

PRERANA

e-zine

AN INSPIRATION TO HINDU WOMEN



GURU PURNIMA

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PRERANA

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

We, as women, are always busy with personal and professional commitments. Our day mostly begins with household chores and continues until late evening, doing a number of routine jobs for our family and people around us. At times, it seems that we are working like machines, going on without rest. And then, without realizing, disappointment, despair, and loneliness seep in and we begin to question: 'Why am I doing all this, and for whom?' This is the time, we need to reflect and introspect. This is the time we need to as

catch up with other women around us and ask, 'How are we all doing?'

This magazine, '**Prerana**' is an attempt to reconnect women with each other and with our own self to find our inner '*Prerana*', the motivation to continue working ceaselessly, but with clarity and a vision that we are moving on together to build a strong Hindu society, brick by brick, with our collective efforts, with love and enthusiasm. Let us bring out the beauty in each other, support each other, and thrive together!



WRITE TO PRERANA

Have something to share? You can write about your experiences in HSS, art and craft projects, book reviews, recipes, or about any topic that appeals to you.

Not sure what to write? Each issue has articles under the titles '*American Women I admire*', '*Hindu women from History*', '*What inspires me*', '*The book that changed my life*', '*I want to share*' and many others. Hope this gives you *Prerana* to write to us. Send in your articles, questions and comments to: prerana.feedback@gmail.com



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PREVIOUS ISSUES

Check out all the previous issues of Prerana here:

<https://www.hssus.org/prerana-e-zine>

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh



Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) USA is a voluntary, non-profit, socio-cultural organization. It aims to organize the Hindu community in order to preserve, practice and promote Hindu ideals and values.

HSS conducts structured programs of regular athletic and academic activities to develop strong character and leadership skills in its members, and encourage maintaining Hindu cultural identity in harmony with the larger community.

Visit www.hssus.org for more information

A Little About Listening

शतेषु जायते शूरः सहस्रेषु च पण्डितः ।
वक्ता दशसहस्रेषु श्रोता भवति वा न वा ॥

Namaste,

One in hundreds is a brave person, and one in thousands is a scholar. A great orator is one in ten thousand, and one can hardly find a good listener

"Suna suno suno..." with the drum beat was a way people were called upon before any important public announcement in olden times, by the kings and queens.

The modern version of the same idea in public follows similar lines, "May I have your attention please..." A more personal version is, "aji sunte ho..."

Have you ever wondered why people have to be called upon to 'listen ' before any public announcement at public places? It's all to seek their attention. Mere physical presence or eyes towards you is not enough to believe that the other person is listening to you. And it is certainly a 'well-known ladies' problem' that their 'ajjis' don't listen unless instructed clearly to!

Last month my school friend posted her younger sister's picture on Facebook with a brief title, 'miss you' followed by a post on how her sister passed away in a week's sickness. The post had more than eighty likes with comments, e.g. 'Looking cute', 'Great click', and 'Beautiful!' No one bothered to read a single line beyond seeing the picture and instantly pressing the like button. This is an example of 'read amiss', but holds for not listening too!

Have you ever noticed that people don't even wait for others to reply to their question, 'How are you?' and begin saying their next sentence? Do they really ask others about their well-being or is it just a formality? Most people feel that listening to others is a drain of energy or a waste of time. We often underestimate the power of listening. More people want to be better speakers but a few want to inculcate the skill of becoming a better listener.

In Vedic literature, two types of listeners have been described. The higher class Bhagavatam listeners are called 'pravara shrota' as they are considered the highest and purest quality listeners while the lower class listeners 'avar shrota' do not listen in the right mindset. Vedic literature abounds with examples of animals to be emulated for their listening skills. In several places, a bird known as 'chatak' is mentioned as an exemplar. This bird has a legendary reputation as it is said that chatak keeps its gaze fixed on the cloud for a long time as it seeks only a drop of a dark rain-bearing cloud of the 'Swati Nakshatra' to quench its thirst. The bird chatak (perhaps a sparrow hawk or a cuckoo) would prefer to die of thirst than to drink anything but what it seeks! This metaphor for good listening alluded us to those true listeners who don't just absorb anything that they come across in this era of the information bubble. They do not pollute their inner self with something mundane and useless. In other words, they do not engage in idle talks or gossip.

Who can attest to the power of listening more than Arjun's son Abhimanyu? If it has such magical results, then why is listening so hard? Often even when we want to hear with focus, our ears fail to listen. The real reason is the cacophony of one's mind. There is so much going on in the minds that it fails to listen to its voice. There is so much noise and distraction that we don't have the mental and emotional space to truly listen to others. We are so filled with our own superficial sagas of flickering minds that we have no scope to listen to others in a true sense.



Is there a simple way to improve our mental clarity?' It may seem odd, but the secret is, that if we want to listen to the other side, we have to learn to listen to ourselves first. What if, before an important, delicate, or sensitive conversation, we took a moment of silence just to tune in and listen to where we are? If we do so, that is, if we truly listen to ourselves first, we will find it a lot easier to listen to others. With practice, quieting that internal monologue within, we can find space to hear what's being said by the other person. Also, if we can listen to others with compassion, without judgment, and with an open heart, the world will be a better place.

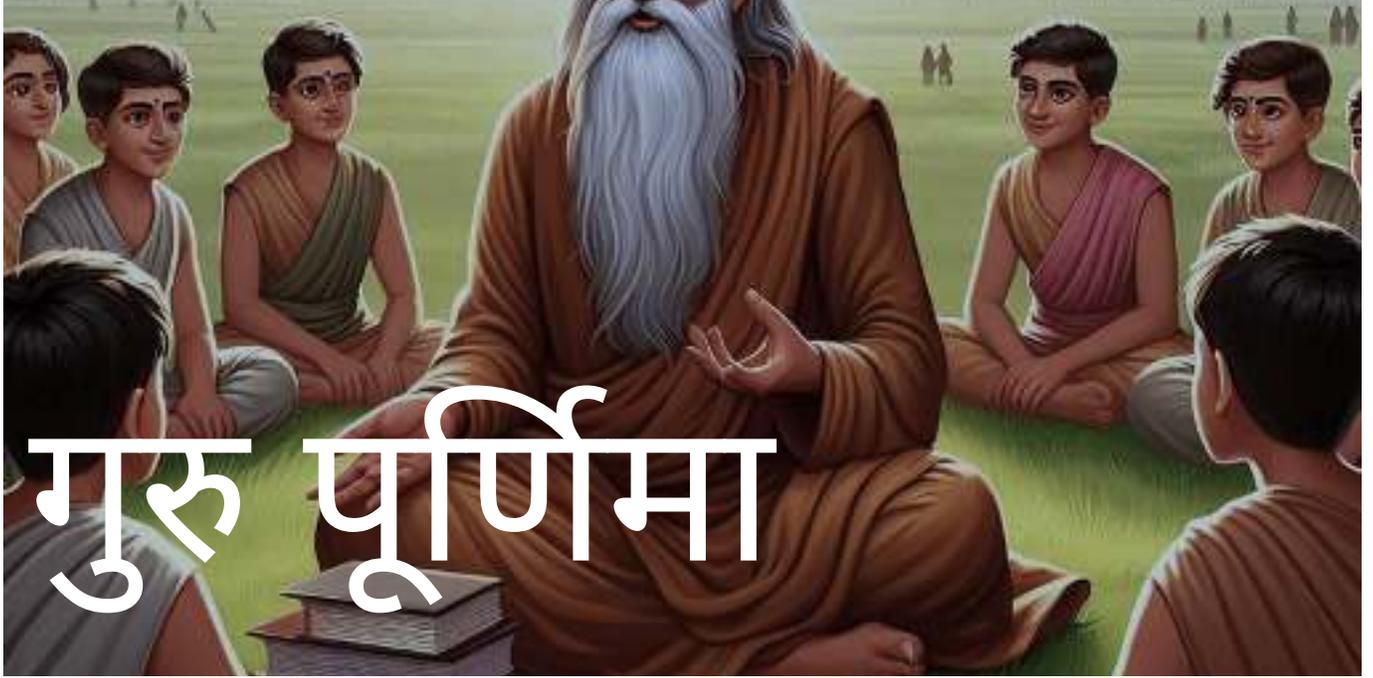
Be careful not to let your internal monologue prevent you from truly being able to listen to yourself and others!



Name: Richa Yadav



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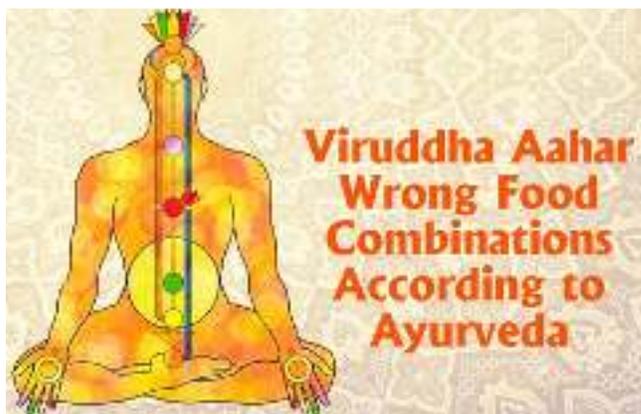
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Prominent Hindu Women

Rukmini Devi Arundale

WRITTEN BY: GOWRI NANDAKUMARA

There are many prominent Hindu women who have played a very important role in elevating our beloved Bharat to the zenith in this world. One of them is Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale.

Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale was born in a small-town Madurai in the state of Tamil Nadu on 29th February 1904. She was exposed to music, dance, and culture through the environment.

Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale remains significant for a variety of reasons. She was a theosophist, a true champion for animal welfare, one who revived indigenous weaving and a dancer who gave new meaning to the arts and sacrificed her all to build a place for the arts.

Carnatic Music is a type of music that is very popular in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka. Devadasis were female artists dedicated to the service and worship of a deity or a temple for the rest of their lives. Sadhir, a form of dance in Tamil Nadu practiced by the Devadasis, was given a dignified status in the society through the efforts of Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale. She renamed Sadhir as Bharatanatyam.



The most important work for which she is remembered is the way the Bharatanatyam was brought out of the shadows, refashioned, given a new life and how it has flourished and experienced growth all over the world. She also realized the centrality of music in dance. She created Kalakshetra in Adyar, Chennai in 1936. Kalakshetra fostered Bharatiya arts and culture. She funded Kalakshetra, through her own resources and donations of friends and well-wishers. She not only invited the best students but also erudite teachers, artists, and musicians to Kalakshetra.

Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale won many awards. She was the recipient of Padma Bhushan, one of Bharat's highest civilian honors in 1956. She also received the Sangeet Natak Academy (Bharat's

National academy of music, arts, and dance) Award in 1957 and in 1993, the Bharat Parliament declared her foundation, Kalakshetra an institution of national importance. Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale was a true champion for animal welfare. As a member of the Rajya Sabha of Bharat, she was instrumental in passing the 'Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act'. But her most important message was in her own life when she chose not to take medicines for her fatal illness. This is due to the reason that many of the medicines were tested or researched with animals.

Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale declined the offer of the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai's nomination for the President of Bharat since she wanted to remain close to the art and Kalakshetra.

Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale was a vegetarian. In 1957, the first vegetarian congress was held under her Presidentship. She often repeated the line "Animals are my friends and I do not eat animals".

Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale revived handloom sarees. She established a weaving center in Kalakshetra to help bring back traditional designs, colors, and motifs along with traditional weaving practices.

Srimathi Rukmini Devi Arundale was fondly addressed as Athai (Paternal Aunt) by her near and dear ones. I was fortunate enough to meet her when I was seven years old. I met her when I went to a concert in a sabha at Chennai with my grandmother. Rukmini Devi attained Sadgati on 24th February 1986 in Chennai.

Name: Gowri Nandakumar

Shakha: Hanuman Shakha, Colorado Sambhag : South West Sambhag
Hobbies: Singing & Teaching Carnatic Music

My Art – My Passion

WRITTEN BY: RUPA TARWAY



Namaste! My name is Rupa Tarway and I have fostered a passion for art since childhood, initially self-taught and now deeply immersed in the rich tradition of Indian folk art. My dedication to this art form has led me to work alongside respected artists like National Awardees Chandrakala ji, Chandra Bhushan ji, and Golu Jha ji. This mentorship has refined my skills and broadened my understanding of traditional art forms. My current focus is on Indian folk art, including Madhubani/Mithila, Aipan, Kalamkari, Godhna, Gond, Pichwai, Mandala, and Warli, all of which are rooted in Hindu history.



When I heard about the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh's (HSS) Guru Vandana Gift initiative, I saw an opportunity to contribute my artistic skills. I proposed creating Indian folk-art pieces for teachers, aiming to spread knowledge and inspire them. The North Houston Guru Vandana team embraced the idea, leading to an immediate and collaborative effort. After the proposal, everyone agreed on mandala art, known for its intricate patterns and spiritual symbolism.

The project's success was a testament to the power of teamwork and dedication. We, as a group of committed volunteers embarked on a two-month journey to create around ninety unique mandala canvases for all teachers. This intensive work involved detailed painting and hand-drawing, reflecting the importance of Sewa, a core principle in Hindu tradition that emphasizes selfless service.

The collaborative process was both challenging and rewarding. We all contributed our time and energy. The project became more than just an artistic effort; it was a collective mission to honor teachers and promote Indian culture through art. Every participant experienced the joy of working together towards a common goal, symbolizing the spirit of dedication, hard work, and mutual respect.

The completion of the mandala canvases was a moment of pride for everyone involved. Teachers were deeply touched by the thoughtful gifts, which not only celebrated their contributions but also introduced them to the beauty and depth of Indian folk art. The response from the educators was overwhelmingly positive, showing the project's impact.



My journey did not end with the Guru Vandana Gift initiative. Inspired by the experience, I have continued my efforts to raise awareness about Hindu history and folk art. I believe that art can be a powerful aspect of cultural preservation and education, especially for future generations. Through my work, I am trying to connect young minds with the rich heritage of Indian traditions.

In reflecting on the project, I emphasize the importance of cooperation and community support. I am happy to lead this project and credit the success of the mandala art initiative to the collective efforts of all the volunteers. It was a good opportunity to create and strengthen bonds between new and old Sevak and Sevikas, Kishores, and Balas.

Through my art, I will continue to learn, inspire, and educate, ensuring the beauty and wisdom of Indian cultural history are being cherished and passed down to future generations. Thank you to all the HSS volunteers who were part of this Guru Vandana gift-making journey, and I am looking forward to more people being part of Sewa.

Name: Rupa Tarway

Shakha: Shivshakti, Brookshire, Vibhag: North Houston Sambhag: Southwest
Hobbies: Painting, Drawing, Gardening, Cooking

Seeta



WRITTEN BY: AMI GANATRA



Was Seetā a helpless dependent woman, or a woman in her own right? How was the relationship of Shri Rāma and Seetā? Let's explore just one incident from her life to get some idea of how strong willed and assertive she was. Here's an excerpt from my book *Ramayana Unravelled: Lesser-known facets of Rishi Valmiki's epic*, that outlines the personality of Seetā as seen in her unflinching decision to accompany Rāma to the forest.

Putting Seetā's hand in Rāma's, Janaka had said, 'I offer you this daughter of mine. She will be your sahadharmachārini, your equal partner in dharma.' With every passing day after their marriage, Rāma and Seetā fell deeper and deeper in love with each other. Rāma's heart was fixed on Seetā. For Seetā, there was never a moment when Rāma was not in her thoughts. Rishi Vālmiki tells us that the two were so deeply in love that between them there was no emotion and no thought that was hidden. They didn't even need words to communicate. They spoke through their hearts.

Their life in the palace immediately after their marriage was like a dream. But that wasn't going to last too long.

Seetā was in her chambers busy preparing for the big day. Soon, her Rāma was going to be crowned as the successor of Dasharatha. Seetā saw Rāma come in. She blushed. It was funny, she thought, how even after so many years, the sight of Rāma sent a wave of warm, fuzzy feeling through her heart. But as he came closer, her heart skipped a beat. Something was amiss. Rāma's face had lost its color. He looked visibly ill at ease.

Rāma hadn't flinched when Kaikeyi told him that an exile awaited him instead of the throne of Ayodhyā. Yet, when he went to his chambers to inform Seetā about the drastic twist in their lives, he couldn't hold back his emotions. Beads of sweat broke on his forehead and a look of despondency spread across his face.

'What happened? Why do you look so pale?' asked Seetā anxiously.

'Seetā, I have been banished to the forest by my father and I must leave today,' said Rāma, narrating to her all that had transpired in Kaikeyi's chambers. 'While I am gone, please continue to serve both my mother and father respectfully, as you always have. My mother will need your care even more as she deals with my separation. Continue to treat Bharata and Shatrughna with love, like your brothers and sons. Bharata will now be the king, so do not do anything that is against his interest,' he said, regaining his composure.

Seetā was shocked, not at Rāma's banishment but his indication that he was going without her. 'Why do you speak to me like some woman who does not know her role? Mother, father, siblings—they all live their individual destinies. Only the wife follows the fate of her husband. So, if you are exiled, I am exiled with you. If you must walk on the paths of thorns in the jungles, I will walk ahead of you, pulling out the thorns to make your journey smooth. And I don't need any instructions from you about how to deal with people; my parents have taught me well. Hence, I know what I must do. I will go with you. There is no way anyone, even you, can stop me from accompanying you. You need not worry. I will eat whatever is available in the forest and tend to your needs. Traveling through forests with

cont'd

I will admire the beautiful lakes full of lotuses and swans, and the tall mountains. All I care about is being with you. I don't even desire heaven without you,' declared Seetā, unable to control her tears.

Rāma was not sure Seetā really understood what she wished to get into. Comforting her, he said, 'You have never shirked your responsibilities, I am aware. I urge you to live by them right here in Ayodhyā till I return after fourteen years. Life in the forest is full of hardships, which I do not wish for you. Unaccustomed to seeing humans, the wild animals are ever ready to pounce when they see one. The place is filled with roars of lions who are always on the prowl. The streams of rivers that flow through the forests are home to dangerous crocodiles. There are swamps all around, making walking extremely difficult. There are no beds. The forest dwellers have to sleep on dry grass. There are no delectable foods. One has to survive on wild fruits and roots and sometimes even these are difficult to procure. There could be bouts of wild storms and intense darkness. Poisonous snakes, spiders, scorpions and mosquitoes thrive in the jungle. Life in a forest is full of mental and physical struggles. Hence, it is better for you not to come to the forest.'



Seetā was undaunted. 'Sure, there will be hardships. But with you alongside, these would matter little. I am certain the wild animals will run away when they see you. Everyone who has challenged you has run away scared, what to say of these animals. When I was still a young girl in my parents' home, an astrologer had predicted that I will have to live in the forest. Since then, I have been yearning to live in the jungles. This turn of events is therefore destined for me. You must take me along. I have been a devoted and loyal wife to you. I promise, whatever the situation, I will live through it without complaining. If you leave me and go, then trust me, you will see me dead.'

Rāma continued to dissuade Seetā by enumerating the dangers of jungle life. With every argument that Rāma presented, Seetā became more upset and annoyed. 'Did my father know that he had found a son-in-law who was a man only in physique but was otherwise more like a woman? If you go without taking me because you are afraid of the dangers, the world will surely think you lack courage and valor. Such an insult of yours will be

unbearable for me. Or is there any other reason that you wish to forsake me? I will cause you no harm. I will follow you, ask for nothing, demand nothing,' Seetā pleaded and hugged Rāma tightly, tears rolling down her eyes uncontrollably. Rāma steadied her and covered her in a warm embrace. 'Seetā, at the cost of making you unhappy, I do not desire even heaven. Nor am I scared of anyone or anything. I am very capable of protecting you myself. But I couldn't have forced you to come to the forest with me without fully knowing your desire. If you have been destined to go with me to the forest, you will.'



Everyone dissuaded Seetā from going to the forest. 'She doesn't deserve the hardships,' said some. 'Seeing her, we will miss Rāma less,' said others. Rishi Vashishtha even suggested that Seetā be given the throne in place of Rāma. But

Seetā's mind was made up. Her firm decision was to go. She wished to be with Rāma, in thick and thin. Even the throne had no meaning for her without Rāma. Rāma didn't want to impose an exile on her. But when he was convinced of her desire, he was more than happy to take her along. Living without Seetā was not to his liking either.

What aspect of Seetā's personality stands out to you in this episode?

Ayurveda Viruddha - Unwholesome



WRITTEN BY: RIYA SAROLKAR

In January, we celebrated our Hindu festival, Makar Sankranti where we share Tilgul (sesame-jaggery sweet) with each other to strengthen the bond between each other.

In February, we celebrate friendship, relationship on Valentine's day. These interpersonal connections are often likened to the concept of yin and yang, where two individuals complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Good friendships and relationships should ideally make both individuals a better person, as they support each other's growth and well-being.



Interacting with interesting individuals can be enriching and stimulating. However, not every individual may resonate with each other despite being interesting/enriching or stimulating. Personalities, values, and interests can vary, and sometimes, despite finding someone fascinating, there might be a disconnect or lack of chemistry.

If we look at the connection between food and the body, it is a complex and long-term relationship. We are tied together from birth till the end of our life. Now the question is, is the food that we are consuming really helping us to stay and become healthier or poisoning slowly? Some foods might be intriguing or appealing in theory but may not agree with our body or taste preferences. Just as not all people are compatible, not all foods work well for everyone. It's crucial to find the right balance and listen to our body's signals when it comes to food choices.

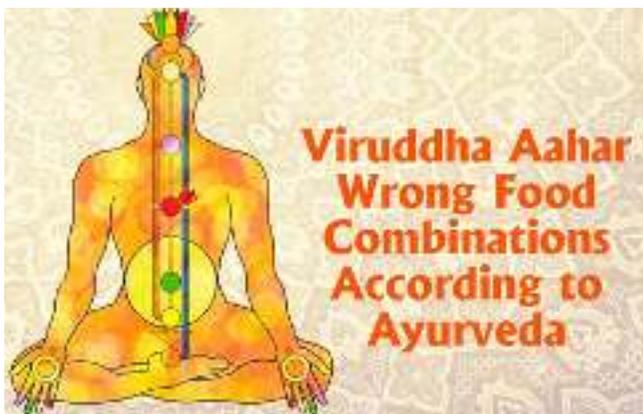
According to Ayurveda, food (aahar) is considered as one of the three pillars of life. Ayurveda has given a keen attention on concept of wholesome ahara and unwholesome ahara (viruddha aahar)

What is viruddha -Unwholesome ?

यत् किञ्चिद्दोषमासाव्य न निर्हरति कायतः। आहारजातं तत् सर्वमहितायोपपद्यते॥

Viruddha means one which specifically obstructs, opposes or resists. The unwholesome or opposite food and practices that are opposite to the normal dhatu or body physiology is viruddha. Diet which dislodges a dosha within the body but does not expel them out of the body are termed as viruddha /ahita (unwholesome). [Cha. Sa. Sutra Sthana 26/85]

It possesses opposite qualities compared to dhatu and destroys them, leading to various diseases or complications



I especially skin diseases, psychiatric diseases like insanity etc. In modern times, knowingly or unknowingly unwholesome combinations of food, faulty diet/junk foods, or processed/packed food are consumed. This produces ill effects on the body, such as allergies, food toxicities, etc. The cases of food incompatibility and food-food interactions, food-drug interactions are increasing.

Therefore, we need to understand the concept of 'viruddha' so we know the approaches to preserving health. Faulty dietary habits can be corrected and incompatibility with ill effects can be prevented by knowing the concept of viruddha.

**यच्चापि देशकालाग्निमात्रासात्म्यानिलादिभिः। संस्कारतो वीर्यतश्च कोष्ठावस्थाक्रमैरपि॥
परिहारोपचाराभ्यां पाकात् संयोगतोऽपि च। विरुद्धं तच्च न हितं हृत्सम्पद्धिभिश्च यत्॥**

There are different possibilities/ ways for food to become unwholesome

Some examples are:

- Desha viruddha: Contradictory to the geographic location
- Kala viruddha: Consumption of food contradictory to time and season
- Agni viruddha: Food intake that is not suitable to one's digestive power
- Matra viruddha: Consuming food that is incompatible in terms of quantity
- Sanskar viruddha: Consumption of food preparation that becomes toxic when prepared in a particular way
- Krama viruddha: Intake of food contradictory to order
- Samyoga viruddha: Food items incompatible in terms of combinations
- Hridya viruddha: Diet which is unpleasant and unpalatable to one's taste.

There are a total of 18 major types of viruddha aahar explained in Ayurveda. We will try to understand them in the next article.

Till then, let's introspect ourselves. Do you think you are consuming any of the (aahar) food that seems viruddha to you? Have you been eating it regularly for a long time?

Name: Riya Sarolkar

Shakha: , Vibhag: North Houston Sambhag: Southwest

Hobbies: Painting, Drawing, Gardening, Cooking



Home Sweet Home

WRITTEN BY: ANJALI PATEL

One of our substitute teachers was very good at giving positive lessons. I was a high schooler at that time. Whenever this teacher used to come to our class, she would tell us some story, trigger some discussion, sometimes she would make us play some game or read some articles. I am sharing one of the games we played at that time.

The game is called "Tari bar" meaning "Thank god even that but this" The game goes like this- one person will say some bad situation, or some stressful condition. The next person has to say, "Tari bar" and say a positive phrase to that situation. Here is the first example - "Oh my god it is so hot, 105 degrees outside!" The next person says, "Tari bar" and then adds- "I don't have to work outside home like a lawn mowing person. Another example is when a person says, "These days everything has become so expensive," the next one says "Tari bar" and then adds - "I have enough money to pay the basic bills." or when a person says "I have so much work that I have to stay up all night," the next person says, "Tari bar" and then add- "Lucky, we have electricity today!"

This game used to go for one hour around the class and for any bad situation there used to be a positive twist. This was not about the game. Many times we used to say that at home when someone complained, felt sad and depressed, or anything adverse happened. At least once a day, we used to come up with this phrase as a solution to our sadness.

It is not a bad idea to try this game at home, in groups to see how people can see the situation positively.

Share with me (send an email to mantraformylife@gmail.com if you play this game some time and it helps to change your attitude. Let us say thank you to that unknown teacher together.

Name: Anjali Patel

Shakha: Maitri Shakha, Frisco, Dallas, TX

Hobbies: Travelling and exploring

The Sewa Project



WRITTEN BY: OJASWINEE JOG

Sewa, which translates to selfless service, embodies compassion and community spirit. The HSS chapter in North Wales exemplifies this by providing essential support to the CHOC Norristown homeless shelter, ensuring regular access to nutritious groceries. This commitment stems from the belief that Annadanam, the act of offering food, is a profound service. Our guiding principle is clear: no one in our community should go hungry, and we strive to play our part in achieving this goal.

This year Shriram Shakha collaborated with Sewa International in various environmentally friendly initiatives. One such initiative involved ten young volunteers in tree planting efforts in Bristol, PA. Activities included planting trees and clearing areas of weeds, spreading mulch, and planting live stakes to promote sustainability. Another impactful Sewa project was conducted with BCCS (Bucks County Composting Services) in Horsham, PA, where volunteers engaged in hands-on activities to create compost from food scraps, in honor of Earth Day. Volunteers participated in



every step of the composting process—from collecting food scraps to turning over compost piles, adding dry hay, sieving the finished compost, and packaging it for distribution. It tested the grit of volunteers at performing some heavy lifting, walking, and bearing with the occasional foul smell. But, after some time, everyone got used to it. It was a learning experience of going through some adversity to help the community.

These projects underscore the importance of treating Mother Earth with reverence and care, advocating for environmental conservation and sustainability. Participating in Sewa projects is not just about service; it is about embracing the Sanskar of expanding our consciousness to uplift others and safeguard our environment.



Name: Ojaswinee Jog

Shakha: SriRam Shakha, PennEast Vibhaag.

Hobbies: Reading

Travel Blog

My Travel My Heritage



WRITTEN BY: **SABITHA HEBBAR**



Size and Seasons

We are but mere players, enacting the divine drama, temporary, negligible and perishable. But what remains for years,, decades and centuries is the proof of our rich heritage, marked by spectacular monuments, stories weaved into the intricacies and beauty of its grandeur. Our family makes it mandatory to visit one historical spot every visit to Bharat. Here, I write about the awesome tiny town of Modera, Gujarat. The Sun temple built by Chalukya king Bhima in the 11th century had its quota of threats and attacks by Ghazni, but was bravely rebuilt. It is on the banks of river Pushpavati. You may feel under equipped with just one pair of eyes to capture the mind blowing architecture. The designs and the minute details make you wonder, what kind of tools were used, how sharp were their eyesights and how intricate their finger skills. Definitely they did not have vision correcting eye glasses, automation of any kind was unknown because there was NO electricity!! And Wow! The results of their un-hindering work is so grandly eternal!!

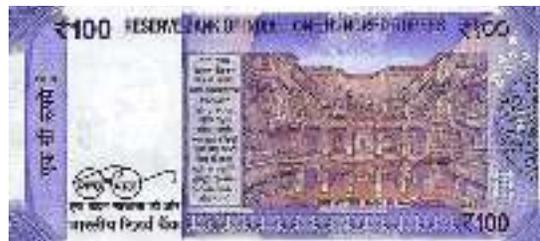
The Surya mandir of Modhera is now a cherished and protected Monument by the Indian Government. Its lake reservoir called kunda is so beautiful with its multi level steps and numerous smaller shrines within the periphery. I am so glad I live in the era of cameras and selfies, cause the possibilities are infinite!!

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Another marvelous never before seen structure near Modera is the Queen's stepwell called 'Rani ki vaav'. In a small town called Patan, this amazing thing was unearthed and discovered in the 19th century. Next to the Saraswathi river bed, this "Upside down temple and well" was hidden for centuries by silt and sand. 290 feet deep below the surface, this staircased temple has 7 levels with 500 sculptures, pillars, statues, beams, all adorned with splendid carvings and stories!!! This was built by Rani Udayamati, wife of king Bhima Chalukya, who constructed the Modera Sun temple. The deepest pit consists of natural water which was considered as the cleanest water. I assumed the ONLY pastime of people in 10th and 11th century was handiwork, craftsmanship. It is absolutely clear that these masterpieces take months and years to complete. The present motor skills and talents of our generation are marred and masked by technology and such trips and tours make us want to turn the clock back!!

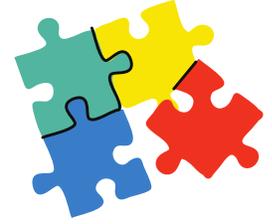
FUNFACT: Did you know Modera city has solar panel generated electricity for more than 75 percent of its residents.

FUNFACT: The picture of "Rani ki vaav" appeared on the new 100 RS bill in 2018



Name: Sabita Hebbbar

Shakha: Veer Savarkar, Vibhag:Uttar LA Sambhag : PSW
Hobbies: Music, art and social activities



CREATED BY: KAUSALYADEVI JEGADEESWARAN

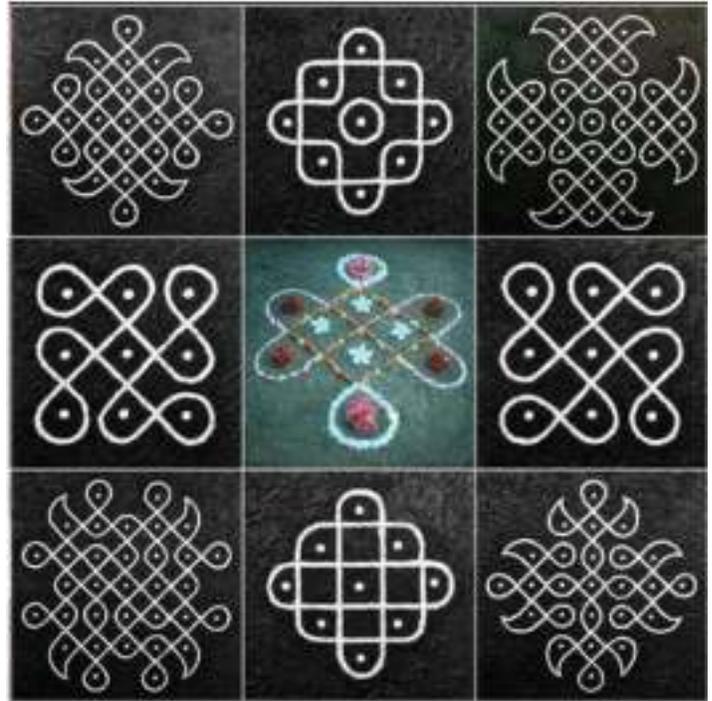
The art of Kolam / Rangoli

All kids are likely enjoying their summer vacation, and their parents must be busy engaging them in summer activities. There are lots of summer camps available in every area, such as coding, sports, music, theater, education, space, etc. Here are a few ideas for parents to engage their kids from home during summer vacation with traditional activities: Kolam, flower stringing, craft activities, and simple cooking are great life skills to explore. Let us talk more about Kolam here.

Kolam:

The art of Kolam / Rangoli helps to understand patterns and develops creativity related to math, shapes, and symmetry. This activity is considered a way to welcome good luck and create positivity, especially in young minds. It is very flexible and can be tried on a notebook, cardboard, or a table with color pencils and pens. Here is a list of materials traditionally used to create this art:

- Kolam/ Rangoli/ powders.
- Dry rice flour
- Diluted rice paste



Name: Kausalyadevi Jegadeeswaran

Shakha: Eklavya – RockyHill - Connecticut NE

Hobbies: Reading Books



ON THE COVER - GURU PORNIMA

Creating a "Guru Purnima" cover page involved visually honoring or showing reverence for a spiritual teacher or guru. The mood of the image had to be serene, respectful, showing the how sacred the bond of a Guru and his shishya is. Digital tool Photo shop was used to get the desired reflect spirituality and reverence through the white color showing purity of knowledge transferred from guru to shishya.

This cover art is created by Dnyanada Pawar from Paanchajanya Shakha of Mid-west sambhag.



THE MONKEY AND THE FOX

WRITTEN BY: AMRIT GUPTA

Once upon a time, in an African forest, lived a fox and a monkey. The fox was very lazy, but on the other hand, the monkey was quite clever. Initially, they had not even met, but one day, as the monkey was swinging through the trees, he spotted the fox roaming below.

They introduced themselves and became friends. The monkey told the fox many times that he shouldn't be lazy, but the fox didn't listen.

One day, the fox spotted a grapevine. He attempted to reach the grapes by jumping, but he couldn't.

Just then, the monkey, swinging through the trees, saw the fox. He landed beside him and learned about the delicious grapes. The monkey suggested that the fox climb the vine, but the fox was only thinking about eating the grapes, not about getting them.

The monkey was hungry too, and seeing the fox's laziness, he decided on a plan. "Hey," he said to the fox, "your paws look dirty! Why don't you go wash them in the stream over there?"

The fox agreed and rushed to the stream. As soon as the fox was out of sight, the monkey swung to the vine and happily ate all the grapes. When the fox saw the empty vine, he understood what had happened.

From that day on, the fox never lazed around again.



Moral of the story: Never be lazy.

Name: Amrit Gupta (6 Years Old)

Shakha: Eklavya Shakha, Rocky Hill, CT NE

Hobbies: Reading Books



Successful event vibes!!!



The best events aren't just memorable, they aren't just beautiful, they accomplish a goal. And this is what exactly describes our event of Guruvandana in HSS hosted on May 11, 2024

Our aim, of appreciating the teachers for the most important role they always play in our lives was the whole simple story of this event. But the simple story did have an immensely important task of involving the gurus (teachers) ,who are not aware of our culture and gesture.

All our efforts as a team made this task a huge success and all the teachers also welcomed our gestures , our Balas and their actions with great enthusiasm ? A special kudos to all the Balas of our team!

It is said that , whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it they will want to come back and see you do it again and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do. And this is what I feel summarizes our event today . All the teachers from the new culture would like to come back to us with curiosity and happiness to learn more about our culture !!

Event success, achieved!!

Name: Nishigandha Kshirsagar

Shakha: Shivray shakha ,Columbus , Indiana .GL , Chetak Vibhag

Hobbies: Reading

Vistarakship

WRITTEN BY: RASIKA GOKHALE



Pre-Georgia

Namaste everyone! My name is Rasika Gokhale and I am a rising freshman at UIUC (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign). I took up the opportunity to be a vistarak the summer of 2024 and started my vistarakship on July 6 (my very first time being a vistarika). When Amruta ji (National Yuva Pramukh) first texted me that I was being sent to the Georgia Vibhag for my vistarakship, only three things came to my mind: hot and humid weather, Atlanta, and insects.



Local Parents

I still remember Chaitanya ji (Jai Ganesh Shakha Karyavaha) explaining to me in half Marathi/half English, "He bagh Rasika (look here Rasika), we're basically like your local parents now, so don't hesitate to ask for anything at all." I retained his words all throughout my vistarakship and noticed this gesture with many other taruns. I met Vanitha ji, for example, in Jai Ganesh shakha; however, I went to her house much later after our first introduction. While driving me to her home, Vanitha ji asked me if it was necessary to keep calling me "Rasika ji" instead of just "Rasika," because to her I was just like her elder daughter Saanvi. Her gesture was simple, but it made me feel like a part of her family. Swapna ji (Georgia Vibhag Bala Pramukh and Vistarak Palak) was another ideal example of a local parent; apart from the soothing vibes in her house, there was a bright excitement in the entire family that projected a welcoming energy. Swapna ji addressed me and her two daughters as "you three girls," which immediately made me feel like a part of their family. I also recall the times when Yashwant ji would just call me randomly during the day and joke that if I didn't take the initiative to call him, he would keep bothering me. In the very first call he told me that he was just like my father, so if I ever wanted to just give random updates about my day or cry about something that didn't work out, I was more than welcome to do so. Finally, what can be more parent-like than having to clean up your child's vomit? I cannot forget the embarrassment when I threw up into the sink and then failed miserably to clean up because the sink got clogged. When I finally told Suprabha ji, she reacted, "No problem Rasika ji! I clean up after my kids when they get sick, so wouldn't I do the same for you? But are you sure you're okay?" There was absolutely no hesitation in her voice, nor any disgust for having to clean up someone else's vomit. All of these gestures not only helped me build a sense of comfort during my vistarakship but also made me appreciate the quality of being able to comfort others.

Tips and Tricks

Before starting my vistarakship, I already had a pre-made mental manual of tips that could help me start a conversation and connect with the people I met. However, over my vistarakship, I learned many more tips and tricks that would help me connect with people not only in shakha, but any social setting (which is especially handy before starting college). When I was at Bhoga ji's (Sambhag Karyavaha) house overnight, I didn't come down all morning because I thought both Bhoga ji and Usha ji (his wife) might be busy with work. Finally Bhoga ji came up to check on me and call me down for lunch; Usha ji explained to me then that I should never hesitate to go talk with the family members in the morning. She suggested that I sit and do my work in the living room or dining room so that I could talk to the family members whenever they passed by. When Yashwant ji would call he would check in on how everything was going and then crack jokes, but he always ended with giving meaningful advice that guided me through my vistarakship. For example, while giving advice on how to mingle with new families, he told me to be extremely observant when I went to someone's home. He advised me to look around their house- perhaps observe what art they have on



display or which books they have (essentially infer their interests) and start a conversation that builds upon those interests. Another smart trick that Srishti ji shared with me from her vistarakship was inviting the family to do yoga in the morning or go out for a walk- this way the family would get to enjoy something new in their routine and get a chance to bond with the vistarak. Over time, I also developed my own tricks: I would pretend to fill up my water bottle just so that I could go out and talk to whoever may be in the kitchen. Or, if there were any balas in the house, I would ask them to play their favorite board game with me or show me their favorite movie or T.V. show.

cont'd

Southern Hospitality

"You'll get a taste of Southern hospitality while you're here," Srishti ji said. And that I definitely did. Right from feeding me abundantly to making sure that I slept well and was comfortable. I really came to appreciate Kavya ji's work ethic, because she truly put in a lot of time planning

out of my vistarakship with Swapna ji. She managed that, her ACT studies, planning for their high school Hindu YUVA chapter, and helping with the Hindu Heritage Camp. In addition to all this, she kept me engaged all the time when I was at her home. Before I even stepped into Srishti ji's house, she asked me if she should run to the store to buy me anything or if I wanted anything at all. I remember the time when Usha ji fed me an entire plate of extra rice because I had missed my breakfast. Mandar ji offered me authentic baklava and turkish delight that they had gotten from the cruise, and when I told him that it was first time trying turkish delight, he offered even more. Ajay ji (Sambhag Sarasanghchalak) and Anitha ji insisted that I try some variety off food that I hadn't tried yet during my vistarakship, so Anitha ji made some delicious vada and sambar and dadpe pohe which I tried for the very first time. A month before my vistarakship, Sonal ji (Georgia Vibhag Kishore Pramukh) reached out to me- I remember her iconic "Hey, hey, hey!" when she greeted me over call when I was half awake at 6 AM in India. She introduced herself and had me do my parichay as well, her enthusiasm pouring over the phone. Tanuja ji (Sonal ji's mom) was so sweet as well; she shared her healthy laddo recipe with me because I liked them so much. Apart from just food however, the families extended their hospitality to give me experiences that would create the best memories. Since Nandi ji owns an aviation school in Augusta, he took me and Shailender ji on a quick ride and let me copilot it. He postponed a session with his student just so that could complete a ride in the plane. And then there were other times, when just some small acts made my time more memorable. When I ripped the toe of my shoe, Keerti ji (Chaitanya ji's wife) insisted I take her new pair of shoes with me. When I was at Rishika and Pranshu's house, Rishika took me and Ameya ji down to her basement to play billiards, which we all bonded over. Pranshu (Rishika's brother) came home late from work, but he brought us some chips from Chipotle so that we could enjoy it while watching T.V. While I was at Tia and Sarvo's house, Tia took me out to connections; we walked around Barnes and Nobles and then just checked out some other stores. When I was in Macon, I never felt a moment without enthusiasm while with Meera and the Macon kishores. I remember Meera staying up till 2 AM to finish drawing mehendi on my hand because she wanted to make it perfect for me. While leaving Macon, the kishoris were almost in tears because they didn't want me to leave. No one asked these families to do these things for me, yet they went above and beyond to make my vistarakship experience memorable; that is something I will never forget.

Spirit Surpasses Sankhya

When me and Suprabha ji first announced that I would be conducting vamshi lessons everyday, I was doubtful how consistent the participation from balas and kishores would be. I thought, would the balas and kishores want to spend their last weeks of summer learning vamshi virtually with some unknown vistarak from Illinois? But that was not at all the case. Not only did the balas and kishores join regularly, but they showed dedication in learning the new rachanas. Every day, each bala would post a video recording of the new line they had practice- sometimes the number of videos exceeded to three or videos per bala per day! Although we only had shikshaks at the Ghosh Varg, we utilized the time to form and run through a Ghosh Pratyakshik that the balas and kishores could perform at vijayadashmi. I salute Aditya, Ameya ji, and Srishti spending time in the varg early morning even when no one else came to the varg. Ghosh was never a vishay that I would step forward and take initiative in on my own, but through these vamshi sessions I developed a newfound excitement and willingness in myself to study more about Ghosh.



Reflection

I truly cherished the one month that I was a vistarak. Apart from the daily vamshi classes we were able to conduct a mini in-person Ghosh Varg. During the rest of my time, I worked on making a flyer and registration form for the Bharat Mata/Shri Krishna Shakha Hindu Heritage Camp, creating Georgia Vibhag shirt designs, and journaling my daily experiences. Me and Ameya ji also collaborated to write a script for a bala skit on one of Dr. Ji's childhood stories. Additionally, in this one month, I was able to develop my skills throughout different aspects:

1. Social: I met at least two families each day, which enabled me to grow my speaking stamina; I had to maintain the same level of enthusiasm when I met new families. I expanded my social circle by bonding with people of so many different age groups, which is a very unique experience on its own. Fluidly communicating with different age groups broadened my

2. Cultural: All of the families I met shared similar traditions, there were always subtle differences that set each family apart from each other. Let's take for example dining; some families, despite having a dining table, preferred sitting on the ground with all the food in the center which added an additional homely feel to the meal.

3. Planning and Preparation: Although sharirik is my stronger vishay, I prepared thoroughly for khel, yoga, and warmups; and that made all the difference because I could see that the families genuinely enjoyed doing those activities.



Did I experience any aversive moments during my vistarakship? Yes, indeed- there were times when I found both live and dead cockroaches in the shower, or the time when I threw up, etc. But those moments were insignificant compared to the gains. I will always look back upon this vistarakship as one of the most unique and engaging experiences of my life, and can confidently say that my vistarakship journey won't end here!

Name: Rasika Gokhalel

Shakha: Paanchajanya Shakha, Mid West (SW)

Hobbies : Playing badminton, doing Bharatnatyam, and painting



WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM MY CHILD

WRITTEN BY: MINAL ABHIJAT MISHRA

My kids remind me of a few things every day that I often forget in my day-to-day life. They remind me of the basic things from their behavior like not blaming anyone for a situation, not getting angry for too long, forgetting the fights & getting along again with friends. The kids always come up with the simplest solution to any situation, like once I was traveling with multiple luggage & through multiple flights, this made it difficult to identify the luggage when on the belt. At that moment kids took out the crayon from their bag & started putting marks on luggage for easy identification. They are super straightforward to express their emotions in the simplest words making it very easy to understand their emotions.

Their curious minds always drives me to explore more & their constant "why" makes me introspect on many common things about which I never thought about before. Their pure heart & empathy reminds me that I should always help all those who need help. Their social awareness helps me to be reminded about my duties. They make friends very easily, reminding me that if we keep our egos & personal ambitions aside it is very easy to get along with everyone. Kids are a source of inspiration & they remind us of all the basic principles of life. Maybe that is the reason it is said that children are true at heart & they are a reflection of God!



Name: Minal Abhijat Mishra

Shakha: Shiva ji Shakha, Denver, Colorado - SW

Hobbies: Dance & Music

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh



हिन्दू स्वयंसेवक संघ

NORTH WEST

NORTH EAST

GREAT LAKES

CENTRAL PACIFIC

MIDWEST

MID ATLANTIC

PACIFIC SOUTH WEST

SOUTH WEST

SOUTH EAST

PRERANA ^{e-zine}

AN INSPIRATION TO HINDU WOMEN

Guru is the one who lights the lamp of wisdom within us ." - Swami Vivekananda

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