



Visteel Mahila Samiti
Quarterly Magazine

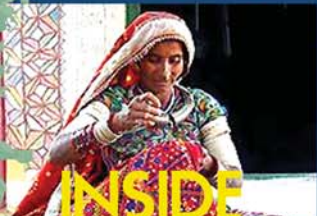
Spark

.... ignite, illuminate, sparkle...

Volume - 7 Issue - 4 October - November - December 2018



Culture & Traditions OF INDIA



INSIDE



Dear Readers,

WELCOME to 2019. A new year marks a new beginning and new possibilities.

To take over the steering wheel from an experienced skipper is a challenge for the new one. For me , as the new Editor in Chief of our 6 year old magazine SPARK, it is a pleasant task to thank the old skipper, Mrs Bindoo Mohapatra, for her invaluable contributions during the many years she has guided Spark and VMS. It is also time to praise TEAM SPARK , who keep up the forward drive of the boat. I look forward to working with them.

The magazine stands on a foundation of publishing a broad range of articles covered under various interesting feature and themes . I plan to extend on this and introduce new features to enhance readability of the magazine.

The theme of this issue is "Culture and Traditions of India". India is known the world over for her rich traditions and culture. We are a multi ethnic nation practising the age old , time tested traditions , rituals and customs to this day despite all the advancement we have made in the field of science and technology . That's how deep rooted and valued our traditions are!

Staying with the theme, we have profiled an astrologer and a yoga therapist in "Hamare Apne", a heart warming recall of the Holy Karthika month by a retired employee , informative articles on the theme, interesting one liners by our readers and many more ..

The MGT of October month was on the Navaratri theme. It was very vibrant and colourful. The October issue of Spark was released.

During the month of November, VMS celebrated Childrens' day. Games and entertainment was organised for children of members.

Vms members were treated to a fun filled picnic in the month of December.

I thank all contributors for sending in articles, stories, poetry and their feedback.

Team Spark invites articles for our April '2019 issue, which is a very special issue- Spark completes SEVEN!!

I wish to sign off with this thought- A new year is not just about changing the calendar; it is also about commitment. We, the SPARK editorial team, will continue to work hard to better serve our readers and writers. We wish everyone a rewarding, joyous new year and look forward to staying connected with you through 2019.

Best Wishes,

Sarada Rath

Sarada Rath

Editor in Chief & President, VMS



KHEL MELA - A CELEBRATION OF SPORTS, FRIENDSHIP & WINNING HEARTS!



-Kavyasree Bharadwaj

The clouds can never eclipse the Sun forever, a hidden star can always smile through the night's darkness. Children with disability are like the hidden stars, for they are able to find special ways to shine in the darkest of dark times. They may only be a tiny droplet in the ocean of humanity, but they too form a part of its collective identity and thus, they are as much a part of the society as any of us are.

Arunodaya Special School is a part of RINL's CSR activities and is intended to provide quality education to the Special Children. To promote inclusivity of special children among the regular school going children, an Inter-school sports tournament - Khel Mela was organised on December 6th 2018, wherein the Arunodaya Special School students, keeping in line with the motto of the event "Come play with a Special Friend", got to play along with the students of regular schools. During this event, a total of 11 indoor and outdoor games were conducted with each of the games designed suitably, such that the Arunodaya student could either compete against or pair up or play along with the regular students.

During the course of events throughout the day, Arunodaya Special School athletes did prove to the world that they aren't disabled but specially-abled. Some games are played to win medals, but some are played to win the hearts and friendship. So, here are some of the most heart-warming incidents in Khel Mela-2.0 which won the hearts of every individual assembled in the ground that day.

1. Happiness doesn't lie at the destination, but it sure lies in travelling along on the journey. A message that was exemplarily conveyed by a small incident in the event, three legged race. A race in which Arunodaya student paired up along with a regular school student, one leg of each was tied up together resulting in them having to hop on 3 legs in total. Amongst all the teams participating, in one particular team the Arunodaya student wasn't able to co-operate and run along, they were left behind right from the beginning of the race, but the Arunodaya student's partner didn't lose heart. She encouraged her partner to run and complete the race and finally when they both completed the

race, the student patted her special friend and appreciated her for completing the race. Though they together didn't win the race for the day, but through this incident they sure won the hearts of many people.

2. In Carroms as well, Arunodaya student was paired up along with a regular school student to participate in the event as a team. One particular team, the regular school student taught his Arunodaya companion to play the game, by explaining to him in his own simple gestures and helped his partner by encouraging him and together they won the game. Here the student did not only won a medal but had also taught us that "none of us can change the direction of wind, but we can always adjust our sails to reach the destination." He also showed that with simple gestures it is possible for someone to really be a special friend and make this world more inclusive.

3. In Dogde ball, a team event where every school was allotted one Arunodaya student to play along as their team member. While many teams focussed on winning the game, neglected their Arunodaya team-mate, assuming that she was a weak link in their team who cannot be helped, one particular student in a team realised the true motive of the game, rose to the occasion and went on to help both Arunodaya students participating in the game, be it her own team mate or the opponent's. She was quick to grasp the idea that winning is a collective effort and one wins or loses as a team not as an individual, hence every member of the team is equally important. She may have lost the winner medal for her school on that day, but she did imprint a great example of humanity in our lives that day.

Many more such memories of the day not only brought justice to the theme of Khelmela 2.0, but also taught us that "When we focus on someone's disability, we will overlook their abilities, beauty and uniqueness. But once we learn to accept and love them for who they are, we subconsciously learn to love ourselves unconditionally."

क्या बात करूँ मैं लोगों की

क्या बात करूँ मैं लोगों की
सब आप बताये बैठे हैं
कुछ दर्द छुपाये बैठे हैं
कुछ ख्वाब छुपाये बैठे हैं
कुछ हँसते हैं ऊपर-ऊपर
कुछ रोते हैं नकली नकली
कुछ बातें ऐसे करते हैं
संसार चलाये बैठे हैं
सच झूठ किसी की बातों का

कुछ पता नहीं चलता अब तो
कुछ के सच भी अब झूठ लगे
कुछ झूठ चलाये बैठे हैं
ख्वाबों का पर्दा यहाँ पर अब
बंद सा है खुलता ही नहीं
संसार समाज सभी अपने
अधिकार बताये बैठे हैं
इस दुनिया में अगर कुछ करना है
अपनी मर्जी की करना तू

हो सफल अगर तो बात ही क्या
पर न हो तो मन डरना तू
वस चलता जा तू सही डगर
और पीछे कभी न मुड़ना तू
जब पहुंचेगा तू मंजिल पर
वो बात अलग ही सी होगी
तुझसे मिलने को सब 'वो' लोग
कतार लगाये बैठे हैं।

संकलन: सुश्री ग्रेसी कुमारी



A TEACHER ON MY WAY.....

-Prasenjit Sarkar



Today I will tell you an incident that happened to me or us who all were part of it while returning from office. Yes, a true incident!

My daily commute while returning home starts from Nariman Point at around 5 pm, The office cab drops me at Vashi Highway where I get a 7 seater shared van that takes me to my residence. The journey takes another 25 mins exact to reach the Kalamboli Highway where I get down and walk 10 minutes more. The road is all full of potholes and everytime some maintenance activity is going on. The journey is not easy though as most of the time there is uncontrollable traffic with big big lorries and trucks loaded with goods that batter the highway tearing it apart and making the ride a bumpy one.

A little early today I reached Vashi at around 6pm. There was no van and I waited for one. A black and yellow colored van came but this time the story was different. She shouted, "Kalamboli, Kamothe, Kharghar, Belapur..." and repeated the drop points again. At first nobody was willing to enter finding a lady driving the van. Most of the junta was surprised finding her on the driver's seat. I was surprised at those junta who were still waiting for other cabs (driven by men of course) to arrive for the same route. I entered the van and kept the door opened. I found a girl entering and sitting next to the lady driver's seat. The driver smiled a little to the girl and raised her voice this time looking towards the curious crowd waiting for other vans for the same route, "Kalamboli, Kamothe, Kharghar, Belapur..." A guy entered though puzzled, but finding a male inside the van got him a little relief. May be he felt safe after finding me inside (pun intended). Another lady entered and occupied a seat. There was a couple watching all of us standing near to the van on the footpath. The husband hesitantly rushed towards the van and enquired whether she drives the van on regular basis. She nodded, but in negative. The wife was not convinced and asked in her local language that I do understand

very well, 'better to not travel and wait for other vans'. I was watching everything and wanted to close the door now. The woman seated next to the lady driver was talking to her like what she does for a living. The driver smiled again and replied, "मीमाझ्या आई वडिलां ची एकुलती एकमुलगी आहे आणिमाझे बाबाचांगले नहीत (I am the only daughter of my parents and my father is not well). I have learnt this in my free time after coming back from school to help my father as this is his only job."

"So you come back from studies and help your father when he is not there?" Asked the girl sitting next to her.

"I teach Marathi to my students in the morning and in the evening I help others to reach their destinations."

There was a silence inside the van. Only the noise from the outside was evident. A smile on the dark face that has indeed suffered the test of the judgemental mindset whether woman can perform better in a man's world.

The couple finally entered the van and asked the lady to continue driving as their destination is very far. I finally closed the door and waited for the van to start. Yes there were potholes, there was a traffic at each and every signal. There were people staring from their cars and bikes. She knew how to pass the test and she dealt with each and every obstacle without any compromise. The couple sitting in front of me smiled this time. I heard they said, "Everything is fine. No need to worry. She knows driving." They don't know that each one of us is a teacher. The lady driver taught us today a lot of things that we fail to acknowledge and understand. We should definitely be thankful to such people who are facing hardship but yet are humble enough helping us out everytime. Let us celebrate her feat and contribute towards her success story. I don't know your name but I wish for your father's well being and your prosperity as I understand you are doing a great job and feel proud about it. May the power be with you.

TRADITIONAL GARMENT OF UTTARAKHAND

By Indrani



Rangwali Pichora is a garment worn at ceremonial occasions in Uttarakhand. From bride to great grandmother, every women in the family wears it on special occasions - be it naming ceremony or marriage, upanayan or mundon. It has a special significance and is mandatory for all married women in the family or close relatives. Another salient feature of Rangwali Pichora is that it can be put on by widows also. As per social traditions, they are not supposed to wear colourful clothes. There is beauty in every part of India which is very distinct and feminine and this is a typical attire of Kumaoni women.

The Pichora is traditionally hand-made and is dyed with vegetable colors after which it is printed by hand; There are only two colors that are used in the Pichora - red and saffron. They are considered auspicious colors in Indian culture. The red color stands for energy and conjugal life, while the saffron represents all the holy and worldly elements. The combination

of these two colors brings in good luck to the bride for her married life ahead.

The traditional Kumaoni bride would wear the traditional 'Ghagri' which is the skirt-like garment just like the ghaghra along with a 'choli' (the blouse) and the traditional 'Pichora' which is also called 'Rangwali' and is a traditional 'odhni' or veil that is embellished with silver and gold tating's.

The saffron base is embellished with red polka dots that are concentrated near the 'swastika' which is artistically made by using traditional motifs like the moon, bells, sun and conch shells. The borders of the Pichora are adorned with paisley or floral patterns and these days, a lot of additional embellishments like zari work, trimmings, beads, sequins and various ornamentation are also done to the Pichora to make it look like an exclusive garment. Although the Pichora is rather a humble piece of garment, yet the appearance of the garment resonates celebration.

నా కిష్టమైన పండుగ బతుకమ్మ పండుగ



ముక్తేవి మాధవి

ఈ రోజు తెలంగాణలో అతి పెద్ద పండుగ బతుకమ్మ మొదలు కానుంది. ఒక మనిషికి, ప్రకృతికి సంబంధించిన పండుగగా బతుకమ్మ పండుగను చెప్పుకుంటారు. ఎందుకంటే ప్రతి మనిషి జీవితానికి ప్రకృతితో విడదీయరాని సంబంధం ఉంటుంది. ప్రకృతి మనిషికి జీవంతో పాటు ఆహ్లాదాన్ని ఇస్తుంది, దానితో మనిషి ప్రకృతితో కలిసిపోయి సేదతీరుతాడు... కాని ఈ బిజీ జీవితాలలో మనుషులతోనే కలువలేకపోతున్న మనిషి ఇక ప్రకృతితో ఎలా కలుస్తాడు. బతుకమ్మ పండుగకి మాత్రం కచ్చితంగా తొమ్మిది రోజులు ప్రతి మనిషి ప్రకృతితో మమేకమై పోతాడు, అదే బతుకమ్మ పండుగ యొక్క గొప్పతనం.

ఈ బతుకమ్మ పండుగ వెనుక చాలా కథలు ఉన్నాయి. బాగా ప్రాచుర్యంలో ఉన్న ఈ కథను చూద్దాం.

ఒక బాలిక భూస్వాముల అకృత్యాలను భరించలేక ఆత్మహత్య చేసుకుంటే ఆమెను ఆ ఊరి ప్రజలు చిరకాలం 'బతుకమ్మ' అని దీవించారట. అందుకనే ఈ పండుగ స్త్రీలకు సంబంధించిన, బతుకమ్మను కీర్తిస్తూ జరుపుకునే పండుగ. స్త్రీలందరూ వారికి ఎటువంటి ఆపదలు రారాదనీ, వారి కుటుంబాలు చల్లగా ఉండాలనీ గౌరమ్మను ప్రార్థిస్తారు.

ఈ పండుగను తొమ్మిది రోజులపాటు తొమ్మిది రూపాలతో బతుకమ్మ కొలుచుకోవడం ఆనవాయితీ.

తొమ్మిది రూపాల బతుకమ్మల పేర్లు:

ఎంగిలి పువ్వుల బతుకమ్మ: బతుకమ్మ నవరాత్రులలో మొదటి రోజును ఎంగిలిపువ్వు అంటారు. అలా ఎందుకంటారు అంటే బతుకమ్మను పేర్చడానికి వాడే పువ్వులను ఒక రోజు ముందే తెంపుకొచ్చి వాటిని వాడిపోకుండా నీళ్ళలో వేసి మరునాడు బతుకమ్మగా పేరుస్తారు. అందుకే మొదటి రోజును ఎంగిలిపువ్వు అంటారు. ఈ రోజునాడు తెలంగాణ పల్లెల్లో వాయనంగా తమలపాకులు, తులసి ఆకులు ఇచ్చుకుంటారు.

అటుకుల బతుకమ్మ: రెండవ రోజునాడు ఉదయాన్నే అడవికి వెళ్లి తంగేడు, గునుగు, బంతి, చామంతి, అడవి గడ్డి పూలు తీసుకువస్తారు. ఈ పూలతో రెండు ఎత్తులలో గౌరమ్మను పేర్చి, ఆడవారు అందరూ కలిసి ఆడుకొని సాయంత్రం చెరువులలో వేస్తారు. రెండవ రోజు అటుకులు వాయనంగా పెడుతారు.

ముద్దపప్పు బతుకమ్మ: మూడవ రోజు బతుకమ్మను మూడంతరాలలో చామంతి, మందార, సీతమ్మ జడ, రామబాణం పూలతో అలంకరించి తామర పాత్రలలో బతుకమ్మను అందంగా అలంకరిస్తారు. శిఖరంపై గౌరమ్మను ఉంచి ఉదయం పూజలు చేసి సాయంత్రం గుడి దగ్గరో లేక నాలుగు బాటలు కాడ ఆడవారు అందరూ కలిసి ఆడుకొని చెరువులో వేసి వస్తారు. మూడవ రోజు వాయనంగా సత్తుపిండి, చక్కర, బెల్లం కలిపి పెడతారు.

నానబియ్యం బతుకమ్మ: నాలుగవ రోజు నానబియ్యం ఫలహారంగా పెడతారు. ఈ రోజు తంగేడు, గునుగు పూలతో నాలుగంతరాలు బతుకమ్మను పేర్చి శిఖరంపై గౌరమ్మను పెడతారు. వాయనంగా నానబోసిన బియ్యాన్ని బెల్లంతో, కాని చెక్కతో కాని కలిపి ముద్దలు చేసి పెడతారు.

అట్ల బతుకమ్మ: ఈ ఐదవ రోజు తంగేడు, గునుగు, చామంతి, మందార, గుమ్మడి పూలను అయిదంతరాలుగా పేర్చి బతుకమ్మను ఆడుతారు. ఈ రోజు వాయనంగా పిండితో చేసిన అట్లను పెడుతారు.

అలిగిన బతుకమ్మ: ఈ రోజు ఎలాంటి పూలతో బతుకమ్మను అలంకరిస్తారు. పూర్వకాలంలో బతుకమ్మను పేర్చే సమయంలో అనుకోకుండా మాంసం ముద్ద తగలడంతో అపచారం జరిగిందని ఆరవ రోజు బతుకమ్మను ఆడరు.

వేపకాయల బతుకమ్మ: ఈ రోజు బతుకమ్మను తంగేడు, గునుగు, చామంతి, గులాబి పూలతో ఏడంతరాలు పేర్చి ఆడుకొని చెరువులో వేస్తారు. ఈ రోజు వాయనంగా సకినాల పిండిని వేపకాయల్లా చేసి పెడతారు లేదా పప్పు బెల్లం నైవేద్యంగా పెడతారు.

వెన్న ముద్దల బతుకమ్మ: ఎనిమిదవ రోజు తంగేడు, గునుగు, చామంతి, గులాబి, గడ్డి పువ్వు మొదలైన పువ్వులతో ఎనిమిది అంతరాలను బతుకమ్మగా పేర్చి ఆంజనేయ స్వామి ఆలయం వద్ద ఆట, పాటల మధ్య చెరువులో వేస్తారు. ఈ రోజు వాయనంగా నువ్వులు, బెల్లం కలిపి ప్రసాదంగా పెడతారు.

సద్దుల బతుకమ్మ: ఇదే చివరి పండుగ రోజు. ఈ రోజు ఎన్ని పూలు దొరికితే అన్ని పూలతో బతుకమ్మను పెద్దగా పేరుస్తారు. ఈ రోజు ఆడవారు చాలా ఉత్సాహంగా ఆడుతారు, పాడుతారు. అలాగే పెద్ద బతుకమ్మ పక్కన చిన్నగా గౌరమ్మను పూజించి ఆడవారు వారి చెంపలకు రాసుకుంటారు. చివరి రోజు కాబట్టి చాలా చీకటి పడే వరకు ఆడుకుంటారు ఆడవారు. పెద్ద బతుకమ్మ రోజు ఎక్కడ ఉన్నా వారి సొంత ఊరికి చేరుకొని ఆడపిల్లలు అందరు కలిసి ఆనందంతో బతుకమ్మను ఆడుకొని చెరువులో వదులుతారు.

CULTURE AND TRADITIONS OF INDIA...



Sourced by **Nagabhushana**

An understanding of what the terms "Culture" and "Tradition" mean is essentially required before proceeding to going into details of their significance in the Indian context. Basically, Cultures (human habits) and Traditions are not religions, per se, by themselves.

Culture is defined as the behaviours and beliefs of a particular social, ethnic, or age group, as well as the ways of living built up by a group, from one generation to another. Indian Culture is something which has now become renowned all across the world. We all refer to India and its culture as something very diverse and unique. But seldom do we give a thought as to why things are done in certain specific ways. Indian Culture is full of several unique customs and traditions, which outsiders might find really intriguing. Most of these originate from the Ancient Indian scriptures and texts, which have dictated the way of life in India for thousands of years.

The seven elements of Indian culture is an amalgamation of several cultures comprising Organization, Customs and Traditions, Language, Arts & Literature, Religion, Forms of Government & Economic Systems. Some of them are:

1. **Namaskar/ Namaste:** The Namaste, or Namaskar, or Namaskaara is one of the five forms of traditional greetings mentioned in the ancient Hindu scriptures, the Vedas. It literally translates to I bow to you and greeting one another with it is a way of saying May our minds meet?, indicated by the folded palms placed before the chest. The word Namaha can also be translated as Na Ma (not mine), to signify the reductions of one's ego in the presence of the other.
2. **Tilak:** It is a ritual mark made on the forehead between the eyebrows with kumkum, haldi or chandan (sandalwood) as a sign of greeting, blessing or auspiciousness.
3. **Aarti:** It is an act of devotion, love or welcoming someone. Mostly it is performed during worshipping God.
4. **Bindi:** The married Indian women wear bindi on their forehead as an auspicious mark made with vermilion powder.
5. **Prostrating before parents and elders:** It is a respectful act of bowing down and touching the feet of the elders, parents and teachers.
6. **Lighting Diya (lamp):** A lamp is lighted in honor of God every morning and evening in the houses of almost all Indians.
7. **Indians remove shoes before entering a sacred/holy place,** While performing Puja the people cover their head. Also avoid wearing leather articles while entering a temple. While going to a sacred place Indians wear very modest dress and no short dresses are appreciated.
8. **Always a Festive Season:** India also sees a large number of festivals, mainly because of the prevalence of diverse religions and groups.
9. **Joint Families:** Also, in India, there exists the concept of a joint family, wherein the entire family (parents, wife, children and in some cases relatives) all live together. This is mostly because of the cohesive nature of the Indian society, and also reportedly helps in handling pressure and stress.
10. **Fasting:** Fasting is an integral part of Hindu culture. Fasts or Vrats or Upvas are a way to represent your sincerity and resolve, or express your gratitude to the Gods and Goddesses.

11. **Holy Cow:** Cow, in the Indian culture, is considered to be a Holy animal. She is worshipped as a maternal figure and is a depiction of the bounty of Mother Earth.

12. **The Science Behind Temples:** Most temples are located along magnetic wave lines of the earth, which help in maximizing the available positive energy. The copper plate (called Garbhagriha or Moolasthan) buried under the main idol absorbs and resonates this energy to its surroundings. Going to the temple often helps in having a positive mind and garnering positive energies, which in turn lead to healthier functioning.

It is also a practice to take off footwear before entering places of worship because they would bring in the dirt to an otherwise cleansed and sanctified environment.

13. **Arranged Marriage System:** The concept of arranged marriage in India traces its origin to as early as the Vedic times. .

14. **Religious Symbols:** The Indian traditions and scriptures contain various signs and symbols which have various meanings. For example, the usage of the Swastika, in the Indian context, does not point towards Adolf Hitler or Nazism. It is the symbol of Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles. The arms of the Swastika have various meanings. They signify the four Vedas, the four constellations, or the four basic aims of human pursuit.

15. **Atithi Devo Bhava:** In India, the saying Atithi Devo Bhava is also integral.

16. **Indian Ethnic Wear:** Indian women are often seen sporting saris. The sari is a single cloth and needs no stitching; it is easy to make and comfortable to wear, and also adheres to religious etiquette. It initially started out as a Hindu tradition but has very elegantly spread across all religions. The same applies to the more functional Kurta-Pyjama, and the ceremonial wear of Sherwani for Indian men of all religions.

17. **Indian Dances:** Indian Customs and Traditions India is a land of unity in diversity, and our dances are no different. Different forms of dance (classified as folk or classical) find origin from different parts of the country, and they are a way of representation of the particular culture from which they originate.

18. **Indian Food:** Indian food and cuisine not only form an integral part of Indian culture but are also one of the key factors of India is popularity worldwide.

Tradition is a custom passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past. While traditions offer reassurance in the face of chaos, they can also frame what might otherwise be taboo as mystical.

Every culture and religion has traditions seemingly normal or taken for granted by followers but unusual and fascinating for outsiders. India, with its overwhelming cultural diversity, is rich with unique traditions that almost always amuse with its esoteric customs and exotic cultures that often bewilder and even shock those from outside the country. .

Each and every custom and tradition in India is associated with centuries of history and defined by a philosophical worldview that is unique to the country.

Indeed, customs can vary vastly and even contradict when crossing between one state and the next, making the country a cornucopia of the exotic and idiosyncratic. Here are some of the most unique and distinctive , customs, and traditions of India that only the locals can understand.

Here is a list of unique traditions followed by Hindus from different parts of the country - from bizarre and truly unique festivals to unusual daily traditions.

1. The Aghori sadhus of Varanasi: The Aghori sadhus are wandering monks who renounce all earthly possessions in order to attain eternal spiritual liberation.

2. The Hola Mohalla warriors of Punjab: Founded by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of Sikhism, Hola Mohalla is a three-day event that usually falls in March, one day after the festival of Holi.

3. The Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: In 2012, the Buddhist chanting of Ladakh was added to UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

4. Chhau dance of Odisha: Another important tradition from India that made it to UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010 is the classical Chhau dance, from Odisha.

5. Thimithi aka the fire-walking tradition of Tamil Nadu: Also celebrated in countries such as Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Malaysia, Thimithi originated in Tamil Nadu.

6. The Fire Fight of Kateel Durga Parameshwari Temple: Also known as Agni Keli, this ritual in Mangalore has hundreds of Hindu devotees throwing burning palm frond torches at each other with the belief that doing so will appease the goddess Durga.

7. Ambubachi Mela, the tantric fertility festival of Assam: During the monsoon season in the middle of June, Ambubachi Hindu Mela (festival) is celebrated annually in the honour of Devi Kamakhya at the Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati, Assam.

8. Lathmar Holi of Uttar Pradesh: Translating as "hitting with sticks," the festival is celebrated before Holi in the neighbouring towns of Nandgaon and Barsana near Mathura.

9. Transgender festival of Koovagam, Tamil Nadu: For 15 days in May and April, India beholds the largest festive gathering of transgender and transvestite individuals at Koovagam in Tamil Nadu.

10. Sankirtana dance of Manipur: The Sankirtana dance is practiced by members of Manipur's Vaishnav community at the center of a temple, where performers narrate the life and deeds of Krishna.

11. Wazwan, the royal cuisine of Kashmir: Many have called Kashmir heaven on earth, but only those who have visited know that there's so much more to the region than otherworldly valleys and pashmina shawls. Wazwan is less a cuisine and more a tradition among Kashmiris.

12. Kumbh Mela: The Kumbh Mela (fair) is the world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims. It rotates between these four pilgrimage destinations in a 12-year cycle: Haridwar, Allahabad, Nashik, and Ujjain.

13. Karva Chauth: This unique custom that is common across northern parts of India is observed in the month of October solely by married women. During the day of the Karva Chauth, married Hindu women fast from daybreak until sunset without touching so much as a drop of water.

14. Theemithi: Performed a week before Deepavali (Diwali) in the Tamil month of Aipasi, the Theemithi is one of the most difficult rituals in Tamil culture.

15. Maatu Pongal: While the popular and more controversial ritual associated with this festival is the Jallikattu or bull taming,

16. Sweet-Pongal: Tamil people celebrate Pongal with a sweet dish known as Sakkara Pongal and propitiate gods by feeding and praying to cows.

17. Lathmar Holi: This tradition, which is popular in certain parts of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, is observed during the festival of Holi and involves the married women of the Hindu community literally beating their husbands with a long and thick stick!

18. Ghunghat: As far as followers of western customs and traditions are concerned, the Ghunghat is one of the most bewildering customs in India. While Ghunghat simply relates to a face veil that is worn by Hindu women,

19. Naga Sanyasis of Kumbh Mela: Associated with the purest form of asceticism, the naga sanyasis of North India are a community of saints and sadhus who forsake the material world for a life amongst nature and devotion to God.

20. Digambar Jains: Another group of ascetics known for their disdain for clothing are the Digambar Jains.

21. Saraswati Puja: The Saraswati Puja festival of Navaratri is a day celebrated in South India in honour of the goddess of knowledge and the arts, Saraswati.

22. Eating on the floor: You will find that most temples in the country, particularly in South India, serve meals to visitors on the floor. Hindu devotees sit on the floor cross legged with their plates (or banana leaves if in the southern half of the country) out of which they eat.

23. Aadi Festival, where devotees smash coconuts on their heads: The 800-year-old Mahalakshmi Temple in Karur district of Tamil Nadu is host to a peculiar tradition during the Hindu Tamil festival of Aadi.

24. Theyyam, or the dance of the gods: Called 'the dance of the gods', the Theyyam in Kerala involves the performance of a dance and various rituals by certain locals who are at the time of Theyyam considered to be possessed by a certain god. Considered thousands of years old, this ritual is performed in local shrines and sometimes at various households.

25. Dropping infants from the roof for good luck: Observed in a handful of places around the country is the controversial and terrifying ritual of dropping infants from a height of 50 feet onto a cloth held by a few men at the bottom.

26. Serpent worship: Nag Panchami is a Hindu festival celebrated by the worship of snakes observed in some parts of the country. In Hindu culture, serpent blessings are sought to bring peace and welfare to the family. The village of Baltis Shirale near Mumbai is said to host one of the grandest snake worship ceremonies in the country, boasting of visitors coming from around the world to witness and pay respects.

27. Marrying animals for better monsoons: Seen mostly in rural Meghalaya, Assam, Maharashtra, and Karnataka is the rather unusual ritual of marrying animals - mostly frogs - in order to please the rain gods.

28. Dahi Handi, the human pyramids of Janmashtami: The Dahi Handi ritual, which is widely organized during the Hindu festival of Janmashtami, involves organized groups of mostly young people climbing atop each other to form human pyramids aiming to reach and break a pot of butter suspended at a height of 20 feet.

29. Immersing idols in water: A lot of major Hindu festivals in the country are celebrated by households, temples, and offices getting custom-made idols of various gods which they honour with various rituals over a span of day. The festival then comes to an end with the idols getting immersed in a nearby body of water. From Ganesh Chaturthi to the Durga Puja festival, this is a much hyped practice in some parts of the country.

As made clear in this article, India is a land nurturing innumerable cultural practices and customs & traditions and quite a few of them would leave outsiders rather curious. But the crux of Indian society, Culture and Traditions have always been to be full of humility, well mannered, polite, respect others, and progress together.

TRADITIONAL PROFESSIONS IN INDIA

- Sourced by P.N.Savitry



India has always been a pool of talents- some having knowledge/learning background and others good in skills. In ancient India there was work Employment, dignity and labour for all. There was no dearth of employment opportunities for persons willing to work.

Usually everyone was busy in one's own traditional/hereditary occupations. India is set apart from many world cultures as the art and craft in this country is actually considered a way of life, rather than a mere profession.

Some of the traditional professions of India are

Blacksmith, Charkha Weaver, Basket weaver, Cobbler, Carpenter, The Scribes of Old Delhi, The Knife Grinders, The Rudaalis of Rajasthan, The Ear Wax Cleaners, The Genealogists of Haridwar, The Ittarwallas, The Potters, The Letter Writers, Snake Charmers, The Bear and Monkey Show, Priest/Purohit

Among these many are the dying professions of India that are almost on the verge of death but no one can take away their old world charm from them. With the takeover of technology, we realize that we don't really need their services anymore. The speed at which technology is taking over means that various traditional professions are dying out. The 'professionals' we once hunted down for often find themselves with little or no work. Here we discuss about two ancient professions which are quite prominent even in modern times

Pottery

Pottery in India is considered as one of the most iconic elements of Indian regional art. Not just its history, but its exquisite beauty and chic features have made pottery, a modern form of Indian decor. Evidence of pottery in India dates back to Indus Valley Civilization. There was a time when pottery was taken as the main source of income for the traditional Indian business class

Being a primarily agricultural country, pots for storage of water and grains were always in demand. Rectangular ovens for firing the product were in use right back then. Seals and grain and water containers were made that were put to use effectively too. The potter occupies pride of place in the Indian art milieu. Indian pottery is rich, colourful and diverse, just like the country herself!

Modern India calls pottery as **Terracotta**. Though the Terracotta is a certain kind of material which is used to design different kinds of home decor items, pottery has also become a part of Terracotta handicrafts. The art of pottery has been included in the course curriculum of interior designing and sculpture paintings. The ancient art of pottery has today become a chic and modern way to design and decorate traditional Indian homes and also re-entered the kitchens. The touch of Terracotta Handicrafts creates an ambiance of warmth inside the home.

The art of pottery is also described as therapeutic and relaxing. While spinning clay, the mind and body are in natural synergy, wrapped around ones' creative ambitions and goals. This thoughtful, artistic activity can open up the mind and relieve the person of outside worries.

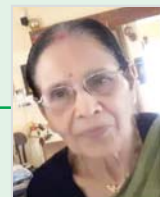
Priest/Purohit

Rituals are an essential part of Indian lives. Whether it is a happy occasion or a sad one, a traditional ritual is a must. The authentication of successful completion of an event is by the procedure followed. One of the oldest professions which occupies a prominent place in the modern times in Indian tradition and culture is "Purohit"

In Indian religious context **Purohit** means a family priest, originated from Sanskrit **Purohita**, and translated as: one placed foremost, from Puras meaning front, and hita, placed. The word is also used synonymously with the word pandit that also means a priest. Rajpurohit is a term used to denote a priest for a royal family or a king who was the authorized person that carried out rituals for the royal family. They were also advisors to the kings and no king would attack other kingdom without consulting with Purohit. Purohiths which site on ford of the holy rivers or holy tanks, which maintained the records of the forefathers of the Hindu Family from thousands years back is known as **Tirth Purohiths**. The family priest/purohit, as the term suggests, is closely associated with that particular family. Family priests are not only considered as a medium to the Divine, but also a friend, philosopher, advisor of the family and thus becoming a part of every Hindu family.

HORNBILL- FESTIVAL OF NAGALAND

Ila Pal



The Hornbill festival of Nagaland has become one of the most important tourism events, not only in India but also world wide. It is acclaimed as one of the best events for showcasing rich Naga culture and tradition, preserved over the years in the form of music Dance Food and culture .It is held at Kisama.it portrays the love and determination of the Naga people for preserving tradition and culture which is the hallmark of our identity.

Hornbill is named in collective reverence to the bird enshrined in the cultural ethos of the Naga to espouse the spirit of unity in diversity.

Spirits that roam the jungles and villages, the fertility of mother earth, Social bindings among communities, purification and rejuvenation are the main elements that form the souls of the festivals of the Naga people. Each tribe that inhabits the land has its own culture and festival's.



NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES

KARTHIKA MASAM AT UKKUNAGARAM



- A. Hanumakumari

My name is A HanumaKumari. I lived in Ukkunagaram for more than twenty five years. I was working in JyotiBalaVihar, Sector 5. Now I live at Madhurawada. I am writing this article during the month of *Karthika* about its sacraments. In Telugu calendar year, the month *Karthika* is given great importance by our ancient Hindu sages to worship Lord Siva and also Lord *KarthikaDamodar* (lord Vishnu). During entire month of *Karthika* people rise before dawn, take bath with a prayer to washout all the sins and attain *mukthi* (salvation). They also light *diyas* near *Tulasi* and perform pujas at home and also at temples, participate in *bhajans* and perform various charitable activities.

I would like to reflect my activities during the holy month *Karthika* at Ukkunagaram .The Steel Township is an abode of temples. The atmosphere in township is always fully charged with spirituality especially during the month of the *Karthika* from the dawn after the crackling *Diwali* night. My husband and I used to get up before dawn, take head bath and light *diya* near *Tulasi*. After that both of us used to perform *Rudrabhishekam*. On every Monday I used to fast and go to Siva temple to light *diyas* and worship.

On *Nagulachaviti* my family used to perform *Naga puja* near ant hill (snake pit) and seek blessings of the lord *Subrahmanyam*. Many families used to go to *Tri sakthi temple* to perform *Naga puja*. Other auspicious days in this holy month are *Ekadasi* and *Ksheerabdidwadasi*. I used to fast on *Ekadasi* do *Vishnu puja* and on the next day evening I used plant new *Tulasi* saplings and

perform *Tulasi* and *Karthika Damodarapuja*. In the puja the main aspect is lighting many *diyas* around the *Tulasi* pot and which was a spectacular sight to see. I used participate in *Jyothirlingaarchana* at *Lord Siva temple* on Monday evenings.

Another auspicious day is the *Karthika Purnima*. On this day my family used to fast and in the evening after the rise of the full moon perform puja at home and go to *Siva temple* where we used to pass through *Jwala Toranam* (garland of fire) along with the Lord Siva and his consort in palanquin. There each one of us used to light of a bundle of 365 wicks soaked in cow ghee.

Another great event I remember is *Karthika Vana Bhojanam* community lunch under trees in a park. We used to have lot of fun and good lunch under trees. The unforgettable event at Siva Temple is *karthika samaradhana*, i.e. the community lunch. It was mostly arranged by the temple on the second or third Sunday of the *Karthika*. Thousands of devotees used to take lunch blessed by the lord *Siva* in a highly disciplined manner with devotion. At *Ayyappa Swami temple* we used hear regularly the *Sarana Ghosha*, *Swami Ye Sharanam Ayyappa* during pujas.

I used to be busy throughout the *Karthika* month in sacred activities with devotion and faith as mentioned. I never used to know how quickly those serene days used to pass. However, there were many spiritual activities in which I used to participate, but the above are a few I remember. My life at present is not as it was at *Ukkunagaram*. I miss a lot.

SEEMANTHAM



KVS Valli

Meaning: Seema- Border, Antham-Crossing, crossing the Border of the village of in-laws and going to parents house for giving birth to Baby.

Motherhood is a sweet experience and it is a celebration for the parents of the going -to-be parents.

During First time pregnancy , when the girl enters into 5th or 7th month pregnancy, the Seemantham Ritual is done at her in-laws house. 18 Rishis are mentioned in the importance of this ritual in Holy Granthas.

Parents of the girls come to their Sambhandis (daughter's in-laws) house with 5 varieties of fruits, 5 varieties of sweets, 5 varieties of Soubhagya items like Turmeric, Kumkum, Chandan, Flowers and Bangles. The Pregnant girl should wear saree which her parents bring for her. She will be dressed up by elderly

ladies of the family. The bangle seller (Gajula Mallaram) is invited. He has to come with all colour Bangles and puja will be performed placing all the Bangles along with other items to be given to the mother in waiting. Seniority-wise, all Suhagan women will slip two bangles each into the hands of the girl and bless her. In this way total 32 Bangles to right hand and 32+2 to the left hand, 2 extra Bangles are Black bangles to avoid Naradristi to the Pregnant girl. The scientific reason behind this tradition is, that there is direct relation between hands and Abdomen. Due to more Bangles in the hands some tension takes place in the Abdominal area which is good for Baby, as well as for the mother which leads to easy Delivery. Our ancestors have made so many wonderful traditions which are scientific too. We should really honour it.

हमारे अपने

उक्कुनगरम निवासी श्रीमती उमा जी एक सामान्य सी गृहिणी हैं, जो आज से कुछ साल पहले तक माइग्रेन और अन्य कई बीमारियों से पीड़ित थीं। लेकिन अपनी दृढ़ इच्छाशक्ति से किए गए व्यायाम व योगासनों से उन्होंने अपनी सारी बीमारियों को आज परास्त कर दिया है। आज उमा जी का जीवन बहुत से लोगों के लिए अनुकरणीय है। प्रस्तुत है इस संबंध में उनके साथ बातचीत के अंश:



स्पर्क: आपको व्यायाम करने की प्रेरणा कहाँ से मिली?

उमा: मैं माइग्रेन से बहुत परेशान थी। रोज छः गोलियाँ लेती थी। अपने को ठीक रखने के लिए बहुत कोशिश करती थी। लेकिन सफलता नहीं मिल पा रही थी। फिर वाकिंग करना आरंभ की। इसी के दौरान तृष्णा ग्राउंड में एक महिला से मुलाकात हुई, जो वहाँ कुछ व्यायाम करती थीं। मैं उन्हें देखकर बहुत प्रभावित हुई। मैंने उनसे कुछ व्यायाम सिखाने का निवेदन किया। लेकिन उन्होंने 'मैं एक्स्पर्ट नहीं हूँ' कह कर ऐसा करने से सीधा मना कर दिया। फिर भी मैं उनसे कुछ जानने का प्रयास करती रही। उनके पति सेना में थे। उनके बताए अनुसार ही वे व्यायाम करती थीं।

एक दिन उन्होंने अपने पति से मिलाया। उस सर से मैंने जब कुछ व्यायाम बताने के लिए कहा तो, वे खुश हुए और प्रोत्साहित भी किया। उन्होंने मुझे तृष्णा ग्राउंड के भीतर तीन-चार चक्कर दौड़ लगाने के लिए कहा। एक-दो दिन दौड़ लगाने के बाद मेरे घुटनों में सूजन आ गया। मैंने यह बात उन्हें बताई। फिर उन्होंने अपने घुटनों, जिनमें से एक में सूजन था, को दिखाते हुए कहा कि कोई बात नहीं, आप दौड़ लगाते रहिए। मैं उनकी बात मानकर अपनी दौड़ जारी रखी। एक दिन उन्होंने मुझे तृष्णा ग्राउंड के बाहर वाली सर्किल के चार चक्कर लगाने के लिए कहा। मैं वह भी करने लगी। इस बीच मालूम नहीं, मेरी माइग्रेन कब और कहाँ चली गई। उस सर ने मुझे समय पर और नियमित रूप से व्यायाम करने के लिए कहा और मैं उन्हें ही अपना प्रेरणा स्रोत मानती हूँ।

स्पर्क: क्या अब आपने व्यायाम छोड़ दिया है?

उमा: जी नहीं, बल्कि और बढ़ा दिया है और अपने जीवन में बहुत बदलाव ला दी हूँ।

स्पर्क: थोड़ा विस्तार से अपनी दिनचर्या बताएँ।

उमा: मैं सुबह साढ़े तीन से चार बजे के बीच उठती हूँ, दौड़ते हुए कूर्मन्नपालेम जाती हूँ और फिर वहाँ से वापस आती हूँ। यह मेरा रोज का काम है। अब तो हल्का-फुल्का योगाभ्यास भी करती हूँ। हमारे खान-पान में भी अब बहुत बदलाव आ गया है। मैं तेल का बिल्कुल भी उपयोग नहीं करती। तेल की जगह नारियल या मूँगफली के जूस का उपयोग करती हूँ।

स्पर्क: इतनी सुबह बाहर निकलने में आपको डर नहीं लगता?

उमा: जी नहीं, एक बार पुलिस पिकेटिंग वालों ने भी मुझसे इसी प्रकार का सवाल किया, पर मैंने उनसे कहा कि जब आप ही मुझे डराएंगे तो फिर हमारी रक्षा कौन करेगा? फिर वे मुझसे सहमत हो गए और अब मुझे कोई टोकता नहीं। कभी-कभी छोटी-मोटी सामाजिक समस्याएं आती हैं, लेकिन मैं उन्हें नजरंदाज कर देती हूँ।

स्पर्क: आपके जीवन का लक्ष्य कुछ है?

उमा: जी बहुत तो नहीं। लेकिन मैं शिक्षित बनना चाहती हूँ। मूलतः मैं 6वीं तक ही पढ़ी थी और एक सामान्य सी गृहिणी थी। लेकिन जब मुझे लगा कि मुझे पढ़ना चाहिए तो अपने पति के सामने इच्छा जाहिर की। उन्होंने तो अनुमति दे दी, लेकिन कई लोग कहने लगे कि अब इस उम्र में पढ़ाई? फिर भी मैं हतोत्साहित नहीं हुई और अपने रास्ते पर चलती रही। आज मैं ग्रेजुएट हूँ और योगा में डिप्लोमा कर रही हूँ।

स्पर्क: मैडम! विस्टील महिला समिति नववर्ष की शुभकामनाओं के साथ आपके उज्ज्वल भविष्य की कामना करती है।

हमारे अपने

ज्योतिष एक बहुत ही प्राचीन एवं लोक विश्वास की विधा है। इसे शास्त्र के साथ-साथ विज्ञान की श्रेणी में भी देखा जाता है। वाइजाग स्टील परिवार में श्री नेमानी लक्ष्मण राव जी वायर रॉड मिल में उप महाप्रबंधक के रूप में कार्य रत श्री एन श्रीनिवास शर्मा के पिता है। स्पार्क के प्रतिनिधि ने ज्योतिष विषय पर उनसे संक्षिप्त वार्ता की। प्रस्तुत है उसके कुछ अंश:



स्पार्क: ज्योतिष क्या है? इसके बारे में कुछ बताएँ।

श्री राव: यह एक विज्ञान है, जो मनुष्य के जन्म-समय व स्थान के अनुसार ग्रहों व नक्षत्रों की स्थिति व प्रभाव का आकलन/गणना के आधार पर भविष्यवाणी की जाती है। यह एक महासमुद्र जैसा विज्ञान है। इस विज्ञान की प्रमाणिकता के लिए ज्योतिषाचार्य के ज्ञान के साथ-साथ उस पर ईश्वर कृपा का होना भी बहुत जरूरी है।

स्पार्क: क्या पॉमिस्ट्री, न्यूमेरिकल्स एवं फेस रीडिंग भी ज्योतिष की ही शाखाएँ हैं?

श्री राव: जी हाँ, ये सब भी ज्योतिष के ही अंग हैं। हस्तरेखाओं की स्थिति, हथेली पर बने माउंड्स के अनुसार गणनाएं की जाती हैं। इन सभी विद्याओं में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण ईशकृपा का होना भी है। यदि व्यक्ति के ऊपर ईशकृपा नहीं है, तो उसे उसके भाग्य का पूरा लाभ नहीं मिलता है। इसी प्रकार यदि बताने वाले के भाग्य में ही कमी है, तब भी उसकी बातों और गणनाओं में कमी हो सकती है। इसलिए ज्योतिष की भविष्यवाणियाँ 75-80% ही सच होती हैं।

स्पार्क: आपने ग्रहों व नक्षत्रों से बचने के लिए कुछ उपायों (रिमेडिज) की बात है, क्या ये उपाय मनोवैज्ञानिक उपचार के तौर पर किए जाते हैं या इनका कुछ शास्त्रीय मूल्य है?

श्री राव: ये उपाय मनोवैज्ञानिक उपचार तो बिल्कुल ही नहीं हैं। इनका शास्त्रीय महात्म्य है। इनके माध्यम से ईश्वरीय कृपा मिलती है और मनुष्य के जीवन की बाधाएँ कम होती हैं।

स्पार्क: हमारी कंपनी और विस्टील महिला समिति की भलाई के लिए आप ईश्वर से क्या कहेंगे?

श्री राव: मैं रोज अपनी प्रार्थना तथा सूर्य को अर्घ्य देते समय सबके मंगल की कामना करता हूँ। मैं ईश्वर से प्रार्थना करता हूँ कि आपकी कंपनी का खूब विकास हो, सभी लोग सुख व शांति से रहें। साथ विस्टील महिला समिति के सदस्यों के प्रति भी आभार व्यक्त करता हूँ।

स्पार्क टीम श्री लक्ष्मण राव जी के स्वास्थ्य और सुखमय जीवन की कामना करती है।

INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCES

- Compiled by PN Savitry



India has thousands of year old tradition of fine arts and classical and folk music and dances. Some of the world-famous dance forms that originated and evolved in India are Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam and Odissi. All these dance forms use basically the same 'mudras' or signs of hand as a common language of expression and were originally performed in the temples to entertain various Gods and Goddesses. They were also effective in carrying forward the various mythological stories from generation to generation while entertaining the audiences. It eventually became a part of 'NatyaShashtra', as propounded by Sage Bharata to compile and forge some rules and regulations of entertaining arts.

With time, the classical dances evolved to include the expressions and themes from social life and experiences. Lord Shiva is said to be the 'Nataraja' meaning 'King of All Dances', who is said to perform the Cosmic Dance that delicately balances life and

death and all that is happening in the Universe in harmonious cycles. Bharatnatyam, popular in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, is said to be revealed by Lord Brahma to Bharata. Kathak is the art to tell a story and is a form of North Indian classical dance. Later, it became courtly entertainment.

Kathakali from Kerala makes use of colorful masks and costumes and belongs to Kerala. Kuchipudi is the dance drama of Andhra Pradesh that combines Natya, Nritta and Nritya. Manipuri, as the name suggests, is from Manipur, the Northeastern state of India, and is a combination of many dances prevalent in the region. Mohiniattam from Kerala is a solo female dance and is known for its rhythmic and unbroken flow of the body movements. Odissi from Orissa is a dance of love, joy and intense passion.

reaching out



OCT MGT: SPARK RELEASE



VMS arranged Dandiya as a part of Navratri celebrations.



NOV MGT: On 16th Nov children's day was celebrated by conducting Fancy dress competition to children of VMS members.

**Winners of fancy dress competition are
1st :SivangiSammaddar, 2nd : Rajeev Rohit ,3rd : Prerna.**

For VMS ladies a sweet dish competition was conducted. Winners of sweet dish competition were: 1st :Sushma , 2nd: SoumiSammaddar.



A picnic was organised by VMS for its members at SwarnaJayanthi park in township premises on 8th December



Celebrated Gandhi Jayanathi at Mahatma Gandhi park in township premises on Oct 2nd.



Sanitary napkins were distributed to girl students of VVV School on Oct 2nd.

PROJECT UNNATI



PROJECT AKRUTHI



Furniture repair work and distribution of dual desks at Islampeta Urdu medium school on Nov1st.



Distribution of certificates to women at tailoring classes on completion of their course on Nov 2nd at Jajulavanipalem.



Farewell to BindooMohapatra madam was given on 29th November at VMS building.



JUNOON KE RAAHI - 3

Thanks to an ever-growing craze among students to join the Engineering, Medical and IT sectors and the lure of a quick and easy settlement, albeit a compromised one, institutes offering pure science subjects have been witnessing a dwindling number of takers for their courses, despite an increasing demand for pure science graduates in the field of research and development (R&D). A career path that has an established and a rich legacy to live up to, is now finding itself losing out to a horde of other careers which offer a quick fix solution to aspirant's need of professional growth and prosperity. Experts say, the Central government's scholarships and schemes to encourage the study of pure Sciences have elicited lukewarm response due to a lack of awareness among students on the scope of the field.

Unlike the myth that pure Sciences offer few lucrative avenues, experts say the scope for those studying Science subjects is extensive today. Graduates for instance can get employment in state and central research organisations, work in the R&D wings of private and public sectors or pursue a career in academics. There are several avenues for pure science graduates in the field of Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics with exciting opportunities in both the research and development industry and the academia. With the emerging need of inter-disciplinary solutions for the problems plaguing every industry, the role of pure science graduates becomes even more important. The pure science graduates and their research find application in various fields ranging from genetics and polymers to space research and renewable energy.

Besides, the Central Government in the past few years has been very supportive towards students pursuing courses in pure Sciences. INSPIRE (Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research), a programme launched by the Union Department of Science and Technology in 2008, aims at motivating students to pursue a career in pure Sciences right from the school level continuing into the under-graduate and graduate level. Various institutes of national importance like IISER's and other institutes are being established in different locations of the country and many pure Science courses are being introduced in IIT's and NIT's as well, to promote the students towards a career in research.



In this edition of Spark, let us cruise along with Mr. Ankit Swaraj on a remarkable career journey, sailing against many headwinds and difficulties. A journey that teaches us to rise from the ashes of the failure, a journey that teaches us to believe in the power of destiny, a journey that highlights the lengths to which the human mind travels in pursuit of Knowledge. What's more? He's a matter of great pride for all the residents of Ukkunagaram.



What were the "Hatke decisions" that you took in your early years?

I wouldn't call my decisions 'Hatke', as some of them were just my way of responding to the 'Jhatke' (challenges) I came across in my life (smiles). I too grew up preparing for the marathon race of making it to the elite IIT's, most revered modern-day Shrines for parents and children alike. I failed in my first attempt to make it, so I put in one more year to give it another shot. I did make it to IIT, but I was unable to land a seat in the photo-finish equivalent branches of Computer Science or other core disciplines, so near yet so far. At that juncture, I got a call from IISER-Pune, offering a 5yr dual degree course in pure Science and that was my first glimpse into the world of pure Sciences and a research-oriented career that was very different from the lucrative and popular engineer life I grew up preparing for. But at that moment, I felt compromising on a subject with which I needed to spend a major share of my future, just for the sake of an institution's brand and reputation was not a wise decision, so I chose to accept the offer from IISER-Pune and that I must say was one defining moment of my life. Just ten days into IISER, I got a call from IISc-Bangalore, offering a 4-year bachelor's programme in Science along with research. With the insights gained from my brief stay at IISER and the historic reputation of Indian Institute of Science-Bangalore, it didn't take long for me to make my decision and that's where everything else began.

How did you deal with the 'Jhatka' of having to transform from an aspiring engineer into a research graduate in pure Sciences?

It was exciting, yet very difficult, owing to the attitudinal shift that I had to bring about in my approach to education. I was required to shift my approach from being a problem solver to becoming an intent observer and learner. The current education system at the +2 level, rears the children on a pedigree of concept and formulae that can be used to solve the most complex problems of the world amidst a huge competition. At IISc, we were encouraged to deal with things at a relaxed pace, we could dabble with the subject, get lost in its depths and just enjoy the company of it. Rather than training the young minds to travel in a pre-meditated and well-defined path, we were allowed to venture into the wilderness of the subject and fish out unexplored vistas of knowledge, with the teachers playing the role of an experienced co-traveller offering their bits of wisdom whenever one feels lost. The transition took time in coming, so the first three semesters were very difficult, but then, "when the going gets tough, the tougher get going", I put in a lot of hard work to get accustomed to the system and I started enjoying the fruits of it in the later semesters.

So, what's so pure and unique about the bachelors' program in pure sciences?

Engineering, Medicine or any other streams of education currently in existence are more of an Applied Science. The pure sciences or the basic sciences are the fundamental roots on which the Applied Sciences are built up. The basic sciences are more concerned with unearthing the reasoning behind every scientific phenomenon that occurs around us while the applied sciences utilise the learnings of the pure

sciences to cater to a specific need or address a certain problem. Pure Sciences have various branches like Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Astrophysics, Earth Science, Environmental Sciences, etc. For the first three semesters, one must study all the subjects like Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and even Biology, which wasn't a part of my curriculum in Intermediate. From 4th semester onwards, one has the freedom to choose the subject that one wants to major in. After 3 years of education, the fourth year is spent in pursuing Thesis in the chosen major. At IISc, we also have a great liberty to do multidisciplinary courses running up to almost 50% of the electives and shift career paths if we wish to.

So many subjects, so different from one another and such in-depth learning of each would demand a lot of time and dedication?

Well yeah it does, but if you manage to climb up that hill, you get breathtakingly clear view of your interests and the way forward in life is revealed to the self with extreme clarity and freedom. In my own case, I dabbled with many majors like Physics, Biology and ultimately realised that my interest lies in Earth and Environmental Science. There was a project I took part in my 2nd year involving a study on the Bellandur lake in Bangalore, the project wasn't successful, and I carried home the message home that it wasn't my cup of tea. The course structure of the institute provides sufficient time and encouraged me to explore the different avenues to zero-in on the path I felt comfortable travelling through. As a result, thanks to wonderful teaching of one of our Earth Sciences faculty, Mrs. Kushalaha Rajender who works on Paleoclimatology, I developed an interest in Earth Sciences and I approached my faculty advisor expressing my interest in studying about the climate change. That kickstarted a great journey in my life.

Could you please share about this journey with our readers as well?

After expressing my interest to pursue research in climate-change, my professor gave me a project in Biology, so you can appreciate the inter-disciplinary nature of the course. I wasn't exactly comfortable with it, but then I put in extra effort to understand the stuff. In my fourth year at the institute, my professor provided me with an opportunity to go on-board a month-long cruise ship that was carrying out research in Bay of Bengal. It turned out to be a remarkable research experience for a young science graduate fresh out of a college, eager to gain hands on experience. Battling sea sickness and tough conditions, having many bright scientific minds of the country for company, I could conduct my experiments on Carbon Bio-Geo Chemistry and got some good results out of the study. My research work was well appreciated by my professors back at the institute and led him to recommend me for a prestigious research expedition to the Antarctic to carry out some studies on the Southern Ocean.

Career going South is bad in normal parlance, but not in your case we see?

(Laughs) You could say so! The moment was a dream come true, for I always dreamt of taking part in such an expedition ever since I heard about them being conducted regularly, during my visit to National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) & National Centre for Antarctic and Oceanic Research - Goa, as a part of an educational trip. So, you can imagine my happiness on being the select few Indians to go on an all-expenses paid 3-month long research expedition to the Southern Ocean. It was a remarkable experience both professionally and personally, spending such a long time away from land, in the company of many accomplished individuals, going to a place where very few people ever get the chance to visit and gaining a richly rewarding research experience. We conducted experiments on the Dissolved Inorganic Carbon (DIC) and Multi Plankton net available in the oceanic water of the region extending from 40 degrees to 68 degrees South on latitude which was in all 2200 KM down south into the Southern Ocean from Mauritius. The Antarctic regions starts from 66 degrees South on the latitude and so yeah, we were in the Antarctic region for about 20 days conducting research. The sight of an iceberg estranged from the Antarctic land mass which travelled up all the way from 66 degrees to 58 degrees South travelling 1400 KM, where we sighted it, left us ruing about the reality of global warming right in front of our eyes. The rich and rare flora and fauna of Antarctic was a lesson in itself about survival in the face of difficulties. The near-death experience of surviving a cyclone in the middle of ocean, humbled me and changed my perspective towards life entirely and I am more thankful to the life's gifts that come in my way now.



Where to from here, how do you want to settle in life?

Frankly, there are many doors opening out to me, I could sit for placements or go ahead on the academic path. Currently I am working on two Science papers which are almost finished and are likely to be published in International Science journals, I am also planning on going abroad to complete my masters and doctoral studies and after gaining some more experience, I would be very happy to settle down as an academician back here in India, try and inspire a few more onto the path of Science. Oh yeah, in the meanwhile, I am also preparing for an expedition up north to the Arctic circle as well, completing the circle, quite literally! But yeah, there are quite a few options available for a pure Science student graduating out of good colleges, be it in the job market or academia, both in India and abroad.

Any regrets so far, or you wish some things happened differently?

(Smiles) I cannot say that everything I wish for would have been in my best interest. At one point getting into a premier course at IIT was the only thing I wished for, but that would have denied me every experience that I hold very dear today. So that's life, sometimes you feel you missed out, but eventually you realise it was all for some greater good.

What would you advice to youngsters who are setting out on a similar path?

I think patience and perseverance are two virtues that are greatly needed in this kind of career. Anybody with an inquisitive mind and an inclination towards understanding the fundamentals can aspire to take up this course. On a personal front, I would suggest youngsters to go for a career in academia and research which might take a little longer for settlement than their peers who enter into the job market straight out of the college, because the quality of life and the self-respect and professional satisfaction that one gains from a career in research and academia, hardly has any parallel in this world. Short term financial gains should hardly preside over long term professional and personal satisfaction.

What are the good institutes in our country offering these courses and how does one gain entry into them?

There are many respectable institutes offering dedicated programmes in Pure Sciences, like the seven IISER's and the IISc. Some of the IIT's and NIT's are also offering five year programmes in pure sciences. Apart from these, there are many respectable central universities offering fantastic courses with very well qualified faculty and infrastructure. Many institutes have their own entrance exams, while IISER, IISc and IIT's intake their students through the JEE Mains and Advanced route. Some of the institutes have their own individual interviews in addition to the JEE.

RETRO GAMES



Sourced by Vani

MARBLES: Draw a circle on concrete with chalk. Each player selects a shooting marble which should be bigger and different to the other marbles. Place all the smaller marbles in the middle of the circle. Players take it in turns to shoot their marble out of their first with their thumb at the marble inside the circle, trying to knock the marbles out of the ring. Each player gathers the marbles they knock out of the ring. If they knock marbles out of the ring they get another go at shooting and if they don't knock any out or their shooter remains inside the ring, it's the next player's turn. Keep shooting until there are no marbles left in the ring and the winner is the player with the most marbles.

SNAKES AND LADDERS: A number of "ladders" and "snakes" are pictured on the board, each connecting two specific board squares. The object of the game is to navigate one's game piece, according to die rolls, from the start (bottom square) to the finish (top square), helped or hindered by ladders and snakes respectively.

PALLANKUZZHI: Six seeds are placed in each cup. The player starting first picks up the seeds from any of her holes and, moving anti-clockwise, places one seed in each hole. If she reaches the end of her cups she goes on the other side of the board. When the player drops her last seed, she takes the seeds from the next cup and continues placing them in this way. If the last seed falls into a cup with an empty cup following it, the seeds in the cup following the empty cup, are captured by the player.

That player then continues play from the next cup containing seeds. If the last seed falls into a cup with two empty holes beyond, she captures no seeds and her turn is over. The next player continues play in the same way.

If, after having a seed dropped into it, if a cup contains four seeds, those seeds become the property of the player who dropped the seed. The round is over when no seeds remain.

Once the first round is over players take the seeds from their stores and fill as many of their holes as possible with 6 seeds each. The winner will have a surplus of seeds which are kept in her store. The loser of the first round will be unable to fill all of her holes. These unfilled holes are marked as "rubbish holes."

In the next round play continues as before, but without the rubbish holes being included and the player who went first in the previous round going second.

During the game if a player has enough seeds to fill any of her rubbish holes, they are again used during play. The game is over when a player is unable to fill any cups with six seeds at the end of a round.

The game continues till all batsmen are out. The team changes side and continues the same way. The team with higher score wins.

जीवन एक अटल युद्ध

जीवन एक अटल युद्ध है
जीवन है एक अटल युद्ध...
तुझको लड़ना होगा।
जीना-मरना घायल होना,
अटल सत्य होगा।
बढ़ता जा तू पवन-वेग से,
रहना अडिग, सीख ले तरु से,
ज्योतिर्मय कर, निकल जिधर से,
मग छायामय, कर दे मरु के...
राहें रुक भी जाएं,

तब भी तुझको चलना होगा...
जीवन है एक अटल युद्ध,
तुझको लड़ना होगा।।
रण भेरी की तान तरंगित,
घेर खड़े, योद्धागण अगणित,
होगा तू अरिमध्य अकेला,
बदले संबंधों से शंकित,
साथ पराए देंगे,
दुश्मन कोई अपना होगा...
जीवन है एक अटल युद्ध,

तुझको लड़ना होगा।।
स्वर्ग लोक बैठा चतुरानन,
तू दिग्भ्रमित, देख जग कानन,
स्वप्न धरे के धरे रहेंगे,
इच्छाओं के महामेरु मन...
सांसें डोर झुलायेंगी,
सुख-दुख का पलना होगा...
जीवन है एक अटल युद्ध,
तुझको लड़ना होगा।।
नर सा जीव नहीं कोई उत्तम,

राष्ट्रभक्ति ही भक्ति महत्तम,
मातृभूमि की एक पुकार सुन...
मृत्यु-वरण कर अमर नरोत्तम,
जन छलकेगी जिस दिन,
तेरा गवना होगा...
जीवन है एक अटल युद्ध,
तुझको लड़ना होगा।।

संकलन: सुश्री ग्रेसी कुमारी

THE HALDI-KUMKUM DISASTER

HOW "CONVENIENCE" IS KILLING THE "NATURE"

Haldi Kumkum or inviting women and girls for tamboolam happens during several occasions each year. These are times of celebrating womanhood, give good wishes to each other for a good and happy life and show that life can be party while remembering the goddess. These are fun times where you dress up, meet other ladies and get the tamboolam bags. But when I come back home and see what I have brought home, I realize that most of it just goes to recycle bin or dry waste. Then why did I bring them at all?! The age of convenience has become an age of unnecessary consumption and killing earth. I wonder, when this change occurred!! I suppose most of us have been taken by surprise or probably have not even realized the change. Even for those of us who are religious in recycling, some of the packaging are so small that it is not even practical to separate the materials to recycle them.

Haldi-kumkum and beetle nut come in these tiny packets. Sometimes haldi and kumkum are not really haldi and kumkum but coloured powder that can cause severe reactions. Moreover most people don't use these. Why give them at all? Haldi kumkum can be offered from a bowl, why give to go. For those few who are particular about this, take a little the effort to pack kumkum in used papers and use dried whole haldi instead. Beetle nuts are

available without packing, where half or whole nuts can be purchased with zero environmental impact. Those who don't use can just compost.

The return gifts are not needed as most people don't use them. Especially the blouse pieces which come in their individual plastic wrapping that no one uses in the age of designer blouses. If you do want to give, a reusable box, a bag or a plant that will be better appreciated. The glass bangles, who wears them anyway. After all they don't match any of the dresses that we have and most times they are either too big or too small. I remember, my mom used to keep multiple sizes and colours in a pile and let the women choose themselves. Now a days, for convenience, they are prepacked into little carry bags. Now that means when it's brought home, highly likely, they are of no use. And finally carry bags. Why can't we just ask the women to bring reusable carry bags like the shops? Why give those single use plastic or polyurethane bags? If you do want to give the convenience, then give a bag that can be reused for veggie shopping or pack in old newspapers. Just a bit of effort from our sides will make a big difference. We have one earth. So, while keeping the spirit of festivities alive and kicking, let us not kick ourselves out of it!



HEALTH 'N' WELLNESS

Indian traditional Medicine-Ayurveda

Ayurveda is a system of medicine with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. The main classical Ayurveda texts begin with accounts of the transmission of medical knowledge from the Gods to sages, and then to human physicians. Ayurveda, means knowledge of life and longevity.

According to Ayurvedic science, every individual has three bodily states — **Vata**, or air and ether, which give us movement and activity; **Pitta**, or fire and water, responsible for heat, appetite and digestion; and **Kapha**, or earth and water, responsible for water and bodily fluids. When these states are in perfect balance, the individual enjoys good health; any imbalance causes disease. Ayurveda seeks to address imbalance through holistic healing. Understanding the individual is the foundation of healing.

Herbs are the heart of Ayurvedic medicine, Ayurveda, uses more than 5,000 herbs. Some of these are especially versatile and well-matched for resolving common problems we encounter today, and have become popular remedies and preventive supplements for a variety of conditions. Flowers, roots, stems and leaves of trees are processed into various forms to release their optimum potential.

Top Ayurvedic Medicine Herbs

1 - Ashwagandha : Especially helpful for anxiety, stress, and adrenal dysfunction, ashwagandha can be an alternative to anti-anxiety and antidepressant medications. It lowers inflated levels of the stress hormone cortisol, and enhances natural levels of testosterone and DHEA, hormones that help maintain overall strength and muscle mass. It also calms harmful levels of inflammation.

2 - Arjuna: Also called Terminalia arjuna, this herb relieves angina, the chest pain related to heart disease, by relaxing and widening blood vessels in a similar way to nitroglycerin. It also strengthens blood vessels and makes them more elastic, and enhances collagen levels. Arjuna can be taken to treat or lower the risk of developing heart disease.

3 -Curcumin(Turmeric extract): Best known as a powerful natural remedy for chronic inflammation, curcumin (an extract of turmeric) relieves arthritis and other pain, cleans arteries, relieves depression, helps with indigestion, and may relieve symptoms of PMS and many inflammatory conditions, such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. It's also used to reduce cancer risk and enhance cancer treatment.

4- Triphala: A classic Ayurvedic combination of three Indian herbs (haritaki, bahera, and amla), triphala is used to enhance digestion and regularity, and helps good bacteria to flourish in the gut.

5 - Amla: One of the herbs in triphala, amla is also used on its own for rejuvenation, especially in cases of anemia or a weak immune system. It can be helpful for frequent colds or flu, ongoing cough, bronchitis, or upper-respiratory tract infections. Amla is also used in conjunction with chemotherapy or radiation treatment for cancer.

6 -Boswellia(Sallaki): Boswellia is an anti-inflammatory herb used to relieve pain and other symptoms of arthritis and other "-itis" conditions, as well as for asthma, hay fever, sore throat, menstrual cramps, stomach pain, and even pimples. It can be combined with other Ayurvedic herbs.

7 - Shatavari: Although it can be used by both men and women to strengthen the reproductive system, shatavari is best known as a female tonic that balances hormones. The herb enhances fertility, reduces vaginal dryness when menopausal symptoms begin and after menopause, and reduces hot flashes.

8 - Holy Basil: As a tea, holy basil is a traditional Indian remedy for colds and flu, and is also used to relieve other respiratory infections, asthma, and seasonal allergies, and to counteract stress and anxiety. The herb is often found in combination herbal formulas.

9-Neem: A remedy for fungal, bacterial, and viral infections, neem is especially useful in preventing and treating shingles and the associated nerve pain, as well as ringworm. It should always be taken with food, as it lowers blood sugar, and can drive levels too low if taken on an empty stomach

10 -Rauwolfia(Devil pepper): Rauwolfia is a natural remedy for high blood pressure. Stiff or hardened blood vessels make blood pressure rise, and rauwolfia works by making blood vessel walls more elastic, thereby restoring healthy blood flow and pressure.

11 -GymnemaSylvestre(Gurmar): A go-to herbal remedy for elevated blood sugar and diabetes, gymnemasylvestre can also treat polycystic ovary syndrome. It reduces insulin resistance and improves metabolism of sugar and starch, and can help with weight loss. Ayurveda says "Balance in sleep, balance in food, balance in exercise, activity, sexual activity, all those things, and when you have created a balance, everything functions properly in the body."

DADI MA KE NUSKHE



BATHING A BABY IN INDIAN STYLE

Most newborn babies get a bath every morning right from birth. The baby either lies along the legs with his head towards the feet and head towards the body or is placed across the legs facing downwards. Usually, the baby is placed facing downwards when the mother wants to wash his hair. That elders believe helps babies build muscle tone, improves their skin and protects them against disease.

That must be where we get the term SQUEAKY CLEAN from. It's our culture. None of us have died from this. The mother uses home made powdered blackgram or green gram as a

scrub. Now it's accepted as a traditional beauty scrub. The baby sleeps so well after and wakes up hungry and active

India is hot all the time so it creates sweat blisters. That's why the baby needs to get light scrubs it's normal and baby has to be face down and in a bottom elevated position so that they don't suffocate. It is perfectly safe and we been doing it since our ancestors....and we don't use fancy baby soaps..all healthy options



By Indrani

Ammini Kozhakattai from South India

These are rice balls steamed and then tempered with spices

Ingredients :-

Rice flour - 2 katoris, Water- 300 ml, Ghee - about 2 tbspn, Mustard seeds- 1 tspn, Split urad dal - 1 tspn, Fresh grated coconut - 2 tbspn, Molgapodi - 1 tbspn, Red chilly powder- 1/4 tspn, Salt to taste, Hing - 2 pinches, Curry leaves- few, Dry red chilly - 2 broken into pieces

Method: Take a kadhai and keep the water for boiling...Add salt and little ghee in it... Once it boils turn off the gas....Then put rice flour in it and mix it....Close it with a lid and keep aside for 5 mins.Then later mix it again such that no lumps are there in it... Then grease your palms with ghee and make small balls...Steam them for 5 to 7 minutes.... Now take a kadhai put ghee in it....Add mustard seeds, splituraddal, then add hing, broken red chilly and curry leaves... Then add the steamed rice balls in it...Put chillypowder,milgapodi,little salt and grated coconut....Toss it such that it gets coated well.... Your kozhattai is ready.... SERVE HOT

PLASTIC CHUTNEY from Bengal

Usually in this recipe Raw papaya is the main ingredient but if not available raw mango, pineapples also can be used.

"PLASTIC CHUTNEY"- When raw papaya is cooked with sugar and lemon juice it will look exactly like transparent plastic pieces,

This chutney is very famous among Bengalis during Fall and Winter when raw papaya is available in abundance.

INGREDIENTS:

1.Raw papaya 1, 2.Cashew nut 10, 3.Raisin 15, .Lemon juice 2 tbspn, 5.Salt 1/2 tsp, 6.Sugar100g, 7.Panch phoron 1/2 tsp 8.Dry red chilli 1, 9.Mustard oil 1tsp.

PROCESS: Peel the papaya skin and after discarding the seeds cut it into thin rectangular pieces.Soak the papaya in water for 15 mnts before cooking.Heat oil in a pan and temper the oil with dry red chilli and panchphoron.Now add chopped papaya,salt and give a light mix.Cover the pan with a lid and cook on low flame for 10 mnts.The papaya will release sufficient moisture and hence no need to add water.Once the papaya pieces are soft enough add cashew nuts and raisin to it and mix lightly.Now add sugar until it dissolves completely.Add lemon juice till the gravy thickens a bit and papaya pieces turns translucent.Switch off the flame and wait for the chutney to cool down. Serve it after the meal with paporbhaja.

Rasiyadhokla from Saurashtra

For the Osaman

200 gmsTuvar dal (Arhar), 6 cups water, A large lime size ball of tamarind soaked in 1/2 cup of water, 1/4 tsp cinnamon powder, 1/4 tsp clove powder, 1/2 tsp mustard seeds, 1/2 tsp cumin seeds, 4 tbspn Gur/Jaggery, 2 tbspn fresh coconut /Nariyal grated, 7-8 curry leaves, 1/4 tsp turmeric powder, 2 green chillies, snapped into pieces, 1 dry

red chili, snapped into 2, 2 tsp ghee, 3 tbspn coriander greens and stalks, finely chopped to garnish, 7-8 pieces Khamandhokla.



Wash the dal well and pressure cook in 6 cups of water. 3 whistles should do it. Gently drain the water from the dal into a vessel. Heat the ghee in a patila. Add dry chili, mustard seeds, cumin seeds, green chili, curry leaves, cinnamon and clove powder. Add the tamarind paste to the above. Mix. Add the dal water to this and Haldi, salt to taste and gur. Boil on medium heat for about 10-15 minutes. Reduce the flame and add the grated coconut and coriander greens and stalks. Take off the flame.

Add the Dhokla

Dhokla: 1 cup Sooji or Semolina (heaped), 1 cup water, 1/2 cup yoghurt, 2 tbspn oil, 2 tsp eno (fruit salt), 1 tbspbesan (gram flour), 1/2 tsp turmeric, 1/4 tsp citric acid, 1 tsp sugar, Salt to taste.

Mix all ingredients except eno together into a smooth paste, then add eno. Pour into greased Thali and steam for 10 min on high flame. Give a tadka of rai, karipatta and Green chillies. Mix it in about 1/4 cup water, 1/4 tsp sugar 1/4 tsp salt and a good squeeze of lemon. Heat through... Then pour this panikatadka on the steamed dhokla let it rest for 20 minutes. Cut into square pieces, sprinkle with chopped dhania and grated coconut and serve.

For the Rasiyadhokla, one doesn't do the tadka.

From West Maharashtra

Bharli Karli/BharwanKarela (Stuffed Bittergourds)

Ingredients:

6 bittergourds (small variety), 3 tbspn gram flour (Besan), 3 tbspn sesame seeds, 3 tbspn dry coconut powder, 1 tsp cumin seeds, 1 tsp fennel seeds, 2 tsp red chili powder, 1/4 tsp turmeric powder, 1 tbspn coriander powder, 1 tsp cumin powder, 1/2 tsp fennel seed powder, 1/2 tsp - 3/4 tsp amchur (dry mango powder), 1 tsp garlic powder (optional), 2-3 tbspn roasted groundnuts, Salt to taste, 1 tsp fine sugar



Oil 1 tsp mustard seeds, 1 tsp cumin seeds, Dash of hing (asafoedita)

Method: Scrape any black skin on bittergourds. Keeping the ends intact, slit them vertically to remove internal seeds very carefully. (Do not cut through and through).

Wash and apply salt liberally inside of the bittergourds. Leave them aside for at least 30 minutes or more. Wash them again to remove salt. Drain all water making sure the insides of bittergourds is dry.

In a skillet, dry roast besan till fragrant (about 5-8 minutes). Remove to a plate/bowl.

Wipe clean pan and dry roast sesame seeds, cumin seeds, fennel seeds, and coconut till very lightly colored. Remove to a plate and cool. Coarsely grind them along with groundnuts in food processor.

Combine Besan with all dry powders and sugar. Add the ground mixture to Besan. Add salt to taste. Mix well. Stuffing is ready.

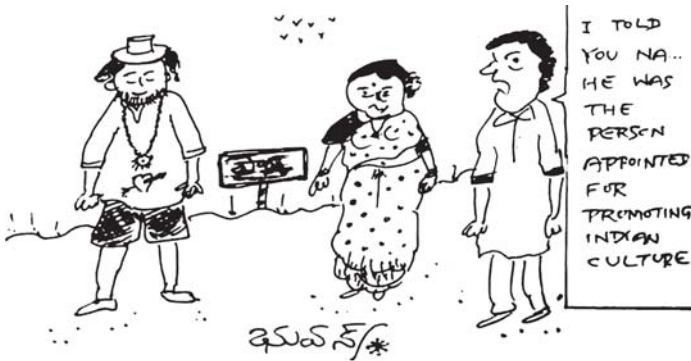
Fill the bittergourds with the stuffing and tie them well with thread.

Heat oil in pan for shallow frying. Add mustard seeds. As soon as they start popping, add cumin seeds and hing. Drop the bittergourds and cover the pan with lid.

Cook on low heat turning them over at intervals till they are evenly browned. Last few minutes of cooking, remove the lid and fry uncovered.

- Indrani Maji & Soumi Samaddar

LAUGHTER



LEISURE

1. Which festival has become one of the most important tourism events worldwide?
2. What are the three bodily states as per Ayurveda?
3. Full form of INSPIRE is...
4. What looks like transparent plastic pieces when cooked?
5. Where are temples usually built?
6. Which posture is safe for bathing babies?
7. What is Wazwan?
8. Which experiments of Ankit Kanowzia led him to the Antarctica Expedition?
9. Who did the author's family pass through the Jwala toranam with?
10. What percent of predictions is accurate in astrology?

Editorial Team

Sarada Rath

Editor-in-Chief

Satyendra

Vani Deshikachar

Gopal

V. Suguna

Bharadwaj, Savitry Srinivas,
Sushma Ekka, Namita

Aapke Raai, hamara dil behlaye...

Dear Team Spark! This is awesome. I loved the Telugu story in this edition. The title, the last "chitti ek line ki, jagaye ummed hazaar khushiyonki".

I loved everything!.

This is just awesome

- Kavya Sree

Awesome Spark... Some high quality work always and the editing n presentation is on par with commercial magazines

- Fahad Rehman

Cover page and theme selected is superb. - Girija, Chennai.

Career on hotel management was very nice. One sentence letter was good. Reciepies r looking nice. Have to give them a try.

Jyoti Pai

Spark is superb as always. SudhaNarasimhachars' her write up brought lots of memories. After my engagement I used to write letter to my mil in Tamil. It was a very nice time. We got engaged in sep1992 & marriage in Jan 1993. So my husband used to write letters to me. Remembering the beautiful memories. Sahithi's aroma of ink is very nice. She has correctly mentioned - felt hapoy and lucky to belong to that era.

- Vidya Ravi

Thank you for sharing. Theme is excellent. Refreshing and rejoicing articles. Hearty congratulations spark team.

- Dr. Gargeyi

स्पाक के पिछले अंक को देखने और पढ़ने का अवसर मिला। जैसाकि पहले से पता है कि स्पाक एक विविधतापूर्ण पठन सामग्री से भरी होती है। इस बार भी उसी तरह का उसे पाया। विस्टील महिला समिति अपने नवीनतम प्रयोगों के लिए जानी है। जो पत्रिका में प्रकाशित चित्रों के माध्यम से देखा जा सकता है।

- डॉ जे के एन नाथन

డిयर् स्पाक, श्रीवांस गारि తెలుగు కథ. నాగభూషణ గారి నైబర్లుడ్ స్టోరీస్ చాలా బాగున్నాయి. పత్రిక ప్రచురణకు సంబంధించిన అందరికీ నా అభినందనలు.

జి. రమాదేవి

స్పార్క్ పత్రికలోని అన్ని అంశాలు బావున్నాయి. ఇంటర్వ్యూలు, కథాంశాలు నన్ను బాగా ఆకట్టుకున్నాయి. ఇది నేటి తరం పత్రికలా అనిపిస్తుంది. పత్రిక ప్రచురణకు చెందిన వారందరికీ నా శుభాకాంక్షలు.

- చరణ్

Dear Readers, Please Note...

Articles for SPARK magazine may be sent to vms.spark@gmail.com or can be put in the drop box at Ukku Club. Articles of Original work with flair of creativity are valued more. While sending articles, please don't forget to mention the name of the contributor along with address and contact Ph. No. Your valuable responses & suggestions are also invited.

Rituals & Superstitions

Lighting up of Diya is my all time favourite Ritual. Lighting up of Diya is a part of Prayer. It signifies Purity, Goodness, Good Luck, and Power. The oil in the Diya symbolises negatives in the human mind, the wick symbolises Atma and lighting up of Diya's signifies getting rid of selfish thoughts. There is a shloka in Sanskrit "Thamasoma-jyotir-gamaya" means Journey from darkness to light.

Lighting up Diya's is important for all the festivals, auspicious functions and for all new ventures.

KVS Valli

అష్టమితో మొదలుపెట్టిన పనులు నాకు ఏవీ జరిగేవి కాదు. అందుకే అష్టమితో ఏ పనులు మొదలుపెట్టను.

- ఎస్ అరుణ

Giving a spoon of curd to my children before they go for any exam, thinking it will give them good luck

Indrani Maji

Romanians believe that if your nose is feeling itchy, it means someone wants to kiss you. My nose has already started itching...

Soumi Samaddar

I strongly believe that the Darshan of Lord Ganesh at Sector.1 Ukkunagaram, before starting any activity programme will give me success.

V. Rajarajeswari

I always do my work facing north only.
Sailaja

Not sleeping with head facing to the north
Kavya ARK

On Saturday I take only one meal and the other two meals of the day are given to any needy person.
Kavya.

Not to scribble/write anything on the wall, not to throw hair (hair strands moving) in the home... they attract -ve/evil spirits .
Kashmira

I fast on all the Mondays during the auspicious Kartika masam every year.
Srinivas.

Don't give anything in the shape of zero so the children don't get any, like prefer to give triangle or square parathas but no round puris or rotis.
Indrani Maji

Celebrating festivals in traditional way giving friendly touch.
Kavya ARK

I always tell my children not to go for hair cut/cut nails on Saturdays as it is supposed to be inauspicious because it brings anger to lord Shani.
Vidya Pangal

The holy month of marghazhi is my favourite time of the year because I love to chant the "thiruppavai" which is the most divine way to offer salutations to goddess Andal and lord Balaji.
- Vidya Ravi

I strongly believe Left Eye Twitching is a good Omen and when Right Eye Twitching is bad Omen for WOMEN. Right Eye Twitching is a good Omen, and Left Eye Twitching is bad Omen for MEN.
KVS Valli

Before going to bed every night I try to perceive my inner voice which says right or Wrong.
V. Rajarajeswari

పసిపిల్లలకు కనుదృష్టి బాగా తగులుతుంది.
- జి రమాదేవి

It's going to be a fruitful day if we happen to see a pot filled with water n vice versa if we see an empty pot..
Vani

Watering the holy Tulasi plant daily is my ritual.
-Savitry

Sneezing when you are going for some work Spilling of milk.
Shashwati

Never wear a new dress on Tuesday or Saturday.
Sowmya

SMART STEEL.
VIZAG STEEL.

Supporting numerous customers across industry and business segments - across the nation.



The most sought after product range...

For Safe Living Use our High Strength ✓ "VIZAG TMT" RE-BARS ✓ "VIZAG UKKU" STRUCTURALS



For details, please contact : GM (Mktg), Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd., Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Fax : 0891-2518025
www.vizagsteel.com