

VOG



Voice of G.S.B.



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members :

Namaskaru,

Trust you all are safe and healthy.

While we reach out to you with this issue, the country is grappling with the third wave of Covid. Just when we thought that things are getting back to normal, we are again back to tracking daily case counts and worrying about the next variant that could hit us.

Apart from the health angle, Covid also had an adverse economic impact for many. In the Sabha, we understood that our disadvantaged Samaj Bandhavas were affected in greater measure by this pandemic. We wanted to do our bit to alleviate their economic stress and, with the generous support of our donors, could do the following :

1. We started an initiative in June 2021 to home deliver a grocery kit, containing 16 items of daily use, to our senior citizen beneficiaries. This initiative has struck a chord with our donors, whose generosity has made it possible for us to think of continuing this initiative, which was initially planned for 3 months, on a long term basis.
2. During Diwali 2020, a fund raise was done by us to strengthen our GSB Senior Citizen Adhaar Fund, from which we provide a monthly sustenance allowance to our senior citizen beneficiaries. Generous support from our donors strengthened the Fund and this enabled us to raise the quarterly benefit extended from Rs. 1,500/- per quarter to Rs. 3,000/- per quarter w.e.f. October 2020.
3. We relaxed our disbursement criteria while processing our Higher Education Assistance applications so that we could disburse a higher amount of assistance to them. 18 beneficiaries were disbursed an amount of Rs. 6.56 lakhs for Academic Year 2020-2021.

We would also like to bring to the attention of our members the following measures taken by us during the pandemic:

1. Three Vaccination Camps were held in collaboration with Dahisar Sri Kashi Math. 1425 people have benefitted from these Camps which were held at Sri Vithal Rakhumai Mandir and were free of charge for the recipients. We were financially supported for these Camps by Konkani Charitable Fund, USA, for which we remain eternally grateful.
2. In view of the shutdown of printing presses, we released digital issues of VoG, including a Lockdown Special Issue. These issues are available on our website www.gsbsabhamumbai.org.
3. We hosted several online talks, workshops, contests and tutorials.

In my message in the Oct to Dec 2021 issue of VoG, I had expressed the hope that full normalcy will be achieved soon and we will be able to connect in physical programs as before. However, it seems we will have to wait a bit longer to do that.

Our Sabha's 82nd AGM will be held on Sunday, 13th February, 2022 at I.M. Pai Hall, Sujir Gopal Nayak Memorial Kreedha Mandir.



The Annual Report giving the Notice of the AGM and all necessary details, will reach you soon. We will be glad to receive you at the AGM.

This issue has an announcement of a very special Cancer Screening Camp for Women above 40 conducted by our very own GSBS Medical Trust, on 14th March, 2022. Do register and avail the benefit.

Please continue to stay safe and healthy and wish you a very happy 2022.

Dev baren koro

Laxmikant Prabhu
President

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News Pertaining To G.S.B. Sabha, Mumbai

A) THIRD VACCINATION CAMP HELD ON 28TH NOVEMBER, 2021

As updated in the October to December 2021 issue of Voice of GSB, G.S.B. Sabha, Mumbai, has collaborated with Dahisar Sri Kashi Math (DSKM) to conduct Covid Vaccination Drive.

Approx. 1300 people were vaccinated with the Covishield vaccine in the first two camps held on 11th July and 29th August, 2021 under the aegis of Shri Madhavendra Charitable Trust (a project of Dahisar Sri Kashi Math) in collaboration with the Sabha.

The 3rd Vaccination Camp was held as a half day Camp on Sunday, 28th November, 2021. As earlier, this Camp was also offered free of charge and held at Sri Vithal Rakhumai Mandir, Dahisar (E).

G.S.B. Sabha, Mumbai, and Dahisar Sri Kashi Math are grateful to Konkani Charitable Fund and its donors for the financial support extended to this cause. Volunteers from both organizations offered their services for the successful conduct of the Camps.

B) DISTRIBUTION OF GROCERY KIT TO OUR SENIOR CITIZEN BENEFICIARIES

From June 2021, the Sabha has started an additional initiative of distribution of a grocery kit to the senior citizens who are beneficiaries under our senior citizen welfare schemes.

A kit containing 16 items is finalized every month. The list includes rice, atta, cooking oil, dals, pohas, jaggery, salt, sugar and spices. Some of the essential items such as 5 kg rice, 1 kg sugar, 1 ltr cooking oil are included.

We are grateful to our donors whose generosity has enabled the Sabha to start this initiative. If you wish to know more about this initiative or support us in the same, please send an email to gbsabha@gmail.com and we will be glad to get in touch with you.

C) DISBURSEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM OUR VIDYANIDHI FUND

The Sabha has completed the disbursement of educational assistance from its Vidyaniidhi Fund for A Y 2021-2022. As in the previous year, an on-line form was launched for receiving applications. Total educational assistance of Rs. 7.80 lakhs was disbursed to 244 students as under :

School Students	116 students	:	Rs. 2,90,000
College Students (upto graduate level)	114 students	:	Rs. 3,99,000
Post Graduate and professional students	14 students	:	Rs. 91,000
Total	244 students	:	Rs. 7,80,000

The Sabha has a separate Higher Education Aid Fund from which educational assistance is disbursed to economically needy meritorious GSB students pursuing graduate professional courses anywhere in India. The processing of these applications will now be taken up and disbursements from this Fund will be done by March, 2022.

D) ANNUAL PUJA AT WALKESHWAR

The Annual Puja of G.S.B. Sabha, Mumbai, at Shri Kashi Math Samsthan, Walkeshwar, was held on Sunday, 2nd January, 2022. Bhat maam prayed for the all-round wellness of the Sabha and its members.



Smt. Amita Kini

Mahila Shakha selects a New President

GSB Sabha Mumbai's Mahila Shakha welcomes its new President Smt. Amita Kini. We wish her great success and look forward to her leadership in taking the Mahila Shakha to greater heights.

We also thank Smt. Prafula Rau, the outgoing President, under whose leadership the Mahila Shakha team initiated on-line workshops, competitions and tutorials.



Smt. Prafula Rau

News pertaining to GSB Sabha's Mahila Shakha

DEVI STUTHI



On October 9, 2021 Mahila Shakha organised 4th episode of Parampara Hastantaran series "Devi Stuthi" a virtual recitation of Stotras and singing bhajans of Devi on the occasion of Navaratri.

Program started with a brief introduction of Navaratri festival. 42 children all over India participated in 3 different age groups.

Participants were categorised on the basis of age.

Group A – participants were 3-7 years of age, Group B – participants were 8-12 years of age and Group C – participants were 13-17 years of age.

Each participants recited either Stotras or sang beautiful bhajans of Ma Saraswati, Lakshmi and Durga with great enthusiasm and devotion.

This online event was live on our Sabha's Facebook page and received good response and encouraging messages to the participants.

Mahila Shakha gifted each participant e-certificates and books of stories, Illustrated History of India, and World's Greatest Books on Growth, Wealth and Success depending on the age group they belonged to.

This was possible due to the funds contributed by Shri. Sadanand Pai (USA).

Mahila Shakha thanks our contributors and welcomes continued support in future too. This online event can be viewed on our Sabha's fb page.

TUTORIAL ON ACHAAR- VICHAAR (HINDU CALENDAR MONTH SIMPLIFIED)

It was our pleasure to resume and release the next episode of our much awaited "Achaar Vichaar" Series after a gap of few months caused due to 2nd lockdown. In conversation with Vedmurthi



On 14th December, 2021, Mahila Shakha bhajan team participated in Ekka Bhajan at Kurla Balaji Mandir, Kurla on the occasion of Gita Jayanti.

Trivikram Acharyamaam by our Mahila Shakha Vice President Smt. Maya Nayak. This episode was a Diwali special, released on the auspicious occasion of Diwali. GSB Sabha Mumbai's Mahila Shakha had begun a tutorial series on explaining of important days (Tithis) in our Hindu Calendar Month and their importance and Significance.



On 13th November, 2021, MS bhajan Team enthusiastically celebrated Kartik Ekadashi at our Sabha office.

Mahila Shakha extends their thanks to Vedamurthy Shri Trivikram Acharya.

76th PARICHAY – GET-TOGETHER OF ELIGIBLE BOYS AND GIRLS

Mahila Shakha held its 76th 'PARICHAY', its Get-together of eligible boys and girls, along with their parents on Saturday, 11th December, 2021 at I. M. Pai Hall, Sujir Gopal Nayak Memorial Kreed Mandir. Different time slots were allotted



according to the age of the participants. There was also a separate slot for those staying abroad and for those seeking alliance for second marriage. There was an overwhelming response for all the slots. Many had attended this PARICHAY for the first time. The event was appreciated by all.

This event was first physical event after a gap of 22 months. To maintain Covid appropriate behaviour the participants had to pre-register online and very limited number of registrations were accepted.

All the necessary precautions and BMC regulations were followed.

This event was chaired by Mahila Shakha's Vice President, Smt. Maya Nayak. She welcomed the members and gave a brief introduction of PARICHAY.

The MS comt. expresses our gratitude to Smt. Prafula Rau, MS President for sponsoring the event ..



G.S.B. Sabha, Mumbai



101, Shree Nidhi CHS, Opp. Bank of Baroda, 76, Bhau Daji Road, Matunga (C.R.), Mumbai – 400 019.
Tel. 2408 1499. Office Timings – Monday to Saturday 2 to 7 p.m.

CANCER SCREENING CAMP FOR WOMEN ABOVE 40 YRS OF AGE ON MONDAY, 14th March, 2022

CAMP CONDUCTED BY GSBS MEDICAL TRUST

AND

SPONSORED BY SHRI LAXMIKANT T. PRABHU

IN MEMORY OF HIS MOTHER, SMT. KISHORI T. PRABHU

It is always truly said that, Cancer early detected can be cured earliest. GSBS Medical Trust has organized a very special Cancer Screening Camp for ladies above the age of 40 only. This Camp will be held on Monday, 14th March, 2022, at its Health Rakshak Centre, Opp. Pritam Hotel, Station Road, Dadar (E).

This Camp is sponsored by Sabha President, Shri Laxmikant T. Prabhu, in memory of his mother, Smt. Kishori Prabhu.

Women who register for the Camp will be examined by specialists on Medical Trust Panel. Mammography (for Breast Cancer) and PAP Smear (for Cancer of the Cervix) will be performed on all. The mammography will be reported by Trust panel radiologist. Dental check up is a prominent part of this process. The entire process of FOUR stages, will take about 3 hours.

Once the reports are ready in 5-6 days, they will be compiled and sent to all those who participated in the Camp. Depending on the reports, further advice will be given.

This is a very expensive camp. Super Specialist Doctors are involved in this. Similar tests In good hospitals are charged at a minimum of Rs. 5,000/-. As a community service, participants in this Camp have to pay a nominal registration fee of Rs. 500/- only. Prior registration is compulsory so that we can be sure about the number of participants and doctors can block their timings.

Only 24 persons will be registered for this Camp as it involves a lot of procedures. Registrations will be accepted on “First Come First Served” basis.

We hope that the current situation arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic is resolved by the above date and we are able to conduct the camp as planned. However, In case we are unable to conduct the Camp, registration fees paid remain with the Medical Trust and the enrolled person will be informed to join the future camps according to their convenience.

Procedure for Registration :

Last date for Registration is Monday, 7th March, 2022.

For registering, you have to fill the below form

Name : _____

Address : _____

Mobile No. : _____

E-mail id : _____

and either a) submit the same at Sabha office of which address is given above with registration fees of Rs. 500/- in cash or b) scan the same and send it to Sabha email id, gbsabha@gmail.com and send the registration fees by NEFT to the following account :

Name of Account : Gowd Saraswat Brahman Sabha, Mumbai
Bank and Branch : Saraswat Co-op Bank, Matunga Branch
IFSC Code : SRCB0000266
Account No. : 266200100003364
Nature of Account : Savings

While doing NEFT transfer, in the comments, do mention your name.

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Shatanand Bhat



MY PRANAM TO THE LORD VENKATESWARA AND LORD NARASIMHA

HISTORY OF THE CENTURIES OLD GSB TEMPLES OF HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE IN ALAPPUZHA, KERALA.
OLD THIRUMALA GSB TEMPLE ESTABLISHED IN 1625 A. D.(SREE VEKATACHALAPATHY TEMPLE) AND
NEW THIRUMALA GSB TEMPLE ESTABLISHED IN 1852 A.D (NOW SREE LAKHMI NARASIMHA TEMPLE)

by Divakara Shenoy, Kochi

Glimpses of history:

In 1791 the GSB community known as “MAHAJANA” of Cochin heavily suffered including massacre & looting at the hands of Raja Ravi Varma known as Shaktan Thampuram in Kerala History. Temple at Gosripuram was looted taking away gold, diamonds, precious jewellery and cash. The Konkani’s fled to the nearby old Travancore state carrying with them the Chief Idol of Lord Venkatachalapathy and idol of Mahalaksmi of the Temple. The idols were then installed in the Old Thirumala Temple in Alappuzha where they remained for about 60 years. The idol of Venktachalapathy was then shifted to the New Thirumala Temple by the Raja of Travancore who refused to give back the idols to Mahajana of Cochin. Subsequently the idol of Gosripuram Venkatachalapathy with the cooperation of the chief priest was hidden in a basket full of fruits & Neyvedyam and brought back to Cochin in a boat by Gosripuram Mahajana in 1853 A.D. The idol of Mahalakhmi was not possible to be brought back to Cochin.

Another importance is that it is here in this Old Thirumala Temple the Samadhis of Kashi Math erstwhile heads H.H. SUREENDRA THIRTHA SWAMIJI and H.H. SUMATEENDRA THIRTHA SAWAMIJI are situated.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PLACE ALAPPUZHA KNOWN AS VENICE OF THE EAST.

Two of the GSB community administered Temples of Kerala are situated in Alappuzha (formerly known as Alleppey) a former coastal village of Kerala turned to be a metropolitan city at present. Alappuzha is one of the districts of Kerala with its district headquarters situated here. The historical importance of this place is that it was here the **first post office and first telegraphs office** in the erstwhile Travancore, were established. Also, the first modern factory for the manufacture of coir mats and matting was also established in 1859 at Alappuzha.



Utsava Murthies of the Lord And Lakshmi Devi

The erstwhile city of Alappuzha has several historical events relevant to its importance. Like the European city of Venice, Alappuzha is a city of canals, beaches and backwaters. Alappuzha is a port city situated about 55 km from Kochi, the commercial capital of Kerala. A nature blessed town and a world-famous tourist centre



Venkatachalapathy with Lakshmi Devi and Bhoomi Devi

with beaches, house boats, lakes, lagoons and fresh water rivers. The “Punnamada Lake” where the annual Nehru Trophy Boat Race is held, is situated near Alappuzha, the place is considered to be the oldest planned city in this region with lighthouse built on the coast of the city. Alappuzha was described by George Curzon, Viceroy of India at the start of the 20th century, as the “Venice of the East” Hence, it is also known to be the “Venetian Capital” of Kerala.

OLD THIRUMALA GSB TEMPLE BUILT IN 1625 A.D.

The Temple was built in 1625 by a group of Goud Saraswat Brahmin families migrated to Kerala from Goa. The Temple is dedicated to the Lord Venkatachalapathy (Lord Vishnu). It is said to be the third oldest Temple belonging to the GSB community in Kerala. As per temple records the main idol of Lord Vekatachalapathy was brought to the place of worship by a sage named Purohit Kashi Ram Bhat who installed the idol in this Temple. In memory of Sri Kashi Ram Bhat his image was installed at a designated place in the west Agrasala of this Temple to commemorate the founding of the Temple. The Old Thirumala GSB Temple has great importance in the history of Alappuzha.

The erstwhile Maharaja of Travancore welcomed the GSB community landed in his state from Goa. His highness assisted the community granting free land and facilities for their stay, carryout their trade and business and also to build their Temple. The Maharaja encouraged the Temple administrators financially and otherwise. The Temple enjoyed Government patronage and honor.

HISTORY

The main GSB Temple of THIRUMALA DEVASWOM Gosripuram, Cochin (Kochi) that was plundered several times and rebuilt in 1599, was again destroyed in 1622 by the

Portuguese. In 1791 the GSB community in Cochin heavily suffered at the hands of Raja Ravi Varma popularly known as Shaktan Thampuram in Kerala History. Temple at Gosripuram was looted taking away gold, diamonds, precious jewellery and cash. Several Konkani & elites were massacred, their shops were plundered, wealth and jewellery looted, Konkani merchants were imprisoned. The Konkani of Cochin known as “MAHAJANA” fled to the nearby old Travancore state carrying with them the Chief Idol of Lord Venkatachalapathy and idol of Laksmi Devi. The idols were then installed in the Old Thirumala Temple in Alappuzha where same remained for about 60 years. During this period trade and commerce flourished and economy of Alappuzha prospered year by year and the people believed the same was due to the presence of the Gosripuram Idol of Lord Venkatachalapathy in Alappuzha. The Maharaja of Travancore also believed this and wanted to keep the idols permanently in Alappuzha. Therefore, several requests from Konkani Mahajana of Gosripuram made through the Maharaja of Cochin to give back the idol was refused by the Travancore state Maharaja. A Temple for the idol was constructed at Anantha Narayana Puram in Alappuzha by the Mahajana of Travancore and the idol of Sri Venkatachalapathy was shifted to the New Thirumala Temple. Gosripuram Konkani Mahajana very fond off the idol did not want to part with it and planned strategies to bring back the idol to Cochin. With the help of the chief priest of the Temple the idol was hidden in a basket full of fruits and neyvedyam one midnight and brought back by boat to Gosripuram in Cochin in 1853 by the Konkani Mahajanas. Subsequent to the event a new idol of Lord Venkatachalapathy was made and installed in place of the old image. The idol of Laksmi Devi was not possible to be brought back to Gosripuram, Kochi.

TEMPLE SRUCTURE

The Temple is dedicated to the Lord Vekatachalapathy (Lord Vishnu). The main idol installed in the sanctum sanctorum is of Lord Venkatachalapathy with Bhoomi Devi and Lakshmi Devi on his either side.

The structure of the Temple is unique in its marvelous architecture. The Temple is situated at the commercial centre of the city near to the Kerala State Transport Bus Stand of Alappuzha. Basic features of this Temple are more or less similar to other GSB Temples in the state of Kerala.

The Temple has its sanctum sanctorum built at the main central place of the Temple structure. Surrounded this is the inner courtyard with inner boundary structures called Nalambalam or four upa-deavalayas, dedicated to Lord Hanuman, Lord Ganapathy, Goddess Lakshmi Devi and Lord Garuda. Outer portico having Parshwa Mandapams and Agrasala structures around the outer court yard of the Temple. Entrance to the Temple is through the main Gopuram on the Eastern front.

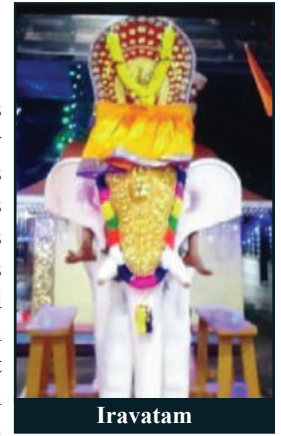
TWO BRINDAVANAS OF ERSTWHILE HEADS OF KASHI MATH H.H. SUREENDRA THIRTHA SWAMIJI AND H.H. SUMATEENDRA THIRTHA SAWAMIJI

There are Brindavanas of H.H. SUREENDRA THIRTHA SWAMIJI AND H.H. SUMATEENDRA THIRTHA SAWAMIJI

are situated at the South East corner and South west corner of the Temple. It is said that Shree Sudheendra Thirtha Swamiji of Kashi Math paid visit to this Temple in the year 1970 AD. During his stay there Swamiji experienced severe pain in his shoulder. In a Devaprasnam held the Hanuman statue installed in the Brindavana of Sree Sumateendra Thirtha Swamiji revealed to be with its right shoulder broken. Subsequently arrangements were made to build a new statue and the same was installed by Swamiji in place of old statue.

ANNUAL FESTIVAL

Annual festival of this Temple is celebrated in a similar way as they are conducted in other GSB Temples in the state. The annual festival is known as ARRATTU is an eight days long celebration. The festival falls between middle of January and February every year. Shivelli, an extremely beautiful ritual and part of the festival celebration unique in Kerala is conducted with participation of an elephant or more elephants accompanied by percussion instrumental music called Chenda Melam moving in a procession. In the absence of a live elephant, what is called IRAVATHA, a white extremely beautiful elephant built in wood and mounted on a vehicle is used to conduct the ritual. A representative image of the main deity “UTSAVA Murthy” meant especially for the occasion is place on top of the elephant’s head and held safe in position by a priest of the Temple. The elephant carrying the image is taken in around the Temple court yard in a procession accompanied by percussion and instrumental music. As per Hindu mythology IRAVATHA is a white beautiful elephant in heaven belonging to God Indra.



Iravatham

There is no festival held in Kerala Temples without an elephant or many elephants. The world-famous festival known as Thrissur Pooram, a mind-blowing celebration unique of its kind is conducted every year in Trichur, the cultural capital of Kerala. A unique festival of its kind celebrated every year. The beautiful sight of several groups of large number of elephants robed with decorated golden face masks and mounted with beautiful umbrellas on them, especially the process of changing of the umbrellas of different forms and colors every minute, accompanied by percussion and instrumental music is a feast to the eyes of the viewers.

NEW THIRUMALA TEMPLE BUILT IN 1852. (Now Shree Lakshmi Narasimha Temple)

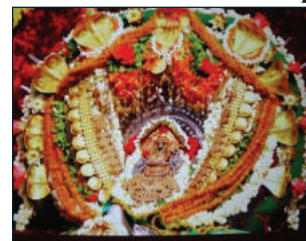


Image of Sree Lakshmi Narasimha



Idols of Lord Venkatachalapathy and Lord Lakshmi Narasimha

The new Temple is presently known as Shree Anantha Narayana Puram Temple. The Maharaja of Travancore refused to send back the Gosripuram idol to Cochin . His highness wanted to keep the idols permanently in Alappuzha . Therefore the New Thirumala Temple was constructed by the then Maharaja of Old Travancore in 1852 A.D. in order to install the idol of Lord Venkatachalapathy of Gosripuram shifted from the Old Thirumala Temple.

The present chief deity of this Temple is Lord Ugra Narasimha Murthy. The Simhasanam or the seat of the idols in the Garbhagriha (shrine) has three levels one below the other .On its top level the Idol of Lord Venkatachalapathy at the centre with Laksmi Devi and Bhoomi Devi on either side. On the next step is Shree Narasimha Murthy with Mahalakshmi seated on Lord's left lap. The Utsava Murthies are placed on the third step.

TEMPLE FESTIVALS (ARRATU)

Originally there were two festivals each conducted with eight day long celebrations. Later it was found that Lord Narasimha was not pleased with this system. Therefore a third festival did begin to be celebrated from 1913.A. D. The annual festival of the temple in Alappuzha coincide with the festivals of Gosripuram temple in Kochi.

One should not miss to visit the GSB temples of Kerala that are standing monuments of our tradition and culture gifted to us by our forefathers despite the atrocities including massacre suffered at the hands of various governments and rules in India and Goa.

GIFT

by Veena Shenoy

Sometimes, while travelling by long distance trains we chat with our co-passengers and share views and experiences. Sometimes co-passengers become our good friends also. This article is based on a co-passenger's experience which he had narrated.

The co-passenger (let us call him uncle) was sharing his experience which he had encountered during his daughter's wedding ceremony. He told us that one of his rich relatives had attended his daughter's wedding. This uncle was extremely happy because the relative had come all the way from Dubai to attend the wedding. Of course, attending the wedding of uncle's daughter was not his sole purpose of coming to India, as he had other business meetings to attend as well. Many a times, I feel that people try to maintain close relations with distant relatives who are wealthy, at the cost of close relatives who are not economically well off/rich. Of course, this is my opinion and readers may have different opinions.

Coming back to the uncle's experience, the uncle said that many people tried to rub shoulders with this rich relative. After the wedding rituals, it was the time for reception, when the assembled guests climbed the stage to wish the newly wed. The rich relative was given special attention/priority as he had to leave for a business meeting. He wished the newlywed and gave a small pouch to the bride as a token of affection. The rich relative was given special treatment in all the ceremonies/rituals of the wedding and he was served lunch also well before the schedule time, so that he could leave early to attend his business meeting.

Many of the relatives and the uncle's family members were curious to know what was inside the pouch as everyone was expecting a costly/valuable gift from the relative. After the ceremony

was over, the uncle opened the pouch and to this astonishment found a small foreign chocolate in the pouch. The uncle added, that although he believed in the saying "never look a gift horse in the mouth", he was a bit disappointed looking at the rich relative's gift for his daughter.

When the uncle narrated this incident, I started thinking about status/wealth/gifts and relations. I remembered an incident when as a young lady I knitted a sweater (it was my first work) for a relative's new born baby and was told that the baby has got many sweaters, thus belittling my efforts.

Many a times it so happens that people give importance to status/wealth of a person and take pride in rubbing shoulders with them. This is sometimes done at the cost of close relatives and their sentiments. It is pertinent to mention here that, rich people do not mean that they have golden hearts. Many a times relatives who are not rich in terms of wealth but have golden hearts walk an extra mile to buy/make gifts for their near and dear ones but people tend to look down upon them. They are neither cared nor given any importance during family functions and get together functions.

When wealth and status are given more importance, relations are spoiled and barriers are created in families/society. Wealth and status should not create barriers in relations/relatives/families. In a happy family/society, values and ethics are respected and given priority. Wealth and status are temporary but family bondings, love, ethics and values are eternal.



Smt. Veena Shenoy regularly writes for newspapers. Till date, 600 of her articles and letters have been printed in the newspapers

WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOUR NAME IN VOICE OF GSB

Voice of GSB, the quarterly newsletter of G.S.B. Sabha, Mumbai, is your newsletter. It is a platform for you to share your thoughts, experiences and creativity. We welcome your articles/essays and drawings, age no bar. Printing will be subject to discretion of the editorial team.



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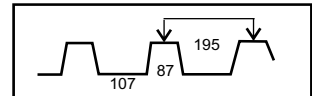
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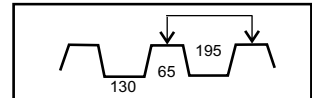
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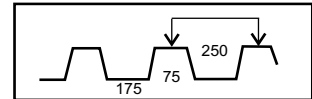
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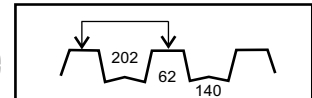
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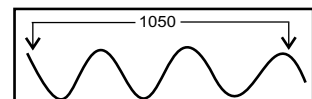
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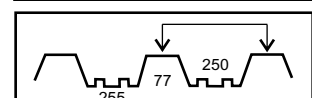
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PANCHA TATTVA

by Ajita Kini



The Vedā say everything in nature is created out of the pancha tattva (five elements) – pṛthvī (earth), āp (water), tej (fire), vāyu (air) and ākāśa (space). Every living and non-living thing, including we ourselves, is made up of these five elements. When I first read this, I was taken aback – I could not relate the soil beneath my feet, the river in which I dipped my toes etc. to my own body, leave alone the mind and the intellect. It took much studying for my mind to wrap itself around the idea.

My studies told me that when the Vedā speak of earth, they refer to elemental earth. Elemental earth is not the soil beneath our feet. The planet earth is only 50% elemental earth and the remaining 50% is equally divided between elemental water, elemental fire, elemental air, and elemental space. Similarly, elemental water is distinct from the water we drink – the latter being 50% elemental water and the rest being equal ratios of elemental earth-fire-air-space. And so on for all the remaining elements. Hence, there is a clear distinction between the elemental tattva and the earth, water, fire, air, and space, as we perceive them

So, then the question arises – what is elemental earth, elemental water etc.? I found some answers in a Buddhist studies class I attended in 2017 and further answers in *Yogāsana, An Adhyātmiik Academy*, by Prashant S Iyengar.

Elemental earth refers to matter that has the attributes of hardness – softness, roughness – smoothness, heaviness – lightness (3 pairs of opposites). Hence, if you feel your bones / teeth to be hard – that is because of the elemental earth within you. If you feel your skin / hair to be smooth, it is because of the elemental earth within you. If you feel your body to be weighed down when you wake from deep sleep, it is because of the elemental earth within you. Equally, if joy makes your body light and you feel like skipping and dancing – that too is the elemental earth within you. The lightness you experience after finding a solution to a particularly challenging problem, the melting in your heart when you look upon a newborn baby – all is due to the elemental earth within you

The nature of elemental water is flow; and the opposite of flow, which is cohesion. So, when your blood flows and subsequently clots – that is the element of water within you that makes it so. If one applies the mind, there are many flows and cohesion within the self – the digestive juices, the lymphatic fluid, the excreted liquids (urine, sweat) etc. Even the flowing movements in dance come from the elemental water within us, as does the ability to grip the muscles around the bone or the skin around the flesh

Elemental water is also what binds elemental earth. The reason why the soil beneath our feet remains beneath our feet is because there is moisture in the soil that binds it and holds it down. Otherwise, it might have been a fine dust that was perennially suspended in the atmosphere and our planet would not have been habitable for us. Hence the earlier statement that planet earth is

only 50% elemental earth; 12.5% of the soil beneath our feet is water.

Elemental fire refers to the attribute of temperature – it is what makes everything either hot or cold. So, the fire element within us maintains our temperature by heating and cooling us, as required. It is also the digestive fire within us. The fire is stoked to fight infections, which is why we develop a fever when we're fighting an infection. It rushes to our core body to sustain vital functions when we go swimming on a cold day. When we experience a blush on seeing our beloved or are embarrassed by something we did – that is the fire element within us. When we experience cold feet just before a stage performance, or a shiver runs down our back, that too is the fire element within us

When we touch the soil or water, we experience it to be hot or cool. That is again because of the elemental fire within the soil and water. Thus, the earlier statement that planet earth is 50% elemental earth and 12.5% elemental fire. The predominant sensation when experiencing planet earth is that of hardness, roughness, heaviness, hence it is 50% (predominantly) elemental earth, while the other four tattva (elemental water, elemental fire, elemental air, elemental space) are 12.5% each.

Elemental air has the property of pushing and supporting. Anyone who has flown a kite or gone parasailing / paragliding can relate to these properties of air. How often have we felt a pressure in the chest, that is relieved after a huge belch? Or intestinal pressure that is relieved after passing wind? This is the air element pushing against the flesh and skin to get out. A diagnostic aid used in Ayurveda is the observation of bumps and protrusions on the surface of the body. These are understood to be indicative of vāyu trapped in the flesh and under the skin. Ayurveda, and in more recent times, allopathy as well, has identified that joint pains are connected to vāyu – relieve the vāyu by setting right the digestion (digestive fire), the pain will reduce, if not disappear. The vāyu trapped in the joints, creates the pushing pressure within the bones of the joints giving rise to pain sensation

The ability of planet earth to support all of us (and the structures that we have created on it) comes from the elemental air within it. The ability of water to support us when we swim (the buoyancy that we feel) comes from elemental air within the water. The flickering of the flames come from the elemental air within the fire that pushes the fire hither and thither

Elemental space is represented by colour, taste, smell, and sound. Whenever we sense any of these, what we are experiencing is the element of space. You only need to lift a handful of rich, dark, loamy potting soil or compost to see how planet earth has not only elemental earth-water-fire-air qualities, but also the quality of colour, smell and taste (touching the tip of your tongue to a handful of potting soil will not kill you with an army of germs despite what western education may have led many of us to believe). If you lie down on the ground and place your ear to the earth (do ensure there are no insects in the spot you have chosen!), you will hear a low humming sound. As science has discovered in more recent

times, everything in the universe vibrates. And when something vibrates, it creates a sound, though the sound may be inaudible to human ears

Thus, when the Vedā speak of everything in nature being made of pṛthvī, āp, teja, vāyu and ākāśa, for purposes of our understanding, we can identify that everything (tangible and intangible, physical or mental) has some or many of the qualities of:

Pṛthvī – hard – soft; rough – smooth; heavy – light

Āp – Flow – cohesion

Tēja – Hot – cold

Vāyu – pushing – supporting

Ākāśa – colour, smell, taste, sound

There is a clear hierarchy in the tattva. Over time, water wins over earth. Canyons carved by rivers out of mountains over centuries are a clear demonstration of this. Fire wins over water. The drying up of rivers in the heat of the summer sun is a clear example. Vāyu wins over fire – experience the coolness brought by the monsoon winds (or the ceiling fan), even though the sun may remain as strong as ever. And ākāśa wins over vāyu – when all is still, only the sound of silence remains

Not only do we see this in the external realm, our ṛṣi and Buddhist teachings describe it as the process of death as well. This process can last for months or happen in minutes from start to finish. When death approaches, the earth element is the first to dissolve and the person experiences a heaviness of the body. The person may feel like they are sliding off the pillow / falling off the bed and ask to be lifted back onto it. We occasionally experience this as we're falling asleep. Next the water element dissolves, and the dying person may experience leakage of bodily fluids from the eyes, nostrils, mouth, lower orifices etc. Then the fire element dissolves, and the person begins to feel cold, the body extremities lose heat. Finally, the air element dissolves and respiration ceases with what is known as the death rattle in the throat – the sound of the last breath escaping. This is clinical death as pronounced by doctors. Dissolution of the space element happens after the breath has stopped and is when gross and subtle thought states and emotions dissolve. Hence the significance of the Bhagwat Gita Verses (Chapter 8):

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।

यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥5॥

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।

तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावाभावितः ॥6॥

Whatever be your last thoughts as you die, that is what will determine your next birth. Therefore, let your last thoughts be of Me (says the Lord) that you may come and be merged in Me (and be released from the cycle of life and death).

And when those last thoughts (not visible to us mortals around the dying person) dissolve, that is when final death has taken place. This is the reason why, when a person is dying, and immediately after the person dies (i.e., the air element has dissolved so medical death is declared; but the space element may not yet have dissolved – so the subtle body, mind, thoughts are still present in the vicinity of the body), it is recommended that one should chant prayers, or from the Bhāgavad Gītā or some other appropriate holy scripture dear to the departed person, so that the departing subtle body's last thoughts be of the Lord. And certainly, it is most important that no unpleasant or unkind words be spoken, so that the subtle body is not pained by them as the space element finally dissolves.

Extensive documentation about Near Death Experiences (NDEs) corroborate that even after the person has been declared dead, the entity is still able to see and hear everything that is happening around the body, but it is unable to make its presence known through speech or touch. The entire gross and subtle body is completely dissolved only when the space element finally dissolves. This is believed to take as long as 3 days sometimes, but it can even happen in an instance, depending on the manner of death.

This article is by way of an introduction to the concept of the pancha tattva (also known as pancha mahābhūta). In a subsequent article, we will explore how the pancha tattva influence our yoga practice.

Ajita Kini has been a student of Iyengar Yoga since 2007. This is the 5th in a series of articles on yoga.

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INDIANS ARE NATURE LOVERS

by Dr Veena Adige

Indians are basically nature lovers. Not only do we love and admire nature, we also worship it. Our Gods and Goddesses are closely associated with nature and have their own vahanas which are birds or animals. Almost round the year there are festivals and celebrations where nature is revered. India being a large country with diverse traditions, there are different methods of paying tributes to nature according to the region and the community.

Monsoon time is the period of torrential rains when nature smiles and produces lush green leaves, lovely beautiful coloured flowers, the waters in the rivers and seas are gurgling, swishing and sometimes over powering. This is the period we respect the breeding time of fishes and refrain from eating them, the fishermen docking their boats till the full moon when the sea is worshiped and fishing starts anew. Wild flowers growing by the roadside are picked up, tied into bunches called chudis and offered to God. This is also the time when snakes are worshipped and given milk to drink in a ritual called Nagpanchami.

The sacred tulsi plant is worshipped by women all over India. This plant has a specially created place in most households where people worship every day. Scientifically, the leaves of tulsi produce high amount of oxygen from the carbon dioxide around, hence the importance. The leaves are also medicinal and are used in many homemade medicines. Tulsi puja is an integral part of a Hindu's life.

Indians have festivals throughout the year when nature is revered. In the first part of the year when it is cold, food made of sesame seeds are consumed. Carrots and other vegetable are ripe at this time and delightful food is made using them. In South India a three day festival called pongal is celebrated where the first crop of sugarcane, gram and other edible items are cooked to produce a mouthwatering dish.

Harvesting time sees pujas performed and the first crop of jowar being offered to God and then consumed by human beings. These are called hurda parties where groups of people go to the fields, offer the first crop to God and then have a lavish tasty party.

Praying to the sun, moon and stars form various festivals in different parts of India. Early mornings will see people standing in rivers or seas with folded hands and closed eyes welcoming the rising sun. Sighting the new moon during a month in the latter part of the year is a matter of cheer for married women (and nowadays men also) who do not eat any food during the day, and now break their fast. Grand parties are thrown and the first morsel is fed by the partner after puja is done of the moon. This festival called karva chowth is a special significant one and is performed mainly in North India.

Women worship the banyan tree, offer fruits, and kumkum and bow before it. A story is told of a queen Savithri whose husband dies and she follows the God of Death, pressurising and tricking

him into restoring her husband's life. She is revered by women and vata Savirtri puja is performed in her honour, especially in Maharashtra state.

Trees, flowers, fruits, the sun, moon, stars, snakes, and even rats are worshipped. There is a city in North India where rats are not killed but nurtured. Oxen used by farmers to till the land are washed, decorated and pampered with delicacies around this time of the year.

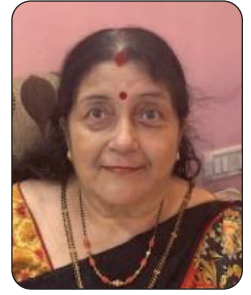
Coins are worshipped during the main festival of Diwali, leaves of a certain tree are offered as 'gold' during Dasera, another important festival. Leaves of mango trees, banana trees, and the tulsi plant are all sacred to Indians. A rich tradition of nature love is our heritage.

Our Ramayana and Mahabharat are full of instances regarding nature. Hanuman and Bhima are born from Vaayu or air. Karna is the son of surya or sun. Sita came out of mother earth when King Janaka was tilling the land as part of a ritual and she disappeared back into the bosom of mother earth when her role in Ramayan was over, when her twin sons Luv and Kush were reunited with their father Ram. River Ganga came down from the heavens and Shiva caught her in his locks and released her slowly on earth. Ganga, wife of King Shantanu and mother of Bheeshma Pitamaha is a river who drowns her first seven sons in her waters. Hanuman, Sugriva, Neel, Vaali, Angad and others are monkeys while Jambavan is a bear. But all are treated like human beings by Ram and Lakshman.

We see divinity in all living creatures also. For us, Ganga is not just a river but a mother, a goddess, and much more. Peepul, Banyan and Neem are not just trees but they are regarded as the embodiment of deities and we worship them. The Bel leaves and fruits, Mango leaves, Tulsi leaves and Coconuts are offered to God during worship. The Lotus is a sacred flower for Indians. The banana plant and leaves are used for decorating the temple and worship. Ayurveda tells us that all plants and flowers have medicinal value.

The bond between Indian people and trees is very strong. Ramayana and Mahabharata have innumerable descriptions of trees and forests. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna compares the world to the Banyan tree because it is so large and provides a home to many different creatures. The Mahabharata says that 'even if there is only one tree full of flowers and fruits in the village, that place becomes worthy of worship and respect.'

In Indian iconography, there is a close relationship between the various deities and their animal or bird mounts. Each God or Goddess is associated with a particular animal or bird, and this lends a special dimension to the animal kingdom. Krishna is worshipped along with his cow who gives us so much. Shiva is



worshipped along with his bull Nandi. Vishnu flies on Garuda the Vulture. Saraswati is worshipped with her swan and peacock and Laxmi is worshipped with her owl. When you seek blessings from Ganesha, you seek blessings from his companion –mouse - too. Ganesha, the son of Shiva, is a combination of elephant and man; the elephant is worshipped in this country and even today forms an integral part of many temples and festivals.

We do not look upon cattle as mere beasts of burden, but treat them with dignity and gratitude; on the harvest festival in many parts of the country, bullocks, which are an integral part of the village economy, are honoured, decorated and taken out in processions across the village.

Also among the ten avataars of God, He incarnated himself first in the form of a fish(matsya avatar) and then a tortoise(kurma avatar), and a boar. His fifth incarnation was a man-lion (Narasimha).

The Atharva-Vedic concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam includes human beings, animals, and all living creatures. It says that human beings cannot command or demand mastery over other creatures and are forbidden from abusing and damaging nature. Man evolved out of the lesser forms of living beings and is integrally linked with them. They live in harmony with Nature.

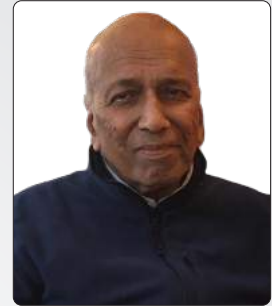
Ahimsa does not only mean no violence to human beings. It also means no violence to air, rivers, oceans, plants, trees, forests, mountains, birds and animals.

Dr Veena Adige is a journalist and author of six books. She is involved in Vsisters, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, WE and Zoroashtrian College. She is a representative to the United Nations. She is Mohan Adige's wife, mother of two and a grandmother of three children

**VASANTH'S
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Xeno Transplants

by Konchadi Vasanth Pai



*All ye patients who on dialysis depend
And wait for a donor, his kidney to lend*

*Take heart from the latest news
Yes, pigs kidneys are now in use*

*A transplant Institute in New York has shown
A genetically engineered pig's kidney they had grown
By knocking out a gene which causes human rejection
So now the patients can no longer feel dejection
The kidney attached to blood vessels in upper leg
Worked normally producing urine and creatinine
Surgeons envision hearts, liver and other organs
To be tried soon as xenotransplant in humans
Millions waiting for donors can forget their strife
They can now get porcine organs and live a normal life
But I am assailed by a nagging doubt why
Such patients may not prefer to live in a sty*



(based on a News report in Times of India dated October 21 , 2021)

Meaning of Life

by Smt. Kakpana Kamath



*Does life mean eating and drinking
Enjoying and sleeping
Till one's heart keep beating?*

Or

Is there some divine hidden meaning?

Life is like a water bubble

Fragile and beautiful, Delicate and colourful.

Life is God's greatest gift to man,

So let us live life as wisely as we can.

Each passing day,

Love all, forgive all and do not spread hate

Because we are all born with an unknown expiry date

Save happy memories & delete those which are unpleasant

Over minor issues,

Do not be angry or greedy

Jealous or arrogant.

Life is precious like an expensive diamond

So be grateful to God and enjoy every second.

Remember time passes very fast

And before you realize

Your present will be your past,

And to enjoy, love or forgive

Your life will not last.

Smt. Kakpana Kamath is a retired bank employee. Reading & writing poetry is her passion. She likes reading 'Speaking Tree' in Times of India & Economic Times.



News From Sister Organizations Gsb Vsisters



The eleven year old GSB Vsisters of Navi Mumbai organised a Diwali Dhamaka on October 31 which began with a beautiful Ganpati and Devi vandana by Shantala Bhat and was followed by Poornima Shenoy's lovely rendition of Bhagyada Lakshmi baramma. Mughdha Nadkarni performed a lavni while Durga Shenoy, Jaya Shenoy and Savitha H Nayak spoke of Diwali in their childhood. Anjani Pai sang a Konkani song, Vidya Bhat, Prabha Prabhu and Aishwarya Bhat also sang songs. All had brought home made Diwali delicacies which were shared by all.

Vsisters also organised a funfilled day picnic to Shrishti farms at Vasind, between Shahapur and Titwala on November 30.

After the 10th annual day function in march, Vsisters had organized a samuhik chudi program in the month of shravan where tulsi puja and exchange of chudis was done.



The Forty Rules of Love by Elif Shafak

by Madhuri Pai

(a GSB based in London, a reader most prolific)

**Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
There is a field. I'll meet you there ~ RUMI**



An American woman living in a wonderful house with 3 children, a dog and a rich Doctor for a husband. She must be happy, right?

A respected Muslim cleric with a loving family and tens of thousands of followers who come from far and wide to listen to his sermons. He must be happy, right?

Wrong.

Separated by 700 years, the housewife in America and the cleric in Turkey have the same problem. A deep awareness that something is missing in their life. A true, spiritually awakening love. A love that is so pure that it opens the windows of your soul and helps you do things you never thought possible.

The Muslim cleric is none other than Jalāl ad-Dīn Mohammad Rūmī, more popularly known simply as Rumi, a 13th century Persian poet, who lived the life of a respected cleric, preaching in Konya, Turkey. Until a force of nature – a Sufi wandering “dervish” called Shams of Tabriz, entered his life. The powerful philosophical influence of Shams converts Rumi into one of the most profound philosopher poets ever. In the process, Rumi gives up his profession, loses touch with his family and immerses himself totally in his deep friendship with Shams. Clearly, this does not go down well with Rumi’s family.

Elif Shafak, the celebrated Turkish author of “The Forty Rules of Love” introduces us to Ella, the middle aged American housewife who knows she “should” be happy but isn’t. During the course of her job as an editor at a publishing house, she begins an email exchange with Aziz Zahara, a new author who has submitted

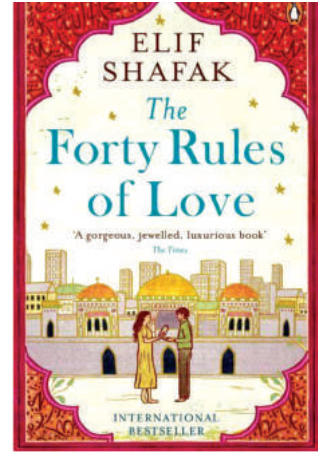
the draft of a book called “Sweet Blasphemy” to the publishing house. That book tells the story of Shams and Rumi and the 40 rules of love that Shams has written. Yes, a book within a book!

As Ella’s exchanges with Aziz become deeper, she experiences a combination of a spiritual awakening and a stirring of romance. Her dormant inner self is awakened by her reading of Aziz’s draft book and through his emails to her. The parallels between Ella and Rumi and also between Shams and Aziz seem laughable at first. But then you see how transformative a spiritual partnership can be. It is possible at any time. Where you live and when you live makes no difference.

The expertly written book takes you back and forth across a span of 700 years and from Turkey to America. The taut narrative leaves you with 40 different “rules” of love that help you get a glimpse of Sufi philosophy and what love means in the truest sense of the word.

Shams transformed Rumi and met a tragic end himself, at the hands of jealous members of the community. That is a well known story. But what happens to our 21st century Ella and Aziz? Does their story have a happy ending? You will have to read the book and decide for yourself.

“Your task is not to seek love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.”~RUMI



Madhuri Pai, a GSB based in London, is a prolific reader. She lives in London and is the co-founder of Turning Pages, a social entrepreneurship that works on building strong reading habits in under privileged children. She is an IIM Bangalore alumna and loves good Aamchi food and great books.

LIST OF IMPORTANT DATES IN THE QUARTER JANUARY-MARCH, 2022

Dates	Day	Festival
14 th January 2022	Friday	Makar Sankranti
21 st January 2022	Friday	Sankashta Chaturthi
26 th January 2022	Wednesday	Republic Day
4 th February 2022	Friday	Shree Ganesh Jayanti
21 st February 2022	Monday	Sankashta Chaturthi

Dates	Day	Festival
1 st March 2022	Tuesday	Maha Shivratri
17 th March 2022	Thursday	Holi Poornima
18 th March 2022	Friday	Holi Dhoolivandana
21 st March 2022	Monday	Sankashta Chaturthi
2 nd April 2022	Saturday	Gudi Paadva (Chaitra Navaratri Aarambh)



Recipes

Winter dishes

by Smt. Anuradha Prabhu
anuradhprabhu49@gmail.com

Come winter and its time for amchies to savour matti gulla, kooka, tarni tori, jeevo vatano etc. So presenting a few seasonal dishes to enjoy in the winter season.

KOOKA SAGLEIN

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup scraped and cleaned kooka(chinese potato) • 1 cup grated coconut | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-6 dry red chillies • A marble sized ball of tamarind • 1 tsp dry coriander seeds • 1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tsp mustard seeds • 1 tbsp oil • 1/2 tsp turmeric powder • Salt to taste |
|---|---|---|

Method

- 1) Cut the kooka into halves and soak in water. Drain and keep aside.
- 2) Heat 1 tsp oil and roast the dry coriander seeds and fenugreek lightly. Also roast the red chillies lightly.
- 3) Grind the roasted ingredients along with grated coconut, turmeric and tamarind to a smooth paste. Keep aside.
- 4) In a vessel cook the kooka by adding a cup of water till soft. Add salt and the ground masala, add water if required to get a curry consistency.
- 5) Bring the curry to a boil, lower the flame and let it simmer. In a karahi heat the remaining oil and add the mustard seeds, once they splutter pour it over the curry.
- 6) Serve hot with rice.



MATTI GULLA BHARATH



Ingredients

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 medium sized matti gulla • 1/2 cup grated coconut • 1 medium onion, chopped • 1 tsp finely chopped ginger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tsp chopped green chillies • 2-3 dry red chillies • A marble sized ball of tamarind • 1 tbsp coconut oil • Salt to taste |
|--|--|

Method

- 1) Apply a few drops of oil on the gulla and roast it on a direct flame. Roasting has to be done on a slow flame so the gulla gets charred evenly and also gets cooked inside.
- 2) Once roasted, let it cool. Remove the charred skin gently and remove the flesh and mash it into a pulp.
- 3) Grind together grated coconut along with dry red chillies and tamarind to a smooth paste with the help of a little water.
- 4) Remove the ground paste, mix the pulp in it, add salt, chopped onions, chopped green chillies and ginger.
- 5) Mix gently and pour coconut oil in the mixture. Mix and serve as a side dish with rice and curry.

TARNI TORI USLI



Ingredients

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup shelled tarni tori • 1 tsp mustard seeds • 2-3 dry red chillies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 tsp asafoetida powder • 1/2 cup grated coconut • 1 tbsp oil • Salt to taste |
|---|--|

Method

- 1) Add 1/2 cup water to tori and pressure cook till tender. It should be little firm and not very mushy.
- 2) Heat oil in a karahi, add mustard seeds, as they splutter add broken red chillies and asafoetida powder. Stir for a few seconds.
- 3) Add the boiled tori and salt. Mix well and let it cook till dry.
- 4) Add the grated coconut, mix and serve with poories or as an accompaniment with rice.

Thank you!



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Origin of the Ganesh Chaturthi Festival: One Possible Scenario

by Ashok Prabhu



A scenario is proposed regarding how Saraswats* in the Goa/Konkan region may have been the first community to start the practice of Ganesh Chaturthi festival, and how it then propagated to other parts of India over the past several centuries. It is also shown how some of the processes that are presently followed in Ganesh pooja were cultivated.

1,000 years ago. If this is the case, the celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi may have started over 1,000 years ago. Who may have started this celebration?

Saraswats have lived in the Goa/Konkan area for about 2,200 years. They began settling in this area during the days of the Shatavahanas. It is known that Saraswat families, while migrating to the Goa/Konkan region, had brought with them their family deities. They installed these deities and continued performing Vedic rituals. Saraswats had good knowledge of different Vedic scriptures, including the Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmanas, and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, and various Puranas. They were familiar with stories about Lord Ganesh from Rigveda, Upanishads, epics, and Puranas like Matsya Purana, Skanda Purana, and Narada Purana. They would have known from Matsya Purana and other Puranas about how Goddess Parvati created an idol of Ganesh and gave life to it. Having a high level of interest in learning and seeking new knowledge, they must have developed great reverence towards Ganesh, who is credited with taking dictation from Rishi Vyasa and scribing it to formulate the epic, Mahabharata. Saraswats also knew about the great importance given to Lord Ganesh as the remover of obstacles. By about 1,200 years ago, Ganesh was already a popular god. Adi Shankaracharya had stressed the importance of including Ganesh among Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, and Surya, and performing their pooja daily. Saraswats in the Goa/Konkan region installed Ganesh idols in their temples and began worshipping Lord Ganesh.

A question arises as to why Saraswats started the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, and why they chose the month of Bhadrapada for the Ganesh Chaturthi festival instead of the Ganesh Jayanti day which falls in the month of Maagha. Saraswats were skilled in agriculture, and knew how to prepare land for cultivation. Agriculture was important to their livelihood. The Goa/Konkan region was the right place with fertile land and plenty of water for growing grains, fruits, and vegetables. One problem they may have faced could be the damage to property and crops due to heavy monsoons during the month of Bhadrapada. It is also possible that lack of rains during this period would have harmed the crops. Since Lord Ganesh is known for removing obstacles, Saraswats may have started the Ganesh Chaturthi festival during the month of Bhadrapada to pray to Lord Ganesh to remove any obstacles that would damage their crops and property and harm the people.

Saraswats likely picked up the idea of preparing idols of Lord Ganesh for worshipping during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival from the puranic story regarding His birth. They knew from the Puranas how Goddess Parvati created an idol of young Ganesh using sandalwood paste and oil and ointments that were on her skin, and then gave life to this idol thus giving birth to Lord Ganesh. Given the abundance of clay in Goa/Konkan region, Saraswats started using clay for creating lord Ganesh idols. They based the pooja rituals involved in the Ganesh Chaturthi festival on the Puranic descriptions, as well as their knowledge

Curiosity regarding the origin of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival

My memories of the Ganesh Chaturthi Pooja celebration in our family home in our native village, Kadneer, in Uttar Kannada district of Karnataka go back to my childhood days. It was a three-day affair, and clearly the biggest at-home pooja celebration starting with the Gauri pooja, the first day, followed by bringing the Ganesh idol on the second day, conducting the elaborate pooja process and then conducting the idol visarjan in a nearby creek in the evening of the third day. Same pooja processes are conducted today. However, during all these years, I do not recall any discussions regarding origin of the Ganesh Chaturthi Pooja celebration. The schools also did not deal with the history of this important event other than contributions by Chhatrapati Shivaji and Lokmanya Tilak.

My curiosity regarding the origin of the Ganesh Chaturthi Pooja celebration started only recently. The questions were straight forward: Who started it? Where did it start? When did it start? How did it become so popular? My limited search of the existing literature did not lead me to the answers to these questions. It was quite surprising given the popularity of this event in many parts of India, and also outside India.

Historians generally rely on provable facts to describe historical events and their significance. Even if they approach these historical descriptions from their vantage point, they construct scenarios based upon facts. They also tend to shy away from areas where there is little evidence. This may be the case for the lack of adequate historical information regarding the origin of the Ganesh Chaturthi Pooja celebration.

Given this, and my curiosity regarding the origin of the Ganesh Chaturthi celebration, I thought I will come up with a plausible scenario for this great event based upon the information I was exposed to. The devotees may find such a scenario interesting and discuss it during the annual celebrations. Also, may be that some historians and intellectuals will modify my scenario based upon their knowledge base.

One possible scenario for the origin of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival

It is reported that the Ganesh Chaturthi festival may have been celebrated in the Goa region prior to the Kadamabas of Goa who ruled the territory of Goa for a few centuries starting from about

of the Vedic worshipping processes. Given the special circumstances of Ganesh's birth by Goddess Parvati, Saraswats may also have included Parvati or Gauri worship as part of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival.

Popularizing Ganesh Chaturthi Festival outside Goa

With time, the celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi spread to places outside the Goa/Konkan region. Saraswats from the Goa/Konkan area moved to other places in the north and south. Groups of Saraswats migrated to Thane district about 1,000 years ago. They served the kings in important positions for more than a century. Thereafter, having learnt the Portuguese language, they helped with negotiations between the Portuguese and the Peshwas. They also served under Chhatrapati Shivaji, and watched over the Peshwa interests in Gwalior. A large number of Saraswats also moved as far north as Indore and served the Sindhia state. They must have taken the practice of Ganesh Chaturthi celebration with them during these migrations.

Saraswats in Kanara and parts of Kerala appear to have started settling there about 500 to 600 years ago. After the Portuguese conquests, Saraswats flocked again to centers along the Karnataka and Kerala coasts. They carried with them the practice of Ganesh Chaturthi celebration during these migrations. The practice of Ganesh Chaturthi celebration spread to various parts of Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, during the reigns of the Chalukyas and Hoysalas, and the Vijayanagar Empire.

Chhatrapati Shivaji and Lokmanya Tilak promoted the public celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi festival. Chhatrapati Shivaji celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi publicly in Pune during the 17th century. Later, this practice was stopped during the British Rule and the celebration was limited to the privacy of individual homes. Towards the end of the 19th century, Lokmanya Tilak promoted Sarvajanic Ganesh Utsav in Pune through his newspaper, Kesari. Being a religious celebration, this approach avoided the restriction imposed by the British on other types of public gatherings. Since then, both public and private celebrations of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival have increased in popularity immensely. Certain restrictions on Ganesh Chaturthi festival in Goa disappeared after the Goa territory became part of India in 1961.

Summary

One scenario for the origin of Ganesh Chaturthi festival is that it was started in the Goa/Konkan region by Saraswats somewhat prior to about 1,000 years ago. The practice then spread from the Goa/Konkan region to the northern, southern, and eastern parts of India, during the subsequent migrations of Saraswats from this region, and during the reign of several rulers who had control over larger parts of India along with the Goa/Konkan region. Chhatrapati Shivaji and Lokmanya Tilak were instrumental in increasing the popularity of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival.

*The word "Saraswat" includes all branches of the Saraswat community.

Ashok Prabhu has a B.Tech degree from IIT Mumbai and a Ph.D. from Purdue University, USA. Since retiring from his professional career in the electronics industry, he has been studying Vedic history and scriptures, synergies between Vedic thought and recent scientific discoveries, and the history and accomplishments of the Saraswat community.

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The Science of Lung-Gut-Brain Axis in Fighting Covid-19

by Dr. Ajoy Prabhu

Most of our immunity building doesn't come from physically keeping the lungs moving, but taking care of what truly runs our entire body smoothly.



Covid-19 has, rightfully so, brought a lot of attention to the health of our lungs. We are thinking of increasing – even if not practising regularly – pranayam, yog, neti. We are even taking in zinc and vitamin D to try and stave off any viral infections. It might surprise you to know that most of our immunity building doesn't come from physically keeping the lungs moving, but taking care of what truly runs our entire body smoothly. Before you read on, try to guess what that could possibly be.

Did you know that we humans are actually a bunch of human cells carefully being controlled by microbes that outnumber our own cells? For every 100 human cells we have within us, there are 130 microbial cells! Does that sound fantastic and outlandish? Wait! It gets even more ridiculous- human cells have about 20,000 genes, but the gut microbes in-total have about 20,000,000 genes! Tell me now, who controls whom?

First let me convince you that this (the fact that we are being controlled) is true, before talking about the health of our brain, and finally, our lungs.

Consider a case reported in 2015 of a lady that had a major colon infection. No matter what her doctors tried, her infection just wouldn't go away. Decades before the infection, she was of normal weight. During the infection, of course, she lost some weight. Finally, as a last resort, the doctors suggested fecal microbiota transplantation (FMT).

An FMT is exactly what it sounds like – the process involves taking feces from a donor (usually a close relative), scrubbing it of wastes, and depositing the rest (mostly microbes) in the recipient's colon. In this case, the donor was her sixteen year-old daughter. In due course, the lady got better, but

noticed something strange – she became overweight and even obese – just like her daughter was! The gut microbes were not only more effective at digesting and absorbing fat, but they were also perhaps even making her think about eating more often. There was no other change in her lifestyle other than the FMT. This is not an isolated case. Similar phenomena have been observed many times in cases following FMT. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that her daughter's gut microbes were now responsible for the weight gain in both mother and daughter!



This is just one example (of weight gain), but there have been numerous documented cases of the gut bacteria changing the mood of individuals (in one case of even making the person suicidal!). The very same type of FMT has even shown to reduce type 2 diabetes in individuals.

Consider this – our gut harbors 99% of the bacteria in our body. Until recently, the thought was that we obtain our gut bacteria from the mother during childbirth. Recent evidence has emerged that this is not the case. We now know that much before birth, these bacteria (and other microorganisms) start their interaction with the human “host” (fetus) and “teach” the fetus their way of signalling. As they signal, we respond – way before birth.

There is strong proof from the fact that prematurely born children have a disrupted “lesson” learned from these microbes. This can lead to many immunological issues including in the lung, in the form of allergies. This phenomenon has also been replicated in germ-free (GF) mice. They too suffer the consequences of diminished immunity towards infections, and even behavioral traits!

It is now known that bacterial by-products that come in contact with the inner gut surface, stimulate special types of cells lining the gut (called the enteroendocrine cells) to produce several neuropeptides – small molecules that alter the brain function. Therefore, it follows that these neuropeptides control, in real-time, the brain's reaction to the condition of the gut.

If the gut is full and food is being digested, one set of signals are received by the brain, if not, then another set is received. For example, a type of bacteria called *Lactobacillus acidophilus* stimulates brain receptors for opioids (opium-like compound), thereby reducing the perception of pain in the gut.

Other neuropeptides function to regulate blood flow into, and motility of, the gut lining. In fact, in a study of over 4,000 patients, scientists at the famous Cleveland Clinic showed that they can predict strokes in the brain a full 3 years ahead simply by looking at the production of a compound called TMSO, by certain gut microbes when the subjects digested meat. Until a few months ago, this was only thought to be a coincidence. A few months ago,

the same scientists then re-created the phenomenon in mice and showed that increased TMSO causes strokes.

Think of gut microbes as a well-manicured lawn. In that, densely growing grass does not allow other weeds to proliferate. However, when the make-up of gut microbes is altered significantly – such as when a person takes antibiotics – it is known as dysbiosis. This phenomenon turns the gut microbes and the brain to foes- they start to send wrong signals to each other, and an already disrupted lawn gets clogged with weeds – in this case, infection.

To add to this, 90% of the main nerve that connects the gut to the brain (called the vagus nerve) goes towards the brain, not from it! What does that tell us? The nerve takes information (commands) to the brain and not the other way around. Multiple sclerosis, a devastating autoimmune disease that leads to progressive deterioration of neurologic function, has been shown to be greatly influenced by the gut microbiome.

Just as the gut alters brain function, it does the same with many other organs. Of particular interest is its influence on the lungs. Lungs are by far one of the most vasculated organs in the body. By that, I mean there are literally hundreds of thousands of blood vessels that supply deoxygenated blood and remove oxygenated blood from the organ.

As mentioned earlier, the gut bacteria is responsible for “teaching” the organs, particularly the lungs about keeping good house- compounds produced in the gut bacteria directly affect how the tissues within the lungs respond to inhaled foreign objects - be it a particle of soot, or a bacteria. It teaches the lungs exactly what

types of cells and compounds (such as antibodies and antiviral compounds, called interferons) to produce for defense, and when to do so.

By far the strongest link that has been established between the lung and gut is by way of compounds called short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs). These are the main byproduct of the gut microbiota. Evidence suggests that SCFAs play a role in the control of infections both through direct action on microorganisms attempting to infect the lung, as well as in “teaching” the human cells and other aforementioned compounds how to kill or neutralize the attacking microorganism such as Covid-19.

The natural next question in your mind should be, about production of these SCFAs. These natural anti-Covid-19 compounds are best produced when complex carbohydrates and Obers are being digested (more accurately, fermented) in the gut by certain bacteria. The best “fertilizer” for these bacteria are vegetables, fruits and nuts.

Bacterial digestion of plant-matter in the gut is like a booster shot of immunity to the body. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that a 2021 study in the British Medical Journal of about 3,000 frontline healthcare workers documented that those that ate a whole food plant-based diet were 73% better protected from severe Covid-19 infection. This is even better than some of the anti-Covid-19 vaccines that are being marketed!

So, eat your vegetables, fruits and nuts to feed your gut bacteria. A healthy set of gut microbes will automatically lead to strong, immune-boosted lungs and a healthy brain!

Ajoy Prabhu co-founder of Circee Health - an initiative for disease reversal and prevention. He worked with the Obama White House as Director of Marketing for US NIH. He was the fourth highest ranking official in the US govt. He has authored 3 patents and established 5 companies.



The Abhijeet Kini Section



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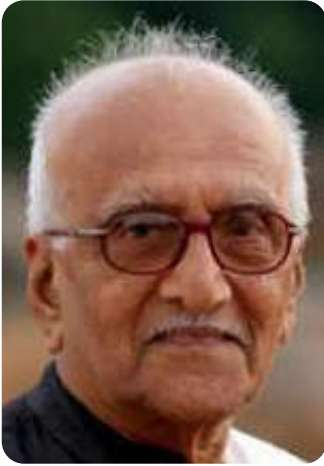
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Abhijeet Kini, founder of Abhijeet Kini Studios, is a Mumbai based illustrator, animator and independent comics publisher, known for his comic series “Angry Maushi” and “Fanboys”.

‘Vishwa Konkani Sardar’ Basti Vaman Shenoy passes away



Basti Vaman Shenoy, the founder and co-chairman emeritus of Konkani Bhasani Sanskriti Pratishthan, World Konkani Centre in Mangaluru, passed away on 2nd January, 2022 at the age of 88 years. The mortal remains were kept for public homage at World Konkani Centre on 3rd January, 2022, before the cremation at his birth-place, Bantwal.

Basti maam is revered as the doyen of the Konkani language movement. He founded the World Konkani Centre in 2009 under the auspices of Konkani Bhasani Sanskriti Pratishthan, of which he was the President since its inception in 1996 till 2021 and co-chairman emeritus thereafter.

He was also instrumental in the formation of the Karnataka Konkani Sahitya Academy, of which he served as the President from 1997 to 2001. During his tenure, the Academy produced “Konkani Samanthar Shabdakosh”, a series of books on stalwarts of Konkani Community “Konkani Mahamanest Pustakmala” and a volume on showcasing the rich Konkani art form of Kavi Murals “Konkanyali Kavikala”.

He was also instrumental in founding Saraswathi Kala Prasarak Sangh and Saraswathi Sangeeth Shala Bhawan, Bantwal in 1958.

In 1995, under the auspices of Konkani Bhasha Mandal, Karnataka, as Chief Convenor, he organized the first World

Konkani Convention in Mangaluru and in 1996, he inaugurated the first North American Konkani Convention at New Jersey, USA. In 1998, the Karnataka Konkani Sahitya Academy organised a 3 day “Konkani Kala Utsav” in New Delhi.



Under his leadership, the World Konkani Centre spearheaded several programmes for the preservation of Konkani language, culture and welfare of Konkani speaking communities. He strived for the recognition of Konkani language and its inclusion in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India.

He was conferred the title of Vishwa Konkani Sardar for his various contributions made. He was conferred with the Karnataka Rajyothsava Award in 2010 and several other accolades for his relentless work for Konkani language and culture.

He is survived by his two sons, a daughter and grand-children. He also left behind a legacy of followers, well-wishers and thousands of scholars who have been beneficiaries of the Vishwa Konkani Student Scholarships Programme.

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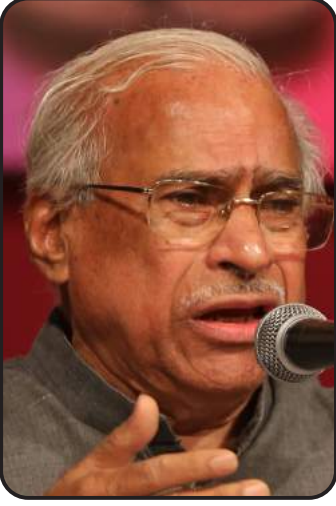


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Obituary – Shri Ramdas Shantaram Kamat (18th February, 1931 to 8th January, 2022)



Noted theatre-actor and singer, Shri Ramdas Kamat, who straddled the Marathi theatre stage during its Golden Era, passed away on 8th January, 2022.

As a child he took Hindustani Classical Music lessons from elder brother Upendra. He learnt Natya Sangeet under the guidance of Pt. Govind Buwa Agni, Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki, Shri. Prabhakar Pendharkar, Shri. Bhalachandra Pendharkar & Pt. Bhimsen Joshi.

He acted under direction of Gopinath Savkar, Mo. Ga. Rangnekar, Master Dattaram, Nandkumar Raote, Bhalachandra Pendharkar & Madhukar Todarmal

The growing popularity of Marathi cinema in the 1950s and 1960s had literally paled musical plays into oblivion, but Kamat is credited with playing a pioneering role in reviving it.

in ‘Manapman’, ‘Sanvshaykallol’, ‘Ekech Pyala’ were appreciated by theatre lovers.

His songs like ‘Nako Visru Sanket Meelanache’, ‘Devgharache Dynat Kunala’, ‘Saad Deti Himshikhare’, ‘Guntata Hriday He’ were were extremely popular.

Kamat ventured into playback singing in films and carved a niche for himself. The ‘Bhavgeets’ sung by him like ‘Ambaratlya Nilya Ghanachi’, ‘Sakhi Saanj Ugavali’ became popular.

Kamat, who originally hails from Goa, graduated in Economics. During his initial days, he juggled with his job to sing for AIR Mumbai. He got his first break in 1964 as a singer-actor in Vasant Kanetkar’s ‘Matsyagandha’ after which he never looked back.

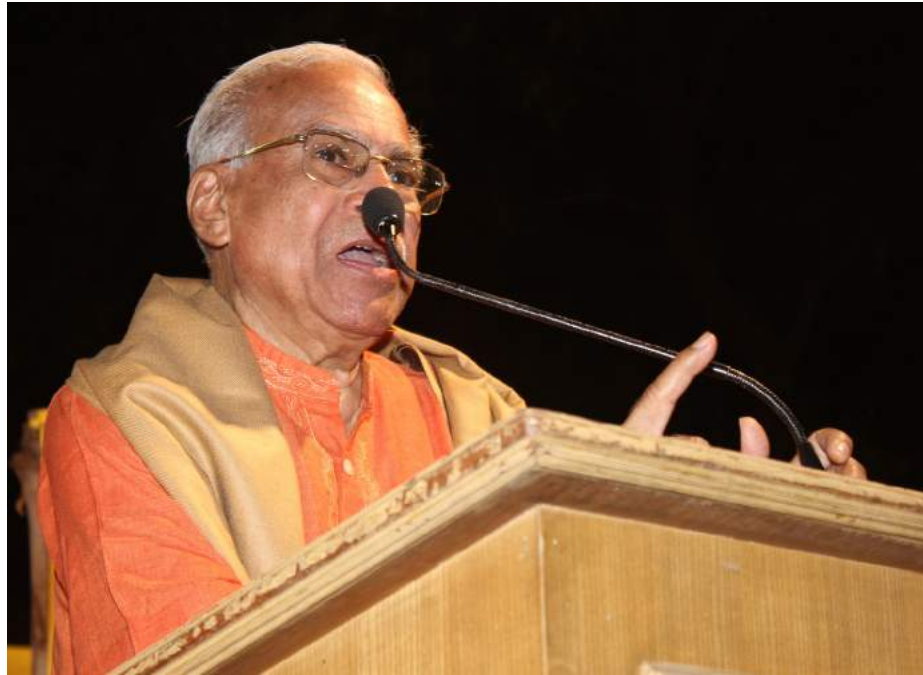
He was conferred with several awards in his lifetime, including New Delhi’s Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Maharashtra Government Akheel Bharatiya Marathi Natya Parishad’s Bal Gandharva Puraskar, Manipal T M A Pai Foundation’s outstanding Konkani Puraskar and Vishnudas Bhav Puraskar, Sangli.

Ramdas Kamat and G.S.B. Sabha, Mumbai

At the Gudi Padva Sneha Milan programme of the Sabha held on 10th April, 2016, Shri Ramdas Kamat was felicitated with the GSB Talent Recognition Award, an award annually presented by the Sabha to honour personalities from our Community who have excelled in the fields of performing arts, fine arts and literature.

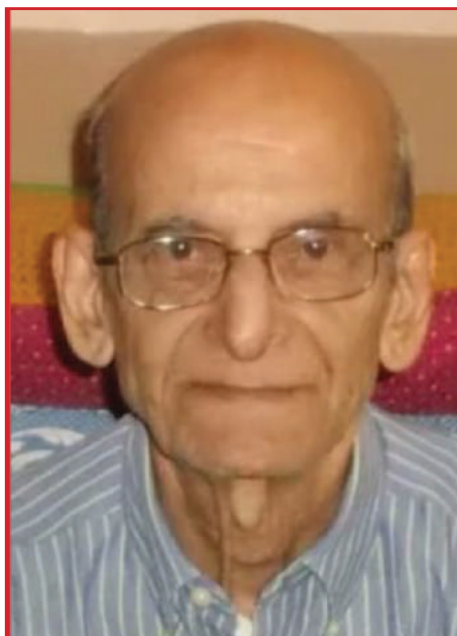
It was a moment of privilege for the Sabha when Shri Ramdas Kamat acceded to our request to perform at our first Bhakti Natya Tarang programme held on 16th July, 2016. He sang the 1950s and 60s classics, in a resounding voice which belied his age. The in-between chirpy chats on how the Natya Sangeet was composed with Pt Jitendra Abhisheki, had great round of applause. Shri Ramdas Kamat was accompanied for this performance by

Shri Sudhir Nayak (harmonium), Shri Manoj Acharya (tabla), Shri Raghavendra Mallya (pakhavaj) and Shri Ravindra Shenoy (side rhythms).



He acted in 18 plays in his lifetime. His popular musical plays included ‘Matsyagandha’, ‘Yayatiani Devyani’, ‘Madanchi Manjiri’, ‘He Bandh Reshamache’. At the same time, Kamat’s performances as Krishna in ‘Subhadhra’, Dharyadhar

OBITUARY



Dr. S. Giridhar Bhat
(28-07-1928 - 5-12-2021)

It is with deep sorrow we report the demise of Dr. S. Giridhar Bhat or “Girimam” as he was known to all, after a brief illness. He was 93 years old and is survived by his wife, two daughters, Anita and Sunita, their families, extended family and friends.

Giribhatmam was born on July 28, 1928 in Kasargod, Kerala. He migrated to Bombay from Mangalore in the year 1947 and completed his B.Sc. (Hon.) from St. Xavier’s college. He did his M.Sc. Tech. and Ph.D. (Oils & Fats) both from ICT (then UDCT).

After ICT he joined Caltex India Ltd as Chief Chemist in 1958, then worked as Production Manager with Lakme Ltd and Tata Oil Mills in R&D for 20 years.

He retired in 1988 after which he helped the needy in his own ways. He worked for NGO’s like Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI) Mumbai, Shanti Kunj Sevaashram – a home for the aged and Ram Krishnaa academy’s English Medium School where rural children are admitted without capitation fees, at Harigram, New Panvel. He was also associated with Zoroastrian College located in Sanjan and was a guide for Ph.D candidates.

Dr Meher Master-Moos, President of Zoroastrian college visited him often and recently his family as he was closely associated with the organisation.

He was loved by all and was dedicated to helping the poor and needy throughout his life.

-V S Bhat



Art gallery

Our Artists for this Quarter

Diwali Celebrations



Drawing by : **Deepika Bhat, Udipi**
Age : **13 years**



Drawing by : **Arjun Pai**
Age : **9 years**



Drawing by : **Siddhant Nayak**
Age : **10 years**



Drawing by : **Vaishnavi Pai**
Age : **11 years**



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