तदेजति तश्रैजति तद्हूरे तद्वृत्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यताः ॥

`tadejati tannajati taddre tadvantike |
tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsyā bāhyataḥ ||

(5th Mantra, Isha-Upanishad)

‘It moves; It moves not. It is far:
It is very near. It is inside all this.
It is verily outside all this.’
Saprem Namaskar

Editorial

Sanskriti Maha Shibir, the historic event last year, has led to a considerable upsurge of inspirational and dedicated work in Sangh and Samiti. It has also led to much introspection about the future of our core work – the shakha.

Shakha is the core functional unit of Sangh. It is the regular meeting of diverse individuals partaking in physical, intellectual, spiritual and social activities in order to nurture their capacity to give more for society. All these areas of life require development. Shakha is the field of training and character building. It trains and nurtures the individual to become a strong and capable instrument for social good.

However, society is complex, dynamic and inevitably prone to change. With this, ought to come a change in our personal and organisational parameters for development. This change requires much introspection, discussion, iteration and above all, courage.

In this edition, the writers courageously tussle with difficult ideas, some controversial, in the hope of expanding our collective perspectives. It is only when we dare to constructively challenge everyday norms or try new things, can we see progress. This journey begins in the mind. We hope you enjoy exploring the minds of our writers and thereby trigger introspection within yourself.

The Editorial Team
Little droplet: Where is the way to the rain?

Parvati: before you’ll reach there, the sun will scorch you, the birds will drink you up, you’re safe here in my palms.

Drop: but I get this feeling in my heart, that I must make my way to the “rain”

I don’t know if that is even what adrift drops do...but I must.

Parvati: well, here’s a morning ray coming, catch it, it’ll take you..

Drop: ...where ?

Parvati: to the cloud castle.

...journey well little drop... one day you might become what you are looking for.

With that the little drop caught the dazzling ray which radiated all it’s seven colors onto the sky but when he reached the doors he saw an old bird with its beak damaged lay feeble, without water.... and without hesitation the little drop gave itself away to the bird...

The ocean wept through her eyes looking at this sight...the droplet was somewhere in there now.

...she could feel it.

A blue hand gently lifted her chin, lovingly wiped the tears and gestured her to look at the sky.

There was a rainbow, the bird was a test...

The droplet happily was dancing right in-front of all other rain drops, lurching them to make the rain happen.

She stretched her palms again in hope that maybe he might land right in...

A thousand rainbows appeared when she opened her heart, one for each drop... . -

...and so was reborn “Love” into the world. -

Story by Abhishek
Abhishek Singh, an artist from Chicago, has graciously contributed his artwork and poetry to Sangh Sandesh. He uses kalpana (imagination) and sadhana (spiritual discipline) to bring primordial stories to life. His work can be found at: http://abhishekart.com
We all want our children to succeed and excel in education, sports, arts and to achieve above their peers (often even their cousins). When children come home with good grades we celebrate. The reaction is somewhat converse when the results are poor. In our reactions, we forget the child’s state of mind; their pressures and their feelings. We thirst for our children to consistently deliver positive results but we fail to see the negative impact on them. We as parents are in a race and scared of being left behind. When children meet their peers, they are one – nobody is higher, nobody is lower. They can be kids and behave like kids. They don’t talk about school; they don’t talk about what they are learning or not learning, they don’t talk about who achieved what. Yet, when parents meet, the main point of discussion is education, schooling, standards, and what is right and wrong for our children.

We need to take a step back and reflect what we are doing to our children. Not everyone is of the same mould; not all children are academic. Some have talents in art, literature, whilst others in sports or music. These should be respected and encouraged, and not demoted by our obsession with academia. Some children may not have found their niche interest yet – but that’s okay – let’s support them in finding their feet instead of burying them in books.

Children that undergo private schooling do not guarantee them top grades, entry to top colleges, universities or land them dream jobs. The ‘ideal’ world we are trying to push our children into, may not be ideal for them. When I put my daughter, Simran, in the Swaminarayana Hindu School people questioned me, “Why not other schools?”. Although she has developed academically, her cultural maturity is what we valued the most. We felt this school provided a suitable mix
for her and this is what we felt was right, for her. Vedant, our son, on the other hand is different in so many ways to Simran, so maybe we’ll adopt a different path for him.

North London, it seems to me, is unique. I feel there’s a lot of pressure on children to attend, what parents perceive to be, top private schooling and weekend full of extracurricular activities. If you don’t, you’re missing out! These pressure bubbles are created within our own community and it’s our children who suffer. We Indians want to achieve higher standards and so fuel the demand for private schooling, tutoring and external classes. It’s not until you have children that you fully understand the pressure of securing a place in one school let alone three or four. The cost of registering for schools and prepping children for assessments runs in the thousands. Waiting lists for external classes can be up to two years. Tutoring fees are extortionate. In this hugely pressured environment, I feel there are three ways parents can go:

One group spends vast amounts of money on private education and tutoring because they don’t have time.

Another group cannot afford tutoring and are spending time teaching their children themselves.

The third group of parents have come from abroad. They may not fully understand current teaching trends and are reverting to expensive tutoring as a safer option, despite their growing financial burden.

Private schooling does not lead children into top universities or careers as compared with state schooling. A child can do well if given the right support, guidance and a positive and balanced environment.

How much time are we really spending teaching our children about our culture or spending time with grandparents?

Is it time to wake up and start listening to our children? Is it time to re-prioritise family dynamics? Is it time to make bold decisions and leave the rat race? Are textbooks the answer to providing the child with a balanced and wholesome upbringing for this evolving world?

I know many parents feel the pressure – let us be open and talk.

“...the ‘ideal’ world we are trying to push our children into, may not be ideal for them...”
My Vistaar Experience

Jaimal Patel
Vice President & Vistaarak for NHSF

Being adaptive

This academic year, I’m on sabbatical for National Hindu Students Forum (UK) – otherwise known as Vistaar. Amongst the myriad of lessons I have learned, and continue to learn, one sticks out – being adaptive.

How do you balance your intention with your environment? How do you manage your priorities with your host’s? How do you say ‘no’ to an invite because you have too much work to do?

The National Committee for NHSF is spread across the country, meaning frequent travelling and overnight stays at people’s houses. I’ve found it a steep learning curve when it comes to juggling responsibilities and tasks when it comes to NHSF projects, with spending time with host families. For example, I’ve just finished dinner with a family, and the intriguing conversation about ‘how we must bridge generational gaps’ evolves into the living room with a cup of chai, my phone rings – “Jaimal, are you ready for this conference call?!”

Time goes fast. The biggest lesson during Vistaar is of planning one’s time meticulously but leaving enough flexibility for new things to emerge. There is no straightforward answer to what I must do in a given situation. I have no “Vistaar for dummies” manual. It’s rather like dialectic – I’m continuously placed in interesting situations where I’ve to rationally work out what is the best use of my time - do I sip the chai with a family or join a conference call? Both have pros and cons. This can be tough, but I’m reminded of my main priority – that of connecting with people.

The people are crucial; people make organisations; people make communities; people do great things; people have stories to tell; people make my sabbatical enriching. With this slow but steady realisation, I invite you to also spend time engaging in a Vistaar activity of your choice.
Practice will lead us toward perfection. We all recognise that a strong Karyakarta is the key to good work and a spotlight focus on a Karyakarta’s core skills will strengthen our shakhas, encourage Karyakarta development and will improve our basic understanding of Samiti work.

Between January and March 2017, Samiti planned National Abhyaas Vargs which focused on going ‘Back to Basics’ and channelling energy into revisiting core skills that will have a direct effect and impact on local shakhas. The National Abhyaas Varg content was designed and planned by one team. This same team canvassed the country to deliver the Abhyaas varg to each Vibhag, ensuring consistency.

There were a total of 4 National Abhyaas Vargs which covered a total of 18 nagars.
1. London - January (North London, South London & West England),
2. East Vibhag – February
3. North Vibhag – February
4. West Vibhaag – March

How were the Abhyaas Vargs different from NKV? Unlike NKV, where a shakha team would split into various Vishays, we planned the Varg so that all sevikas were present for every Vishay. The timetable consisted of:- Shareerik, Achaar Padhathi, Gana Samata, Shikshan Vidhi for Khel and Suryanamaskar. The Bauddhik content focussed on the deeper meaning of our Praarthana, its pronunciations and relevance in modern day, and how we connect ourselves with it. We encouraged innovative Bauddhik planning, content and delivery and addressed some of the administrative needs of the Shakha. Some inventive methods were to use white boards for Acchar Padhathi and how to plan a relevant Bauddhik on each line of our Praarthana.

We gained positive feedback after each Varg - “well planned and focussed with amazing time management”, “A brilliant varg, very informative, my home is always open for Samiti and Sangh”.

A common thread was to focus on Karyakarta Nirman (development), both the characteristics as well as the connection of a Karyakarta with core shakha work. The final Bauddhik drew upon points on how we can develop ourselves through having Atmeeyataa (relationship), Swadhyay (self study), Antarik Vikaas (self-introspection), culminating into Atyanta Pramanikata (ultimate reliability, integrity, and honesty).

The journey from a Sevika or Swayamsevak to a Karyakarta may be different for different people. However, we aspire for all Karyakartas to continue her or his journey with direction, depth, understanding, innovativeness, team spirit, capacity and, most importantly, a strong heartbeat for our work – we aspire for multi-dimensional Karyakartas. We aim to be, not only productive, but connected; connected to the roots – the Shakha.
My first Tarun Shibir experience

Vishnu Nair, Ashton

I attended Tarun Shibir for the first time this year from 3rd-5th February. The first full day began with early morning shakha involving intense warm-ups leading into energetic khel (games). Aside from their intensity, the diversity of khel was a hallmark, due in part to the fact that swayamsevaks from a variety of shakhas had come. For example, a variation of netball entailed launching a dand (stick) across the pitch instead of a ball.

Shakha was not the only physical activity. As a group we walked and climbed the beautiful Malvern Hills, culminating in a picturesque view of the town. The refreshing walk and activities
energised me to participate and focus on the discussions that lay ahead.

Healthy body = healthy mind!

Multiple workshops nicely broke up the physically demanding activities. The first focused on visualising a model of leadership espousing core elements of ‘head (jnana), heart (bhakti) and hands (karma)’, and involved groups working on various tasks and feeding back to the larger group at the end.

Another workshop focussed on self-reflection, motivations for working and the relevance of shakha. We broke down our daily lives and compared them to a personal role model within Sangh. The evening activity, Mukta Chintan (free thinking) was an open discussion on anything Sangh-related and everyone had the opportunity to ask anything (one s’sevak even showcased some inspiring poetry!) Many interesting topics from, “how do I explain Sangh in one sentence”, “conversion of Hindus to other faiths”, to “How Brexit will effect us” were discussed in detail. Such relevant topics really goes to show how Sangh is willing to tackle problems head on and not simply dismiss them.

On the final day, a very forthright, thought-provoking and inspiring talk was delivered, explaining the foundations on which Doctorji founded Sangh, and the reason why Sangh is vital even in today’s society.

Tarun Shibir was definitely a weekend to remember for me. Some of the lessons learned will stay with me indefinitely. In my opinion, the reality of a vibrant atmosphere created by like-minded individuals from diverse places in the UK, each offering their own unique perspectives whilst living and eating under one roof for three days, is an unrivalled event, and I am delighted to have been part of that experience.
Prarthnaa Abhyas

Sarva Mangala Maangalyaam
Deveem Sarvaartha Saadhikaam
Sharanyaam (Sarva) Bhootanaam
Namaamo Bhoomi Mataram (1)

The most auspicious referring to Mother Earth.
The means to achieve all that one aspires for
living beings (includes plants, animals and humans)

OM Mother Earth

We salute thee (like using Namaste)

Sachchidaananda (Roopaaya)
(Vishwa) (Mangala) Hetave

You are the manifestation
Roop = manifestation

You are the manifestation
Roop = manifestation

Sat = Truth
Chit= Consciousness
Anand= Bliss

Universal Good

Dharma = Righteousness
Aik = The one and only

Mool = Root

Namaste = We pay our respects to

Namaste = We pay our respects to

Dharma = Righteousness
Aik = The one and only

Mool = Root

Paramatman = God

Sarva Mangala Maangalyaam
Deveem Sarvaartha Saadhikaam
Sharanyaam Sarva Bhootanaam
Namaamo Bhoomi Mataram (1)

Sachchidaananda Roopaaya
Vishwa Mangala Hetave
Vishwa Dharm(aika) Moolaaya
Namostu Paramaatmane (2)
Vishwa Dharma Vikaasartham
Prabho Sanghatitaas Vayam
Shubhaam Aashisham Asmabhayam
Dehi Tat Paripoortaye (3)

Ajayyam Aatma Saamarthyam
(Su) (sheel) am Loka Poojitam

Gyanam Cha (Dehi) Vishwesha

Dehi = Give Us

Atman = Self

Su = Good / Sheel = Character

Lok = People

Viswesha = Vishwa (universal) + Ishwar (God)

Dhyeya = Goal
Maarga = Path
Like from Maarg Darshan = Guidance for the Path

Dhyeya Maarga Prakaashakam (4)

*Prakash = Light eluding to Enlightenment
i.e. asking to enlighten the path, which leads us to our goal

Viswesha = Vishwa (universal) + Ishwar (God)

Dhyeya = Goal
Maarga = Path
Like from Maarg Darshan = Guidance for the Path

Dhyeya Maarga Prakaashakam (4)
National Samiti Abhyaas Varg
National Karyakarta varg
I am Simran Solanki and I am writing about education. I have a number of things I want to communicate, however, all these points stem from one overall aspect:- Challenges of Education. I present, the world of education from the perspective of a child:

At home what are the general talking points over dinner?
“What did you eat for lunch today?”, “How was your day?” and “Have you done your homework?, have you done your homework?, have you done your homework?”

The main topic we talk about is STUDIES.

As my 11+ exams are approaching, there is one question that comes to my mind - what are my thoughts on the 11+?

I feel a lot of stress at times even when I do past papers, especially when there is a timer going on in the background. This fear, results in me rushing towards the end and making lots of silly mistakes. This leads to the fear of failure, and not getting enough points to get into a school.

Am I happy with my education?
Yes, of course I am happy with my education and it really means a lot to me. Alongside that, I feel grateful to both my parents for working hard in order to pay my school fees, allowing me to be educated and giving me lots of opportunities. My education will help me progress in future and when I do my higher-level studies that could give me a job. The world is evolving; technology is progressing and developing at a rate where adults cannot keep up. I hear my parents talking sometimes how my generation of jobs have not been created yet.

Skills are essential to have when it comes to the topic of education. Everyone has a skill or talent within him or her. For example, I have a skill in English and more in
creative writing. I think these skills will help me in the future and will lead to a positive habit. I find, if I start to learn and practice life skills now, it will help me excel further. But, this is just one there is still so much I am interested in but time is not permitting me learn. My parents are great and let me explore and try different things. There is so much to try...I don't have enough time in the day.

The Swaminarayan School is an amazing school and I feel I have progressed with this opportunity. Academically and culturally it is very advanced and feel we are at least one year ahead. I am always learning Year 6-7 topics while I am in Year 5. This also benefits me when I do learn about new topics; I would've already known the basics about it since I covered it.

My mum has taught me some key things whilst learning. Plan, organise my work, explore new ways, discipline and clear desk policy! This has helped me focus and enjoy while I learn. I now also know that hard work = good results.

As written above, I do feel stress and pressure at times in order to achieve my goal for passing my 11+ exams. I also feel pressure as time gets closer and closer to the exams, but I know this is something I need to do and overcome.

Who knows what the future holds for us? Maybe the style of education might change.

I am starting to realise that trying to achieve something is not so easy. It takes hard work in order to achieve something and I know that after experiencing it many times with my school's termly exams, it has given me a good foundation. Most importantly I know that education is important and we must all strive to do our best.
Nature rarely comes in straight lines. In fact, ‘linear’ is only really a human trait. As humans, we have a need to have straight roads, design rectilinear buildings, lay flat surfaces, and build boxed compartments. We have a peculiar fascination with ‘straightening’ things out - including issues in our personal lives. We find it viscerally unacceptable to see undefined, jagged, wavy and often chaotic things around us.

Nature, however, is anything but linear. This non-linearity is a hallmark of a living thing. Life, nature, existence, and arguably reality do not, and need not conform to our human obsessions with being linear and logical. Therein lies our fundamental problem – of trying to ‘fix’, ‘sort’, ‘straighten out’ and ‘control’ things.

In Sangh shakha, when doing Samyak (aligning ourselves), at face value, this means arranging ourselves in strictly straight lines. Based on our initial statements, this discipline of ‘straightening’ would seem un-natural,
a human obsession, and even a form of control and conformity.

However, if we look closer, we see that this physical discipline, translates into a mental ‘letting go’ by one who is arranged in line.

This is because, when the order of Samyak is given, the person must give up their personal desires (i.e. to move, itch, wave hands, play, sit etc) and instead align themselves to the discipline of keeping a straight line. This training, rather counter-intuitively, does not bind the person to conformity, but rather frees the person from being a slave to his or her personal cravings.

This is meditation.

In Zen, they call it Zazen; in Theravāda Buddhism they call it Vipassanā; in Sangh, we call it Samyak.
The epic war between history and mythology

By Bhavit Mehta, Children’s Author and Literature Programmer

We’re living in the times of fake news, post-truths, alternative realities and multiple truths. These are not new phenomena by any means, certainly not to Hinduism. Our culture and history is filled with epics, stories, anecdotes, hearsay, superstitious tales and interpretations, and it is often impossible to know how many of them are true. Let us take for example, our epics and Puraana’s – did they really happen? Is our religion based on historical events or mythical stories, fact or fiction? But more importantly, does it really matter?

The Puraanic stories are often referred to as mythology, suggesting they are fiction or folklore. As these stories often do not have a consistent structure, and usually appear in various versions in different regions and at different times, developed by different people and philosophical schools and passed down through oral traditions, it means they are often seen (by Hindus and non-Hindus alike) not as literal accounts of historical events but rather as allegorical stories, with deeper meaning open for interpretation or just for pure entertainment.

There are some groups and individuals, however, that take offence when such stories are labelled as mythology. To even suggest that our Gods, festivals and rituals – the bedrocks of Hinduism aren’t a part of India’s history can hurt the sentiments of a lot of people. This hurt and anger (arguably legitimate) can range from impulsive outbursts on news channels and letters of criticism to writers or academics, to the boycotting of publishers, and burning of books etc…

Some people are determined to “prove” that the epics and Puraanas are true. NASA’s images allegedly showing the Rama-setu (bridge) between India and Sri Lanka, or geological studies claiming to have found the sunken city of Dwarka off the Gujarat coast, fill many Hindus with a sense of gratification. We selectively accept and share views that match our own. This has led me to believe that many Hindus suffer from a sense of insecurity when it comes to our religious texts, and this either manifests in silent questioning within closed doors, or very outward and desperate expressions.

At the root of this insecurity are a number of assumptions. Firstly, we assume that history and mythology are mutually exclusive. Modern society has created this dichotomy between the two, and we’ve forgotten the fact that they actually have much in common. We also assume that history is equated with truth and mythology with falsehood, and hence history has the upper hand. We forget that both history and mythology are creations of human imagination, which can complement each other.
In the Ramcharitmanas, Goswami Tulsidas relates Lord Shiva to ‘vishvaas’ (trust) and Goddess Bhavani (or Parvati) as ‘shraddha’ (profound reverence), and says that both qualities are essential in perceiving God. I like to see history, with its verifiable facts and evidence, as a form of vishvaas, and mythology, with its artistic and limitless manifestations, as a form of shraddha. To understand Hinduism, both are necessary and neither one is inferior. When we try to look at one through the lens of the other we get confused. This confusion culminates in us either regarding everything we read as fact (something we’re seeing in the media today) or everything as complete nonsense.

To return to the original question … did these stories really take place? Did Krishna lift the Govardhan mountain? Did Shiva cut off his son’s head? I don’t know. I doubt these things really happened. But then I also don’t rely on them being historical incidents for me to appreciate them. As a child listening to the kathas of the Ramcharitmanas and the Shrimad Bhagavat filled me with devotion and love for Rama and Krishna. It matters less to me whether these are true or not. What’s more important to me is their transformational power.

As someone who works in the literature and publishing sector, I enjoy reading fiction and non-fiction, and believe both are equally important. Those that only read factual, historical, biographical or motivational texts are missing out on a world of colour, imagination and emotion. They forget that fiction has the power to change perceptions, transform attitudes and profoundly alter emotions in a way that non-fiction rarely can. Above all, fiction is universal.
Let us...Empower our Men

Kirti Vekirya, Kendriya Vyavasthaa Pramukh

You’re on Family Fortunes and the host, Les Denis shouts, “we surveyed 100 people to name 5 things that annoy women most about men” and you hit the buzzer. What do you say?

1. Untidy
2. Struggles to multi task
3. Leave the toilet seat up
4. Acts like a child
5. Chooses football over a dinner-date

Now let us raise the stakes.

Beyond the trivial and possibly stereotypical traits listed above, I am of the opinion that there are certain behavioural traits, which in my own experience, find to be more prevalent in men (at the risk of generalising) that can lead to disharmony at home and in society:

1. Men hold the dominant narrative when it comes to defining the women’s role in society.
2. Men tend to exercise control and want to be perceived as “strong” and “confident”
3. Men are quick to make decisions about and judge a woman’s actions, but lack that same swiftness about their own.
4. Men perceive confident women as being aggressive and brutish.

I propose these be primarily due to prevailing norms (which in some cases can be perpetuated by women!), giving rise to ‘Ego and Power’ struggles. These may have been formed over countless generations, hiding an underlying inferiority complex.

Let me be quick to reassure the reader that I do not lay blame on men as perpetrators, but rather see them, in this particular regard, as victims of society. For example, a prevailing stigma of society prevents a hurting man from asking for help when he requires it and instead demands him to ‘man-up’. It demands him to ‘stay in control’ of his family. For fear of social rejection, it demands him to earn a high income and respectable job. As a result, he
unwittingly transforms this ‘manning-up’ into an ego and power struggle, full of control, judgment and dominance. So yes, men are very much at the receiving end of these negative tendencies.

This is my fundamental thesis:
If ‘Empowering’ is about evolving ourselves to be the best we can be, then let us stop the ongoing, opportunistic and ill-defined cliché of just “Empowering Women” and focus our efforts on also Empowering Men.

I beseech the reader to either challenge this thesis, or support it and help me better understand what is happening. Beyond the superficialities, I believe truly empowered men hold the following traits:

Empathy

An empowered man thinks beyond himself.

When Ma. Alka Tai (now Saha Karyawahika of Samiti) married her husband Shri Sudheerji, he carried a responsibility in Sangh. At the time, she was summoned to take a national responsibility in Samiti. Her father-in-law at that time had asked Sudheerji, that he must support her in taking a national Samiti responsibility, and that he should consider taking a step back and let her progress in this work.

Ma. Sheshadriji (Sar Karyawaha of Sangh at that time) had also requested Sudheerji to support Alka Tai. Many times, due to lack of family support we find sevikas unable to stay active in Samiti after marriage.

After the birth of their first child, Sudheerji travelled on the train with Alka Tai with their new-born so she could attend a national Samiti meeting.

This support and understanding, bereft of ego, from Sudheerji is the hallmark of an empowered man.

Actively nurtures at home

In shakha, we hear stories on how we should be like Shivaji Maharaj and how is in-field training created the man he ultimately became. But look closer – his spirit and development was largely nurtured at home by his mother Jijabai (who was also a tactical leader and possessed excellent warfare skills).
I often see Sangh life and family life become segregated and roles split accordingly, where “I (the man) will actively input on how the swayamsevak should develop at shakha and what happens at home is upto my wife”.

Motherhood is not gender specific and an empowered man has mastered the art of motherly love and nurtures active input at home.

**Raising capacity**

To have Power is not about having control over someone, but to raise the capacity of that individual and positively influence the behaviour of others. Param Poojaneeya Shri Guruji Golwalker was able to transform a vision into action by continuously working to raise the capacity of people. The power was not misused to belittle others. If we cannot help raise the capacity of others then let us not commit the sin of being a barrier.

Those men that raise the capacity of others are truly empowered men.

The ‘heard-it-before’ narrative of ‘female empowerment’ and ‘women’s liberation’ can only mean something when man has been empowered and liberated.

Swami Vivekananda once said, “There can’t be women’s liberation without men’s liberation. They go hand in hand. Throughout the ages, the male fraternity kept imposing all kinds of restrictions on the womenfolk, whilst the male fraternity enjoyed full freedoms. It is believed that when men are oppressed, it is tragedy, but when women are oppressed, it is tradition! Such cruel belief and practice emerge from a totally wrong view of women, held by men. And therefore, if the victim of the practice of gender-based discrimination needs to be enlightened and elevated, so much, and even more, has the victimiser to be enlightened” (extract from The Way to Women’s Freedom)

I’m aware of the limitations of my argument, but I feel these points need to be addressed in light of the generally skewed narrative that dominates our circles, almost suffocating women into (albeit learned) silence. By having a balanced focus on empowerment, I believe we can achieve a more gender-equitable society.

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**Hindu Gods**

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**Crossword answers**

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On the 23rd September 2016, fourteen boys flew out to compete for England at the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup. This was the third rectangular kabaddi world cup but the first that had been globally popularised since the birth of the ProKabaddi League in 2014. Preparations had started out well before the departure date, with regular weekly trainings that quickly escalated to daily sessions in the month before.

Our experience at the world cup was astonishing. We could not believe how popular the sport was in Asia. As is typical for India, we were greeted with a fantastic reception before each match. Team England played five group games and managed to grab two wins (against Australia and Argentina) but unfortunately fell short against world-beaters Korea, Bangladesh and India (who went on to be crowned champions against Iran). A whopping 80 million people watched the world cup in 110 countries!

While we didn't manage to qualify for the semi-finals, we learned an incredible amount that we are trying to translate into tournaments back here in the UK. This started at the recent NHSF Sports Competition in Birmingham who adopted the proper international rules for the first time.

Kabaddi is a hugely exciting sport that is undoubtedly going to grow from strength to strength in the forthcoming years. We welcome all those who would like to get involved! We would like to thank Ashok Das (president of EKA) and Jagmohan Kilaru who coached us both here in England and India.

Keshav Gupta,
B’ham Madhav Shakha
Vice-captain of the England Kabaddi Team

Someshwar Kalia
Woolwich Shivaji Shakha
Captain of the England Kabaddi Team
On the 26th of January 2017 the England Kho Kho team travelled to India to play an International Test match series. A team encompassing the very best of talents across the country, from various different communities had the honour to represent the country taking on the number one ranked side in the world. The side included swayamsevak’s Nikunj Depala, Akshay Depala (Finchley Shakha), Bhavik Vara, Rahul Gopinathan (Croydon Shakha) and Akash Sood (Ashton Shakha).

It was a surreal experience. From playing Kho in front of hundreds of spectators at the Khel pratiyogita to playing in front of a 8000 crowd and Live TV was an experience like never before. We were welcomed like celebrities in each state we played (Mumbai, Rajasthan and Delhi). A true example of Atithi Devo Bhava.

Although the Indian Team proved to be too strong for us, the amount we learned from the experience was invaluable. It provides us with a great opportunity to share and teach these skills in our shakhas.

Whilst in Rajasthan we had a great opportunity to take time out and visit the morning shakha in Ajmer. We were delighted to share mutual experiences of shakha in both countries.

This is a massive step in the right direction for the sport of Kho Kho. We hope that our shakhas continue to encourage such cultural and indigenous sports of India and that in the near future develop more players for future Kho Kho world cups.

Kho Kho
Nikunj Depala
Hindu Gods

ACROSS
5  God of sun
7  Remover of obstacles
8  Preserver
9  Lord of dance
12 Another name for Shiva
13 Goddess of knowledge
14 Resides on a tiger

DOWN
1  Creator
2  King of all gods
3  Bhagavad Gita
4  Goddess of wealth
6  God of fire
10 Destroyer of evil
11 Born in Ayodhya

Answers on page 24