obstacle for Sri Rama to complete his destined duty. Ashwapati ordered Manthara to plot to send Sri Ram to the jungles to fulfil his duties. This paved the path for the rest of Ramayana, which we all read and cherish. After defeating Ravana, Sri Rama returned to Ayodhya and was warmly welcomed by everyone. The first person he met was Kaikeyi and touched her feet.

Little do we understand why events happen in our lives. But in a broader perspective there is always a reason and a cause. Nothing is accidental! Perhaps that's what we learn from mythology – to accept the situation and continue to pursue our path. The choice is ours - whether to accept the situation and fulfil the duties like Sri Rama, or be like the Pandavas, who spent 13 years in the forest, always complaining about their circumstances.



## Interesting facts about India

The name 'India' is derived from the River Indus, the valleys around which were the home of the early settlers. The Aryan worshippers referred to the river Indus as the Sindhu.

- The Persian invaders converted it into Hindu. The name 'Hindustan' combines Sindhu and Hindu and thus refers to the land of the Hindus
- Algebra, Trigonometry and Calculus are studies, which originated in India.
- The world's highest cricket ground is in Chail, Himachal Pradesh. Built in 1893 after leveling a hilltop, this cricket pitch is 2444 meters above sea level
- Ayurveda is the earliest school of medicine known to mankind. The Father of Medicine, Charaka, consolidated Ayurveda 2500 years ago.

## Rochester Vidhyalaya Library Services

*By Bhavana Shivu and Ganga Gopalkrishnan*

Rochester Vidhyalaya ([www.rvmn.org](http://www.rvmn.org)) in support with Hindu Samaj temple started the library services in the summer of 2013. The goal of this service is to disseminate culture through stories and books. We have a catalog of about 400 books relevant to Indian Culture, Festivals, Gods, Amar Chitra Kathas, Panchatantra and many other stories. There is also a section of books for adults, including books on Yoga, spirituality and Hinduism. Book reading for preschool and school age children is scheduled from 4 to 4:30 pm every Sunday, but often times, children stay with the books past the reading time and discuss them. They also borrow books from the library. We enjoy the time spent with children and also give them the opportunity to read aloud. Children are encouraged to ask questions and suggest books they would like to read during the next session. It is a very conducive environment to read, listen and gain knowledge about various aspects of Indian culture. We look forward to having more and more children join the book reading every Sunday evening.



## Hindu Temples of Goa: Part II -

*By Shyamala Bhat*

### The pristine Mahadeva temple at Tambdi Surla

Nestled deep in the green tropical forests of the Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain sanctuary of North Goa, is a breathtaking monument of ancient Indian heritage. It has withstood the ravages of Man (the Portuguese occupation) and Nature alike over seven centuries and continues to be a tourist draw off the beaten path.

As described in Part I of this series, Goan temples are unique in their architecture due to the Christian and Islamic influence in that region. Tambdi Surla is a definite departure from this trend. We were introduced to Tambdi Surla by a lovely book, *Inside Goa*, authored by the famed writer Manohar Malgonkar and illustrated by the quintessential "Nimbupani" cartoonist Mario Miranda. According to the book, Tambdi Surla was a well-kept secret until 1935 when accidentally, a survey engineer, Anant Dhume, stumbled upon it on one of his work expeditions. How fortunate we are that it stayed hidden intact and when discovered was spared by the then Portuguese rulers!

Our Goan taxi driver took us from Panjim to Tambdi Surla in about an hour and twenty minutes covering 66 kms from Panjim to Tambdi Surla. The roads leading to and inside the sanctuary were lined by trucks ("lorries") that carried minerals from the ore-rich quarries. Fortunately for us, they were all headed in the opposite direction!

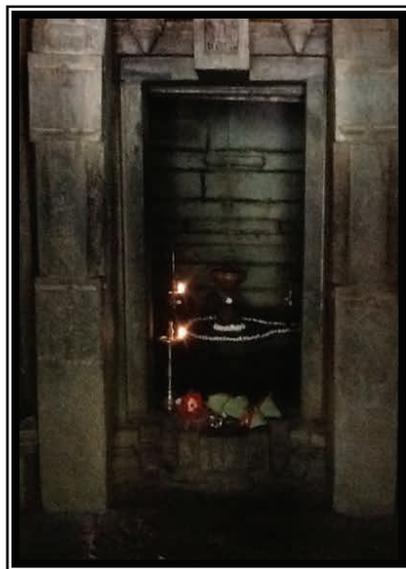
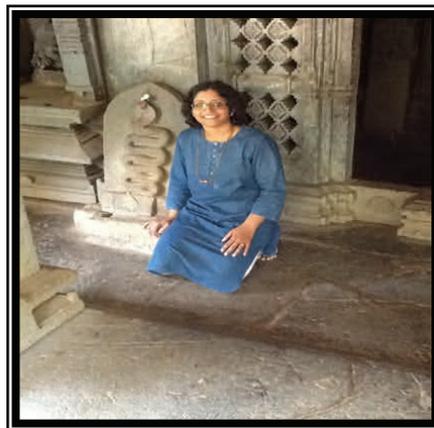
The temple boundaries are marked by a bare fence and the site itself is well maintained by a Government-appointed caretaker. Named for the river Surla (and Tambdi means red in Konkani) that flows nearby; the temple is the oldest surviving original Hindu temple in Goa. Mahadeva, or Shiva, is the main deity of the temple with Naga and Ganapathi being the other two Gods that are worshipped. Stone carvings on the outer walls depict Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma, the Nandi and the elephant among other Gods. Legend has it that a real King Cobra occupies the sanctum sanctorum of this temple ever since it was built. The intricate basalt stone work and an elaborately sculptured dome are highlights of this rather small temple. The roof of the temple on the outside appears rather plain without much carving or work, a very striking feature of the temple – was it left incomplete? We do not know. Of recent times, the temple has been made functional for worship during the daytime and Shivaratri is celebrated with great pomp at this site every year.





## Hindu Temples of Goa: Part II

By Shyamala Bhat



Clockwise from top left : Tambdi Surla full view, author in front of a Naga statue, the Shivalinga inside the Girbhagriha, and the intricate stone work seen on the dome of the temple.

We were struck how similar the architectural style of this temple is with the Hoysala temples at Belur, Halebid and Somnathpur in Karnataka. Further reading revealed that the Kadamba and Yadava dynasties, contemporaries of the Hoysalas (all of these reigned in adjoining regions between the 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> AD), were responsible for this marvelous structure and hence perhaps were directly influenced by the architecture of those times. On our return journey back to Panjim, we stopped to see the Pandava Caves in Arvalem. The five caves are carved into a single rock face and date back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Legend has it that the Pandavas stayed in these caves.

I hope you have enjoyed reading about Tambdi Surla. In Part III of this series, we will explore a few popular temples of Goa, patronized primarily by the Konkani people of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa.



## Onam

By Shikha Kumar



Every year people in Kerala and Tamil Nadu celebrate a harvest festival called Onam. The festival of Onam lasts for 10 days. This important festival is based on the lunar calendar and is in the month of August and September. Onam is celebrated to celebrate King Mahabali's return.

The ten days are called Atham, Chitira, Chodhi, Visakam, Anizham, Thriketa, Moolam, Pooradam, Uthradam, and Thiruvonam. During the first nine days, people buy new clothing, add flowers to the pookalam (floral mat), clean their house and have many different rituals preformed. Each day different colors of flowers will be added to the pookalam. There are boat races, dances, and pookalam competitions. One famous dance preformed is the Puli Kali (Masked leopard dance). Also on the fifth day the great Vallam Kali (Snake boat) kicks of too. The last day of Onam is the most important day of all. This day marks the return of King Mahabali. In the morning people clean their house, put rice flour on the main entrance, and take an early bath and wear new clothes. Many also give food and money to the needy. Followed by that there is also a big feast called Onasadya that is eaten on banana leaves. The feast includes a large variety of dishes.

For Onam, my family and I pick flowers from our yard to make the pookalam. My sister and I decorate the floor at the entrance of our home with flowers and make a pookalam. My parents give my sister and I new clothes too. We also have a get together with our Malayalee friends. Children perform dances and songs and the women perform the traditional thiruvathira dance. After those performances we enjoy the traditional feast called Onasadya. There is rice, pappadum, sambar, avil, thoran, pickles, and some other curries and the traditional paysam (rice pudding).

The festival of onam is something that I look forward to every year. Onam reminds me of my cultural heritage. I am proud to be part of this diverse Indian community and enjoy this festival very much.



## Baba's Birthday Celebration

By Anushka Kollengode



Sai Ram.

My brother Akhil and I go to Balvikas every Sunday. We learn about Baba's teachings which are human values, unity of faiths, stories and shlokas. On November 23rd, we celebrated Baba's birthday in the Temple. Our class did a play. The play taught us not to say lies to anybody – parents, teachers and friends. The first item of the day was my Krishna dance. I was a little bit shy and nervous. This was my first time alone on the stage. All classes performed dances and plays. For Baba's Birthday, we had cake, Indian food, dessert and drinks. I thank Shantal aunty and Jyothsna aunty for a good class and teaching us about Baba.



## Quiz

By Nisha Kurup

### Match the festivals with their significance or events

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Ram Navami      | Bathing for purification                  |
| 2. Karvachauth     | Sankranthi                                |
| 3. Guru Poornima   | Death of the Sufi Saint Moinuddin Chishti |
| 4. Raksha Bandhan  | Birth of Vishnu's Avatar as Rama          |
| 5. Onam            | Fasting observed by married women         |
| 6. Urs Festival    | Worship offered to lord Shiva             |
| 7. Kumbha Mela     | Vyasa Purnami                             |
| 8. Holi            | Avatar of Vamana                          |
| 9. Pongal          | Bonding of sister and brother             |
| 10. Maha Sivaratri | Play with colors                          |

### Fill in the blanks

- was the mother of the great Maratha king Shivaji.  
 The famous 14<sup>th</sup> Century Sanskrit epic *Madhuravijayam* is written by -----.  
 The Hymn to the Earth, *Bhumi-Suktha*, which holds gems of wisdom on ecology and environment is contained in -----Veda.  
 The rivers that flow at the four places of Kumbha Mela are, ----- at Haridwar, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswathi at -----, Godawari at ----- and the ----- at Ujjain.

### Find the odd one out.

- The seven sacred rivers of India: Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswathi, Godavari, Krishna, Narmada, Sindhu.  
 The seven sacred cities of India: Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, Dakshineswar, Kashi, Kanchipuram, Avantika.  
 The four abodes of God, also known as Char Dham: Badrinath, Kadarnath, Rameshwaram, Dwarika Dham.  
 The seven sacred mountains of India: Himalayas, Aravali, Vindhya, Raivatak, Mahendra, Nilgiri, Sahyadri  
 Five great vows of Jainism: Ahimsa, Satya, Tanha, Asteya, Brahmacharya.

### Answers to Ramayan Chiller

- Brahmastra.  
 Kalidasa.  
 Nagapasha (snake rope)  
 Pushpak Viman

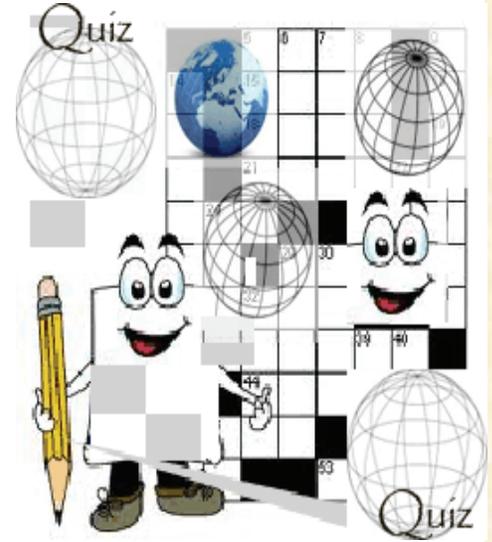
Treta Yug -the second of the four Yugas and celebrates the events of 3 of the Avatars of Lord Vishnu (Vamana, Parasurama and Rama)

### Match the following

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| Wealth       | Dhanalakshmi     |
| Knowledge    | Vidyaalakshmi    |
| Valor        | Viryalakshmi     |
| Courage      | Dhairyalakshmi   |
| Sovereignty  | Gajalakshmi      |
| Grains/crops | Dhaanyalakshmi   |
| Success      | Vijayalakshmi    |
| Good fortune | Saubhagyalakshmi |

### Utsav Jingles

1. Janmashtami
2. Dussehra
3. Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswathi.
4. Garba
5. Ravan
6. Golu



If you would like to contribute to this column please email

samarpan@histemplemn.org with the title "Food for Thought". Contributors should reach 45 days in advance of the issue being published.



## Recipe of the month: Tilgul Laddu Recipe

By Anuradha Dhumne



This treat is made during the Sankranti festival all over Maharashtra.

### Ingredients:

4 cups white sesame seeds

3 cups of Jaggery

1 cup peanuts

1 cup dry shredded coconut

1/4 cup ghee

Roast sesame seeds, shredded coconut and peanuts separately.

Crush roasted peanuts lightly to remove their skin. Crush the skinless peanuts further.

Heat jaggery at low heat till it starts melting. Put one drop of the melted jaggery in cold water to test consistency of the jaggery syrup. It should harden in water immediately.

Add ghee, roasted sesame seeds, crushed peanuts and shredded coconut to the jaggery syrup. Mix the ingredients lightly. Apply some ghee to your palms so the mixture will not stick to your palms. Make sure the mixture is not too hot and safe to put on your palm. Carefully roll laddus (Balls) of desired size in your palms.

## Lighter side of life

By Unni

