



Samarpan

an offering....

Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota

March-April 2016

President's Note

Namaste to All!

We have begun this year with good spirits and great expectations. The Temple board has been actively engaged in discussions with the architect, construction engineer and the banks to confirm plans for the construction of our new Temple. We are working on the sanction of loans to start building in Spring 2016. We are also working towards getting documents ready for interest free loans to fund our down payment to the banks. The hope is to have the ground breaking ceremony this Spring, begin construction right away and inaugurate the New Temple in Fall 2016.

The cost of the first phase is \$1.5 million. This pays for the building. The cost does not include kitchen equipment, or office equipment like computers, printers, audio/video systems that we will need, as well as furniture that would convert the rooms into classrooms. We are looking for individuals, groups or organizations for sponsoring these items. Hence I ask all of you to volunteer time, energy or money to make this possible. Please pass this message to your friends, groups or organizations and help us realize our dream of a New Temple.

On a religious front, the temple is busy with 7 monthly poojas, 12 annual poojas and also private poojas sponsored by devotees both in the Temple and at their homes. We also have other activities going on at the Temple which keeps it busy and reminds us that we need more space to meet the needs of the ever growing Indian Community.

With your support we hope to realize our goal of celebration Diwali 2016 at our New Temple!

Thank you for your support.

Santhi Subramaniam

President, Hindu Samaj Temple.



Editor's Note

By Rajani Sohni

Hello Readers:

Welcome to our first Samarpan issue in 2016. Hope the start to the New Year has been great for everybody. Seems like Spring is already here and is early this year!

The Temple has been actively engaging in a number of religious and cultural events over the past several months. We are busier than ever now with the plans for starting construction on the new Temple coming to fruition this Spring. We are rapidly outgrowing the space at our current Temple as was evident in the Maha Shiv Ratri celebrations on March 7th, and the scheduling conflicts we have with the different groups wanting to use the Temple premises for classes and events.

ASHA, the service wing of the Temple, has been bringing interesting discussions to the community that is spreading awareness of the issues facing the Rochester community at large and opportunities to volunteer in different areas. Plans are underway to branch out the cultural activities into a separate cultural wing that will be affiliated with the Temple. Some of you may receive an invitation to participate in brain-storming sessions on this topic over the next several weeks. The forum is open to anybody who is interested. Details about this will be coming out soon.

We have not published an issue of *Samarpan* for a long time and we have a good collection of articles in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading them. We are always looking for articles to publish in our community newsletter and we welcome submissions from all of you, children as well as adults. Please email your submissions to editors@histemplemn.org for publication in one of our future issues of *Samarpan*.

Best Wishes from the *Samarpan* Team.

Forrest Dailey, Jyothi Muthyala, Anantha Vijay Raghavan Santhanam

Rajani Sohni, Bhaskar Iyengar, Nisha Kurup

Unni Krishnan (Design & Illustration)



Priest's Corner - Shodasa Upachaara (Nitya/Daily) Pooja

By Sri Hari Krishnaji

Shodasa Upachaara means 16 kinds of hospitality duties. If a guest visited our house, what do we not do to be a good host. We would invite them in first, make arrangements for them to freshen up, offer beverages to drink and we make sure they are seated comfortably. After they are settled in, we may show them to a relaxing shower and serve them a delicious meal. A meal is never complete without a heart filling dessert. Later we spend quality time chatting with them about everything starting from the weather patterns to personal lives. And as the moment comes to bid farewell to the guest, we walk them to the door with a heavy heart.

We should consider God as our guest too. Imagine if we could do so much to please a guest, how should we host God? So, if God is our guest the steps that explain what to do and how to do them are called "*Shodasa Upachaara Pooja*". But extra efforts should be made when serving God as He is the one who gives us the strength to do so and has the ability to bless us with the final goal of humankind- Salvation.

Aavahanam - Invite and invoke

Aasanam - Offering a seat

Paadhyam - Offer water to wash their hand and feet

Arghyam - Religious water offering to God

Aachamaneeyam - Refreshment

Snanam - Bath

Vastram - Offer clothing

Yagnyopaveetham - Offer holy thread that priest wears

Sandal wood - Offer relaxing sandal wood paste

Pushpam - Offer scented flowers

Dhoopam - Incense sticks

Deepam - Light lamps

Naivedyam - Offer delicious food

Taambulam - Traditional offering of betel nuts and betel leaves after offering food

Namaskaaram - Bow down with devotion

Pradakshina - Circumambulation

We follow these steps while offering prayer to show our love and devotion to the Almighty. As every household tries to follow these simple steps and encourages our younger generations by explaining the importance of religious rituals, may all our homes be blessed with abundant love and prosperity. And when such prayers are offered at the Temple, it brings immense blessings to all of mankind.



Exploring Hinduism

By Ben Mandler



To fully qualify my multicultural experience I believe it is important to first explain my personal background. I am a 27 year-old white man. My hometown, high school, and undergraduate university were all predominantly white. Consequently, my friends are also mostly white. For the first 22 years of my life it's safe to say that the people surrounding me have been at least 95% if not 99% white.

When I was 22 years old I was hired by the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. My work unit has offered more diversity. About 40% of my team members are not white, most of who come from Southeast Asia. My experience with meeting people from different backgrounds both personally and professionally over the past few years has been positive and has led to many more

interesting experiences and conversations.

I was raised Catholic. My parents both come from Catholic families. My siblings and I grew up attending mass every Sunday, going to religion classes, partaking in all of the Catholic traditions, and following all of the views of the Catholic Church. From my upbringing I am very knowledgeable about Catholicism. In recent years I've also tried to familiarize myself with other religions to gain an understanding and appreciation.

What I was looking for in a multicultural experience was something where I would be a racial minority since I've had an overwhelmingly white experience for a good portion of my life. I've also never been to a non-Christian ceremony or place of worship.

Choosing a Multicultural Experience

The location that I chose to attend was the Hindu Samaj Temple in Rochester, Minnesota. I had found the temple website and saw that they had temple hours nightly which was convenient. It was an intimidating concept to go by myself though. I would be completely out of my element and I would be fearful of offending someone at a religious event. At work I brought up cultural events to my team lead, Rajani, to see if she could help me with choosing one. She is from India and an active community member so I thought that she would be an excellent resource. When I mentioned the Hindu temple she said that she was actually on the board at the temple, could get me access at any time, and would actually go with me if I wanted.

Going to the temple with Rajani seemed like a perfect opportunity for a cultural event. I would certainly be a racial minority and it would be a religious ceremony like I'd never experienced. Rajani would be able to provide commentary so I would not just be a passive observer. Another benefit with choosing the Hindu temple is that a handful of my coworkers also attend which would give me a better insight into their culture. I was very lucky to have the opportunity so I accepted her offer to meet me there one evening during temple hours.

My Multicultural Experience

Rajani gave me a bit of info about what I could expect at the temple, but I was still very unsure about what would happen. I was actually pretty nervous prior to the experience. I know Rajani fairly well and was confident that I would be well-guided with her there, but it was still the first time I'd had palpable nerves in a long time. I would guess that the nervousness stemmed from potentially offending someone or being viewed as if I didn't belong.

I arrived at the temple before Rajani. The front door went directly into a coat room. I removed my shoes there as Rajani instructed me I should. I could hear the priest speaking in Sanskrit, playing music, and ringing bells in the main temple area, but I stayed in the coat room. I was afraid to go anywhere else by myself since I didn't know what I would find. I actually felt myself shrinking into the corner and avoiding eye contact from anyone who passed through. It was pretty intimidating to me to be in a place with so much unknown.

I was much more at ease once Rajani arrived. She took me into the main temple area without hesitation and I could see what was causing me so much fear. The priest was performing a ritual at the far corner of the room as some people watched and participated. The scene was hardly intimidating once I was inside the room. I was a bit embarrassed with myself for being so afraid. I think that it helped quite a bit that with Rajani there I suddenly had an identity: as her guest. Having this identity may not have mattered much to the others in the temple but it was very important for my own comfort.



Exploring Hinduism

By Ben Mandler

Rajani spent plenty of time explaining everything she could about Hinduism. I spoke with a handful of other people who all seemed welcoming and willing to discuss Hinduism. I met the priest toward the end of his ritual. The end of the ritual was pretty interactive. First he offered a flame to each of the individuals who then made a hand motion as if the flame was washing over their head. This signifies the removal of ignorance and acceptance of knowledge. They then spun clockwise three times to remove evil energy. I was nearby at this time and I was very reluctant to participate because I didn't know exactly what to do or the significance. The priest must have picked up on my body language because he didn't offer the flame to me, which is the level of participation that I was aiming for. Next the priest offered a milky liquid into the hands of the participants. This time he did ask whether I would like to try it. I declined at first, but then changed my mind when he asked if I was sure. I held my hands to receive the liquid but I did it incorrectly at first. I held both hands stacked with palms up with my left hand on top. The priest requested that I put my right hand on top, the cleaner of the two hands. The reason that I defaulted to my left hand on top is that when receiving communion in Catholicism the proper reception is to put the left hand on top, then reach over to the top with the right hand to pick up the bread and place it in the mouth.



The liquid was a mixture of yogurt, honey, milk, butter, and juice and tasted quite good. I was also given a banana. This was all part of the ritual of welcoming the deity as if one would welcome a guest in their home. Earlier I had witnessed the priest bathing the deity as one would bath oneself. The offering of fruit and food items is also part of welcoming a guest, and therefore part of the ceremony.

After the ritual those of us who were present went to the kitchen area. One of the participants brought some food to share with the others which is customary in the temple. Traditional foods seem to be very important to the culture. The food was called pongal which contained rice, lentils, butter, black pepper, and cashews. It was similar to pudding in consistency and pale in color. My reaction when first tasting it was that the taste did not match the appearance. Being so pale in color I expected a bland taste, but the pepper gave it a much stronger taste than anticipated. I thought that it tasted like gravy or a soup and it was pretty good.

In my time in the temple there were times where I was not able to understand the language being spoken. When addressing me everyone spoke in English. Rajani told me that they usually speak English in the temple since it is a common language. India has a diversity of languages; there are various dialects from different regions in India. Depending on which region the person is from, they may not be able to speak or understand the language from a different region. The priest spoke in Sanskrit which is primarily used for Hindu ceremonies, but is rarely used in other situations. Rajani said that she was not able to understand much of what the priest was chanting.

I spent about an hour and a half in the temple learning about Hinduism, the culture, and the temple. In my observations at the temple there were plenty of parallels and differences with my experience with Catholicism.

Observations and Comparisons



Hinduism and Catholicism both value cleansing of the participant before attending a service; this is accomplished very differently though and Hinduism seems to emphasize it more. In Catholicism it is expected that the individual prepares his or her body to receive communion. Communion entails eating bread and drinking wine which are the body and blood of Jesus respectively. The participant's body is prepared by not eating at least one hour prior to accepting communion, which provides a clean vessel for Jesus to enter. This practice is not always consciously performed by Catholics. Communion is offered about forty-five minutes into the service so unless someone ate something immediately before attending then they would consequently already meet the one hour preparation time and have their body prepared.

The removal of shoes in the Hindu temple is also a practice of cleanliness and respect. The ritual that I witnessed at the temple involved bathing the deity. Participants are also expected to bathe before going to temple. This is not always possible so it is not always followed but it is recommended. I actually did bathe directly before going to temple,

partially on purpose. I was not aware that bathing was an expectation, but I did bathe and dress nicely because it seemed like I should put some additional care into my appearance to show respect. I did take notice of the dress of people at the temple. For the most part the people seemed to be wearing normal Western clothes. There was one woman who was wearing a robe and shawl that were clearly of Indian origin and purposefully worn for attending the temple.

Similar to cleansing, anointing occurs in both Catholic masses and Hindu temples. When entering a Catholic church, participants are expected to dip their fingers in a pool of holy water (water blessed by the priest) and perform the sign of the cross. This ritual represents cleansing of the soul and is a reminder of the sacrament of baptism. Baptism entails the priest dipping the head of the recipient in water to cleanse original sin which is the first sin of mankind when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

Exploring Hinduism

By Ben Mandler



Women are expected to anoint themselves with a bindi when entering the temple. A bindi is a dot formed by rubbing a red powder on the forehead. The forehead is one of several vulnerable points on the body. Applying the bindi has healing properties and wards off evil. It can also be used to signify the marital status of the woman. The application indicates that the woman is married, but this is not used as widely anymore. Rajani told me that in her experience the bindi is typically worn whenever the woman is dressing in traditional Indian clothes.

The gods and deities are a bit similar between Hinduism and Catholicism. There is one all-encompassing deity, God in Catholicism and Brahman in Hinduism, and then different forms or derivations. In Catholicism God is a trinity composed of the father, son, and Holy Spirit. In Hinduism Brahman can take many different forms such as Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, Krishna, and Rama. There is no finite amount of deities in Hinduism and they can each be prayed to depending on the beliefs of the individual.

One big difference between Catholicism and Hinduism is the service, mass and temple respectively. In my Catholic upbringing I'm used to a mandatory service every

Sunday where a large portion of the religious community gathers. Temple is a lot less structured. When I was at the temple the priest was performing a ritual and there were only four people in attendance. Hinduism can be practiced whenever the individual would like to visit the temple and can also be practiced from home.

Although equivalent in name, Catholic and Hindu priests have some differences as well as similarities. Both are very knowledgeable about the religion and require years of education in order to fulfill their role as a spiritual leader in the community. Attending temple and participating in rituals with the priest is not required in Hinduism, but he is at the temple every day and available if people would like to participate with him. In Catholicism attendance to weekly mass services which are performed by the priest is required. Also, if the person would like to cleanse their sins they need to do so by confessing them to the priest. Similarly a Catholic priest is available for guidance but interaction with him is more of a requirement. Hindu priests are usually men, but it is not a requirement as it is in Catholicism.

One major difference between the priests is that in Hinduism priests come from a lineage of priests. Priests are allowed to marry and their descendants are allowed to become priests if they wish. This is contrary to Catholic priests who do not and cannot come from a lineage of priests. This is because priests are not allowed to marry and as a result cannot have children. The mentality behind priests not being allowed to marry is that they choose to dedicate their lives to God, not to having a wife. Since sex outside of marriage is a condemnable sin in Catholicism it is effectively impossible for a priest to have children.

Marriage is important in both Indian and Western culture, but it seems to be more important in Indian culture. Hindus would prefer that their children marry other Hindus. Similarly, Catholics would also prefer that their children marry other Catholics. I remember when my sister first mentioned her boyfriend at the time, now husband, to my grandma. The immediate response from my grandma was to ask if he was Catholic, which he is. I'm not sure what the response would have been if he were not. In my experience, it seems like in both Catholicism and Hinduism that marrying an individual that fits a template is not as important as it was previously. Both cultures seem to value the occurrence of a marriage foremost and would prefer the partner to fit a template if possible.

One significant difference between Indian and Western culture is the idea of arranged marriages. Marriages can be arranged between sets of parents who agree that their children would be a good match for marriage. When selecting a potential mate the parents will look at aspects of the couple such as similar background, age, and attractiveness. Couples are also selected on their ability to provide care for the other. Arranged marriages are less common for Indians living in the United States.



Exploring Hinduism

By Ben Mandler

Takeaways

I thought that everyone was receptive and welcoming during my time in the temple. Rajani was particularly helpful as a guide. One of the biggest takeaways is that Hindus consider Hinduism as a philosophy or a way of life and not a religion. A lot of Hinduism seems to be flexible and variable compared to the rigidity and absolutes that I'm familiar with in Catholicism. Participants in Hinduism can pray to whichever deity they choose. For example Rajani was raised praying to the deity Rama. One of the main themes of Hinduism is the triumph of good over evil which perpetuates the idea of being a righteous person. Hindus believe in Karma which means that every deed someone commits will have good or evil associated with it and this will affect the person positively or negatively in this life or a subsequent reincarnated life.

It is good for me to have a general idea of what Hinduism involves and represents. It is also important for me to recognize that there can be quite a variation. Rajani informed me that all of the Indian members of our work unit attend the temple in some respect. It's reasonable to guess that each of these individuals have their own cultural background and temple experience so it's beneficial for me to have a broad and open view of Hinduism.

Arranged marriages can seem strange and perhaps a bit scary in Western society. For one to have little input in with whom they will be bonded for the rest of their life is an intimidating concept. From what I gathered the parents have the best interest of their children in mind. They are conscious of which aspects of a potential mate will be able to provide a happy and stable life. Life can have limited time for building a family if careers are given priority so one of the goals when arranging a couple is to have them at similar points in their life when family can become a priority.

I'm really glad that I chose to attend the Hindu temple for my experience. I think that it will make it easier for me to ask questions and have cultural conversations with coworkers. It will also make attending Indian events less intimidating if I know a bit more about them. The additional exposure has piqued a bit of interest. I've read a bit about karma and reincarnation before. I may read more about the deities since I had known very little about them before. In all, I have gained a better understanding and appreciation for Hinduism and Indian culture.



Who Are Refugees?

By Gauri Sood

Just a few weeks ago, in Balvikas class, Kristina Hamell from an organization called Catholic Charities came and gave us a small informative lecture on refugees. She taught us many things such as who a refugee is, what problems they face, what they go through to get to a safer land, and how we can help (as a community or even just as individuals). From the very beginning, to help and support the refugees that have been/are arriving, we need to know who they are.

Refugees are people who flee from their countries to come to a safer land due to some serious issues in their homelands. Some of these problems are wars, gangs, drug violence, etc. Refugees can choose to move out of their countries, but there is a long process that is required if they choose to make that decision. Most of them have to stay in a refugee camp for years, and some even decades! Even then, less than 1% of them are actually given the opportunity to move to a peaceful land. Many people might wonder how they manage a life here with practically no money!

Well, in Rochester Minnesota we have Catholic Charities, who welcome refugees and get them started. Imagine starting a life all over again! The government pays for a small apartment, but only for 3 months. Some basic items get donated, and things such as First Aid kits are made by Catholic Charities. Kristina, her staff and volunteers help them get jobs, figure things out, learn some English, find a school for their children, and many other things of that nature. In Rochester most of the refugee children attend Riverside Elementary School as that school have many programs and multilingual teachers that support them. Once they are settled down with the help of Catholic Charities, most of the refugees go to take services from IMAA (Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association) for sustained support and assistance with job search, job support, health care, insurance, victim service. They also can take up job as interpreter if they can speak and understand English reasonably.

Balvikas children learnt a lot on that day about refugees and their struggles. I am so happy that we have non-profit organizations like Catholic Charities and IMAA to help them. But they also need the support of community. We can all volunteer for these organizations or do Seva by helping the refugees during their resettlement.



Holi 2016

Dear Community Members,

The much awaited **HOLI - THE FESTIVAL OF COLORS** cultural event is taking place on Saturday, March 26, 2016, at 11:30 am at the Community Presbyterian Church, 3705 55th St NW, Rochester, MN. This program is hosted by the **HINDU SAMAJ TEMPLE**.

For this Holi cultural event, there will be a dance program, karaoke singing, and a painting & essay writing contest with Holi or Spring as the theme for the contest. At the end of the event there is the option of playing with colors for those who are interested.

We are now accepting entries for the cultural program on March 26th.

Please **sign up** for dance and karaoke performances by clicking on the following link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ep7cjWuIOAWm1MMP7-9IZutw_HI0VRhFzOTi0_3X-gM/viewform?usp=send_form.

Please enter all the performance details when you sign up. Also, please verify if the karaoke track for your song is available in MeraGaana.com or youtube.com, or send your track to us via the google folder that will be provided later.

The last date for uploading your music to the google folder is March 19, 2016. *The link to the google folder will be sent later to participants.*

Please note that there will be no rehearsals for this cultural program.

Cultural Program Signup Guidelines:

- Entries will be taken on a first come, first served basis and we will close the sign up if we fill the allocated time for program (one hour for dance performances and one hour for Karaoke).
- Group performances are preferred.
- A person can participate only in a maximum of two items. If a person participates in a third or more items, those items will be placed on a waiting list.
- The program is scheduled from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm. Please plan to be there for the duration of the program.
- Please note that there may be no stage available for the cultural program.
- Due to time constraints, suggested duration of each item is 3-5 minutes. Please make sure that your item does not exceed 5 minutes to accommodate more items and to complete our program on time.

You can view your entries for performances at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-fk2f8mu5DlhZWMAXdrj1dJs19skukT0pCOV-4I0Ds0/edit?usp=sharing>

If you need to make updates after your initial submission, please contact us at hismncc@gmail.com with details of your item.

We will confirm order of events once we have all the entries.

Please send an email to hismncc@gmail.com if you have any questions.

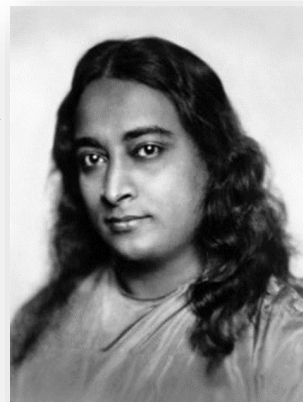


Awake: The Paramahansa Yogananda Story – A Review By Forrest Dailey

“Awake: The Paramahansa Yogananda Story” came out on DVD/Blu-ray in early October. I’d been told by a friend that viewing it was a “puja-like” experience. Just like at puja, I found myself sitting up straight and completely attentive to what was unfolding. The viewer of the film offers love and attention at the feet of the great Master, and in return receives the blessing of *darshan*, and his words enter your permanent consciousness. In the film, several noted the transformational power of the Master’s voice and gaze - Transformation with sound and light.

Much of the film reviews what Yogananda wrote of his life in “Autobiography of a Yogi”: His conscious entrance into the world, the death of his mother, meeting his guru, and brief biographies of Mahavatar Babaji and Lahiri Mahashaya, are all brought to life by actors, narrated by a voice actor in unique film sequences.

Various experts and devotees comment on Yogananda’s influence on yoga and spirituality in the West, and yoga’s influence on the human mind. A quick glance at the back of the DVD case may give you the impression that the film is focused on yoga in the West, and not about the man himself. This is not so. But Yogananda’s influence on Western yoga cannot be overstated.



Yogananda’s message went over well in the U.S. because he did not use explicitly Hindu terminology. By making spirituality a science, he was able to make it universally digestible. “Awake” takes us through Yogananda’s early years in the U.S. when he was first insulted for his “foreign” appearance, and later denounced as a “snake charmer”, and a “cult leader” in the most derogatory sense of the word. He was later called a “spiritual genius” or “prodigy” but “Awake” also reveals his very human qualities - Self-doubt, stress, frustration, and despair. It clearly demonstrates that even the most elevated soul, while on Earth, is here to learn and experience.

The West may not have been ready to think of spirituality as a science, or for a spiritual teacher who, when asked by a devotee about drinking, smoking, etc., said “You may continue” while advising “...but I will not promise you that the desire to do these things will not fall away from you.” To sum up the importance of Yogananda in his time, one “Awake” commentator says “You couldn’t have described to a Westerner what Yogananda was teaching prior to the 20th century. There simply was not a vocabulary for it.”

“Awake: The Life of Yogananda” is very much like a puja. It very well may leave one spiritually reinvigorated and focused. Reinforced with certainty in our pursuits and our convictions, “Awake” reminds us to be spiritual lions regardless of forces acting upon us.



Draupadi: Imagine Draupadi as the human body. The Pandavas, the five senses, are wedded to it. Their first cousins, a hundred in number, the Kauravas, are present in the form of the tendencies of the mind.

Yudhishthir thinks that he is a good gambler and so would win over the Kauravas. The senses also think that they can win over the tendencies of the mind. The Pandavas keep gambling till they lose everything, including themselves and their beloved wife, Draupadi. Likewise, we lose everything when we gamble with our tendencies, and, like the Pandavas, end up in spiritual exile. The body is demeaned, like Draupadi was, and only divine intervention can save it. However, our body does not abandon us, even when we lead it into exile.

Mahabharat interpretation

Human Trafficking and the Safe Harbor Law

By Rajani Sohni

ASHA, the Service Wing of the Hindu Samaj Temple, recently invited **Laura Sutherland**, the regional Safe Harbor Navigator for South-east Minnesota, to talk to our community regarding human trafficking in the area and the laws surrounding this issue. This law was passed in 2011, but was implemented only in 2014 in Minnesota. According to this law, in Minnesota, youths who engage in prostitution are viewed as victims and survivors, not criminals. They will be treated with dignity and respect, and directed to supportive services, and shelter. This is a “No Wrong Door” approach which is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and a multi-state agency approach. Intervention and protection laws generally apply to victims under the age of 18 years, though there are exceptions where the law has helped older victims. Laura’s goal was to spread awareness in the community about this very significant problem and the steps we can take to prevent this from occurring.

Minnesota ranks 13th in the nation in human trafficking, and Rochester serves as a corridor for the traffickers with easy access to the interstate highways in the tristate region. While the victims of trafficking are usually girls and women, and the laws apply to all victims irrespective of gender. Laura talked about circumstances where the individual is coerced into trafficking. The reasons are many – unstable family life, economic circumstances, abuse, ignorance and innocence can all be factors due to which a person can be drawn into a situation where they eventually become a trafficking victim. Sometimes the victimization happens due to coercion, sometimes it’s by abduction, though abduction is seldom seen now. The victims are targeted at malls, schools, bus and train stations, or group homes, and through social media sites. Peers, classmates, or older “friends” can isolate and convince the victim of his/her love before selling that child for sex. Most often psychological manipulation, drugs, and/or violence are also part of this scheme.

Laura shared that the victims could be of any race; she said that children belonging to different races are traded as “exotic.” Some of the victims are as young as 7 years of age. The traffickers are of different age groups, some as young as 18 and some even into their seventies and could belong to any race or gender. There are statistics available as to the profile of traffickers in the region and in the nation.

The victims are usually threatened and are terrified of their controllers, which is the reason that a lot of trafficking cases go unreported and unnoticed. Other reasons are the child’s reluctance to disclose the problem due to a sense of shame & fear, stigma associated with forced prostitution, power and control of the trafficker’s seduction and manipulation, or the child’s inability to recognize that he or she is a victim and therefore, is unwilling to seek help.

Laura shared that at the current time she is dealing with 40-50 trafficking cases in the region. Once into the system, the victims are forced to participate in unspeakable acts and are abused both physically and mentally. For those who cannot get out of the system, death is the outcome many times. Disease is also prevalent.

Laura shared a few instances where the victims were contacted through social media like Facebook. She advised parents to stay in tune with their child’s on-line activities and to keep the communication channels open with them. Laura had the attendees view a website called backpage.com which is used by traffickers to advertise and sell services of their victims. She talked about becoming aware of the verbiage of advertisements such as these and to look for key words used by traffickers to indicate that the ads are not what they appear to be.

Laura provided contact information for her organization to report any human trafficking activities. Laura refers all the culturally sensitive victims and cases to the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA). The Safe Harbor victim services include a 24 hour crisis line, crisis intervention services, support and advocacy during hospital emergency room visits and during law enforcement interviews. They also offer assistance with filing restraining orders and safety planning, and stay connected with the victim through the duration of a criminal case.

If you or someone you know is being sexual exploited or trafficked, please contact your Regional Navigator at 507-328-7270. The 24-hour crisis line number is 507-289-063.

For more information about ASHA and for future events, please visit: <http://asharstmn.org/index.html>

Some community members with Laura Sutherland (3rd from Left) after the event:



Recipe Corner - Gasagase payasa

By Srilakshmi Honnavalli



This is a very traditional sweet recipe from Karnataka. Often made during festivals as part of the 'habbada-adige' (Festival Feast), this dessert is known for its sleep inducing qualities. So don't-drink-and-drive!

Ingredients:

Poppy Seeds - 25 gms (2-3 Table spoons)
 Grated Coconut - 1 cup
 Dry Coconut - Grated – 1/2 cup
 Raw Rice - 1 table spoon
 Jaggery or Dark Brown Sugar - 2 cups
 Milk - about 2 cups
 Cashew and Golden Raisins for 'seasoning' and texture
 Cardamom powder - 1 teaspoon



Method:

1. Dry roast the poppy seeds until golden brown and gives out a sweet aroma.
2. Dry roast the rice until it changes from translucent to white.
3. Then Grind the poppy seeds, rice, dry coconut, and coconut with some water and run it through the sieve to collect the rich milk.
4. Take the 'grounds' and add some more water and grind, and sieve to collect the milk. This will need to be repeated about 2-3 times.
5. Start heating the collected milk and add the jaggery until the jaggery melts on low flame. Then bring the mixture to a medium simmer when it starts forming a lighter layer making the top layer foamy/airy. Keep stirring to avoid flowing over or burning. In about 10-15 minutes it should be ready.
6. Add Warmed milk to the mixture and stir it to incorporate well with the mixture.
7. Then add the ghee-fried cashews and golden raisins, and powdered cardamom to it.
8. You can add more milk/jaggery to adjust the sweetness to suit your taste.

Enjoy!

Maha Shiv Ratri

Maha Shiv Ratri celebrations were held at the Temple on Monday, March 7, 2016. The festivities began at 6 p.m. and ended at 5 a.m. on Tuesday, March 8th. The event went well, and more than 250 people attended the pujas throughout the night. We had over 60 sponsors of the Shiva Abhishekam scheduled at different times through the night and early morning. Volunteers prepared the food for the event and our food committee boxed and served dinner for nearly 100 people.

Sri HariKrishna Ji performing Rudra Abhishekam at Midnight

Midnight Alankaram:



Food committee – Nisha and Prasaad:



**Travels of SHRI MUNI****By Aanmeehan**

Sri Muni and his disciple, Seedan, go to different places and meet people. They travel from town to town and as Sri Muni is a revered Sadhu – people come and seek his blessings and seek his advice. Once Shri Muni and Seedan were sitting where a Satsang was arranged for later that day. A man approaches them:

Man: Namaskarams.

Shri Muni: Good. Who are you? What do you want?

Man: I am a Sangeetha Vidvwaan, Indian classical musical exponent. I have performed thousands of concerts all over the world. I was awarded many titles and awards by almost all sabhas. I have written many books in music. I have composed thousands of Keertanas in all Ragas. I teach music in my academy. My favorite Ragam is Darbari Kanada. (sings – Bhagavaan, Ab Tho Neer Bahalo from Baiju Bawra).

That man talked continuously on music, and only on music topics, for nearly two hours. Finally, he got tired and stopped. He chose a corner in the hall and sat there.

Seedan (observes): He knows nothing but music. Strange are men.

Then came another man.

Man: Namaskarams.

Shri Muni: Good . Who are you? What do you want?

Man: I am a merchant doing grocery business. I purchase grains and lentils at cheap prices and sell at higher prices and make a profit. What is the price of onion at this town? What is the price of garlic in your neighborhood?

That man talked about his grocery business for nearly two hours. Finally he got tired and sat in another corner of the hall.

Seedan (Observes): He knows only about business and nothing else. Strange are men.

Then came another man. A youngster, probably a sportsman.

Man: Namaskarams.

Shri Muni: Good . Who are you? What do you want?

Man: I am a sportsman - I play cricket. I am a spin bowler. And also a batsman. I scored a hat trick in the last test match.

He talked for many hours - all on cricket. He too got tired and sat at another corner.

Seedan (Observes): There is nothing but cricket for him in this world. Strange are men.

Then came a thief.

Thief asked: Is that idol made of gold? How many donation boxes are here? Are there any watchmen here? Where are the temple jewels kept?

He asked questions and looked all over for clues about the temple treasures. And sat near the donation box watching how much cash people were dropping in the box.

Seedan (Observes): He knows only about stealing. Strange are men.

The crowd gathered and the Satsang started. The hall was full of people listening to the discussion that was going on.

At that time, a man came and stood at the entrance. Seeing no place to sit he looked all over as if searching for someone and finally recognized the musician and went straight to him ignoring others. He seemed comfortable with the musician and merrily began talking with that musician. Both of them applauded each other talking only about music.

Then came another man. He wondered what was going on there. He immediately recognized the businessman. His face beamed on seeing the businessman and happily sat near him, enquiring about how the business was going, etc. They both were comfortable and talked business at length and were happy doing so.



Travels of SHRI MUNI

By Aanmeehan

Then came a thief. He recognized his comrade thief and joined him.
Then came a sportsman. He hooked up with the sportsman from earlier who talked about cricket.

Thus, as the saying goes, “Birds of the same feather flock together”, one by one people arrived, recognized their kind and settled down.

A pundit came and joined the group Satsang discussions.

Seedan turns and asks Sri Muni:

Dear Guru - Why and how do people become a specific character, and recognize their kind, and group together with similar characteristics?

Shri Muni explains:

The present person is the effect of the sum total of all thoughts and all actions from past countless lives. Every thought and action influences humans. The subconscious mind keeps on telling one to repeat actions. Repeated actions create habits and tendencies and personality traits. Man lives those compulsory lives, with a specific mind set, specific VIBRATORY FIELD created by those habits.

As in a sound-wave experiment, an object with similar wavelength resonates in the same, so also humans with similar vibratory fields respond to one another. You could call it chemistry! Men in same mental vibratory field recognize and respond to each other.

Brahmavit Brahmaiva Bhavati. A simple translation of this is “The Knower of Brahman becomes Brahman”. Knower is the one who is in the relative field. Alternately, one can develop vibrations and field by being in proximity. Thus, Man can know GOD by being in HIS proximity. That is, being in the Satsang helps you know more of God and Godliness.

Every action has two effects:

Karma or debts – consequences that you have to overcome (paapam/punyam – bad/good consequences).

Influence on the personality such as likes and dislikes. These are called *Vasanas* (compulsions) or *Samskaras* that seed tendencies. Thus seek company to seed positive tendencies.

Humans should be vigilant in thought and actions to become FREE – from *Karma* and *Vasanas*. **Satsang is one way to be in good and God’s company to enable this.**

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



Quiz

By Nisha Kurup

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1. Pick one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu.
 - a) Prahlad
 - b) Markandeya
 - c) Vamana
 - d) Hiranyakashipu
2. Which mythological character had the boon that made the person invincible when he/she enters the fire alone? –
 - a) Mahishi,
 - b) Drupadi
 - c) Holika
 - d) Sita
3. Holi is celebrated towards the end of winter on the.....full moon day on the lunar month of Phalgun.
 - 1) 1st,
 - 2) 14th
 - 3) Last
 - 4) 21st
4. _____ is considered to be the abode of Lord Shiva, while is considered to be the abode of Lord Vishnu
 - a) Gangotri, Vaikunda
 - b) Varanasi, Hrishikesh
 - c) Kailash, Vaikunda
 - d) Manasa sarovar, Palazhi
5. Which of these is associated with Lord Vishnu?
 - a) Thishul
 - b) Sudarshanachakra,
 - c) Crescent moon
 - d) River Ganga
6. The bonfire on the eve of Holi are lit in memory of the miraculous escape of Prahalad when he was carried by Holika into the fire. Whose sister was Holika?
 - a) Maricha
 - b) Hiranyaksha
 - c) Mahishasura
 - d) Hiranyakashipu
7. By which name is Holi known in the states of West Bengal and Orissa?
 - a) Holi
 - b) Dolyatra
 - c) Lath Maar
 - d) Durgapuja
8. Which region in India celebrates Holi in temple premises with Holiyaars singing songs?
 - a) Rajasthan
 - b) Bihar
 - c) Tamilnadu
 - d) Kumaon
9. The tradition of breaking the pot filled with buttermilk is celebrated in which states?
 - a) UP and Bihar
 - b) Bengal and Orissa
 - c) Maharashtra and Gujarat
 - d) Kerala and Goa
10. In some regions of Haryana, women, specifically the *Bhabhi*'s (sisters-in-laws) get a social sanction to beat their *Devars* (brothers-in-laws) and take a sweet revenge for all the mischiefs they have played on them. What is this revengeful tradition called?
 - a) Dulandi Holi,
 - b) Basant Holi
 - c) Hola Mohalla
 - d) Thabal Chomgba



Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota, Inc.

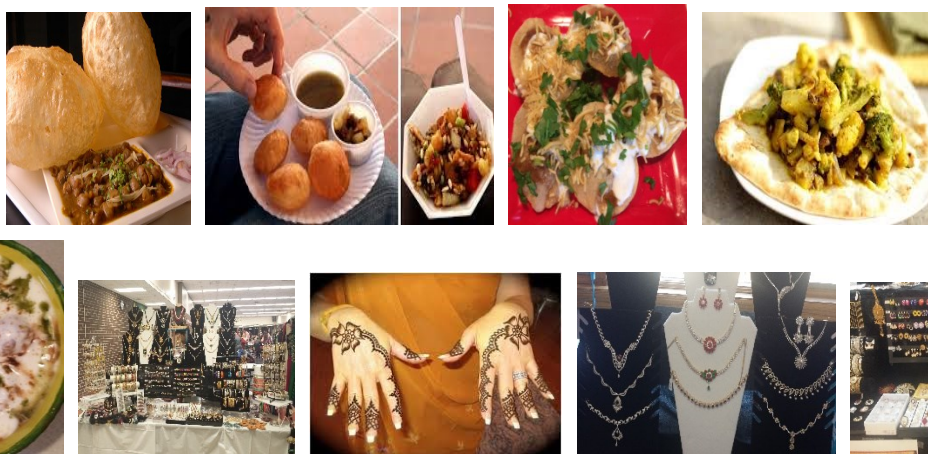
A REGISTERED, PRIVATE, NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Striving to Meet the Community's

Religious, Spiritual, Cultural, Artistic and Literary Needs

www.histemplemn.org

Hindu Samaj Temple Invites Everyone to **Holi Mela & Cultural Program 2016**



Date & Time: Saturday, March 26th, 2016, 11:30AM

Community Presbyterian Church,

3705 55th St NW, Rochester, MN 55901

Tickets: \$5 (Free for kids < 5 years)

Food extra at the venue (\$3/item).

<http://www.histemplemn.org/Holi2016.html>

(Free Holi Color and painting kit for kids & students)

- Booths selling wide ranges of Jewelry! Henna artist!
- Food stalls by the Indian restaurants in town, serving delicious items like Gol Guppa, Chat Papri, Nan, Curry, Rice and other delicious items!
- Riveting Performances & Karaoke from the community!
- Color painting & fun activities for Kids!
- Holi Color Playing!
-

If you would like to be vendor in this event, please send email to contact@histemplemn.org