

Samarpan

an offering....

Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota

Oct-Nov 2014

President's Note

Namaste to All!

After a relatively quiet summer, the Temple is abuzz with activity this Season, starting with the Installation of Sri Subramanya Swami or Lord Muruga, and his Consorts. The three day festival started with Ganesh Chaturthi Celebrations on Friday, August 29th, and continued through the weekend. The collective Silence on unveiling Lord Muruga and his Consorts dressed in their finest was memorable. The festival was a grand success, thanks to good planning by Harikrishnaji, our Priest, and Sumathi, our VP for religious events. This was followed by 45 days of Mandala Pooja and concluded with Kalyana Utsav for Sri Subramanya Swami and his Consorts, Sri Valli and Sri Devasena. This brought the community together for yet another Grand Celebration.

The installation was soon followed by nine days of Navarathri celebration. We set up "Golu" or dolls at the Temple to mark this event. The newly formed CABERI group from the Bengali Community celebrated Durga Pooja with much fanfare along with Dance, Drama and Music. Each day of the nine days was celebrated by different groups - educational, religious and cultural, bringing unity in diversity at the Temple.

More celebrations are on-going in the following months at the Temple. These include Diwali on October 22nd, Karthiga Poornima with Sri Satyanarayana Pooja on November 6th, Shiva Pooja on every Monday in the Karthigai Month, Cultural Diwali Celebration at Century High school on Nov 22nd, Karthigai Deepam on December 5th, and we will conclude the year with Vaikunta Ekadesi on December 31st. Once again we will begin the New Year with a Pooja on the evening of January 1st, 2015, to seek blessings for another great year. All are invited to come and join all the celebrations at the Temple.

On another note, Dr.Chari has been diligently working in getting the New Temple plans moving forward. The Board of Trustees and Board of Directors have agreed to cap the cost of the New Temple at 1.5 million and are in the process of getting plans ready for bidding. Every penny counts! So please give generously so we can realize our Dream of a New Temple. If anyone has skills in varied fields like Architecture, Civil Engineering, Electrical, Plumbing, etc., or just want to volunteer time, we welcome you to our Building team. Please contact Dr.Chari or me to be included.

Sincerely,

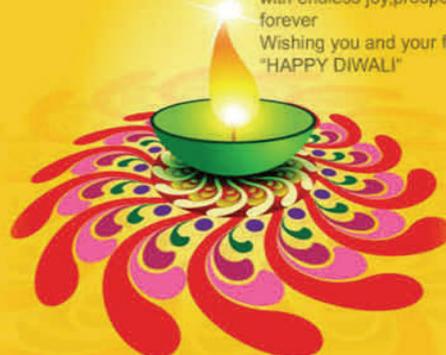
Santhi Subramaniam.



Happy Diwali

May millions of lamps illuminate your life
with endless joy,prosperity,health and wealth
forever

Wishing you and your family a very
"HAPPY DIWALI"





Hello and a warm welcome to all our readers! I hope you had a wonderful summer and have great stories to share.

We are back with a new issue of *Samarpan*. Our Temple recently concluded Navratri celebrations, which began with Diya Puja and concluded with Vijaya Dashami celebrations that included Ravan Dahan, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. Devi Puja honoring Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, and their different forms, was performed on all days of the festival with cultural programs being held on certain days. The big event that happened at the Temple over summer was the *Prana Pratistha* (Installation) of Lord Muruga or Karthikeya along with his consorts, Valli and Devasena. This installation was held in conjunction with Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations. The ceremonies were beautifully conducted by our Priest, Hari Krishnaji, along with priests who came to Rochester from the Minneapolis Temple.

Diwali is right around the corner. Lakshmi Puja will be performed at the Temple on Wednesday, October 22nd, followed by dinner and fireworks. There is also a Festival of Lights event on Saturday, November 8th, at the Kahler Grand Hotel followed by a Temple-sponsored Diwali cultural program at Century High School on November 22nd. Looking forward to seeing many of you at one or more of these events planned for you.

We would love to publish your stories and life experiences in future issues of *Samarpan*, in addition to other articles that you are interested in writing about. The articles should highlight mythology, history, spirituality, or arts of India, with the goal of promoting Indian Heritage and Culture. The articles must be original, have 1000 words or less, and should reference the sources. Submissions are invited from adults as well as children. Please send us your contributions by November 25th, 2014, to be considered for publication in the December newsletter. Also welcome are any comments or suggestions you may have to improve this newsletter. Our e-mail address is: editors@histemplemn.org.

The *Samarpan* team wishes all our readers a Very Happy Diwali and a prosperous year ahead!

Editorial Team:

- Forrest Dailey
- Bhaskar Iyengar
- Nisha Kurup
- Jyothi Muthyala
- Anantha Vijay Raghavan Santhanam
- Rajani Sohni
- Unni Krishnan (Design & Illustration)

“Regardless of the mythological explanation one prefers, what the festival of lights really stands for today is a reaffirmation of hope, a renewed commitment to friendship and goodwill, and a religiously sanctioned celebration of the simple - and some not so simple - joys of life.” - Times of India.

Diwali has become a national festival that is enjoyed by most Indians regardless of faith: Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

Hindus interpret the Diwali story based upon where they live:

- In North India they celebrate the story of King Rama's return to Ayodhya after he defeated Ravana by lighting rows of clay lamps.
- South India celebrates it as the day that Lord Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura.
- In western India the festival marks the day that Lord Vishnu, the Preserver (one of the main gods of the Hindu trinity) sent the demon King Bali to rule the nether world.

In all interpretations, one common thread rings true—the festival marks the victory of good over evil.

Non-Hindu communities have other reasons for celebrating the holiday:

- In Jainism, it marks the *nirvana* or spiritual awakening of Lord Mahavira in Oct. 15, 527 B.C.
- In Sikhism it marks the day that Guru Hargobind Ji, the Sixth Sikh Guru was freed from imprisonment.



<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/stories/peopleplaces/diwali/>

Priest's Column - Karthika Masam - The Auspicious Month

By Sri Hari Krishnaji

Karthika Masam is the most auspicious month among Hindus. It begins on the day after Deepavali. The lunar calendar is divided into two parts *Dakshinayana* and *Uttararyana*, and *Dakshinayana* is set aside for *Sadhana* (penance). *Sadhana* means a process by which one would get *moksha* or salvation. Out of all the months in *Dakshinayana*, Karthika Masam is best suited for *Sadhana*. Any austerity, be it a pooja, charity, penance etc. performed during the Karthika Masam is more meritorious than one performed on ordinary days.

Cultural Beliefs:

In this Month, Lord Shiva and Maha Vishnu are worshipped. People during this month observe strict rituals. The daily activities start early in the morning by taking a bath with cold water, going to temple, lighting deepam or lamps, fasting and *Saligrama* (Symbol of Lord Vishnu) pooja. The most auspicious days in this month are Mondays, and Pournami, which is very important to Lord Shiva. As per the puranas it is believed that by performing the Karthika Masam Vratam we can ward off the past karmas and the sins committed. Lighting Lamps with ghee during sunrise and sunset brings prosperity, wealth, and health into our lives. It also burns the material desires in between our birth and death.

Also, the Tulasi plant is worshiped daily by lighting a deepam during this month. There is story behind Tulasi who came as a sister of Goddess Lakshmi when the Ocean of milk was churned. Tulasi wanted to marry Lord Vishnu but Lakshmi did not like this and cursed her to become a plant. But Lord Vishnu took pity and to fulfil her wish he gave a boon that when he is in form of *Saligrama*, Tulasi will be close to him. On Kartika Shukla Dwadashi, the Tulasi plant is decorated and worshipped.

Interesting Facts:

Mythology says, Lord Vishnu goes to sleep on *Ashadha Suddha Ekadashi* and wakes-up on *Karthika Suddha Ekadashi*.

Lord Shiva protected the world by killing Tripurasura demons on Karthika Pournami.

Ganga (Goddess of river Ganges) enters in to all rivers, canals, ponds and wells and makes them as pious as Ganga.

Ayyappa Deeksha is also taken during this month and is continued up to Makara Sankranthi.

Any austerity performed during the month of Karthika would help the sadhakas to free themselves from all sins and leads them towards moksha.

Lighting of Diya or Lighting a Lamp

During Karthika Masam, it is considered auspicious to light a diya. Diyas are lit and placed in front of Tulasi plant and near the main entrance of the house before Sun rise, and just before Sun set. Temples light the Diya and bring the diya to the top of the Dhvajasthambam in the temple and tie it there on Karthika Pournami. This diya is called as *Akaasa Deepam*. On Karthika Pournami, the whole house is decorated with diyas. Some people use diyas made of rice flour or Gooseberry to light deepam and recite each chapter in Karthika puranam daily for 30 days. Lighting deepam in Lord Shiva's temple is very beneficial.

Bathing in River or Nadi Snamam

Another important significance is bathing in rivers during Karthika Masam. Also, *Sharad Rithu* is known for its special Moon light. During the Aswayuja Masam (month that falls in the season of Sharad Rithu), the rivers would absorb the energy from Moon and by bathing in the river during Karthika Masam one can absorb this energy from the river.

Karthika Somavara Vratam

The most important aspect of Karthika masam is hearing *Karthika puranam* while observing the *Karthika somavaara vratam*. People get up at Brahma Muhurtha time. They take a bath within the river or sea, if possible, or take a bath at home before sunrise, perform the Rudra Abhishekam by chanting the Rudra Namakam Chamakam, listen to Karthika Puranam and then break their fast at night.

From our priest Harikrishna ji and the Temple Board we would like to invite all devotees on this auspicious month of Karthika to participate in the various events performed in the temple. On Mondays we will have Rudra Abhishekam from 7-8am and special Alankaram. On the auspicious Karthika Pournami we will have Saamuhika Satyanarayana Vratam.

For more details on all religious updates please subscribe to the temple's mailing list.

OM NAMA SHIVAYA.... HARA HARA MAHA DEVA.... SHAMBHO SHANKARA....

**Gathered from various sources like: Elderly speeches, my Guruji's teachings and

<http://theancientindia.blogspot.com/2012/11/karthika-masam-auspicious-month.html>



My Trip to India

By Nandini Iyer

I went to India on June 8, 2014, for three weeks with my family. We flew into Mumbai and stayed in a hotel for one night. Then in the morning we went to Mumbai airport. We were going to Coimbatore to meet my grandparents. When we got off the plane I was excited to see my grandparents. When I saw them I ran and gave them a big hug. They were excited to see me too. When we were walking out of the airport and to the car I was asking if we would have fun. My grandma said we would have lots of fun. When we got to the house I saw that there was a badminton court.

We stayed in Coimbatore for a couple days and then left for a trip to Kerala. We traveled in a car to Kochi. We spent a night there and the next day went to Kovalam beach. We stayed at a beachside resort. We swam in the pool but we couldn't swim on the beach as the sea was very rough due to the monsoons in Kerala. The next day we traveled to Poovar Lake and rode on a boat. We went down the river and saw how the river joined the sea. On the way back we traveled through a mangrove forest where there were trees full of poisonous mangoes. Then we traveled to Trivandrum and we went into the *Anantha Padmanabhaswami* temple.



The next day, we traveled to the southern most tip of India, Kanyakumari. We stayed at a beachside resort there as well. I saw the morning sunrise. It was the most beautiful sight. I also had a chance to see the three major oceans of India in one place. Kanyakumari is the point where all the major oceans of India, the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean join together and it is called the *Triveni Sangam*. We rode on a boat to the *Vivekananda* Rock Memorial and the statue of *Tiruvalluvar* which is in the middle of the ocean. The next morning we drove to Alleppey. We also saw a huge Hanuman statue in *Suchindrum*. We then went on a houseboat ride in the backwaters of Kerala. The houseboat was luxurious. We ate lunch and watched a movie on the boat.



Then we drove to *Kalady*, the birthplace of *Sri Adi Shankaracharya*. My brother Varun was going to have his *Upanayanam* ceremony in *Kalady*. We stayed there for three days. I met my Aunt, Uncle and my cousin Sachit, who live in Cairo, Egypt. I hadn't seen them for four years. I also met a lot of other aunts, uncles, cousins and other relatives whom I hadn't met before. The first

ritual before the *Upanayanam* ceremony was the *Sumangali Prarthana*. It is a ladies/girls ceremony where we seek the blessings of all our female ancestors. We ate on banana leaves and we got to eat before the boys. The next day was the *Nandi* ceremony, which was a function for our male ancestors. The third day was the *Upanayanam* function. It was the day Varun got his sacred thread or the **Poonal**. We all had feast on all 3 days. The next day we drove to Coimbatore and stayed there for one more week and then returned to Rochester on June 30th. It was a fun and exciting trip for me that I will remember for a long time.



Old Vedanta Temple

By Forrest Dailey



My wife and I traveled to San Francisco this summer. While there, I visited the site of Old Vedanta Temple on Webster Street. It is one of the few places that claim the distinction as the "oldest Hindu Temple in The United States." Built in 1906, though not a "traditional" styled temple, it is three quarters of a century older than Sri Venkateshwara Temple in Pittsburgh, the oldest "traditional" temple in the U.S.

Old Vedanta Temple was not built by Shilpas trained in the *Vastu Shastra*, but its domes apparently mimic the style of various temples in India, and give a nod to Christianity and Islam. Otherwise the only visual I identified which were of any particular Hindu significance was a small bit of Devanagari script which may read "Namoh Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya," an architectural obeisance to Swami Vivekananda's guruji.

At the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda delivered a timeless address. Some of its content was alien to the westerners' world view, yet Swami-ji spoke with the stark, authoritative clarity of truth. Later, in San Francisco, Swami Vivekananda founded the Vedanta Society, a community of seekers who were just as open to Eastern thought as one tends to find there today. Though Swami Vivekananda died in 1902, the Society soon made the temple a reality.

Old Vedanta Temple is closed to visitors now, but being able to see the walls built by the Vedanta Society's conviction to do so, was a happy moment for me. I told my wife and our friend "We are sitting on the site of the beginning of Hinduism in America!" There definitely had been Hindus in America before 1906, but no permanent temple had been constructed before Old Vedanta Temple. In years to come, Hindu communities across America developed and built temples of their own.

I won't go so far as to say that we would not have the Hindu Samaj Temple were it not for the Vedanta Society. But it had to start somewhere. And I was grateful for the opportunity to give Pranams to Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna where it all did begin.



Destination Karaoke Center

By Anil Dhumne



Do you remember those nostalgic, haunting songs you used to listen to on the radio when you were growing up in India? Do you sing when you are alone? Are you afraid of singing in public? If you answered yes to any of these questions, keep on reading - you are going to find this article very interesting - or should I say - music to your ears?

It's not a secret anymore that Rochester is going to be DMC - Destination Medical Center, but our city has another secret that not many people know. A few months ago, some Indian music lovers started an interesting fun initiative in the city called DKC - Destination Karaoke Center.

Our karaoke events take place at 7:00 pm on the second Friday of each month at Creative Salon in downtown Rochester. These fun-filled evening are free events.

Since we started these events, we are amazed to discover the hidden musical talents of people in the community. We have known some of them for years, but didn't know they were so interested in music and passionate about singing. None of us is a professional singer, but one thing common to all of us is that we are interested in singing and we support and encourage others who like to sing. Some of us used to sing in the privacy of our homes or in the shower, but we were afraid to sing in front of people, even if they were a small group of friends. After getting support and encouragement from others, we have overcome the fear and have brought ourselves to singing in front of people.

On the day of event - second Friday of each month - we bring our technology - sound mixer, microphones, speakers, cables and a laptop to the event. Thanks to the internet, we don't need any musical instruments as we have karaoke music and lyrics on www.meragana.com. Beauty of this site is that it has hundreds of songs in Hindi as well as other Indian languages. People wanting to sing songs come up on stage and we play songs of their choice on the laptop. The singer sees the lyrics on the screen and sings, as a bouncing ball jumps from word to word, line by line guiding the singer as the song goes on. Having a computer-assisted guidance while singing helps incredibly as it takes the guesswork of when to sing and remembering the lyrics.



In every event, participants surprise others when they sing songs that others love and still remember dearly. You may hear renditions of Talat Mehmood, Salma Agha or S.P. Balasubramaniam. Each event is unique with the song selection. Who knows, when you attend you might hear a surprising mix of S.D. Burman, Anuradha Paudwal and Shreya Ghoshal!

You don't need any prior singing experience to participate in these events. You simply need to bring your desire to sing. Once you sing your first song, you will be amazed to know that it isn't that hard. Besides singing and enjoying listening to others sing, these events are a great platform to meet people and socialize. The events also give us a break from our routine and help reduce our day to day stress.

We would like to invite you to attend these events on behalf of DKC. We are sure that once you attend, you will want to keep coming. If you would like to know more about DKC, please feel free to contact us at anildhumne@gmail.com or anudhumne@gmail.com.



Karwa Chauth

Shailaza Singh



Karwa Chauth is a festival with origins mostly in the Northern and Western Indian States - Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand among others. It is observed during the Hindu month of Kartik (the fourth day of the month, hence the name "Chauth"). The popularity of this festival has spread and it is now celebrated by communities all over India. Karwa Chauth is considered one of the most auspicious rituals for Indian married women, who pray for the long life of their husband. As is the custom in Hinduism and other religions, fasting is considered as praying to God. Indian women on this day fast for their husband's long life and well-being.

There are several beliefs behind the origin of this festival. Legend has it that this was the time of the year when the river Indus would be subsidizing after the monsoons. The dry rivers would force the menfolk to travel for warfare and trading. Womenfolk would gather to pray for their husbands' long life and well-being. Another story behind the origin of this festival is that in olden days the girls would get married when they were teenagers and would be sent to their in-law's place. In order for the girls to get familiarized and make them feel at home, all the brides would get together to meet and talk. This created a bonding and friendship between the girls. As time passed, since their husband was the main reason for their bonding, they all started praying together for their husband's well-being.

Today, Karwa Chauth is celebrated on a huge scale. The Hindi film industry has popularized and glamorized the festival a lot more. Women start their fast in the dawn and gather in the evening with their "thalis" (decorated tray or plate) which has the lighted karwa (earthen oil pot), sweets and savories. The ladies dress up in various shades of red, orange, and other bridal colors, wear gold jewelry, with henna painted on their hands. In the evening they all meet in a community place and sit in a circle. They listen to the story about the tradition and circle the thalis among themselves. They end their fast after looking at the moon, usually its reflection in a vessel filled with water or through a sieve. Water is first offered to the moon and then the husband gives water and the first morsel of the day to his wife breaking her day-long fast.

Whatever history has to say, Karwa Chauth is celebrated with great festivity and is considered as a very auspicious occasion for married women. This festival reinforces the bond of love between husband and wife and hence, is special for every married individual.

Citations: Wikipedia, Spiritual significance networks.



Karwa Chauth celebrations at the temple.

Short Story: TRAVELS OF SRI MUNI - 2**By Aanmeehan**

Sri Muni and his disciple, Seedan, go to different places and meet people. Sri Muni is a revered Sadhu – people come and seek his blessings and seek his advice. Once, they are in a village when a man comes to visit the Muni.

Man: (With reverence) – Namaskaram.
Sri Muni: Welcome. Who are you and how can I help?
Man: I am a simple man. A family man with children. Due to bad company I have this bad habit of drinking. I am unable to give up this habit. Please help me.
Sri Muni: Sorry to hear that. Can you please tell me who your friends are?
Man: I don't have many friends. I have some drinking buddies, some poker buddies, and I have some interest in music, so a music teacher is also one of my friends.
Sri Muni: So, here is a suggestion. Start playing poker and see if you like it.
Man: Thank you. I will definitely try poker. (Man leaves).



After a few days the same Man comes back to visit Sri Muni.

Man: (With reverence) – Namaskaram.
Sri Muni: Welcome. How are you doing? Hope all is well.
Man: I am better. Sometimes I drink, and sometimes I am playing poker. Still am unable to get out of this mess.
Sri Muni: Ok - here is a suggestion. Try spending more time with the musician, and see if you can learn to sing. This can help you.
Man: Thank you. I like music. I will try learning to sing. (Man leaves).

After a few days the same Man comes back, humming a song, to visit Sri Muni.

Man: (With reverence) – Namaskaram.
Sri Muni: Welcome. How are you? Hope all is well.
Man: I feel good. I am spending a lot of time with my musician friend. Don't feel like drinking or playing poker. Feel cured. Hope I can keep this up.
Sri Muni: Good to hear this. Be well. (Sri Muni blesses the man)
Man: Thank you. (Man leaves happy and cured).

At this point the disciple, Seedan,,interjects.

Seedan: Dear Guru. I do not understand. How did he get rid of his bad habit?
Sri Muni: Just like a doctor uses an antidote (an unnecessary ingredient) to cure/negate a poison, and after it is effective, provides nutrients and fluids to help gain strength – so also in order to get rid of one habit, you need to replace it with another one, then a harmless one, and then on to a good habit.

This is the principle presented in Yoga Vashishta. Yoga Vashishta is the conversations between Sage Vashishta (great enlightened soul) and Rama (a young knowledge seeker). It is the second largest Sanskrit text – next to Mahabharatha. It is said to contain the principles of the human mind and how to understand its complexity to lead to enlightenment.

Note by Bhaskar Iyengar: This is a short story written by my Dad. I translated it from Tamil. His pen name is Aanmeehan.



Sree Padmanabha Temple (contd)–

By Anu Nair



On November 20, 2013, the historic Murajapam Festival commenced at the Sree Padmanabha Temple. Observed once in six years, Murajapam involves the chanting of the Holy Vedas for fifty six days. This time the rituals were attended by one hundred and ninety six priests who chanted the Vedas, Vishnusahasranam and Sooktams. The grand finale was the Lakshadeepam when the temple and premises were decorated by more than one lakh oil lamps. It was a memorable night and an unforgettable sight – the whole population of Thiruvananthapuram congregated around the temple to pay homage to their deity and the royal family.

The Royals came with heavy hearts – things have not been going well for them. Sree Uthradam Tirunal Marthanda Varma passed away on December 16, 2013 at the age of ninety one. The new head of the royal family is his nephew, Sree Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma.

In April 2013, Mr. Gopal Subramaniam was appointed by the Supreme Court as amicus-curiae. He submitted his report in April 2014 in which he stated that there were serious lapses in the management of the temple and the treasure. The 575-page report said that there was no proper accounting of public donations received or records of expenses or assets. He discovered a “gold sheeting machine” whose ownership or purpose was never satisfactorily explained. He also met a jeweler who admitted taking 17 kg of gold from the temple.

In the light of these findings the Supreme Court went ahead and placed a restraint on the Head of the royal family from participating in the day-to-day affairs of the temple. The temple is now under the administration of a five member panel headed by Additional District and Sessions Judge K.P.Indira. The other members of the panel include the Tantri (High Priest) and Nambi (Chief Priest).

The court also appointed former Comptroller and Auditor, General Vinod Rai, to head an expert team to do an audit of the temple wealth.

In his preliminary status report, Rai alleges that the vault B, which the royal family has insisted that it be kept locked to preserve the sanctity of the temple, was opened seven times in recent decades!



The report states that twice in 1990 and five times in 2002, silver ingots were removed from the vault, while some gold vessels were deposited but later removed!

In the light of Rai’s findings, it seems inevitable that the vault B will be opened and inventoried – there is fierce speculation over what it will reveal. Historical newspaper accounts indicate that Travancore officials took money from the temple during the Depression in 1931. Also, the lawyer for the devotees, Mr. Padmanabhan, says that the vault was opened far more often than has been officially recorded.

Meanwhile Princess Gauri Parvathi Bayi, the niece of the last Maharaja and the sister of the current Titular head, bemoans that all the family’s money is going towards lawyer’s fees to fight the battle over the temple. She speaks of the family’s anguish that the scathing report of the amicus curiae came out just months after the death of her

Uncle, who never had a chance to respond to the allegations. She says that the royal family will keep fighting for the restoration of their custodianship of the temple they had faithfully served for centuries. In an interview given to Ms. Amy Kazmin of the Financial Times, she says: “We have no claim even to one little coin within the temple. We are saying it all belongs to the Deity and Him only. We are not fighting to gain control of the riches – not at all. We want our good name vindicated. This is our life. It is not about possessions. We are fighting for our life.”

References:

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Amy Kazmin, The Temple of Treasure, Financial Times Wealth Magazine, September 2014, page 25



Love your Greens -- Pick your Salad recipe

By Neeta Pai

How do you get your children to eat vegetables? Some of us are lucky with children who like cooked vegetables. Some absolutely love to eat freshly picked home grown tomatoes, cucumbers, fava beans and string beans like my granddaughter. The problem is when mothers have to hide vegetables in pasta or curry. Most children love a dipping sauce along with cooked or raw vegetables. There are many varieties available in the market. But we will learn how to make basic salad dressings and modify them to your taste.

Basic Vinaigrette: Contains vinegar and oil seasoned with salt and pepper. To call it a salad dressing, one may add a tablespoon of mustard from any of the brands such as Dijon, Stone-ground, or spicy. If you like it a little sweet and tart, squeeze in lime or lemon juice and maple syrup or honey. For a variation, use balsamic, red wine or any other vinegar. For the health conscious, use cold pressed, organic olive oil. If your children like a fruity flavor, use raspberries, strawberries, or mandarin oranges instead of lemon juice.

Basic vinaigrette:

¼ cup vinegar of your choice

1 tbsp. mustard of your choice

Salt and Pepper to taste

½ to ¾ cup of Olive oil. Whip together until well mixed. This need not be refrigerated.

The basic recipe can be modified in many ways. Experiment with Indian spices like roasted, coarsely ground *cumin* seeds, *carom* seeds, *turmeric powder*, ground *garam masala*, *sambar* powder or *chaat* powder.

To make Italian vinaigrette, add a teaspoon of Italian spice mix to the above basic recipe or make your own mix with dried parsley flakes, oregano, basil, fresh ground pepper and minced garlic or garlic salt (Fresh herbs are okay and taste delicious. But the salad dressing must be refrigerated and will not last more than 3-5 days). A few sprinkles of Parmesan-Romano cheese mix will render an aromatic taste.

Many children love French dressing. To the above Italian salad dressing recipe, simply add ¼ - 1/3 cup of ketchup, juice of 1 lime, and ½ cup of onion flakes (fresh chopped onion is also useable) and blend together in a mixer. Instead of Parmesan- Romano cheese, use blue cheese. You will also have to use sugar or sweetener. No salt will be necessary since tomato ketchup already has salt. Not a healthy choice for a salad dressing.

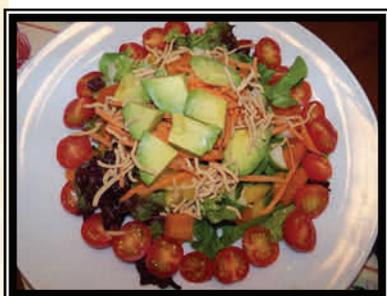
Hidden Valley style dressing: 1/2 cup buttermilk, 1/2 cup vegan mayonnaise OR Greek yogurt or cream cheese, 1/2 tsp onion flakes, 1/4 tsp onion powder, 1 tsp parsley flakes, ½ tsp garlic flakes and ¼ tsp garlic powder, ¼ tsp celery salt, ¼ tsp of sage and 1 sprinkle of fresh ground pepper. Whip together until well blended, refrigerate one hour before serving. Lasts a few days if refrigerated.

Greek dressing: 1/2 cup of white vinegar, 3 tbsps. of Tahini (Ground sesame seeds), ¼ - 3/4 cup of olive oil, ¼ cup of Maple syrup, Greek spice mix – or make your own with ¾-1 tsp of Oregano, ¼ tsp each of marjoram, sage, and thyme. Garlic powder (optional), Salt to taste, Fresh ground pepper corns to taste. Mix together and serve. Lasts a long time in the refrigerator.

Basic Indian salad dressing: Many of my friends prepare salad dressing with orange juice, a tiny amount of oil and *chaat masala*. Over the years, I have added a little bit of yogurt instead of oil to thicken it and expanded it with chopped fresh cilantro or fresh mint leaves for a refreshing flavor.

Here is one of my favorite recipes that is a healthy version of an Indian salad dressing: Blend together ½ cup of yogurt, ½ fresh mango, salt, green chili to taste and fresh ginger (optional). Remove from the blender and toss with ½ cup of finely chopped fresh green *coriander* leaves (cilantro). Serve over salad.

Next comes the important question of what vegetables and in which combination to use for a salad. Many of us commonly add tomatoes, cucumber and radish for a salad in India. In the United States, there are more options that make salads mouthwatering and healthy.



Love your Greens -- Pick your Salad recipe ..contd

By Neeta Pai

The best way to decide would be to choose one of these leaves or leaf mixes for ½ to ¾ of your salad: Mesclun greens, baby spring mix with spinach, arugula, kale, Swiss chard, etc. (field greens); red and green leaf lettuce, Romaine lettuce, Boston (butter) head, or Bibb lettuce, organic being the best. If you are not making a specific salad like Waldorf, Caesar, Cobb salad, Cole slaw pre-set vegetables, any vegetables of your choice will work fine for the rest of the salad.

The second group of vegetables could be cucumber sliced or cut into cubes, grape or cherry tomatoes, local from the farmers market being the best tasting variety, red and yellow pepper slivers, chopped green or purple cabbage, avocado cubes, shredded carrots, red or white radish and even Indian radish. If you enjoy raw broccoli and raw cauliflower, snow pea pods, fresh peas from the pod or baby beans, add them. Involve your kids in the process to choose the vegetables, and to prepare the salad.

Finally everyone's favorite for garnish is from this third group: Nuts such as walnuts, pecans, cashews, almonds, raw being the best or seeds like sunflower, pepitas and pine nuts or roasted soy beans for that crunch in the bite. If you prefer Indian taste, feel free to sprinkle *fried mung dal* or *chana dal*. Raisins or craisins for sweetness and variety of cheeses freshly shredded are good additions. If you enjoy fresh fruit, pineapple, berries, mandarin orange slices or apple pieces taste really good. To enhance the beauty of the salad and gain health benefits, broccoli, pea sprouts or alfalfa sprouts can be used to top the salad. Another option would be sprouted raw lentils or mung beans.

For added protein, cooked chick peas or red and black kidney beans work well. Canned beans may also be used. Cheeses like feta for Greek salad prepared with romaine lettuce will enhance the taste. Add fresh parmesan, blue cheese or cheddar crumbles to suit your taste. A few olives added along with red onion slices and pepperoncini give that spicy, salty bite to the salad.

To prepare salad for a meal, a slice of marinated and pan fried tofu or "*paneer*" served warm will be quite satisfying and nutritionally sound. Go green, let your imagination loose, let salad be dinner. Enjoy the break from the daily grind of cooking!

Azhagan Murugan

By Bhaskar Iyengar



It was in the month of June. The year 1992. And the place was Palani (or Pazhani) in South India. Newly married, my wife, Savitha, and I, were on a visit to this popular temple of Murugan. It was my first time visiting this temple.

And being the impatient type, I had all the reasons to complain. It was hot – a balmy 40 degrees Celsius. Tremendous crowd. We waited – felt like forever – for one of the winches to take us up to the hilltop (the other one was out of order). And of course many were cutting in to the line to get ahead of the crowd. We had got up early and had traveled about 4 hours to reach this place. We needed to get back to catch our connecting bus that evening. I was anxious, nervous, irritated and *hungry*.

All the while Savitha kept asking me to be patient and making sure that I wasn't getting riled up. Finally the crowd moved; we got on to the winch; reached the hill top around noon. And - the temple was closed! It was that time of the day for *Abhishekam* and *Alankaaram*. We were told that the temple would open again at 1 pm. Not knowing what to do, we enquired at a counter. We were told to get in the line anyway and wait. So we did. Another long wait in the sweltering heat.

Finally, we were allowed inside the temple. Still crowded, sweating, balancing so you won't fall down, and waiting! This time though there was nice live divine music. A bit of activity and then suddenly the curtains moved. And lo and behold the most beautiful sight you can imagine! Through the throngs of heads of people - you see the decorated Lord and his consorts. A feeling of seeing the God in person. And the mesmerizing beauty! The line moved quickly and within few minutes we were out with the Prasadam (Vibhooti). The Darshan lasted only a few minutes – but filled us with satisfaction and inner happiness.

When we got out we were told that the winches were not running. And it was raining. I mean it was pouring cats and dogs. In order to catch the first trip on the winch, Savitha and I, ran to the winch. I was in the rain for about 2 minutes, but was fully drenched. The rain water was cold – washing away all the discomfort and anxiety I had all day. That rain – out of nowhere – was God given. It was comforting to the mind and cleansing to the soul.

Together with the exquisite Darshan and the unexpected cold shower – this happens to be the most exhilarating experience I have ever had. You ask me to go to Palani or any of the mountain tops where there is a Murugan temple, I am ready. Not that I will not complain or grumble. That is me. But I will always look forward to this divine blessing. I reminisce this experience all the time.

Murugan is called by many names. He is also referred to as Azhagan – or the Beautiful one. In mythology, he is the second son of Shiva and Paarvathi. Shanmugan (Murugan) is extensively worshipped in South India, primarily in Tamil speaking regions. There are six abodes for Murugan (Thiruchendur, SwamiMalai, Pazhamudircholai, Thiruparankundram, ThiruthaNi and Pazhani). Thaipooosam festival is celebrated with Kaavadi Aattam – a dance performed with Kaavadi (flower pots) carried on the shoulder – symbolizing the burdens carried by humans – finally releasing them at the abode of Guhan (Murugan).

Fortunate are we who had the privilege to witness the Sthapana of Skanda (Murugan) at our Temple, and to have a long uninterrupted Darshan of this beautiful diety – decorated with so much love and affection by our own HariKrishna Ji.

Life is hard and has its ups and down. But after a visit to the temple and a look at the Benevolent Lord - we are back in peace, and love, and happiness – as if showered with rain (HIS abundant blessing).





Quiz Mahabharata Trivia

By Nisha Kurup

1. *Karna* is also known as:

- a. Gangeya b. Surya c. Radheya d. Kavacha

2. Who is the sage who gave *Kunti* the boon that she could beget a son through the *Devas* whenever she wished for one?

- a. Vyasa b. Durvasa c. Valmiki d. Suka

3. Name of the sister of the *Kauravas*.

- a. Dundubi b. Ambalika c. Dushala d. Drupadi

4. Who took the oath to kill *Bheeshma* in her next birth?

- a. Amba b. Satyawati c. Ambalika d. Ambika

5. When *Vichitraveerya* died who gave an heir to the *Kuru* clan?

- a. Sukacharya b. Sukracharya c. Durvasa d. Veda Vyas

6. What is name of the childhood friend and a prominent King, who insulted *Drona* when he approached the King for financial help?

- a. Drupada b. Drishtadyumna c. Ashwathama d. Jarasandha

7. What is the weakness of the eldest *Pandava*, *Yudhishtira*?

- a. Racing b. wrestling c. Archery d. Gambling

8. What is the name of the *Apsara* who wanted to marry *Arjuna* when he was in *Indraloka*?

- a. Ramba b. Urvashi c. Tilothama d. Draupadi

9. The capital city of *Paanchala* is

- a. Kamapilya b. Ayodhya c. Hasthinapura d. Indraprastha

10. Who were the first, second, third and fourth commander in chiefs of the *Kaurava* army?

- a. Duryodhana, Bheeshma, Karna, Ashwathama
b. Drona, Karna, Bheeshma, Duryodhana
c. Bheeshma, Drona, Karna, Ashwathama
d. Bheeshma, Drona, Karna, Aswathama



If you would like to contribute to this column please email

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with the title "Food for Thought". Contributions should reach 45 days in advance of the issue being published.

The first correct respondent will receive a movie gift card.

