

Sangh Sandesh

संघ संदेश

October – December 2012 – Yugaabd 5114



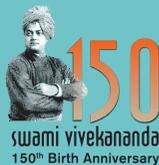
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**Vivekananda:
Like the rays of
the Sun**



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Published quarterly by
Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (UK).
Registered Charity No. 267309
For any contributions, comments and
correspondence please write to:
Sangh Sandesh,
46-48 Loughborough Road,
Leicester, LE4 5LD, UK

email: sanghsandesh@hssuk.org
website: www.hssuk.org

For private circulation only.

Editorial team: Poonam Davdra,
& Amit Patel

The editors reserve the right to edit the
material submitted for publication. The
opinions expressed in this publication are
not necessarily those of HSS (UK).



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Editorial

A look towards the New Year...

We are now well into winter and all looking forward to the December break. Following the holidays, we have all started to plan for the new year. This issue of Sangh Sandesh issue provides some new food for thoughts in the form of inspirational stories and reports. There are some great stories on Sewa.

Sewa Day was a landmark event which took place globally. Thousands of volunteers took part in multiple Sewa activities on 7th October 2012 earlier this year.

In addition to Sewa Day, there is a write up on Sewa Yatra in North England, Sewa drive to Sandy cyclone victims and Cycle 4 Sewa 2012.

Binal Rabadia gives an interesting outlook on her visit to Bharat earlier in the year in 'Mera Anubhav'.

Stories of Deivaraj and Babanrao Sathye are really inspirational. In the world of corruption, depression and conflict such lives give us tremendous motivation to live lives like them. The coming new year, 2013 will be a special year. As many of you know it is Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birth anniversary and the planning for many celebratory programmes are taking place globally. Swamiji's message is not only relevant today for the Hindu samaj, but his message provides inspiration to humanity. We should all aim to learn more about Swamji and incorporate his message into our lives.

Wishing you all a great break.

Editorial team



Sewa Yatra 2012

On Sunday 9th September Shree Bharatiya Mandal in conjunction with Charity Through Adventure organised a 10 mile sponsored walk, Sewa Yatra 2012.

The walk was organised to raise funds for a young girl, Shuhaney Lad, who has a rare condition called Spastic Diplegic Cerebral Palsy, which causes her to have stiffness and pain in her legs, making it impossible for her to take independent steps. However a £50,000 operation at St Louis Hospital (USA) can help her to walk again.

This years Sewa Yatra took place in Malham, a beautiful and scenic part of the Yorkshire Dales. There were a 100 participants aged from 7 to 75 years from all over North England; Bolton, Wigan, Leeds, Bradford, Manchester and Tameside.

A few of the day's highlights were:

- The wonderful weather; it was a beautiful summer's day, it only rained when we completed the walk – we were truly blessed.
- 12 Swayamsevaks and Sevikas took the wrong turning – so ended up walking double the distance! Nevertheless they had a brilliant time.
- Our veteran swayamsevak, Shri Ratilal Shah swam in Malham Tarn (lake) to raise £116 for Shuhaney.
- Seeing Shuhaney with us smiling all day!

We expected to raise around £2000, but we raised an overwhelming £5884. After the event, despite her condition, Shuhaney started to attend Shakha. She enjoys playing khel and watching others play. She hopes that in the future she will be able to play for Ashton Ambika Shakha's Kho team!

Hariom Bhatt, Ashton Arjun Shakha

Sewa for Sandy

When hurricane Sandy hit the US North East, SEWA volunteers were preparing themselves for the annual Diwali Food Drive in the tri-state region. A lot of our efforts came in handy because a lot more people were in immediate need of food, clothing and other basic necessities. In addition to conducting the food drive, SEWA partnered with a local Community FoodBank to pack and sort food for the hundreds of people holed up in state shelters (see article below for more details).

One of the biggest challenges we faced was to get a positive collaborative response from State officials. They have to make sure the first responders (Military, Fire, Red-Cross etc.) check out the region before they can allow second responders (like us) to participate.

Few volunteers from HSS have reached out to Middlesex County and they succeeded in participating in a water distribution project where they reached out to all the flood-hit households without power.

SEWA volunteers are in continuous talks with the Jersey City, Hoboken, Middlesex and NYC administration to collaborate on future relief efforts."

RaviChandra Chakinala

SEWA serves SANDY victims via a Local FoodBank

In early November, the North East of USA witnessed terrible destruction from Hurricane Sandy. People are still trying to recover from the after-effects many weeks later. The damage displaced and destroyed many families and communities, leaving them without power, food, and shelter for over a week. On the brighter side, this gave renewed energy to many individuals and voluntary organizations and saw communities come together to help the victims of the Hurricane in every possible way.

As always, the SEWA volunteers came up with an action plan in a short period of time to try to help the victims. One such event was organised at the Community Food Bank in Hillside, New Jersey on Sunday, 4th November. Twelve youth volunteers from SEWA spent a Sunday morning at the food bank helping with sorting and packing about 100 large boxes of food & groceries.

The Community Food Bank of New Jersey fights hunger and poverty by distributing food and groceries to help people with low incomes. However, with the recent weather turmoil they started including shelter homes and other disaster hit



area in their list of benefactors. They are working overtime in order to reach out to the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Traci, the volunteer co-ordinator at the FoodBank noted, "It was a pleasure to see SEWA volunteers in action today and I'm looking forward to building a huge Volunteer Relationship in the future".

The volunteers had their own troubles to deal with. While broken transportation and fuel shortages caused some of the volunteers a little difficulty in travelling, a few others were still without power for five continuous days. However, in true SEWA spirit, they focussed on the greater need of the community and lived up to SEWA's mission of "Serving humanity in distress."

In addition to weekend volunteering, Sewa also conducted a Diwali Food Drive to aid the hurricane victims.

More details can be found here: www.sewausa.org/sandy-drive



Sewa Day 2012

"What a great day it was!

Sewa Day, which took place on 7th October 2012, resulted in almost 50,000 volunteers in over 20 countries taking part in community building 'sewa' activities.

Remarkable for the way this initiative has grown, this year saw groundbreaking partnerships with large organisations who were involved in organising projects or in promoting Sewa Day.

With Amnesty International – the leading human rights campaigning organisation – hundreds of volunteers wrote letters of support for prisoners of conscience as part of the global 'Write for Rights' campaign.

With The Big Issue Magazine – a social enterprise in the UK that seeks to help homeless people – volunteers provided their sewa by helping write CVs, providing advice on jobs, and then by standing side by side with them to sell the Big Issue magazine.

For the first time, a large company – Britain's largest Bank – Lloyds Banking



Group came on board and adopted Sewa Day as part of it's corporate volunteering strategy, which resulted in several projects that were exclusively organised by their staff.

Almost 400 projects took place all over the world, and included beach clean-ups, street cleaning, park litter collections, weeding, planting trees, entertaining the elderly, feeding the homeless, and numerous other activities.

The UN body for education – UNESCO, as well as the leading education newspaper in the UK – The Guardian, backed the 'Sewa Day for Schools' programme. As a result, almost 80 schools used the learning resources that were prepared to teach youngsters about the concept of 'sewa'.

Following the lead taken by Croydon Council, three other local authorities – Brent, Ealing, and Harrow also adopted Sewa Day. As a result of the long-term partnership, it is hoped that all schools in these boroughs will also become involved in Sewa Day.

Recognising the contribution of Sewa Day volunteers, HRH The Prince of Wales's office said: "It is His Royal Highness's hope that the spirit of service which Sewa Day embodies will continue to grow and bring happiness and satisfaction to everyone who is touched by it. It is with the greatest pleasure that I extend to everyone involved in Sewa Day The Prince of Wales's heartfelt thanks and warmest good wishes".

Sewa Day takes place on 6th October 2013, so start dusting off the cobwebs and begin planning for next year's activities. Please do follow us on Twitter and Like of Facebook page if you wish to have regular updates

Thank you for your support."

Sewa Day Team



cycle4sewa

Cycle 4 Sewa 2012

Sunday 9th
September

was a day enjoyed by all who attended the "Sewa UK" charity fundraiser at Redbridge Cycling Centre.



The aim was to raise as much money as possible for Sewa UK's Panvel project to help build a school for disabled children in India.

The core team comprised of Swayamsevaks & Sevikas from Shakti Shakha & Bharatee Shakha, Newham. A Sankhya of over 250 enjoyed the fantastic day out for all the family where people, young and old, came together to enjoy the electric atmosphere.

Cyclists as young as 3 years of age attended the event full of enthusiasm. They came from as far as Leicester and Birmingham. With bicycles, tricycles, scooters and sponsorship forms in hand, the participants came with the aim of completing the 1km track as many times as possible, having lots of fun, gaining a personal sense of achievement and raising money.

The day wouldn't have been the same if it wasn't for everyone that attended – cyclists, volunteers, the beautiful weather and of course our sponsor, National Security Systems. The participants enjoyed cycling on the professional track, had fun with friends, family and met new people. Many said it was something they would want to do again!

Collectively 922km were cycled in the two hour allocated window by the 76 registered cyclists, with the highest individual cyclist doing an amazing 41km!

Parents were astounded that their children were doing 14-15km when they expected them to be tired after 5km! The enthusiasm of everyone in the Centre motivated and kept the cyclists going, making it truly a fantastic day to remember.

Within two weeks of the event, Newham saw its average sankhya for Sangh and Samiti go over 50 giving the local team inspiration to do more. This showed us that a local event and Sampark goes a long way. Approximately £6,200 was raised.

Kishan Mehta



North West Vibhaag Sammilit Shakha

Shakhas from the North West Vibhaag came together in Bolton on Sunday 14th October for a Sammilit Shakha. There was a fantastic total sankhya of 95 (sangh – 53, samiti- 42). The sankhya consisted of Swayamsevaks and Sevikas, old and new, from Bolton, Manchester, Ashton, Warrington and even Liverpool!



The theme of the day was Ramayan, so Bolton shakha took the opportunity to use the day as an educational yet

fun, interactive day for the whole parivaar. The day consisted of khel, different interactive stations, and the highlight of the day, the Ramayan play workshop! A delicious hot meal was also served at midday which kept everyone fuelled up for the remainder of the activities! Overall, the day was truly enjoyable for all those who attended!

Vijay Shibir, West Midlands Vibhag

West vibhag held a shibir in Birmingham during the weekend of October 26th 2012. The Swayamsevaks and Sevikas who participated were from all age groups, all towns in the Vibhaag and we had a good sankhya of 96. There were also many who came to a Shibir for the first time.

All of the participants were split into four teams and competed with each other in games and baudhik throughout the two nights and three days. The competition built up good team spirit and leadership qualities and was the source of much fun.

The Shibir was a great success with the bauddhiks ensuring that everyone left inspired and enthused, ready to carry the work on in their respective towns.

Sharad Shah, Birmingham

Interfaith Forum - Ilford

On Saturday 3rd November a special interfaith Forum took place at the VHP Ilford Hindu Centre, Cleveland Road.

The Near Neighbours leadership training day organised by the Hindu Christian Forum was a chance for the youth of the respective faiths to learn and develop skills to help them become future faith and community leaders.

The facilitator, Dr Kate Wharton (Deputy Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams), said 'Our aim was to encourage young people in East London to have the confidence to build relationships across their local community. We drew on business models relating to the understanding of personality types, team building and negotiation techniques to teach young Hindus and Christians skills to help them become a positive force for change in their neighbourhood.'

The day was led by Business psychologist Krish Raval, Director of 'Faith in Leadership' and included various activities to help develop effective communication skills and an open forum debate on the influence of role models. The day ended with an informal feedback session involving older members of both faiths.

The Hindu Christian Forum was launched by The Archbishop of Canterbury and Sri Shruti Dharma Das Ji at Lambeth Palace in October 2011. It has become a national forum partly in response to the findings of the 'Bridges and Barriers to Hindu Christian Relations' Report which was carried out by Dr Jessica Frazier of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Near Neighbours scheme aims to bring people together who are near neighbours in communities that are diverse, so they can get to know each other better, build relationships as people and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in.

Literally "Food for thought" Dharma from home to work!

Recently a work colleague asked me why I wasn't off work for Eid? To which I cheekily responded, just because I'm brown doesn't mean I'm Muslim! Anyway, through this conversation I realised what very little they know about our religion, most of them live in predominantly 'white' areas of Yorkshire and for many I'm

probably their only Hindu friend.

So to educate my colleagues I decided to organise a quiz event on Hinduism to create a fun learning atmosphere with a competitive edge. The prize was lovely homemade food, which we know everyone loves.

On Diwali day, I gave each team a quiz for them to collectively complete. I wanted to create a platform for discussion and that's why I suggested they work as a team rather than individually. It was interesting to hear their conversations, and some highlighted common misconceptions, for example about the Swastika, Buddhism, and our Hindu Gods. This provided me with the opportunity to explain and clarify these points, which in turn gave them a better understanding of our dharma. I also explained the significance of Diwali.

All the teams did well in the quiz with the winning team getting 14 out of 15 questions correct. I was further impressed when a team manager sent an email to everyone with a summary of what they had learnt about Hinduism.

The following day a work colleague told me she really enjoyed learning about Hinduism, and she now thinks she wants to become a Hindu!

I feel the quiz was a simple yet effective way to educate and engage people. I shared my quiz with others to implement in their work places, and I know this was successfully conducted by Alpa Chauhan, Rajnikantji Mistry and Hariom Bhatt.

Falguni Bhatt.

Hindu Heritage Exhibition

To kick start the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, an inauguration function was held at the Greenwich Heritage Centre (Woolwich, South East London) by the Hindu Youth Association to launch the Ancient Indian Civilisation exhibition. The opening ceremony was attended by 150 guests including our chief guests, Cllr David Grant (Mayor of Royal Borough of Greenwich), Mr Jay Lakhani (Director of the Hindu Academy) and Mr Vino R Patel.

It was evident that every individual felt the presence of Swami Vivekananda that day and this continued throughout the month. Youths welcomed and led the tour around the different aspects of Hindu Dharma and the greatness of Bharat. Swami Vivekananda believed that religion should be at the centre of all our work, and by religion he meant universal principles, which bind us all together. We feel that this was a truly auspicious start to Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary, which is to



be celebrated worldwide.

This was the first time in which an event showcased the diverse traditions of India, Hinduism and India's contributions to the world. The exhibition presented discoveries in popular subjects including physics, geometry, astronomy and chemistry. The display showed how over a thousand years ago Hindu scholars

made significant progress in astronomical calculations such as determining the circumference of the earth, the distance to the moon and how the ancient Hindus devised the decimal system and the concept of zero.

As Cllr David Grant said, "We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made."

However, none of this would have been possible without a great young team with the guidance of elders to assist. Once a month, projects were discussed to celebrate the life of Swami Vivekananda and the Ancient Indian Civilization exhibition was one of them.

The inauguration function at Greenwich Heritage Centre was also well attended by various community groups, leaders, schools and local families. Following the event, traditional Indian snacks were served amid intercultural camaraderie. The event was very successful and inspired many to read up on the life of Swami



Vivekananda so they can understand his life in depth and share this knowledge with the wider community before the year long 150th birth anniversary in 2013.

Bunch Of Stories

Our Inspirational Karyakartas

“The Hindu Marathon during 80s and 90s were a real moving experience for me because it was a unique opportunity where 1000s of Hindus from across the UK, young and old, different parts of our society came together for one particular goal. That really was the inspiration for us to start thinking about another cross section of our society, there were students at these Marathons. It was at one of the first Hindu Marathons that National Hindu Students Forum was actually formed.

...What I learnt from the experience was that you need a couple of key hard workers to really embrace and excite the local Hindu community and obviously Sangh is key to that.”

Dilip Mistry was born in Leicester and has been a swayamsevak since a young age. Finding different ways to develop as a Hindu he has challenged his creativity, especially with NHSF and living in Singapore.



For more info visit www.hssuk.org

“Think out of the box... get creative and most importantly get the job done”

Sanket: KarmaYogi



In Maharashtra, a person's father is generally called 'Baba'. My father, Shri. Babanrao Sathye, an ordinary Swayamsevak like millions of others reflected Sangh sanskaars in his daily life through small and effective actions.

There is a book called 'Karma Yogi' which is a collection of the silent manifestation of such sanskaars.

Baba was naturally disciplined. He developed a habit of arranging all footwear in rows and he used to follow this discipline wherever possible. Once there was a shortage of water and the Council had to provide drinking water. On the arrival of the water tanker people used to rush to fill water and this would cause great inconvenience to everyone.

Baba would get everyone to stand in an orderly queue and I believe that these were his Sangh sanskaars which he was putting into practice.

Baba also used to go to Dehu Road, near Pune for work. A school was situated near his work place and in the evening, while coming back home, Baba used to get his colleagues to manage the traffic for the safety of the school children.

Another aspect of Baba was his punctuality. Whether he was going to Shakha, Utsavs or even weddings, Baba would make sure he arrived on time. I remember that in the Sangh Karyalaya in Pune, if anyone heard the sound of Baba's bike (Luna), they used to synchronise their watches!

Such were the habits of Baba. He put the sanskaars of discipline and punctuality into practice in his daily routine.

Chanda Sathye, West Zone Pracharika, Bharat

An exotic holiday or volunteering in India?

After I had finished my final year at university I found many of my friends planning their summer holidays away in the sun to celebrate their exams being over. There was indeed a temptation for me to do the same and I was faced with a question "an exotic holiday or voluntary work in India?" I soon realised that I can go on an exotic holiday any time and right now for me an opportunity to develop myself further and explore my understanding of life felt more important. This guided me in finalising my decision of spending my summer vacation in India where I stayed and visited many Sewa projects.

I visited the town Madhapar, Kutch, situated in Gujarat and the fast growing city Mumbai.

My main project in Madhapar was at a disability school called Navchetan Anhjan Mandal. This school caters for four types of disabilities: the visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally challenged and orthopaedic. Navchetan aims to provide each and every individual with an education, empowerment, medical care and vocational training for rehabilitation to become contributing members of society and earn a livelihood. Currently Navchetan has four centres: a disability school for the boys, disability school for the girls, an old age home, which has a workshop where they make folders, do printing and make sweet boxes and an Industrial training centre where students learn how to operate computers, tailoring and book binding.

I stayed at Navchetan and taught Maths, English and Gujarati; further to this I did recordings in English for the visually impaired, teaching games to the students and helping students with their homework. Having the opportunity to visualise a first-hand experience on how the disabled people are catered for was an eye opener. Seeing the visually impaired students walking freely without assistance and playing games like cricket and chess was for me something new. The care and service the people at the centres are receiving is impeccable and to see the different level of communication between students and the teachers was exceptional.

As I was teaching classes with mixed disabilities, I furthered my knowledge on

sign language, which gave me more confidence and enabled me to interact with these children freely. I learnt to appreciate life and not let the negatives in life become barriers preventing me from going forward, but using everything as an advantage to facilitate in my personal development.



As well as spending time in Navchetan, I went to visit a design and development centre situated in Jiyapar, Kutch run by Sewa International. The centre provides women with the opportunity to develop on their tailoring skills. The tailored items are then sold to different towns and villages giving these women the opportunity to make their own living.



Having the opportunity to visit such projects made me realise the beauty of a simple lifestyle. I learned the significance of gratitude; not taking things for granted and being pleased with what God has blessed me with - families, friends, food and shelter.

I merely experienced a tiny proportion of projects running in India but the inspiration and knowledge I gained from the different organisations is extraordinary and I am extremely grateful for the warm welcome I received to each project.

My time in Bharat was incredible and deeply inspirational and the amount of new people I was introduced to was an added extra. I believe my journey started with the thought "I want to help make a difference to someone's life by offering them my services" but ended with "each and every individual made a difference in my life and changed my perspective of life. "

"In the conflict between the heart and the brain, follow your heart" –

Swami Vivekananda

Binal Rabadia, Woolwich Pannabai Shakha

* Please find the documentary I have created regarding the projects I visited on the following website: www.samiti.org.uk

They live life

Hair Arts Trust

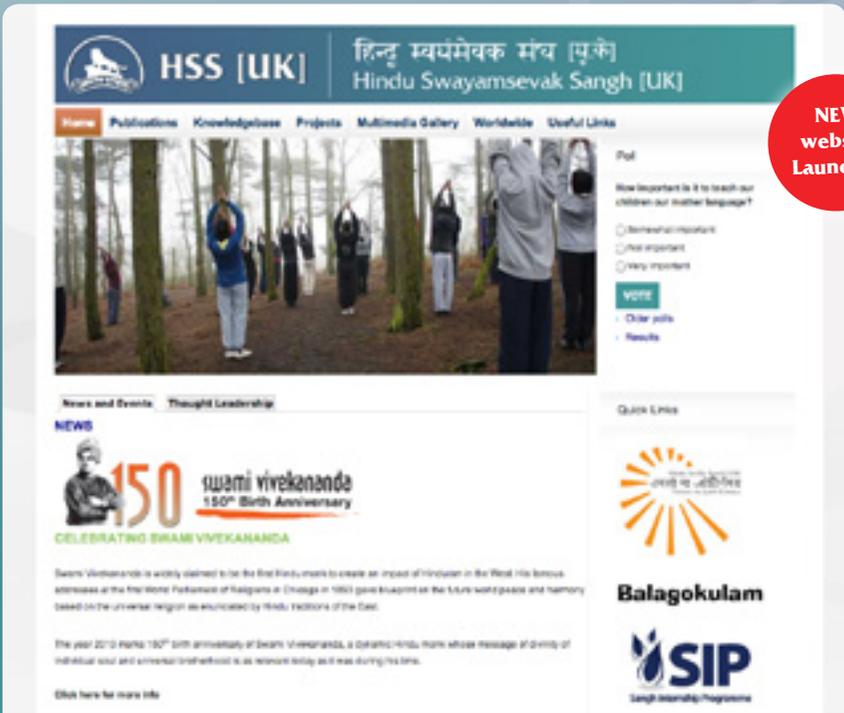
People in the neighbourhood call him Kumar. He wanders about the roads, sleeps in street corners and lives on food offered by kind-hearted passers-by. On a hot Tuesday afternoon, as he lies by a gutter off Mettupalayam Road, something unusual happens. A group of men with combs and hair-styling shears arrives in a car. Before he realises it, they sit Kumar down and give him a haircut, his first in many years. He



sits still as they crop his hair and trim his beard. The men dress him in a new shirt and offer him food and water. Kumar walks away, sack slung over his shoulder. He merges with the market crowd – this time, he fits in. This is what N. Deivaraj and his team wish for – that the homeless and mentally-challenged get to live dignified lives. A hair-stylist based in Tirupur, Deivaraj runs the 'New Deiva City Hair Arts Trust' with his friends and relatives. The trust has been providing free hair cuts for the mentally-challenged and under-privileged for four years now. Deivaraj and his 13-member team seek out such people, groom them and offer them a meal. Once in three months, they travel to places outside Tirupur. The team goes around in a rented vehicle from 6 AM to 5 PM, helping as many as they can. Once a week, they do free hair-cuts for children in orphanages in and around Tirupur.



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Balagokulam



Knowledge is the goal of all life



150

swami vivekananda
150th Birth Anniversary

Vivekananda: Like the rays of the Sun

Many Hindus worldwide will celebrate Rath Saptami on 17th February 2013, a festival in which Surya Dev the God of Sun is worshipped. One form of worship is the exercise "Surya Namaskar" or Sun Salutation which consists of 10 Yogasana (Yoga postures).

The morning sunrays are believed to have medicinal value, and are a rejuvenating force. It has been acknowledged in the Hindu scriptures that doing Surya Namaskar regularly assists in healing ailments, including asthma, diabetes, and skin problems.

The Sun is forever extending its rays upon us to bring light into our lives and for this reason we humbly offer our prayers. This symbolically represents going from darkness (tamas) to light (jyoti) where darkness is the materialism that surrounds us and the light is the true spirituality our souls desire.

A great Hindu monk of the 19th century who made an electrifying appearance at the Parliament of Religions in America on the 11th of September 1893 was no other than Swami Vivekananda. The year of 2013 is the 150th Birth Anniversary of Vivekananda, who was truly the radiant Sun of the modern era as he extended his rays of knowledge and showed the path of light to the world by introducing Yoga and Vedanta Philosophy.

Yoga is the confluence of the healthy mind and healthy body, its ultimate goal is to be in union with the supreme personality but before this is achieved the union

between the mind and body of the individual is primary.

By doing various forms of diet or exercise our body may become healthy but if our mind has not developed alongside our body, what use is this healthy body?

Swami Vivekananda was asked once: "To develop ourselves physically should one concentrate on exercise, yoga or martial arts?"

Swamiji responded "either of these will do, they are all capable of increasing the physical strength but I would recommend Yoga as this does not limit itself to the physical development but develops the mind contributing to spiritual development."

From this we can understand the benefits of doing Yoga regularly and allowing our body and mind to develop simultaneously.

Surya Namaskar is a combination of the various Yogasana (postures) whereby one can stimulate every system in the body. It is good for the heart as it oxygenates the blood and helps strengthen the heart. Furthermore it is good for the digestive system, nervous system and the endocrine system as it enables the various endocrinal glands to function properly. These include the thyroid, parathyroid and pituitary glands as well as the adrenal gland, testes and ovaries.

Vivekananda placed significant emphasis on creating great men and women who are willing to serve the society. He was constantly asked the question "Swami-ji how can we aspire to be a great person like you?" Swami-ji consistently responded that it was not a difficult task to be like him. His advice to all was that if one develops their power of concentration then everyone can achieve true success. This is what differentiates a human from an animal, our ability to enhance our power of concentration. To have a successful life in any line of work is the result of the power of concentration. This power of concentration can be increased by practicing regular breathing whilst doing Yogasana.

During the day of Rath Saptami and the month of health awareness let us all collectively perform Surya Namaskar and collectively reap the benefits of the ancient teachings given to us by our forefathers.

In creating a strong mind and strong body we can aim to complete the work of Vivekananda.

Can we light the Surya Namaskar torch and spread the message of healthy body, mind and spirit?

Kirti Vekriya

Woolwich Pannabai Shakha

HinduVishwa

Scandinavian shibir 2012

This year's Scandinavian Shibir was held at Sanatan Mandir, Oslo in September 2012. The theme of the Shibir was "Hindu Parva"(Hindu Festivals).

Different Bauddhik and Karyashala sessions on Hindu festivals were conducted for all ages as well as sessions enabling participants to explore more about meditation. There were also various "Vishesh Abhyas Vargs" covering topics such as "heart diseases", "the importance of yagna from the Gayatri Parivar" and even "website design", which proved very popular with the Swayamsevaks.

Different innovative games during Shareerik were enjoyed by those who attended the three-day Shibir and most of them are already waiting for next year's activities.

"Wow!! Wow!! Wonderful days and evenings. Fast paced action, drama, well meaning rituals, smoothly, graciously and stylishly "dished" sanskars, aartis, exercise drills, antakshri, games - the whole works. Lovely kids, loving parents and other elders. Good food, good care of each other. Could we ask for more, guys? I'm already waiting for the next one. My heartiest congratulations and sincere thanks to all the organisers and volunteers."

Ankur Tade

Balagokulam Basingstoke celebrate Dusshera

The festival of Vijaydashmi, also known as Dusshera, was celebrated by a large community in Balagokulam Basingstoke on Sunday, 28th October. As a first for the Indian Community of Basingstoke, the kids of Balagokulam Basingstoke enacted a small play depicting the story of Ramayana with snippets of critical points on the much loved story like "Ram Vanwaas", "Sita Haran" and of course, the epic battle of Good over Evil, Lord Ram with his army of 'Vaanars' against the might of Raavana.

After the play, an effigy of Ravana was also burnt as per the time honoured traditions. It is indeed worth mentioning here that the very lifelike and man-size 6 feet high Ravana was built with the concerted efforts and inputs by all the Sevikas and Swyamasevaks of Basingstoke Shakha.



A nail in the fence

There once was a little boy who had a very bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of their fence.

After the first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. But, it was such hard work and over the next few weeks, as he learnt to control his anger the number of nails that he hammered into the wall each day reduced. He discovered that it was easier to hold his temper than to hammer the nails into the fence.

Finally, the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all!

He was so proud and told his father. His father then suggested that he pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. As the days passed, the boy managed to pull out each and every nail from the fence.

His father held his son's hand and showed him the fence.

"You have done really well, my son! But look at the holes in the fence - the fence will never be the same. Remember, when you say things in anger they can sometimes leave a scar, just like these holes. No matter how many times you say you are sorry, the scar will still be there."

The boy understood what his father was trying to tell him and promised that he would from now hold his temper and always speak sweetly.

Annual National Balagokulam Shibir

The Annual National Balagokulam Shibir took place from 1st to 2nd September at Rudolph Steiner School, Kings Langley. 14 Balgokulams were represented from across the UK with a record sankhya of 180 participants consisting of both children and their parents who also stayed for the entire duration of the Shibir.

The Shibir started from lunchtime on Saturday and concluded on Sunday afternoon. The theme of the Shibir centred on Bal Krishna and the adventures that Krishna had in Golkul. Eight groups were created and each group learned about a story from Krishna's childhood. These story telling sessions were followed up with different workshops throughout the weekend focusing on taking each story and creating a story board using arts and crafts to depict the story.

The storyboards created by the children (with some help from parents as well!) were then used to form a role play which each group presented within the School Auditorium towards the end of the Shibir on Sunday.

Other activities included a number of Khel sessions, a treasure hunt and Fun Yoga.

On Saturday evening Hanuman Chalisa was recited with all children and parents joining in together in the School Auditorium. A Manoranjan activity was also held on Saturday night, where a number of Baal came up and performed various items from geet and tabla performance to recital of shlokas.

The participants slept in classrooms overnight and for many of them this was the first time they have had such an experience. The Shibir also enjoyed delicious food throughout the weekend.

At the Samarop of the Shibir all the Baal attendees were presented with a prism shaped memento, covering three daily activities being encouraged by Balagokulam.



These are Gayatri Mantra, Bhojan Mantra and Suryanamaskar.

All participants left having experienced a fun filled weekend of playing, learning and making new friends.



It was Diwali recently...

What did you do to celebrate it? Have fun colouring in this picture of Lord Lord Ram! When you have finished, ask your parents to scan your masterpiece in and send it to us at sanghsandesh@hssuk.org

SanghSandesh

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Published by:
Hindu Swamyamsevak Sangh (UK)
46-48 Loughborough Road, Leicester, LE4 5LD, UK
sanghsandesh@hssuk.org • www.hssuk.org  hssuk



Printed on
Recycled paper