

January – March 2015 – Yugaabd 5114

Sangh Sandesh

संघ सदेश



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Sarve bhavantu sukhinah
sarve santu niraamayah
sarve bhadraani pashyantu
maa kascid dukhabhaag bhavet

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनिः सर्वे सन्तु नरिमयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत् ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

May all be happy.
May all be healthy.
May all enjoy prosperity.
May none suffer.
Aum Peace Peace Peace.

Editorial

Hindu Matters

Recently I asked a friend whether he had seen a highly publicised Hindi movie which had created an outrage among Hindus in Bharat. He replied that he did not want to see it as it was projecting very negative aspects of Hinduism. "Why should I support such a film", he added. While there could be pros and cons on the movie, one thing that struck me was his firm commitment to his belief. He had a particular view and he followed it in action. How many of us commit ourselves to our beliefs and views in daily life?

Hindus in general are less vocal about their beliefs/views on worldly matters of public concern, leave aside assertive actions. They may have personal opinions but they keep it to themselves. Therefore, in spite of being a very peaceful, progressive and economically contributing community, Hindus are generally ignored in national debates and discussions. Vilification, mockery or denigration of Hindu beliefs and icons are frequent in the media with full understanding that there will be no effective backlash from the community. Recent example is the BBC describing Holi festival as a "filthy festival". In the last few years, things seem to be changing slowly with the advent of powerful social media. Young Hindus are voicing their comments and views frequently. This has made some impact in the political establishment and media.

We are living in a vibrant democracy in UK. Our Dharma and traditions are very compatible with democratic way of life. Therefore we should play an effective role in the mainstream life of this country. In the forthcoming general elections, Hindus like other citizens have an opportunity to express their views through the ballot box. But there is a general opinion that Hindus show less enthusiasm in politics. Their voting percentage is low as well, even in areas where they are in large numbers. Such apathy is detrimental to the community in the long run. In a liberal democracy, it is the highly vocal and articulated which win the favour and attention. Numbers also count in the electoral process. Hence for Hindus to be taken seriously by the politicians, they have to be active, assertive and articulated. They have to use the power of their vote sensibly and effectively. They should question and judge a candidate whether he/she understands and supports their (Hindu) issues and concerns.

Therefore, if you (should be over 18) have not registered for voting, please do so urgently and make a point to vote on 7 May. Exercise your democratic right and as a community send the message that **Hindus in the UK matter**.

The passage to Adulthood

This year marks the birth centenary of Shri Eknath Ranade, a stalwart in Sangh. Here is an extract from his must-read book, "Sadhana of Service".

Man is an animal no doubt, but he is a rational animal. Reason is something which is a special gift to him as compared with other animals. As is said in Sanskrit Subhashita:

Aaharnindrabhaimaithumanm Cha
Samanayametapshubhirnranam
Budhirhi Teshamadhiko Vishesho Budha
Viheenaha Pashubhihi Samanaha

"Eating food to satisfy hunger, to sleep in order to have rest, protecting from fear as an instinct for self-preservation against dangers and multiplication through fulfilment of sexual desire – these are four instincts which are common to man and animal. But intelligence is the special prerogative of mankind. Without intellect they are as good as animals."

But this intellect is a double-edged sword. If properly used, it leads a man to become superman, but if wrongly handled, it makes a man more ferocious than an animal. Animals also possess intelligence, but it is just to satisfy their four natural instincts. When they are satisfied, animal do not care for the world. But with his intelligence, man plays havoc. Animals do not think of tomorrow, but man thinks of storing up not only for tomorrow, but for day after tomorrow also, and in order to satisfy this desire of self-preservation, he indulges in exploitation of every kind. Animals fortunately have no logical faculty. They do not imagine nor do they infer. But man, with the sovereign reason generously bestowed on him by God, misuses it and by his logic, imagination and inference finds out multifarious ways and means to satisfy his desires. And what a wonder! With all this, he is still dissatisfied. Man's desires and hungers of multifarious kinds have increased to such an extent that in order to find new means of satisfaction



he has yoked science to serve him and thus he is making numerous inventions day by day. He has started exploiting nature in an unimaginable manner and the exploitation of man also in different ways. But the intelligence goes on inventing still new desires and, as a matter of fact, the desires of man have become limitless. There is no end to the sense of pleasure in man. The primary need of every human being are only a few, but his desires multiply in countless forms, as the primary even colours have a huge variety of shades created out of them or like the simple emotions expressing in hundreds of way. The hunger of man has multiplied and it has not remained the simple original one for food as in the childhood. His development of mental apparatus and intelligence has completely changed that one crude hunger into innumerable desires and he aspired to satisfy all of them. These desires have qualitative and quantitative aspects whereby he desires to raise his standard of living. Surprisingly enough, this standard of living is measured by the wants one has. The more one has, the more one wants and in order to satisfy his increasing wants he has to spend more. So the position of the so-called civilized person depends upon how extravagant he is, how much more he can spend. A few clothes are just enough for a person. But in order to make an exhibition of their social position, people possess hundreds of suits and as many pairs of shoes. This is not because the body wants them, but because the person desires to parade his position and riches to the people.

But this is not worldly wisdom. To enjoy by oneself is selfishness, but to enjoy along with others is enlightened happiness. How to live with world is basic wisdom. If the society is saved, I am saved; my safety depends upon the safety of the society. Therefore I must learn to share happiness with others. I want to enjoy the pleasure, but I cannot enjoy unless the society assures my safety. Therefore to ensure my safety, I enjoy along with others. This is selfishness no doubt, but this is "enlightened selfishness". In business, man maintains honesty not only believing firmly, that 'honesty is the best policy', but he follows that honesty because he can win the favour of the customers and the more the customers, the more will be his profits. So also, one must have the worldly wisdom in not increasing one's hungers because they remain not only confined to the physical level but they reach the mental level also and as a result one starts hankering for name and fame, for power and position, and so on and so forth. Thus the 'hunger' multiplies in adulthood as a result of intelligence. It is an artificial development of hunger which prevails. Therefore, proper knowledge is most essential and this knowledge forms the second landmark in the growth from the childhood to the adulthood.

'Shyamness'

Satya, Prem, Karuna... Truth, Love, Compassion

We come across many inspirational figures throughout our lives, but it is rare that these people can touch our hearts in such a profound way and enable us to live life at its fullest. Shyam Purshottambhai Chandegra, a Birmingham Nagar swayemsevak was one such person.

Shyam began his journey with Sangh at Birmingham Shakti Shakha from the age of 5. Like most children his age, Shyam would always want to participate in Shakha activities. He would attend weekly shakha, Nagar Shibhirs, Baithaks, SSV, Khel and Geet competitions as well as hosting overnight sleepovers!

Through Sangh, Shyam began Karate classes and joined Niyudh Shakha. Many of you may wonder how was it possible for him to participate in Niyudh.

"...Even with his restricted movements he performed activities to the best of his ability whilst in a wheelchair. This was noticed by our Sensei who was so impressed by Shyam's genuine desire to learn that he was awarded the brown belt – the first in our shakha"

(Sanjay Dhorajia, Saha-Karyawaha, Birmingham Nagar).



(Left) Shyam and his mum, whilst being awarded brown belt by his Sensei. (Right) Shyam with fellow B'ham S'sevaks at the Nagar Shibhir

Niyudh was not the only sport he excelled in. During his teenage years, Shyam was a dedicated wheelchair Hockey player, winning three consecutive

'Player of the Year' awards. After six long years of playing with and mentoring fellow teammates, Shyam was awarded the Medal of Admiration in Wheelchair Hockey by HRH The Prince of Wales. This was an astonishing achievement and it wasn't too long before he began playing for England. Unfortunately, Shyam suffered an injury, which prevented him from playing further. However, he did not see this as a setback. Instead, he decided to give back to the charity that has consistently supported him through all aspects of his life - Acorns Children's Hospice.

From the age of 17, Shyam had volunteered for Acorns Hospice, a charity very close to his heart. He committed his time to attend regular meetings where he'd express his desires to establish good communication and care for young disabled people. He was later awarded the Ambassadorship at Acorns 2011 AGM. His most recent interest was to raise money for a disability project in India by bringing together members of the public to raise money for Sewa UK in support of the Gulmohar disability school in India. Shyam addressed his concerns of how children in India suffer neglect due to disabilities and of the tabooed nature of this topic.

In 2014, Shyam was personally honoured by the Mayor of Birmingham a Highly Commended award for being the Pride of Birmingham. Such an award is only presented to those remarkable individuals showing compassion to society and the hunger to make a difference in peoples' lives.

Shyam's health had been deteriorating for a number of months and he experienced intolerable physical pains on a day-to-day basis. Despite this, he never missed an opportunity to be with people and laugh with all his belly.

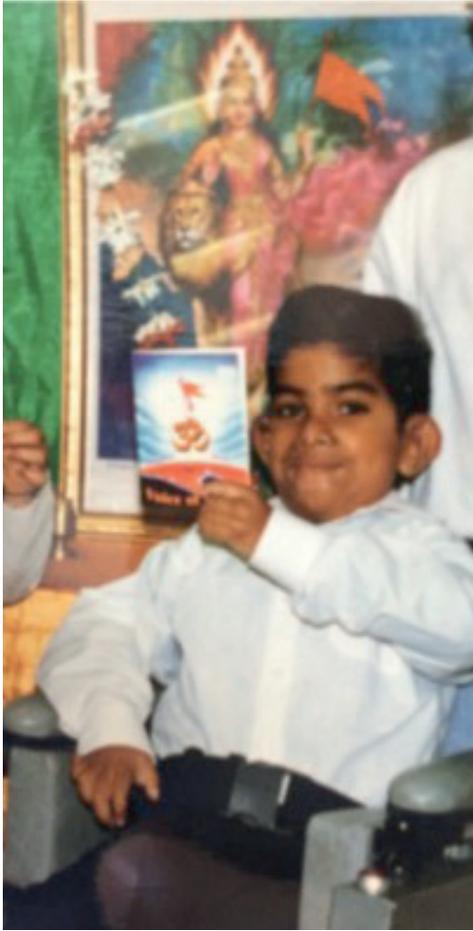


Perhaps he knew he had accomplished his life purpose and time was ripe for him to move on.

On 20th January 2015, it was with an extremely heavy and saddened heart that we said our final goodbyes to our dearest brother Shyam, as he breathed his last.

"...He touched the hearts of so many members of our Sangh family and for that, let Shyam's enthusiasm be an inspiration to live our lives like that of a model Swayemsevak..."

(Hrishi Vadukal- B'ham Swayemsevak)



"...Shyam was an ambassador for the Together for Short Lives UK Transition Taskforce, and Acorns Children's Hospice. He helped represent the needs of young people with life-limiting conditions. Despite his significant physical challenges, he was a committed champion for the Taskforce, Acorns, and the wider palliative care sector. At his funeral, the Priest introduced the word 'Shyamness' or optimism to describe Shyam's approach to life. Shyam was a true inspiration to all of us and will be greatly missed by all the staff..."

The Acorns Children's Hospice Team

Shyam was born with an extremely rare genetic disorder, Infantile Systemic Hyalinosis that caused progressive physical disability. Despite this, Shyam never let his condition dictate his life. Rather, he taught us what it meant to be a model swayemsevak – to overcome

all obstacles enthusiastically and to share love with humanity.

His devotion to Shri Hanumanji gave him that unlimited store of mental strength as he wore the values of Truth, Love and Compassion on his heart and sleeve.

Sangh is proud to have had such a swayemsevak like Shyam. I hope we can take the quality of "Shyam-ness" and embed it within our own lives.

Puja Chandegra. Birmingham Draupadi Shakha

Sarasvati Puja



Sarasvati Puja is an Indian festival celebrated by many Hindus across the world. Sarasvati Maa is the Hindu Goddess of knowledge, music, arts, wisdom and learning; therefore most students will perform this puja in

order to seek blessing from Sarasvati Maa for their studies.

On the 24th of January, many Hindu families gathered together in Indian association Oldham at Radha Krishna temple to take part in a Puja for Goddess Sarasvati. This is the first time Sarasvati Puja has taken place in the Radha Krishna temple but we had a turn out of more than 50 people, which was really good to see.

I enjoyed taking part in the Puja as usually children tend to watch parents do Puja's and this was an ideal opportunity for all the children to get involved! Everyone brought their own educational materials. For example, revision books, maths books or even musical instruments that people were learning to play, to receive Goddess Sarasvati Maa's blessing. The Maharaj (priest) explained each part of the puja so that everyone understood why we do certain parts and went through some easy shlokas, which we can recite at home. To end the Puja we did Aarti to show our respect to the other Gods as well. Once we had given our offerings to the Gods we broke our fast with some Prasad.

Overall, the Sarasvati Puja turned out to be very spiritual and fun. As this year was successful we hope to celebrate this again at Radha Krishna temple.

Anita Ghosh – 12 years old

Hindu Dharma - What is it?



On 31st January 2015, Dr Navalkant Prinja gave a talk on Hindu Dharma at Shree Bharatiya Mandal, Ashton-Under-Lyne. I found this talk very useful as I had already gained a strong base understanding of Hindu Dharma through shakha and shibirs (camps) and so this was a brilliant way to develop my understanding of Hindu Dharma to the next level.

The talk was attended by over 100 people of all different ages and was open to all; it was interesting,

inspiring and intriguing. We learnt that Dharma is the path of righteousness and living one's life as described by the Hindu scriptures. Navalkant ji explained that everyone has an Atman meaning a soul, which is eternal and that lives on for many lifetimes, in one body after another. He also spoke about Moksha, which is the releasing of the atman (soul) from the cycle of rebirth. The Atman can only be released by practicing the following yoga's Jnana-Yoga, which is the way of gaining knowledge, this can be achieved though reading books and studying. The next one is Dhyana-yoga, which involves focusing the mind on meditation; Bhakti-yoga, which means devotion, can be attained through traditional songs and music, and Karma-yoga takes into account your actions.

We were told about the Vedas, the Upanishads and other scriptures that guide us on a day-to-day basis. He also discussed the differences between Religion and Dharma, and why some can get mixed up between the two. We were so captivated by the talk that time had got the better of us. The talk ended with aarti.

I very much enjoyed the talk and learnt a lot. The next talk will be twice as interesting and successful!

Dillon Kevat (Ashton Arjun Shakha, aged 15)

5th ICCS conference

Mysore in Karnataka witnessed the 5th International Conference the World's Ancient Cultures and Traditions at the Ganapathi Sachchidananda Ashrama in Mysore this morning. The conference was organised by the International Centre for Cultural Studies.

The theme of this conference was 'Universal Wellbeing' and aimed at sustaining nature, culture and communities. Seniors from nearly 40 countries and 73 different cultures from across the globe participated in this conference. The motto of the conference was 'Children of the Mother Earth Unite'. Pujya Shri Sachchidananda Sarasvati blessed the occasion.

Shri. Mohanji Bhagwat delivered the keynote address on the occasion. He went on to say, *"It seems that the world is yet to realize that there can be no other way apart from Universal Well-being. The Universe consists of many apparently distinct things but they are all inter-related. This is what our ancient traditions tell us and is also what modern science has discovered. An event at one place has its ramifications at remote places in the universe"*.

Throughout millennia, civilizations have found it difficult to live in



diversity and therefore uniformity has been favoured due to its convenience. This is because diversity is a function of acceptance, deep acceptance of another.

As our ancient traditions suggest, and modern thinking is now following suit, that diversity and unity are inexplicably interlinked. The inexpressible Oneness that pervades all apparent differences is the absolute truth and permanent reality.

"The ancient traditions of the world must have gone through the experience of living together by accepting one-another. This universe is one whole organism and not different parts. Hence well-being is universal and everybody has to take care of everyone else and everything else".

When we cultivate the attitude of deep acceptance, the beauty of diversity can be celebrated. No one should be subjected to persecution and discrimination based on their different attire, skin colour, ways of worship, traditions or belief systems. All this must co-exist together.

Mohan ji suggested *"The coming together of ancient traditions can provide the basis for well being in the universe. They are to be experienced and re-lived through acceptance and not through a contract (of give and take). Our lives are not for our self-interest. They are for the contribution towards universal well being. I exhort you all to apply your mind and translate the conclusions into deeds and seek ways to find universal well-being. I wish you all the best in your efforts in realising the goal in this gathering of elders. I assure you of all the support of Sanatan Bharat in sustaining the ancient culture and traditions."*

A strong UK delegation attended the conference including Sachin Nandha and Sagar Solanki of Leicester and Falguni Bhatt of Ashton-Under-Lyne.

Varshik Shibir, Kenya

The Varshik Shibir in Kenya was held in Kisumu from 25th to 28th Dec 2014. 115 Swayamsevaks and 52 Sevikas attended the Shibir from 4 towns in Kenya, namely: Kisumu, Nakuru, Mombasa and Nairobi.

In the Shibir, we were blessed to have the full-time presence of Shri Chandrakant ji Sharma, HSS Pracharak from UK, whose guidance has motivated and inspired all the Karyakartas in Kenya.

During a public function which was attended in large numbers, Shri Chandrakant ji gave detailed comparison on the various philosophies of the world that include socialism, capitalism and communism. Later, he

enlightened the role of the Hindu Philosophy, in particular the role of Sangh and its importance in comparison to all. It was for the first time, we were listening to what Sangh has to offer to the entire world, from a different perspective. This definitely changed the perceptions of many Swayamsevaks & Sevikas and made us extremely proud to be part of the social transformation, by being part and parcel of Sangh.

In his Samarop speech, he further urged all to do Sangh work with Samarпита Bhava, to take our Karya to greater heights.

After the Shibir, Chandrakant ji made pravas to Kisumu, Nakuru, Mombasa and Nairobi, where all the Karyakartas got charged up to take up various responsibilities. He has totally energized all in Kenya!

Anita Patel, Nairobi

Pravaas – Way to Expand Sangh Work



On the 5th of December, I set out on my first independent Pravaas to Cyprus – a beautiful island which up until now, has had no Sangh influence. What led me to think of making this trip was the constant Chintan Manan of the challenges, work and life that a Pracharaks embraces in today's day and age. At the same time, a young businessman from Bulgaria, who had joined our European main land Karyakarni baithak, requested that I visit three countries; Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria. I decided to begin with Cyprus.

Today, I write these words not too long after virtually attending the first Masik-Milan and Balagokulam of the island of Cyprus via Skype with Shree Ram Ji Vaidya. The excitement of the first ever Milan of this kind and spirit of the group was contagious and could be felt through the screen. This Hindu family event had a total Sankhya of twenty five, with the ages ranging from

five through to over sixty and a diverse representation of different states in Bharat.

As this was my first pravaas and in a land unknown to me, I was naturally, quite nervous until the day I returned. But before leaving, as I sat in Gatwick airport, an energy of some sort filled my being; with hope and confidence, I realised this was the Sangh-Atma dwelling in me, providing me with strength for my work ahead. It was with this that my journey to Cyprus began.

As with anything new, challenges present themselves, big and small, and this pravas was no different. Putting aside the common issues of language and logistics, I hadn't any idea of even the basics- where would I sleep on the three nights that I would be in Cyprus? Would there even be vegetarian food available? Bigger concerns that had entered my mind were; would I be able to find the right people? How would I manage negative mind-sets and attitudes towards HSS and our work? Would I be able to cover all that I had set out to do and meet everyone I had planned to? All this in just three days!

Looking back now, this pravas has gifted me with confidence, valuable experience and new points of contact to further our work. Despite feeling nervous before, I see this entire experience as an adventurous Sampark activity that all Karyakartas should be trained and prepared for, it builds confidence, gives us insight into starting sangh activities in a variety of different environments and supports the work of our pracharaks in initiating more Shakhas worldwide.

Magnanimous characters that we look up to today such as Pp. Doctorji , Shree Guruji and Swami Vivekananda like our Pracharaks today travelled far and wide and I have no doubt that the variety of experiences they encountered, enhanced their work. It is with a snippet of this experience that I would humbly request every Sangh karyakarta to make pravaas a part of their life; three to four trips a year would revolutionise the quality, sankhya and breadth of Sangh activities across the world, give us a deeper appreciation into the work of a Pracharak and reward us with experience we can each take back to our own vibhaag.

Shri Prakash Nandha, Europe Vibhaag



My Vipassana Experience

From the 7th October till 18th October, I stayed at Dhamma Dipa - a silent meditation retreat to learn the art of Vipassana meditation - an ancient Buddhist practice which Gautam Buddha actually taught. Recommended by a fellow Sevika, I never really knew what to expect and quite honestly, it was the most challenging thing I have ever done; but equally the most rewarding and eye-opening.

The retreat was like no other - it had stern rules to abide by, including that of 'Noble Silence'; or in other words, remaining silent for the entire 10 days. This was clearly no holiday! I found the silence incredibly peaceful, giving me ample time to reflect on each aspect of my life. The first few days were tough; I found it difficult to concentrate on my breathing, as I simply did not understand the purpose of it. However this changed dramatically when S. N. Goenka-ji explained it all in his insightful evening discourses. It was all essentially a technique of deep meditation where you maintain awareness and calmness by observing sensations in all parts of body and remembering the law of 'Anicha' meaning impermanent nature. Whether it be a pleasant or unpleasant sensation or situation, nothing lasts - everything is bound by this law of impermanence. In such a world, equanimity is the

key – the ability of being unperturbed by change. These ten days were spent practicing this essential quality of equanimity; in other words, what the Gita calls "*Sthith-Pragya*" to describe a person of steady wisdom.

After ten days of intense practice, the 11th was called 'Metta day' or the day of spreading compassion to the rest of humanity. We came out of silence and the noise erupted! I saw it as a fantastic opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds including a lady who sat beside me for the entire ten days and came to reveal that she was also a YIC graduate from SVYASA, the Yoga University I attended just the month before!

Vipassana meditation was nothing to do with organised religion. Perhaps this was the reason for so many westerners attending. It was not about any "ism," sect or community, but only about the simplicity of observing one's breath and body – two factors that every human shares despite their creed. It advocated "*Shuddha Dharma*" or the purest form of life: – being good, being simple and sharing all your merits with those around you.

Dharma is not linked to any one being; any one deity, but in actuality, it is linked to our inner self – the qualities which we have that make us who we are. We ourselves are responsible for polluting and weakening our minds so we have to be responsible to clean and empower it. An uncontrollable mind is the worst disease that one can have as it the single domino to a chain of diseases to follow. We must learn to see things as they are; we must try our hardest at living in present moment. Life is about dissolving the ego and solidifying joy and peace with calmness and compassion. We should learn to know our true self and challenge situations equanimously without falling prey to our emotions and pain. The impermanent law of nature itself will find a way to take care of things; but in the mean time, keeping a subtle mind is vital to all aspects of life.

Sabka Mangal – May all be happy!

Reena Rabadia, Pannabai Shakha, Woolwich



www.hskonline.co.uk
www.hindubookshop.com

Hindu Sahitya Kendra (HSK) aims to provide books, charts, on Hindu religion, history, philosophy, culture, health, cookery, places of interest, and language learning for most age groups



Hindu Sevika Samiti UK

Proud to be celebrating 40 years in the UK

Hindu Sevika Samiti, through its activities, encourages girls and women to learn, practice and preserve universal Hindu values, to build self-confidence, cultivate a sense of social consciousness and achieve all round development in order to face the challenges and rigours of the modern era. This we hope will lead to individuals who proactively contribute and eventually become integral members of the culture, society and country in which they live.

Gita for Daily Life

Living in the Present

'Whatever happened, happened for the good; Whatever is happening, is happening for the good; Whatever will happen, will also happen for the good only. You need not have any regrets for the past. You need not worry for the future. The present is happening...'

For me, this quote epitomises the essence of the Bhagavad Gita as being a marriage between the quest for the purpose of life and the discipline of living life in the present form. It is been said that if you read a single quote from the Gita, that quote would perfectly relate to your current circumstances or be a solution for any difficulties you are facing. The Gita is a manual for living life at its optimum level. Indeed this quote informs us that our life is merely a path and irrespective of the direction you are pursuing, our sole aim should be focused on living and enjoying the present. The message is simple: embrace what is happening for the good, even embrace the difficulties you are facing in the present and in time it will be your greatest teacher.

Kishan Bhatt, Kingsbury Shakha

Chapter 6 – Dhyana Yoga

Chapter 6 relates to the process of nurturing self-control and self-restraint as a means to harness and unleash one's free will. It breaks the process of developing self-control and self-restraint down to its basic elements, starting with raising awareness of one's state of mind, habits and nature. This in itself is telling.

It seems that I cant simply 'practice' self control, I need to first be aware of my present conditioning, my biases, perceptions and preconceptions. It is a process of raising my awareness of the way I engage with the external world – the world experienced through the senses.

When I experience the world through the senses I judge. I judge what I find to be hot and cold; I judge what I find attractive and unattractive; I judge and judge till I have my list of likes and dislikes. This is completely subjective, often tainted by personal conditioning.

When I stop judging, I can see things for what they really are. Gradually I

can being to start seeing the world for what it is; and see myself for who I am.

So here is a process to start seeing things as they are – to gain awareness of what connects us:

- To gain knowledge of self requires knowledge developed from a means such as Vedanta.
- To assimilate/digest this knowledge requires a mind that is capable
- A capable mind is emotionally and intellectually mature; one that is honest, compassionate and humble
- Such a mind is fit for meditation.
- To cultivate such a mind requires one to perform action. To use ones free will very responsibly, intelligently, pro-actively (C6 V5). This means not being lazy, depressed, self-pitying.



To live the life of a contributor to society requires a lot of free-will based effort. NOTE: By free will, I don't mean the western concept; I mean "the will NOT to do what you want to do"

I believe each person is defined by the strength of his or her will – free will. My free will is my inner drive and purpose. The journey towards ones own happiness is a gradual process of full of choices based on our will; one must take full responsibility for oneself.

This understanding sits directly with Sangh's moto of Swayameva Mrugrendrata – we achieve by our own efforts

Anonymous

The Play of Words

In response to the recent ITV broadcast. A documentary named “Charities behaving badly”.

Words in general are inherently meaningless, apart from any meaning we ourselves attribute to them, thereby giving them power, and more importantly, the power to influence.

Organisations like Sangh, who become recognised for creating impact in society, may also face opposition at a number of levels. It is my personal contention that any error in judgement is deeply rooted in linguistics, which is then exploited by opportunists and politicised by people or groups directly out to mal-align the work.

Let us explore how linguistic inaccuracies can be used to interpret things in a distasteful manner.

“Sangh is an extremist organisation”

Extremism means polarity. Having a fixed belief system, a rigid way of thinking or an inflexible manner of working leaves no room for anything else apart from oneself. Extremist behaviour can no doubt make a loud noise, seek attention (which is taken very seriously) to secure easy wins, but ultimately divides people.

This is the complete antithesis of Sangh. As a matter of fact, workers would fail miserably in their duty to instil social consciousness if they exhibit polarity in any way. A social change-maker is effective in as much as he or she can let go of his or her personal viewpoints and parameters for change, thereby being completely and unreservedly absorbed in the work at hand.

Furthermore, the definition of “extremism” is a totally arbitrary one. There is no accepted meaning for the word in mainstream thought and so its liberal use by a few vested groups to label HSS in this way seems like a cunning strategy to hypnotise the lay public.

Certain challenges do call for prompt and stern action, free from hesitation or emotional attachment. Herein lies the linguistic error – these qualities are mistakenly (or opportunistically) labelled “extremist”. A firm

resolve, decisiveness and bold action are the hallmarks of a great leader, which in the Sangh Praarthanaa (prayer) is stated as 'Dhyeya-Nishthaa'. When these positive qualities are interpreted as being 'extreme', the error lies completely on the interpreter.

“Sangh is military-like”

When people see swayamsevaks and sevikas (members of HSS) marching, practicing martial arts and wielding sticks, the immediate knee-jerk reaction is to equate this to being a para-military outfit. The use of the word 'military' brings about connotations of violence and raising an army. This grossly inaccurate choice of word is bizarre to say the least. As we all know, developing any skill requires both physical and mental discipline alongside soulful commitment. In Sangh, physical activities like martial arts and mental activities like meditation, are deliberately designed to cultivate all-round wellbeing. When this multi-dimensional approach to building character is seen from one angle only, it is liable to be misjudged and wrongly labelled.

“Sangh is anti-other religions”

Social identities divide people when taken to be ultimate. For example, if we so happened to believe that "Attending the temple is superior to attending the church", this may bolster one's personal pride, but grossly damage the universal values of Oneness that we seek to promote. Therefore, Sangh would never lay ultimate emphasis on personal belief systems, because pro-Hindu values must be pro-Humanity.

Again, herein lies the linguistic error - that pro-[insert word] must by definition indicate anti-[insert word]. In the realm of language this is of course the case - we cannot escape this phenomenon of duality. But just like the word "water" is not water itself, and a 3D object drawn on a 2D plane is not the object itself, words are not reality in themselves - they are merely abstract estimations that help point to a reality.

This error of language gives rise to the feeling that promoting a pro-Hindu stance must mean anti-other; in the domain of language this may be the case, but in reality, Sangh regards pro-Hindu to mean having a universal outlook which is not against any belief system. It is by no coincidence that the concluding line of every Hindu prayer is "may there be peace, peace and perfect peace".

“Sangh is indoctrinating...”

If Sangh wanted to create spectacular machines, it would have conditioned individuals to think in fixed ways. On the contrary, a lot of its work is a 'de-conditioning process' wherein machine-like habitual mind patterns are broken down and members learn to become more and more open-minded – the process of personal development. It is only the de-conditioned mind that has the power to act appropriately in a given situation without hesitation.

Part of the curriculum includes learning about Hindu philosophy and history, which helps to build a healthy connection between individuals and their heritage – absolutely vital in enabling people to be comfortable in their own skin. The misleading use of the word “indoctrinating” is testimony to the interpreter’s inability in understanding the value of learning about one’s roots.

As we have seen, linguistic fallibility can be exploited, and a current example highlights how certain words can be used by the media and opportunists to influence people in the wrong way.

On the 18th of February, ITV aired a documentary named “Charities behaving badly”, produced by the company Hardcash productions, wherein it erroneously portrayed an extreme, anti-another and military view of HSS. This grossly inaccurate documentary has resulted in a formal Charity Commission inquiry into Sangh's activities; knowing full well the allegations to be unsubstantiated, Sangh has been nothing but transparent in their cooperation with the Charity Commission.

The lesson to be learned from all this is to perhaps appreciate the power of wordplay, meanings and interpretations to distort actual reality. Their fictitious nature is used (albeit in a very convincing manner) to manipulate weak minds and mal-align honest work for the purpose of entertainment and controversy.

M.S Golwalker defines Dharma to be “the rehabilitation of man's mind and individual adjustment for a harmonious co-existence”- nothing more, nothing less. This definition is deeply embedded within all Sangh activities and irrespective of any language used by people who beg to differ, it will continue to live by this ideal.

Rajiv Chandegra, Birmingham Madhav Shakha

Balagokulam



Open Day in Stevenage

Stevenage Balagokulam Open Day was organised on 14 Dec 2014 in Chells Park Pavilion, Stevenage. The Mayor of Stevenage, Councillor Sherma Batson, and her consort Mr Howard Rooke attended the event as chief guests. Mr Michael Downing, ex-Mayor and Mrs Aideen Downing were also present as special guests. We were fortunate to have Mr Bali as one of the seniors from the community to observe the event. The total sankhya was 49, including guests.

The activities started as usual with assembly followed by warm-ups and family khel. This was followed up by Bauddhik activities, including a discussion on the importance of Balagokulam and a workshop on recognising the Hindu deities.

Both the guests gave very encouraging speeches. In the end, Dr Ram Vaidya, (Joint Coordinator of HSS worldwide) explained the logic behind different activities and purpose of Balagokulam. Finally the activities finished with assembly and refreshment.

Children also entered into a 'Gangajali-making' competition that they were asked to make at home and bring on the day.

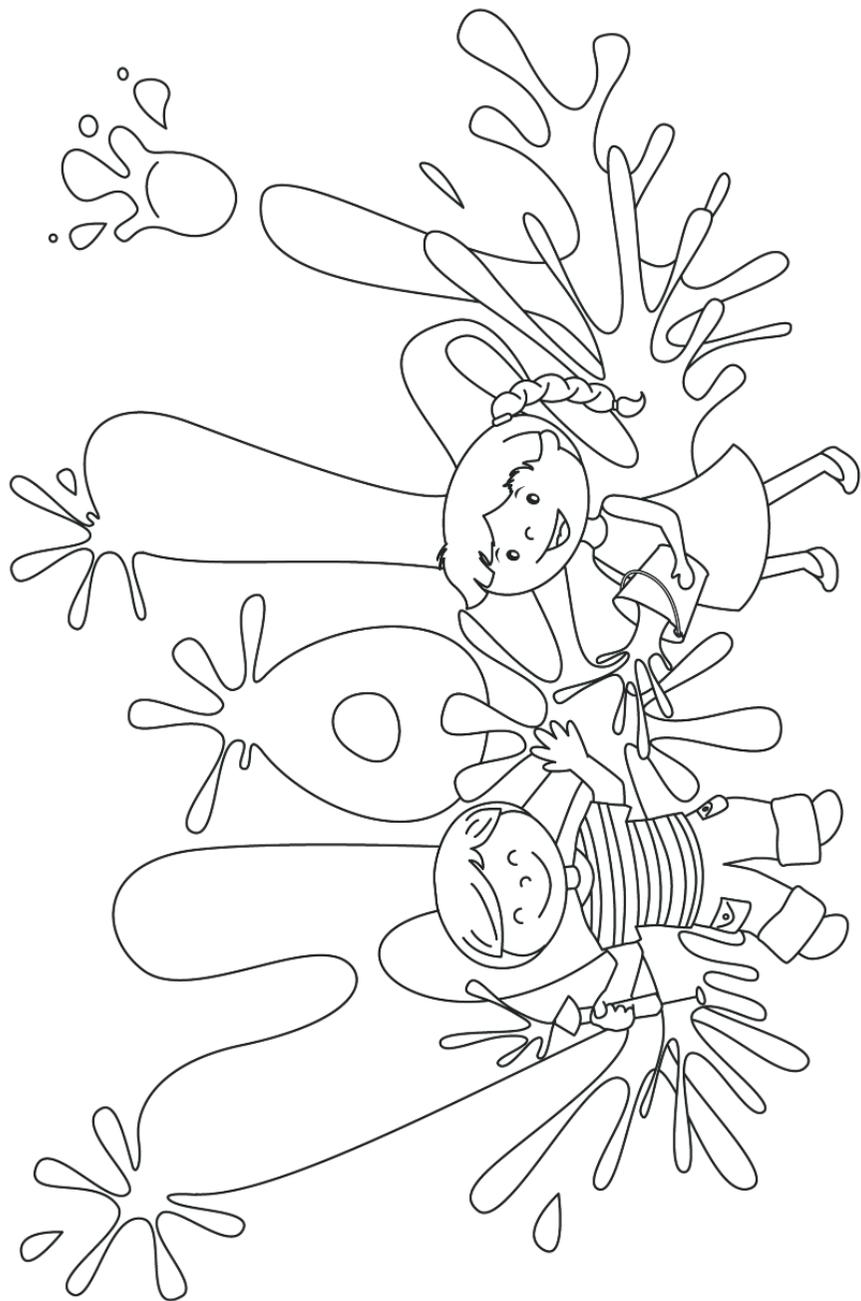
All the feedback was very positive – "full of fun", "fast-paced", "how could you fit this all in?!", and so on. All the parents actively took part and then stayed till the end to tidy up. There was real enthusiasm and sense of ownership of the event.

We were very fortunate to have support from Jeel ji, Ritesh ji from NL Vibhaag, Jigneshji from Liverpool and Bhaskarji from Stevenage Interfaith Forum.

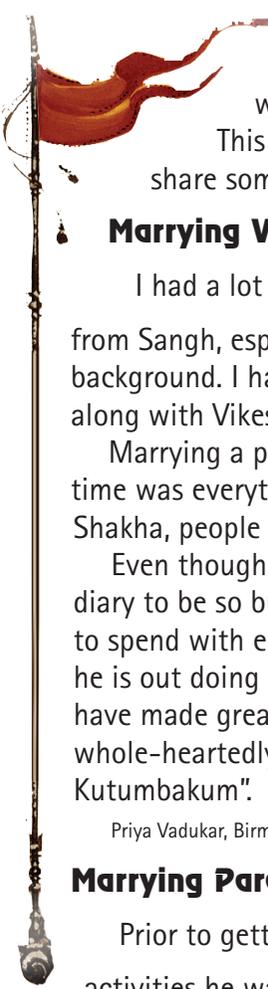
Overall, the open day was a real success.

Anuradha Sharma, Stevenage BG





Marrying Into Sangh



There are many examples of newly married couples where one spouse is completely new to Sangh and Samiti. This can be both exciting and challenging for them. Here we share some of their experiences.

Marrying Vikesh

I had a lot of people ask me what it was like married to someone from Sangh, especially because my family were not from the same background. I had never really given it much thought as I just 'tagged' along with Vikesh to all the events without really thinking twice.

Marrying a person who is quite heavily involved in Sangh meant that time was everything: - weekly shakha, regular meetings, Friday Niyuddh Shakha, people staying over and 10 days at SSV.

Even though I had exposure to NHSF, I wasn't quite expecting my diary to be so busy whilst being married. We would have to squeeze time to spend with each other. I thought to myself - "What should I do when he is out doing all these activities?" GET INVOLVED. I'm so glad I did. I have made great friends, and the Birmingham Nagar has welcomed me whole-heartedly. I really feel like I am part of one big family - "Vasudeva Kutumbakum".

Priya Vadukar, Birmingham

Marrying Paresh

Prior to getting married (in May 2014), I was aware of some activities he was involved with and that there were events and meetings that took place across the country. I had even attended a few events and got introduced to a number of people involved in Sangh who treated me like family.

Before we got married we discussed how there may be 'occasional guests' staying over and it could be at short notice! Surprisingly, I actually welcomed this without hesitation as it meant I could give back to the people that have

made my husband the person he is today. When I first met Chandrakantji and Ramji I was very surprised at the simplicity of their lives. Their approach was very humble, kind and it suited their roles so perfectly, guiding the Swayamsevaks and Sevikas in the right direction. I felt extremely honoured having them stay with us.

Soon after we got married, I got used spending my Friday evenings alone, as Paresh would be at Shakha. I made a conscious choice to join Samiti embrace this new way of thinking.

Bradford was a completely new city for me, with unknown people. But the nagar made me feel so comfortable and involved me with all their hearts.

Kavita Mistry, Bradford

Marrying Dipvandana

Before meeting Dipvandana I had not been to any shakha or HSS functions, but I had heard of shakha as my father had taken part in Kenya. In addition, the Jain function of Paryushan takes place in the Birmingham karyalaya which I got used to!

It has taken a while for me to figure out all the terminology. I have managed to relate some of the commands to my background in the military but still struggle with all the names for all the different groups and hierarchy.

My first large HSS event was SSV 2011 in which Dipvandana was in charge of logistics (Vyavastha Pramukh is the name I think!) and I was helping out in the kitchen and picking up rotlis. It was then that I realised how big the Sangh family is - I'm still trying to remember everyone's names!

I am amazed at the commitment of the people involved with HSS; there are always conference calls, people coming over and meetings/events in various parts of the country. It was difficult at first to get used to the time required by Dipvandana to fulfil her duties in HSS but it has now become normal and we have managed to work around the commitments.

Since moving to Lincolnshire we have met other families started a Balagokulam, which has been running for over a year. I found this was a really good way to meet people in the area. Through Balagokulam, we have taken part in Sewa day and also held Lincoln's first Navratri event, which was held for 2 days, bringing the entire community together.

I have met so many people through Dipvandana's role and participation in HSS and hope to make many more friendships through the years.

Shameer Mehta, Lincoln

Magna Carta and the Vedic Scriptures



This year 800th anniversary of the famous 'Great Charter' the Magna Carta is being celebrated. This legal document was originally issued by King John of England. Even though only 3 out of the original 63 clauses have survived in the English law it is known to enshrine the idea of 'free men', 'right to justice', 'fair trial' and 'freedom of speech' that laid the very foundations of democracy. It has influenced the constitutions of many countries including those of USA and India, the two largest democracies in the world. It echoes in the American Bill of Rights (1791) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

This idea of democracy and election of the ruler existed in the Vedic scriptures of Hindus in ancient India almost 5000 years ago. It took England a very long time to develop a democratic type of government. In the Rig Veda, a verse in Book 10 Hymn CXXIV implies that those people who elect their rulers are divine. Thus electing a government or ruler is a godly act and giving in to despotism or dictatorship is like adopting the ways of devil. The origin of the State, the office of the king or ruler, the law conferring power on the ruler and ruler's duty to maintain law and order have been explained in the Shantiparva of the Mahabharata. There are many other treatises such as the Manu Smriti and the Artha Shastra of Kautalaya that talk of democratic governments where there is a social contract which treats rulership as a job not a privilege. Kautalya (9-39) says, "In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness." The ruler looked after the welfare of the people in return of people's loyalty to the law and the taxes they paid to the government. Above all, the great philosophical text of Hindus, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states, "The law is the king of kings. No one is superior to the law. The law aided by the power of the king enables the weak to prevail over the strong."

Whilst we admire and enjoy the freedom and democracy and salute the Magna Carta that enshrined these rights in the law books 800 years ago we

should be mindful that similar ideas of the free world and democracy existed in the Vedic scriptures in ancient India almost 5000 years ago !

Prof. Nawal K Prinja

Prof. Nawal K Prinja is Religious Education spokesman for the VHP(UK) and teaches Vedic Mathematics and Hinduism at VOICE (Manchester) on Saturdays.



My Tabla and Me

Indian classical music is a system of music that has evolved over many years and continues to evolve to this day. It has had many influences over the years, which has led to the two styles of classical music- Hindustani from the North and Carnatic from the South.

Not only has a musical genre developed but a specific system of teaching has been made integral to Indian Classical music. The method of one to one teaching at the feet of a guru gives us an appreciation for the practice and rigour needed for this art form. It also gives us more of an appreciation for the music itself, the precision with which it is played, and the perfection which is strived for. The method of teaching is also a great impartor of values such as humility, curiosity and many other values we look for in Sangh karyakartas.

Personally, Tabla has provided me a method to achieve some form of peace in the day. I have found in the practice that I focus internally and de-focus from the external goings on in life. Sometimes I am asked why I am so calm, and a large part of that answer would be down to yoga and music. It has really developed my ability to focus and de-focus. Even if it is not necessarily playing the instrument, learning Tabla has given me a greater appreciation for all classical art forms and this appreciation and understanding has meant that I'm able to contemplate and focus inwards just when listening to a Tabla solo or a vocal recital. Through being able to appreciate the music, I am more able of appreciating various other forms of art, and actually it helps in being able to appreciate others. Practicing is a tapasya for me, which has slowly enabled me to appreciate that all Nature is in fact art in motion; I hope I can bring that same sentiment to Sangh karya.

Hinesh Shah, University of Nottingham

"Civilizations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient and modern times, wonderful ideas have been carried forward from one race to another...But mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast of war trumpets and the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood...

Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This, many other nations have taught; but India for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist... Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and peace before it.

We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live...!"

– Swami Vivekananda

Sangh Sandesh

संघ संदेश



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