

# REFLECTIONS



A Hindu Cultural Center of Albany Hindu Temple Society's Newsletter devoted to the Capital District's Indian-American community particularly its seniors

## Editorial: A Newsletter for Our Community

By Ram Chugh, Ph.D.



Namaste!

Grandparents constitute an anchor for our families. They connect us with our near past and give us hope and

inspiration for our future. They pass on to us religious, cultural, moral, and social values they learned from their own grandparents. In particular, they form special bonds with their grandchildren. They share stories of their lives with them, play games, read books, laugh and even cry with them. While playing, grandparents again become children themselves. In the process, they enrich their own lives and those of their grandchildren. They become distant observers of the changing life cycle and the passage of time. They think of their own childhood and of their own

grandparents. There is then a realization that, like their own grandparents who continue to live through them, they will continue to live in the minds of their grandchildren as well. That is the reality of life.

To express gratitude and love to grandparents and what they mean to us, the United States observes a National Grandparents Day on the first Sunday in September following the Labor Day every year. This year the Grandparents Day falls on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>.

In his 2014 National Grandparents Day Proclamation message, President Obama said: "Each year, we pause to salute the grandmothers and grandfathers who strengthen our families and shape our Nation. Through decades of hard work, they have broken down barriers and blazed pathways for the generations that followed, and they continue to provide inspiration and support to their children and grandchildren. On National Grandparents Day, we

honor the anchors of our families and recognize the immeasurable ways they enrich our lives."

The Hindu Cultural Center plans to organize its own "Grandparents Day" celebration on Sunday, September 13, 2015. The details of the program and activities for that day are currently being worked out. These will be shared with our community when finalized.

**Let us take time to honor our grandparents on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Please see the REQUEST on page Six.**

This issue contains two pieces written by famous Indians, Tagore and Swami Vivekananda, and three short essays by young students from our Heritage class, Somida Oruganti, Bhargvy Ramathan, Shashank Salgam. Other contributors include Amar Chandel, Jagdish Doshi, Richa Kaushik, Kajal Lahiri, Jai Misr, and Kishan Putta.

We thank them immensely for their contributions to *Reflections*.

## Vedic Science boosts Modern Medical Science

By Ronnie Newman Ed.M., C.A.S



As a research scientist in the field of mind/body medicine, I realize that some of the most effective and

easy to adopt health promotion practices derive from the ancient Vedic tradition. This article focuses the Yogic Science of Breath (YSB), a 5000 plus year old precise science of health promotion which has been shown in independent research to enhance brain, immune, hormone, and cardiovascular functioning. Sometimes, it can be superior to standard drug therapy in the

treatment of depression, anxiety, and post traumatic stress disorder which will increase wellbeing and quality of life rapidly. It shows that its beneficial effects reach all the way down to the molecular level to a person's DNA.

How is this possible? The cutting edge medical field of PNI (psycho-neuro-immunology) provides some clues. It explains how people's health and even the very length of their lives become profoundly affected by their mental and emotional states. Chemical messengers called neuropeptides are released with every emotion. Generally, 'positive' emotions like joy and enthusiasm produce neuropeptides that influence the brain, endocrine, and immune systems in positive ways, leading to improved resistance to

### In this Issue

Editorial	----	1
Tagore's Poem	----	1
Time for second opinion	----	2
Aging Gracefully	----	2
Hinduism in the Caribbean	--	3
Jainism	----	3
Indian History	----	4
Timekeeping	----	4
My Grandparents	----	4
Kids	----	5
Vivekananda	----	5
Assocns. of Capital Region	--	6

breath through skilled use of the breath, individuals can transform their emotional states and impact whether

life supporting or life damaging chemical messengers are released.

So, what are some of the results of Yogic breathing practices? Nadi Shod (Alternate nostril breathing) has been found to calm the 'fight or flight' response, reducing heart rate and blood pressure, and promote a more relaxed state. It is also an ideal preparation for meditation. The accompanying u Tube link can instruct people in Nadi Shod if they are not familiar with it, and 5-10 minutes once or twice per day is ideal.

A breathing practice with the most comprehensive range of benefits is Sudarshan Kriya, which cannot be learned via video, but only from a qualified instructor. It can reduce the stress hormone cortisol by 50% from the first session and increase the wellbeing hormone cortisol by 33%. SK practitioners also enjoy significant reductions cholesterol and high blood pressure with no change in diet and spend 3 times as much of their sleep time in the deepest stage of sleep. More importantly, SK practitioners enjoy greater mental focus, quality of life, wellbeing, optimism, and serenity.

Indeed, the more science expands its understanding of mind/body medicine the more it validates the health benefits of ancient Vedic practices.

Ronnie Newman, Ed.M., C.A.S. is a Harvard University trained researcher and published author in the field of Mind/Body Medicine. She has presented on the subject at the United Nations, The World Bank, and the National Institutes of Mental Health. She is Director of Research and Health Promotion for the Art of Living Foundation (North America).

## Karma, Destiny, and Free Will in Hinduism

By Jai N. Misir Ph.D



*Karma* comes from a Sanskrit word which means "action". The rule states that each action has the same

reaction at present or in the future. Good actions in agreement with righteousness will have good reactions, and bad actions in agreement with unrighteousness will have bad reactions. Human beings reap the fruits of their actions in this life or in a future life. This development of rebirth becomes the continuous cycle of death and rebirth according to the law of action and reaction. At death, the *self* or *atman* is taken by a subtle body into a new physical body which can be a human or non-human form. The goal of Hindus is to free themselves from this cycle of action and reaction and rebirth.

Hinduism associates free will to *karma*, rebirth, and awareness of the *self*. Destiny connects to human beings with the results of their past actions. People use free will when they perform action at the present time, and this present action becomes destiny or past action. For instance, if humans cause others to suffer, then they will experience suffering. If they love others, they will experience love. According to Hinduism, free will becomes subject to the control of *samskaras*, the mental impressions caused by past *karmas*. Hence, people create their own destiny through thought, emotion, and deed. Therefore, free will and destiny become one, but they vary in the issue of time. **As a result, nothing like destiny runs people's lives, but karma drives them**

**to take action regarding their behavior in life.** Because the present faces all human beings, they can apply their free will and shape it. **Hinduism says that people** must dedicate themselves to free will, and by applying free will in the past, they take on the resulting destiny.

Shri Krishna states in the *Bhagavad Gita* that nature operates in people through the three *gunas* or energies. He says, "All activities are performed by the three *gunas* of nature. But the person who becomes deluded by the false identification of the body thinks, 'I am the doer.'" One can observe that people do not carry out the happenings of the world, but nature does it. This complete system consists of nature or energy which makes up the three *gunas*: goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and ignorance (*tamas*). As bubbles become a part of the water, in the same way, the body becomes a part of nature from which it is formed. Therefore, energy becomes the doer of everything. Under whatever circumstances, to gain more happiness or to lessen unhappiness, people must use their free will in the present.

Hinduism gives human beings freedom to act but lets them know what is good and bad for them. They cannot run away from their duties by faulting destiny, for destiny becomes their own creation. Furthermore, they cannot hold God responsible since he distributes the results in line with the qualities of their actions.

\*Jai N. Misir, Professor Emeritus/Hindu Priest\* He taught at Hudson Valley Community College.

## Hindu Festival Tihar in Nepal

By Mohan Thapa



The Nepali ways may not be particularly familiar to others. I live in the Albany area where about 250

Nepali people reside. Many of them come to the Hindu temple. The Hindu

traditions and rituals in Nepal are a way of life for most people like they are in India. The development of these traditions, rituals, and places of worship has been a continuous one since the beginning of Hinduism itself; therefore, the totality of it is very vast.

So, I will tell you about one festival called Diwali or Deepavali known as the festival of lights. In most of Nepal, we call this festival Tihar. We begin Tihar on the 13th day of the waning moon in the month of Kartik which begins with the new moon in November. The first day is called Kaag Tihar, which is the crow's day as the messenger of death to be honored with food and prayer. The second day is called Kukur Tihar which honors dogs as Yama's gatekeeper. Yama is said to have been the first mortal who died. The dogs are offered bread, tika, marigold garlands, and special foods. The third day is Lakshmi puja, upon which we honor cows and worship Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. The cows are given marigold garlands, and later in the evening, all households carry out their own Lakshmi puja. Big, bright lights, prasad, fruits, and sel roti are common.

On the fourth day is Goverdan Puja, and we honor oxen with garland, Prasad, and food given to oxen and symbols of oxen. Lord Krishna lifting a Goverdan hill to save people, cows, and oxen from floods is also an important image and tradition to honor. Some people may also do self puja on this day, honoring one's self and praying for good things in the future. On the fifth day, Bhai tika allows us to honor our brothers. The sisters complete special puja for their brothers and pray for long life and security from Yama. This day is very special and the sisters often prepare a long time in advance. The puja takes a long time to execute, and the brothers give presents to the sisters for their blessings and hard work. The sisters give makhamali phool mala, a globe amaranth garland, and the purple color does not fade - even when dry.

During this festival, many communities will have groups who perform special dances and bless households, asking for donations for community work. Nepalis will donate greatly during this festival.

\*Mohan Thapa was born and raised in the mid-hills of eastern Nepal. He currently lives in Troy NY with his family and he is the president of a small civil engineering company (South Col Engineering PC). Mohan has been a part of the Albany Hindu Temple congregation for the last thirty years.

## “US” Indians in the tent of Tricity Area: Albany, Troy and Schenectady

by Suman S Joshi



Assimilation describes the process of social, cultural and political integration into a dominant society and culture. The primary benchmarks are socioeconomic status, geographic distribution, second language attainment of the country and inter marriages.

We did not come here under coercion. It was our own choice to migrate in order to grow professionally by practicing our profession or for furthering education in areas we already trained in. Many opportunities beckoned us to this part of the country. We started being visible here by 1960s as physicians, scientists, engineers, professors and students for higher learning.

So let's take the panoramic view of our lives here from 1960s to 2015, four generations being alive from an infant to grandparents who are facing many changes and transformations. About 30 families then, 3000 to 4000 families now, adding people in IT and business background.

In 1960s we showed up in this area without any preparation, social and emotional. Our plan was to grow professionally, make money and return to India after spending 5 to 10 years. We found ourselves in a very different culture and felt out of tune socially and emotionally, even though in sync professionally. Often we felt lonely miserable longing for our parents, families, friends and the known culture.

Raising kids in this society was scary and unthinkable but we stayed on to bring up two generations which call themselves Indo- American with great pride. We became more at ease and

accustomed to this surrounding. India Association was formed around 1960s to be with our kind of people, to watch Hindi movies and celebrate Independent and Republican days.

During that time communication with our folks in India was very difficult at the best. We became homeowners; our children started attending public schools which was totally new experience for parents since we never had the experience of public school education as children in this tricity area.

Children bought America from our door step to the living area and the kitchen by bringing and relating with their American friends. In our tricity area there are few examples of turning these childhood friendships to full bloom marriages. Willingly, and some not so willingly, parents and grandparents started feeling more comfortable with a larger community.

Indians coming to this country in recent times already have lot of information of this county as well as friends and families. Hindu temple was founded in 1976 to meet the needs of Hindus in Tricity area. Cultural center opened its door with its own building in 2007 which has become the hub for activities of Indian culture for Indian and the larger communities which includes music, dance recitals, discourses on philosophy, yoga practice as well as Heritage class and the summer camps for children.

We have moved into the era of sharing our values, culture and expertise in a larger community. Some areas to be still ventured are political arena and mutual understanding of other faith communities. Many with Indian origin need help in some crucial areas of living as circumstances are changing. It is exciting to be present in this era where positive growth and change is in progress. Salute to all who participated and participating in this venture.

## BUDDHISM: An Introduction

By Rev. Monshin Paul Naamon



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The founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama (c. 5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE), was born in Lumbini and grew up in Uttar Pradesh. For six years he studied with several gurus or masters. After a period of especially severe ascetic practice, and rejection of that method, he attained awakening under the Bodhi Tree in contemporary Bodhgaya and became known known as the Buddha or "awakened one".

We often start the story of Gautama Buddha's awakening under the Bodhi tree. To be more accurate, Shakyamuni Buddha's awakening was a result of all the teachings to which he was exposed to previous to that experience. The awakening under the Bodhi tree was the cumulative effect of the search. In other words his awakening was a process not a single event. The recognition by Siddhartha that awakening is not found in extremes of philosophy and practice led him to preach the **Middle Way**, avoidance of extremes of austerities and sensual indulgence. All traditional forms of Buddhism believe in **Karma** and **Rebirth**, though many post-modern Buddhist reject these concepts.

The **Three Marks of Existence** provide a valuable summary of foundational teachings. These are 1.

**Anicca** (Skt. *anitya*) - impermanence. All conditioned things are in a constant state of change, 2. **dukkhā** — pain, suffering, discontentedness, 3. **Anatta** (Skt. *anatman*) - not self. There is no permanent self or soul.

The frame work of Buddhist philosophy involves **Three Jewels or Refuges**: the **Buddha** (awakening that resides within us), **Dharma** (teachings of the four Noble Truth and the Eightfold Noble Path) and **Sangha** (one looks for support, inspiration and guidance from the Buddhist community). This is the basis for formally accepting the Buddhist path and it is the first step toward Nirvana, however one defines it.

According to the earliest texts the core of Buddhism is the **Four Noble Truths**: 1. **Dukkha** – life is filled with suffering and discontentedness, 2. **Samudaya** - Causes of Dukkha, 3. **Nirhodha** - Cessation of Dukkha, and 4. **Magga** - Liberation from Dukkha by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

The **Noble Eightfold Path** is divided into: **Prajna - Wisdom** (Right View and Right Intention), **Silla - Moral Conduct** (Right speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood) and **Samadhi - Concentration** (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Meditation).

Like other Dhammic religions, Hindu and Jain, there is no single Buddhism. Some forms of Buddhism are non-theist, some include deities, but, all Buddhists accept basic tenets, such as the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Three Marks of Existence, and the Six Paramitas. However, there are basic philosophic differences between Theravada (found in South Asia), Mahayana and Vajrayana (in East and North Asia).

**Theravada** hold that their spiritual ideal requires many lifetimes and only **Arhats** (enlightened ones) attain Nibbāna (extinction of the self) after their death. **Mahayana** and **Vajrayana** assert that enlightenment is possible within a short time, even a single lifetime, however the spiritual ideal is to become a **Bodhisattva** (awakened one who returns to the *samsaric* world (endless birth and death) to work for the benefit of all sentient beings).

While the philosophy of the Buddhadharmā guides us, practice is as important, and some would say more important, than the philosophy. Practices include, depending on the form of Buddhism, meditation, chanting, use of mudra and mantra, visualizations, mandala, circumambulation, creating merit, devotional practices, calligraphy, etc. The historic Buddha asserted that one should not accept the teachings based upon authority alone, but put the teachings to the test of practice. Shakyamuni Buddha's philosophy and practices lead one to liberation from dukkha, in this life and lifetimes to come.

### Message from Dr. Swatantra Mitta, Chair, HCC Board

I felt proud and happy while reading the articles written by our community members for this issue of *Reflections*. I felt especially proud reading the short essays written by three young students from our Heritage class. *Reflections* is a community newsletter, written, edited, and formatted by members of our

community. **Rasik Shah, Richa Kaushik, and Sastri Sripada** provided valuable assistance in this effort. **Vijay Oruganti** helped design and format the newsletter. I thank them immensely for their service. Lastly but most importantly, I wish to express my deep gratitude to **Ram Chugh** for initiating this newsletter and for his tireless efforts in putting it together.

The newsletter is being sent electronically using the email lists accessible to the HCC. Some of you might get duplicate copies because you may be on several e-mail lists. You may delete any duplicates.

**Comments and story suggestions on Reflections are welcome and should be sent to Ram Chugh at: [Reflections.HCC@Gmail.com](mailto:Reflections.HCC@Gmail.com)**

## PROSTATE CANCER: MYTHS & FACTS

By K.Perumal MD.FACS



Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men and the second leading cause of cancer death in men. In the US

yearly, it affects more than 200,000 men and claims the lives of more than 32,000 men. 1 out of 6 American men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. However, there is a lot of confusion about its prevention, detection and management.

**MYTH:** No symptoms means no cancer

**FACT: False**-Typically, symptoms in prostate cancer appear once the cancer is much advanced. Do not assume that the absence of symptoms means no cancer.

**MYTH:** If dad had it, son will have it too.

**FACT: True**-Having a first degree relative with prostate cancer definitely increases one's risk of developing it, though it is not certainty.

**MYTH:** Prostate cancer does not run in my family so the odds are I will not get it.

**FACT: False-** While a positive family history doubles a man's odds of being diagnosed, a negative family history does not ensure not developing the cancer.

**MYTH:** Only old men get prostate cancer.

**FACT: False** -Though more common in older men, younger men can get it too. Screening should begin at 50 or at 40 for men at high risk for the disease. Risk factors include- race, family history, physical health and life style, and even geographic location.

**MYTH:** Supplements can prevent prostate cancer

**FACT: False-** Recent research has not shown any such benefit from supplements like vitamin E and Selenium. A healthy diet with high fiber and low fat is certainly useful in general.

**MYTH:** Pomegranate juice decreases prostate cancer risk.

**FACT: False-**Though in vitro studies supported this, it did not pass muster in vivo studies. If you are at high risk for the disease you could try it but without a false sense of expectation.

**MYTH:** Eating tomato or tomato based products prevent prostate cancer.

**FACT: False-** Recent studies have not confirmed preventive effect of lycopene, a nutrient in foods like tomato, watermelon, Guava, Pink grape fruit, Papaya and apricots. However these foods are certainly a part of a well-balanced healthy diet and are helpful in maintaining good health.

**MYTH:** Fish Oil (Omega-3 Fatty acids) decreases prostate cancer risk.

**FACT: False-** While Omega 3 fatty acids have been shown to be beneficial in many ways; they do not decrease the risk of developing prostate cancer.

**MYTH:** Vasectomy causes prostate cancer

**FACT: False-** Numerous studies have shown no increased risk of prostate cancer in men who have undergone vasectomy.

**MYTH:** Sexual activity increases the risk of developing prostate cancer.

**FACT: False-**There is no evidence that sexual frequency is related to risk for prostate cancer.

**MYTH:** New scans make biopsies obsolete.

**FACT: False-** For now, biopsy remain the only way to diagnose prostate cancer.

**MYTH:** Treating prostate cancer will end your sex life and cause urine leakage.

**FACT: Maybe-**While erectile dysfunction and urinary incontinence are possible following surgery or radiation therapy for prostate cancer, all men do not experience these complications. Many men recover erectile function following surgery with nerve sparing technique.

**MYTH:** You can pass your cancer to others.

**FACT: False-** Prostate cancer is not infectious or communicable.

**MYTH:** High testosterone levels increase the risk of prostate cancer.

**FACT: False-**Testosterone levels have no association with prostate cancer. Long term testosterone replacement treatment for patients with low testosterone (low T) does not increase the risk of prostate cancer and having a low T level does not protect against the risk of prostate cancer.

**MYTH:** A high PSA means that you have prostate cancer.

**FACT: Maybe-**An elevated PSA (Prostate specific antigen) can be due to other causes like BPH (Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia- non cancerous enlargement of prostate) or Prostatitis

(inflammation/ infection of the prostate) or even a vigorous rectal examination or riding a bike.

**MYTH:** If your PSA is low, then you do not have prostate cancer.

**FACT: Maybe-**A low PSA does not completely rule out the presence of prostate cancer.

**MYTH:** If your PSA is low then you do not need a DRE (Digital Rectal examination)

**FACT: False-** DRE is the only way for your doctor to physically examine the prostate and is an important test to be coupled with the PSA test. Finding a nodule or irregularity of the prostate gland during a DRE is often the first step towards diagnosing prostate cancer.

**MYTH:** Prostate cancer is a slow growing cancer. I don't need to worry about it now.

**FACT: Maybe-** The urologist uses the pathologist's data to characterize the aggressiveness of the cancer and make recommendation for treatment based on factors, including a patient's age and overall health status. New tests will be available to better stratify the risk of a patient diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Take home-

Know the facts-eliminate confusion. Studies support that life style decisions like a healthy diet (low fat, high fiber) and regular exercise (walking 30 minutes daily) may play a pivotal role in reducing the risk of getting prostate cancer, and surviving it if you get the disease. Talk to your family and friends about prostate cancer and, if you are over 40, talk to your physician to develop a prostate health and screening plan that is right for you.

## FINANCIAL ADEQUACY IN RETIREMENT

By Gopal Dorai, Ph.D\*



One of the major concerns for persons contemplating retirement, or those who may have recently retired, is whether their financial resources will last as long as they live. This is especially true of those who, for one reason or another, have not put away 'sufficient funds' for their golden years.

There are many ways to deal with this issue fruitfully. To do so, I will divide potential retirees into 2 distinct groups: First, those who are still employed, and plan to quit the labor force within the next 5-10 years; second, those who have already retired.

If you belong to the first group, you still have considerable control over your future financial life. Here are some steps you can take now, to ease into eventual retirement:

(1) Create a preliminary "retirement budget". Experts usually suggest 75-80% of your current expenses as a starting point. This will show how much money you will need for 20+ years, with an inflation adjustment.

(2) Determine how much your accumulated funds will grow to, by the time you are ready to retire: (there are many excellent financial calculators to help you do this, such as those available on Rowe Price/Vanguard web sites; or talk to your Human Resources/Retirement funds Custodian).

(3) Increase your pre-tax retirement contributions to the maximum possible limit—(cut your current spending, as needed, to accomplish this). Build up your funds, by delaying retirement, as long as possible.

(4) Shift a part of your investments to asset-classes which have good potential to grow (rather than stick to very conservative, slow-growth investments). This will undoubtedly involve some 'risk taking; but will provide that extra growth which will produce the income you need later).

(5) Planning is the key: you can shape your financial future the way you want—within limits—all you need is discipline and commitment. Time is on your side!

Now let me turn to the folks who have already retired.

Depending on your current age, you can do a few things to stretch and strength your retirement income. Here is the strategy.

(1) Defer taking social security, until age 70. This will provide the maximum possible social security benefit payments. Suppose you are 65, and can wait until 70 to take SS\$: for every year you delay withdrawing, your monthly payment will grow by 8%! This is a fantastic rate of return.

(2) Enroll in Medicare as soon as you are 65, even if you are NOT taking SS\$ now.

(3) Try to divide your Retirement Kitty into 2 parts: (A) will provide a fixed payment of x\$ to meet monthly "fixed expenditures"; (B) will generate variable payments for discretionary spending—travel, vacation, gifts, charitable contributions, etc. To accomplish this, you may shift funds to an "Immediate Annuity"—(A) which will provide guaranteed monthly income as long as you live. Consult 'Immediate Annuities.com' or Vanguard Funds—which provide excellent value for the money. Pick a reputable Annuity provider; also consult: AM Best for additional information.

(4) The Variable Portion of your Retirement Funds (B) can be invested in a low-cost ETF (exchange traded fund)—such as SDY—which periodically increases dividend payments. Or, again, go to the Vanguard website to pick a suitable ETF that fits your needs.

(5) Those who are in a position to utilize their human capital—knowledge, knowhow, experience, problem-solving abilities—can also supplement their incomes by finding rewarding part time work.

**Motto:** "Helping People Make Sound Financial Decisions"



## Kids: My Indian Heritage

By Aarya Kaushik\*



My Indian heritage is very important to me. Even though I am born and raised in America, my parents

have helped me stay in touch with my Indian heritage. Staying true to my ancestry gives me a strong base, where I can always branch off from easily. Knowing about my culture also gives me an identity, and makes me proud of my customs. I think that if someone is given the opportunity to learn about where they come from, they gain a lot of confidence in themselves.

Every Sunday, I attend Heritage Class at the Albany Hindu Temple. Going to Heritage Class is really fun; we sing bhajans, and learn about various important things about the Vedic tradition. For example, at Heritage Class, I have learned a lot about some epics (the Mahabharata and Ramayana), about values, and about religious culture. Also, going to this class every Sunday gives me a chance to wear Indian clothes, and go to the temple. So even if I have a busy week, I can always come to the temple on Sunday, and just pray to God, sing bhajans, and learn about our culture.

Besides Heritage Class, I also participated in 'Children at the Well' this past year. 'Children at the Well' is a group where people from all different religious faiths come together to tell stories from their respective faiths. For my year there, I chose to recite the story of Prahlad. I knew this story because my parents and grandparents had told it to me many times, and I had liked it, but I never really learned it's meaning completely. That's why I chose it, so I could learn more about. I had a lot of fun telling this story. Using my hands and eyes to tell the story along with my voice took some time to learn, but paid off in the end, because some people came up to me after the performance saying that they could understand the wonderful story of Prahlad very well when I told it. My sister told the story of Dhruv, and my cousin told the story of Eklavya, so I also got to learn about these stories along my journey. I really liked sharing my own tradition and culture with other people, but I realized that I, myself, had to understand my tradition before sharing it.

\* Aarya is 13 years old and is a freshman at Shaker High School.



## Kids: My vacation trip to India



By Vikram Oroganti\*

I recently traveled to India on summer

vacation with my family. My trip to India was wonderful. This experience was one which made me rethink my thoughts on the trip before I went. I did things which I've rarely done in the past, with a few of those being first time experiences. I also met some relatives whom I've never met until the trip. India was really pleasant.

My first destination was the city of Vizag, where my aunt, cousin, and grandma live. When my father told me that we were going to Vizag, I felt disappointed. I soon realized how wrong I was because I had a great time there. My aunt lives in the heart of the city. In about a five mile radius, there are four malls, two movie theaters, a wonderful beach, and several popular restaurants. I went to the mall many times and there is a movie theater inside. I saw seven movies on my trip.

My second stay was at Gopalapatnam, where my grandma and more cousins live. This place is a suburb. Here I got the chance to meet new people. In the evenings I used to go outside with one of my cousins and play badminton. We also used to go to the store nearby and get some food for ourselves. We also went to the beach, which was an enjoyable experience. There, I got to go in the water and we stopped at a nearby hotel for dinner.

My third destination was Simhachalam, which is a rural area. It's a place which is away from all the noise and distraction of the city. My grandfather lives here. There is a large garden at his house and a large territory next to it. I talked with my grandpa a lot, and he's a very wise person. He told me some good habits and routines which I should follow for

the rest of my life. I really enjoyed staying there.

To sum it all up, my trip was nothing like what I thought it would be. I did a lot more things than I expected and I expect to do more during my next trip. I had a great time seeing my family members whom I haven't seen in a while and life there is better than I thought. I look forward to going again in the hopefully near future.

\*Vikram is 14 years old and a sophomore at Shaker High School.

## MEDITATION

By Eknath Easwaran\*

As butter lies hidden within milk,  
The Self is hidden in the hearts of all.  
Churn the mind through meditation  
on it;

Light your fire through meditation on  
it:

The Self, all whole, all peace, all  
certitude.

### Amritabindu Upanishad

Meditation enables us to understand the teachings of the scriptures and apply them in our daily life. It is meditation that reveals the inner self dwelling in all things.

But the practice of meditation is like a long journey: some days we make wonderful progress, and others we seem barely able to go one step. Like a veteran traveler who knows the road, when we gain a little experience of the benefits, we' all look forward to our meditation period. We' all sit down for meditation with eagerness and enthusiasm each day.

From" Words to Live By (2005) by Eknath Easwaran

## TIME FOR REFLECTION AND RENEWAL

Often I wish  
I could wipe the slate clean  
And start again a new life  
Have a new personality  
Free from hurt and anguish.

It is just a fleeting thought,  
Because there are many experiences  
that I treasure and would not like to  
part with,

No I do not want to wipe everything,  
Just only the bad days of anger, grief,  
ingratitude and false pride.

It would be good to blot out every  
failure,

Every hasty and wrong decision,  
every row and pain, I ever caused,

And reassemble and recreate my life,  
with all the goodness, a cheerful  
honest life and a grateful heart. and  
without faults, and flaws, and pains

Life would not be deep and full, of  
course,

I know I cannot go back

And change my life completely,

Yet I pray to my Lord,

That my short comings and failures

Be not only forgiven but erased

As if they had never happened;  
better,

I, be completely renewed,

That YOU alone can do, my lord,

Even though I may stumble and  
sometimes offend others,

YOUR LOVE still showers on me.

S, Lord, once again help me with  
YOUR LOVE

And forgive my every fault,

Help me to refashion my life and cast  
it

In YOUR IMAGE that

I may share my love with my  
fellowmen'

And serve them in every manner

Seeing you in everyone.

(Author Unknown)

CORRECTION

## Associations within the Indian Community of Capital District

Given below is the listing (alphabetically) of the associations within the Albany



### SUGGESTIONS

Comments and story suggestions on the newsletter, *Reflections*, are welcome and be sent to Ram Chugh at: [Reflections.HCC@Gmail.com](mailto:Reflections.HCC@Gmail.com)

### REQUEST



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