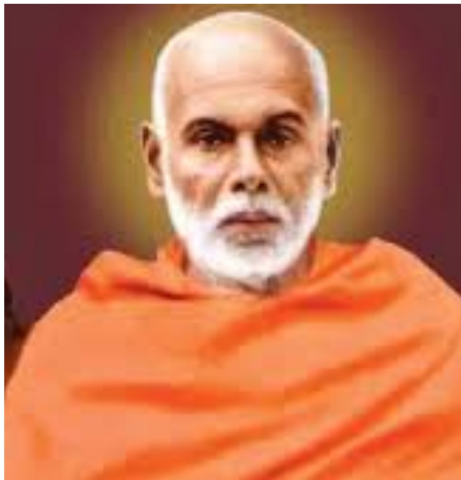




Gitanjali 2019

An Ohmkaram Publication



Gandhiji 's non-violent crusades like the Satyagraha movement, Dandi March, influenced the Vaikom Satyagraham in Kerala. Though ideologically similar, the protest was to eliminate untouchability ..

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*I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth
and non violence are as old as the hills
- Gandhiji*

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From the desk of Gitanjali's Editorial team:

Hello Everyone! Hope you all had a wonderful New Year!

Just like always, this time too, it has been an absolute pleasure putting together the magazine. We are always amazed with the artistry & creativity shown by Ohmkaram kids & their parents. The varied contributions add to the charm of Gitanjali. It is always inspiring to see the hidden or maybe, not so hidden talents in many of the submissions.

This year's Cover has been inspired by the very well-known & renowned figure of Mahatma Gandhi, who has been recognized world-wide for his revolutionary ideas of Non-Violence. The 150th Birth Anniversary of this great person this year gave us a perfect opportunity to honor him.

Few Ohmkaram members participated in a Skit presenting his forward-thinking ideas for the upliftment of backward classes. Read Cover Feature story on Vaikom Satyagraham for details. Walk down the memory lane as you view the Photopages put together by Dr. Suraj Alakkassery, Sunil Krishnan & Anoop Kadungath.

Gitanjali gives all of us an opportunity to express our creative skills while exploring our literary and artistic talents. All your contributions are extremely precious & valuable to us. Publishing Gitanjali involves soliciting articles & advertisements, editing, proof reading, and printing. In the end, it is extremely gratifying to see the outcome of all of our combined efforts. We thank you for giving us an opportunity to work with them.

We would like to request our members to utilize the services provided by our Sponsors and let them know how much we value their contributions to Ohmkaram. These contributions are a part of fundraising for our organization. We hope to see more generous articles from our members next year.

It has been a great pleasure, working as a team for the Souvenir – Gitanjali, and thank you for giving us the opportunity!

Hope you enjoy reading your copy Gitanjali!

The Editorial Team,

Rajagopalan Unni,
Anjana Prayaga,
Vinay & Kavita Menon.

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Dear Ohmkaram family members,

It was an honor to have been able to serve as the President of Ohmkaram (an organization that was formed to promote awareness of Kerala Hindu culture, arts, and tradition through community participation) for the year 2019. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to serve as the Vice President for the year 2018 and the Secretary and Joint Secretary in the years 2014-2015. First and foremost, I would like to thank the Executive Committee for the huge support and guidance they gave me, without which it would have been impossible to lead the organization successfully. A big thank you to the Board of Directors and Audit Committee for the guidance and recommendations that were given. I would also like to thank all the members for giving me this opportunity to serve as the President. I want to personally thank all the members who dedicate their time to this organization and make all the events a success and all the new members who joined this year for deciding to be part of this great cultural organization. I thank the Souvenir Committee for their hard work in putting together Gitanjali which showcases the writing and artistic talents of members and promotes local businesses with advertisements.



We started this year with the 13th anniversary celebration which was held on January 27th, which included various cultural programs and activities for kids. The General body meeting held on the same day elected the new office bearers. Last year's Gitanjali was also released during the event. We had successful participation for the Vishu and Onam programs. As usual, almost all the kids and most of the adults were seen participating enthusiastically either for the on-stage performance or behind the scenes help. These celebrations help us keep our traditions and help the kids to understand and follow them. All the individuals who participate in these programs share a special bond after spending a lot of hours in preparation.

Last June was a busy month for Ohmkaram members. Ohmkaram Picnic was a major event that we had in June. It was a nice evening filled with fun, good food and outdoor games. We had a Special Program - Bharath Darshan, which was performed by Kalakshetra - The Temple of Arts from Michigan. We had the 3rd Kalakriti painting competition and art exhibition which is open to the whole St. Louis community and promotes art and artists.

St. Louis Vallomkali was another enjoyable event we had this year with lots of participation. Malayalam School of St. Louis continued its 13th year activities with a curriculum that gets updated every year to make the learning of Malayalam language for kids more enjoyable and easier to understand.

This year we had a kids group which was formed - Ohmkaram Engage, which will engage kids of Ohmkaram for volunteering and fun events. This year's School Supply Drive was mainly coordinated and handed over to The Little Bit Foundation by Ohmkaram Engage with the generous donations from members and non-members.

Ohmkaram is grateful to the Missouri Arts Council and Regional Arts Commission for giving us Grants to promote cultural programs that help us to bring Special programs to St. Louis.

I wish you and your family members a wonderful year ahead.

Sincerely,

**Sona Mukesh
President 2019**

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Mahatma Gandhi's influence during Vaikom Satyagraham

By **Sunil Krishnan**



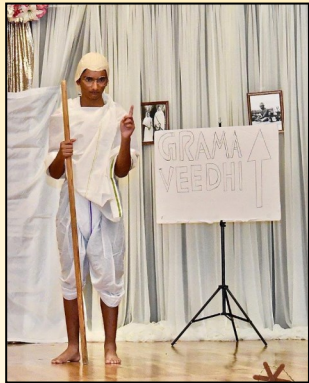
Every year on October 2nd, people in India and around the world celebrate Gandhi Jayanti, to mark the birth anniversary of the most prominent leader of the Indian Independence struggle. Gandhi Jayanti is a way of commemorating and remembering the teachings of Gandhi and spreading his message of peace and harmony forward.

In 2019, we celebrated the 150th Birth Anniversary of the honorific Mahatma, Bapu, Gandhiji, & Father of the Nation to all Indians.

Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.

Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhiji incorporated a non-violent resistance, taking the forefront of India's freedom struggle movement against the colonial British rule. His life and soul continue to animate



humanity transcending national and international boundaries prompting the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution to celebrate October 2nd as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Gandhiji initiated several non-violent crusades like the Satyagraha movement, Dandi March, Non-Cooperation movement during the freedom struggle against the British.

One such protest was the Vaikom Satyagraham in Kerala. Though ideologically similar, the protest was to eliminate untouchability & caste based segregation among the Hindus during that time.

The protest centered on Sri Mahadeva temple in Vaikom. The lower caste Hindus were not allowed to enter the temple or use public roads near the temple.



The lower caste Hindus began agitating and were supported by venerable Sage Sree Narayana Guru, his disciple Mahakavi Kumaran Asan, Muloor S Padmanabha Panicker and T K Madhavan.

Even though Gandhiji wasn't in the fore front of this agitation, his idealism and practical wisdom provided the framework. This movement focused on the eradication of untouchability, acceptance of human equality and tested Gandhiji's principle of non-violence.



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Ohmkaram members posing after Skit at Gandhi Center

Upon Gandhiji's insistence, a memorandum was submitted to Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai who helped pass the resolution to open all roads in the state of Travancore for traveling for people of all caste and creed.

Ohmkaram members had the opportunity to present this topic as a skit during the 150th birth year celebration held at Mahatma Gandhi Center. The idea was brought by Prasad Malamel and directed by Vimal Nair.

Pranav Menon performed as Mahatma Gandhi in the skit. Prashob Prabhakaran as Sree Narayana Guru, Raj Unni as Mahakavi Kumaran Asan, Pradeep Thampi as Muloor S Padmanabha Panicker, Sunil Punnachallil as T K Madhavan, Sudhir Kozhikkal as Neelakandan Namboothiri and Amritha Kossery as Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai played other characters. Arshaya Pillai and Hrithika Malugu were Rani's assistants. Prasad Malamel, Anish Pillai, Shyam Punnachallil, Devang Krishnan, Vaibhav Nair acted as protesters. Sahaj Vijayan, Rakesh Shekar and Sunil Krishnan were the Police officers with Meenakshi Kadungath as Mother India.

Notable Mentions:



K. Kelappan:

K. Kelappan, also known as 'Kerala Gandhi' was born in a small village called Muchukunnu in Koyilandy near Calicut. He took an active part in the freedom struggle and in Gandhian programmes like upliftment of the untouchables, propagation of Khadi & Hindi. He also fought for social reforms while opposing the British rule in India. He was also the Founder and President of the Nair Service Society.

A reformer and an Indian freedom fighter, he fought relentlessly against untouchability and caste-based discrimination. Along with K. Kumar, another Malayali freedom fighter, he became the earliest in Kerala to remove the addition to his name that implied caste-status.

As part of his determined fight against 'untouchability', K Kelappan played a leading role in the famous Vaikom and Guruvayur Satyagrahas. In 1930 he led Salt Satyagraha in Kerala from Calicut to Payyannur.

An educationist and journalist, after Indian independence he held various seats in Gandhian organizations. The 125th birth anniversary of this freedom fighter was celebrated in 2014 by 'Kerala Kshetra Samrakshna Samithi' (Kerala Temple Protection Council).

Temple Entry Proclamation:

The Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936 issued by Maharaja Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, abolished the caste discriminatory ban on lower castes from entering Hindu temples in the Princely State of Travancore, Kerala. This proclamation was a milestone & the first of its kind in Kerala as well as in British India.

After Indian independence in 1947 Universal temple entry was granted in Malabar & Kochi (Cochin) regions too.

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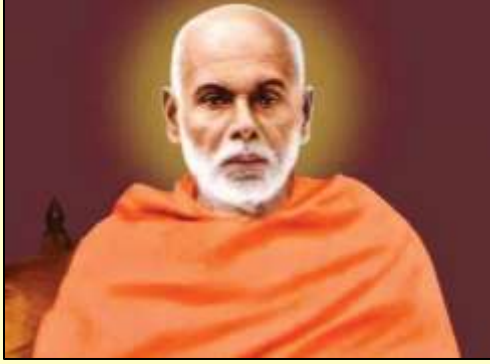
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Beliefs of Sree Narayana Guru

By **Sunil Krishnan**

Oru Jathi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam, Manushyanu (One Caste, One Religion, One God for All) is a popular saying in Kerala. The origins of this phrase are from a song 'Jhathinirnayam' written and composed by Sree Narayana Guru in 1914.



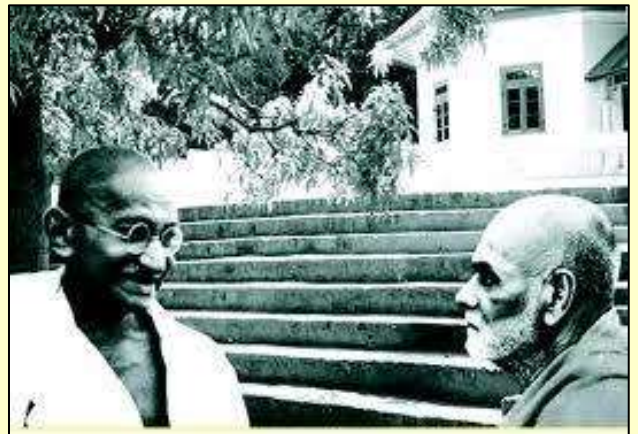
Sree Narayana Guru was born on August 28, 1855 to an Ezhava peasant, Madan Asan and his wife Kuttiyamma, in the village of Chempazhanthy near Thiruvananthapuram. At the age of 21, he went to central Travancore to study under a known Sanskrit scholar, Raman Pillai Asan, who taught him Vedas, Upanishads, as well as the literature and logical rhetoric of Sanskrit. He returned to his village in 1881 when his father was seriously ill, and started a village school and was called Nanu Asan. A year later, he married Kaliamma, but soon disassociated himself from the marriage to commence his public life as a social reformer.

Guru traveled through Kerala and Tamil Nadu and it was during these journeys, he met Chattampi Swamikal, a social and religious reformer, who introduced Guru to Ayyavu Swamikal from whom he learned meditation and yoga. During his wanderings he came to Aruvippuram, where he meditated for a while and during his stay there, he consecrated a piece of rock taken from the river, as the idol of Shiva, which has since become the Aruvippuram Shiva Temple. It was here, he founded the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) on May 15, 1903 with the efforts of Padmanabhan Palpu, better known as Dr. Palpu.

Guru shifted his base to Sivagiri, near Varkala in 1904 where he opened a school for children from the lower strata of the society and provided free education to them without considering their caste. He built the Sarada Mutt in Sivagiri in 1912.

Guru fought against Casteism that was prevalent during that time in Kerala. His focus was to cleanse the blemishes of Casteism in the Hindu religion. It was said that the Vaikom Satyagraham, a movement centered on Siva temple in Vaikom, started when he was stopped from passing through a road leading to the Vaikom temple. His disciples Kumaran Asan and Muloor S. Padmanabha Panicker, composed poems in protest of the incident. Another disciple T. K. Madhavan, was instrumental in getting Mahatma Gandhi involved in the movement.

It is said that during the movement, Gandhiji and Sree Narayana Guru had a difference of opinion about the modus operandi of the movement. Even though they agreed on the objective of the Vaikom Satyagraha, Gandhiji's suggestion was to gain access to the road, and then try for temple entry whereas Guru proposed to go ahead without stopping until temple entry was achieved. Later both agreed on the path forward and Guru provided the Vellore Mutt for the use of Satyagrahis and to set up head office.



Pic Credit: Spiderkerala.com

His last public function was in Pallathuruthy to attend the anniversary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam in 1927. Guru became ill and underwent treatment at various places. He died on September 20, 1928, at the age of 73.

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Halloween

By **Laxmi Kadungath**, 2nd grade

Once upon a time there was a boy named Cooper. Cooper was walking down the street at night. It was Halloween and he was scared. There were creepy sounds... OOOOOOOOH.. There were creepy faces. Ahhhhhh.. He yelled!!

Five minutes later... "What took you so long to get here?" Mom asked. "I was slow because I was scared," said Cooper. "I saw creepy faces with teeth sticking out. I heard creepy sounds too. I think I still hear them."

Cooper looked behind him. The shadow came closer and closer. He looked closely. And then he noticed it was uncle Vernon! He ran and hugged him.

I was trying to scare you Cooper, said Uncle Vernon. We both laughed. Ha ha ha ha ha.....

It's time for dinner, Mom yelled from the kitchen. "Well, we have something special today", Mom said.

"What is it?" Cooper asked. It's PUMPKIN PIE!! Dad shouted with excitement.

After dinner, Cooper, his friends and Uncle Vernon went trick-or-treating. Cooper and his friends got a lot of candy. When he got home Cooper didn't feel like eating candies since his tummy was full. After sometime they all went to sleep.

Unicorns in danger

By **Anvika Malugu**, 2nd grade

One day there were two sisters. Their names were Kate and Mylee. They were best friends in the whole entire world.

One day they went to summer camp. They never went to summer camp in their entire life. Finally, the day came to go to summer camp. They actually made a lot of friends, one of Kates's friend's names was Natalie.



In the first week, they went on a field trip to a forest. Both of them were really scared. They hadn't gone to a forest in so long, the first time they went, Kate was only 5 years old and Mylee was only 3 years old. They didn't know what to pack. They just packed almost everything.

When they got there, Kate and Mylee saw a shiny little thing, they didn't know what it was. They went a little closer, they saw two hooves, legs, a body and beautiful hair. Then they saw a... Unicorn! She was beautiful, her hair was rainbow with all sorts of jewels and glittery clips. They decided not to tell anyone. They didn't want to leave the unicorn, so they just stayed.

Kate thought the unicorn didn't know how to speak so she just used hand signals. Eventually, they found out that she does speak English. Her voice was so beautiful like her. Her name was Amelia, she told Kate and Mylee she came here because her family was in danger, there was a fire coming in only 5 days!

The sisters didn't know what to do so they just asked the unicorn to clone both of them. She did as she was told. Then the unicorn took them to her village and they saw what was going to make the fire. It was the trolls that were

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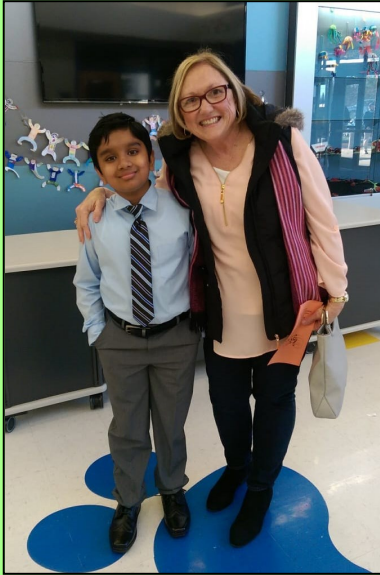


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going to make the fire. Kate and Mylee just asked politely to the trolls, not to do this, the trolls agreed. They had saved the day! Amelia said she would grant them three wishes each. One of Kate's and Mylee's wishes was that all the unicorns will always be safe.



An Important person in my Life

By **Devang Krishnan**, 5th grade

As I was heading home, I know Sue will be there waiting for me. She never misses my birthday. Sure enough, she was there as I got off the bus. She hugged me and wished me Happy Birthday.

Sue Jackson was my Parents as Teacher educator, when I was little. She used to come to my home once in 3 weeks to teach me and play with me. She has a special bond with my family and is like grandma to me and my brother. She calls Mom and checks about us. She brings gifts for me and my brother on our birthdays and Christmas. She came to my school to cheer me during my music concert.

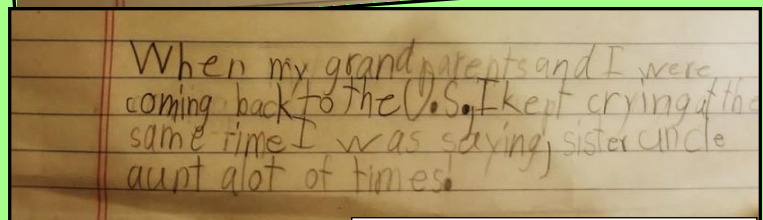
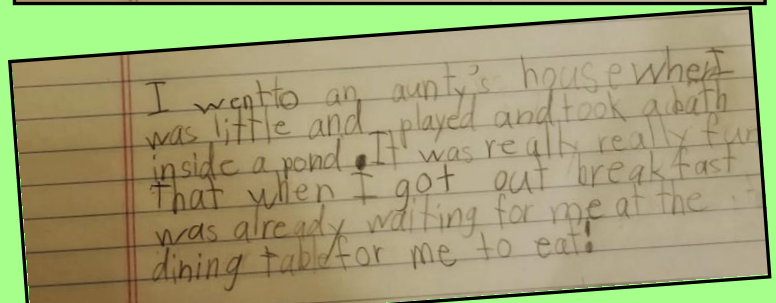
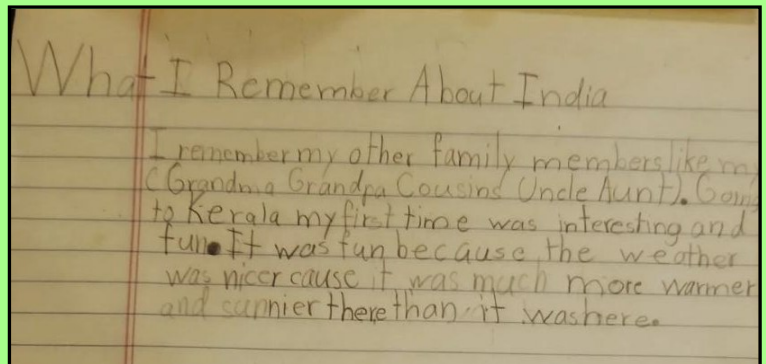
She is a great coach and cheerleader, encouraging me on my challenges and achievements. I always wish her a happy and healthy life.

Haunted House on Halloween

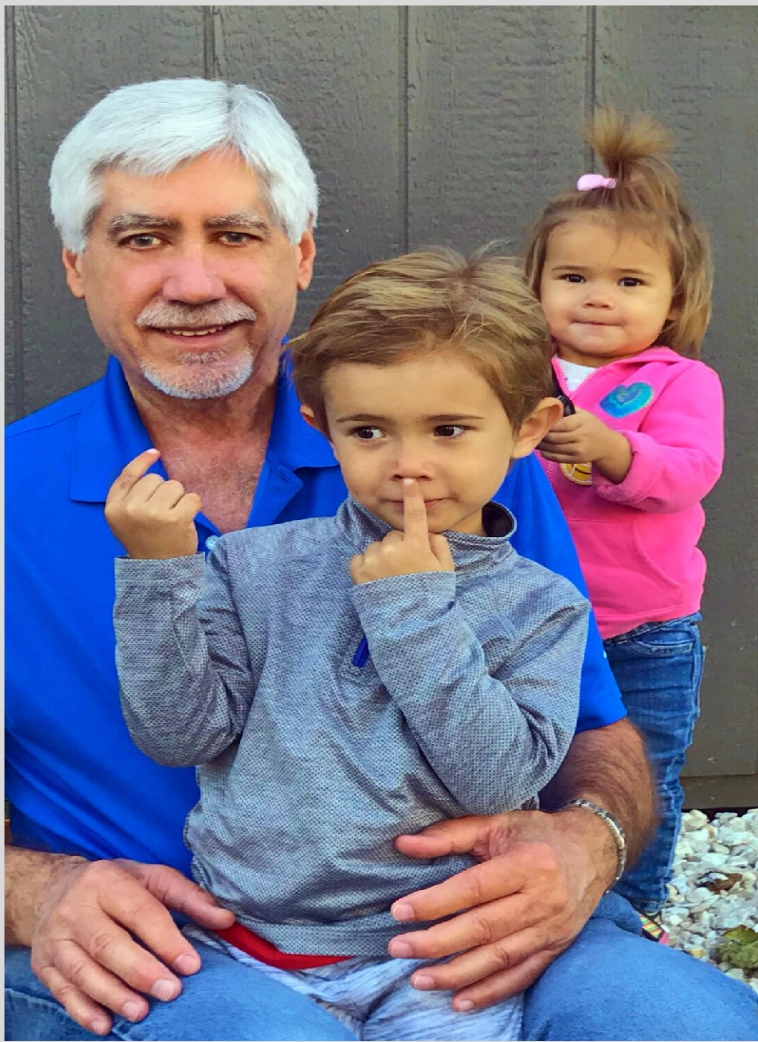


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Rama Alakkassery, 2nd grade



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Sita Swayamvaram: How Lord Rama saved the Day!

By Kavita Menon

King Janak was the ruler of the kingdom of Mithila. He had 2 daughters - Sita & Urmila. Sita was a divine child. King Janak found her in a field while he was tilling the earth after a Pooja. As Sita and Urmila grew up, the daughters of King Janak's younger brother, Mandhavi and Shruthikrithi were often their playmates. Time passed and all four Princesses grew up into beautiful young women.

Soon King Janak started getting worried about their weddings. He was especially anxious about Sita because of her unusual birth. Sita had grown up into a soft-spoken gentle person.

She showed a firmness of mind and an understanding well beyond her age.

King Janak decided to organize a massive Swayamvar for Sita. He invited Kings and Princes from all Kingdoms, requesting them to compete for his daughter's hand in marriage. Among many people King Janak also invited King of Lanka, Ravana.

He laid out a challenge to all contestants – they must lift Lord Shiva's bow 'Pinaka' and successfully string it. Anyone who completes the challenge will end up marrying Sita. In truth the bow was very heavy. It had been handed to an ancestor of King Janak by none other than Lord Shiva.

Hearing about the challenge & to glimpse 'Pinaka', Sage Vishwamitra brought along Lord Rama & his brother Lakshmana who were staying with him that time, to Mithila. Knowing that both Rama and Lakshmana were the Princes of Ayodhya Kingdom, King Janak invited them for Swayamvar as well.

Among the first guests arriving in Mithila for the Swayamvar was Ravana. There were rumors that Ravana was the ultimate devotee of Lord Shiva and only he could manage to pick the bow and pull the bowstrings.

Sita was already aware of Ravana's first wife Mandodiri and had heard about his evil nature. She worried if the rumors would come true. So, the night before Swayamvar, she went up to her mother Queen Sunaina, and expressed her fears. Queen Sunaina advised her to visit Gauri temple and pray to Goddess Parvati to bless her.

On the day of the competition, all guests assembled. Each of the contestants tried their best to pick up the sacred Bow of Lord Shiva. But it wouldn't budge. The Kings and Princes tried unsuccessfully till they had to give up.

Soon it was Ravana's turn. He came marching arrogantly, very confident of winning. He walked towards the bow & almost lifted it, but soon lost his grip, due to which the bow fell back on the platform. Still he had done better than others, atleast managing to pick up the bow! If no more contestants stepped forward to try, Ravana would be declared winner for Sita's hand!

King Janak asks if there was anyone else who would like to participate. And it is then that Lord Rama rose. He walked towards the platform, and folded his hands to pay respect to the mighty bow. Then very effortlessly, he lifted it.

In the stunned silence that followed, everyone watched in awe, as the young handsome prince from Ayodhya placed the bow vertically on the ground, bending it a little from the top to string it. And while he was stringing the bow, it accidentally broke into two halves. Rama is announced the winner! He has saved Sita from marrying the evil Ravana!

Lakshmana & Sage Viswamitra beamed with pride as King Janak stood speechless. Sita was overjoyed. Among the chorus of the spectators cheering for the youth from Ayodhya who had humbled them all, Sita garlanded her husband Rama. And thus it was that the Prince of Ayodhya married the Princess of Mithila in the presence of the mighty Ravana.

As no one until then as per the condition of the challenge, was able to pull up the bowstrings, Ravana had emerged as winner, until Lord Rama arrived at the Swayamvar and saved the day for Devi Sita!



Should All Kids Be Put On Screen Time?

By **Hritika Malugu**, 6th grade

Every day, majority of kids are stuck on their phones for seven hours a day. This is a big problem in many aspects. Kids are getting eye problems and infections. Also, there is an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and high cholesterol which can lead to bigger problems regarding health. How can we solve this problem that is getting worse due to technological advancements?

Screentime. Screentime is an idea that many kids absolutely HATE. Including me. To have to only spend a certain amount of time on a phone or device - what a pain! Even though this idea isn't very popular or appealing, can it help us as kids limit our time on electronics?

The real question is: What is the genuine cost of having a wonderful time on your phone? According to CBS News, "Children are also exposed to unhealthy food advertising while on their devices. In addition, the blue light from screens can hinder their ability to fall asleep, and lack of sleep may contribute to obesity risk." This means that even commercials and advertisements can cause damage to children and their bodies. Imagine how much of your life you are spending on devices getting exposed to blue light.

If you think texting people 24/7 is that bad, see what The Telegraph has to say about video games: "Playing "shooter" video games weakens the brains of young people and puts them at greater risk of dementia in later life, new research suggests." You may think that this means that you can play other "non-violent" video games, but it will cause almost the same amount of damage.

As we think about this major problem, are we really helping society develop? I think that we aren't. And in fact, we are making society even worse by developing new phones, video games, and devices. Many people can argue that teens absolutely need phones, but do they really? If they do, how were the teens, before the 1990s, able to become successful?

Why have phones become so popular? Well, there are many reasons. Some people use it as a way to show off to others, which makes them feel good as a person. Very few people use it for safety, which is probably the most reasonable way to use a phone.

Next time you hop on a device, think about what you are doing to yourself. Do the costs outweigh the benefits?

Why Organic Food Is Better For You?

By **Arshya Pillai**, 7th grade

Organic food is worth the cost because it is healthier for people. The definition of organic food is food especially grown without pesticides, fertilizers, and hormones. The conservation of soil and water by organic food helps enrich the environmental quality for future generations.



There are health benefits from organic food. For starters, organic food has no pesticides. This means that organic food can prevent illness from pesticides.

Here are the most contaminated non-organic foods. They are: peaches, apples, bell-peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, grapes, spinach, lettuce and potatoes. These non-organic products can infect a person with many harmful chemicals. So, a person should go organic for these products. Organic food also has more nutrients and more weight benefits than non-organic food. A study was tested on rats that had only been fed organic food vs rats that were fed only non-organic food. The rats that were fed organic food had lower weight, less body fat and stronger immune systems. Studies have shown that organic milk is seventy-five percent in beta carotene, which is a predecessor of vitamin A. Organic milk, has fifty percent more vitamin E than non-organic milk. Vitamin E helps the immune system get stronger immunity, less belly fat, a less risk of type two diabetes and healthier arteries. Organic meat has 28 more omega-3s and has important fatty acids that are connected to decreasing heart disease, depression, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and inflammation.

Organic food also has environmental benefits. Growing organic food creates less greenhouse gas emissions because it does not contain any pesticides. According to the Food & Agriculture Organization, organic farming harms the environment 60% less than non-organic farming. Because organic farming creates less greenhouse gas emissions, it means that organic farming has 20% less climate footprint.

Another benefit of organic food is that it could help cut down on world hunger. Farmers and agent development agencies are suspecting that organic food could possibly suppress world hunger. Non-organic yields, or amount of produce, are 20% higher than organic yield. A scientist named Bill Liebhardt from the University of California has researched and said that non-organic yields are a little higher than organic yields. However, in more countries with a higher poverty rate, the difference between the percentages of non-organic and organic yields vanishes. In India, a study was held and included 1,000 farmers farming 3,200 hectares. In that study they discovered that organic cotton, wheat, chili, and soy yields were 20% higher than non-organic yields.

And even if the prices of organic food are more expensive, people continue to buy more and more organic food each year. The organic food sales have risen considerably since 1990. The increasing sales are showing that people are beginning to realize that organic food is healthier. Organic food will benefit their

bodies much more than non-organic food. So, organic food is worth the cost because it's healthier for people.



My Dad and Me

By **Meenakshi Kadungath**, 6th grade

I opened my eyes and squinted. Everything slowly came into focus. I curled up, cold, despite the blanket and stared out of the window. My room in DC was upstairs and I had a perfect view outside. As I looked outside the window, I could just see the wind blowing. The trees waved as if shivering in

the cold.

I suddenly sat up. I remembered, it was Christmas day! I hopped out of bed and raced down the stairs. I looked at the Christmas tree and the heaping amount of gifts wrapped in bright, colored paper. I was the only one awake, beside my uncle who was sleeping on the couch. I smiled. I could have some time alone without anyone disturbing me. The lights were already on. So I tiptoed to the bookshelf, grabbed the book *Magnus Chase* and settled down on the couch.

"I'm just going to point out that this is the *Make Way for Ducklings*," I read to myself.

"Do you think that's a coincidence?" Blitz insisted "*Nine ducks, nine worlds?*"

"Good morning, Meenakshi", someone said. I looked up, relaxing when I saw my uncle was awake.

"Hi! Merry Christmas!" I whispered excitedly. I continued to read when I heard a crying sound from the room that my aunt and uncle slept in. "Let's see if they're awake" I decided, heaving myself off the couch. I tiptoed into their room, opening the door as silently as I could. Three pairs of eyes stared at me. I grinned and launched myself on the bed. We played around for a bit, then my aunt settled for a story.

My cousins were as reckless as my sister. Vishnu, who was one and a half, smiled at me, showing his growing tooth. I smiled back at him, and he buried his face in his hands, shyly. I fought the urge to squeeze him, but I still hugged him. I could not help it! He looked so cute. Nandini, who was six and a half shoved her way through, wanting attention.

"Come on you guys, get up!" I giggled as Nandini pouted. "I'm going to read until you get up".

Nandini jumped off the bed and ran to the bathroom to brush her teeth. I got to my feet and went to the living room. I collapsed on the couch and read eagerly, wanting to read as much as I can before Nandini and Vishnu came back. The floor cracked so I looked up, finding my dad.

"Good morning", I said.

“Hello”, he replied. “Get up! It’s eight o’clock in the morning! We’re going to the Lincoln Memorial, remember?” I groaned. “Lakshmi is coming with us too”, said my dad. I sighed and got up just as my cousins and my sister, Lakshmi, barrelled into me, knocking me out of balance. I laughed.

As I ate breakfast, my mind wandered back into the time I went to a baseball game. I was really not into sports and I hated watching them. I remembered the time when my dad, my sister, and I went to the sports game. I remembered how much I didn’t want to go, but my dad made me. I went with my dad unwillingly, watched the game and I liked it. I realized that the thing I had been dreading turned out to be a thing I loved. It would always be an adventure I would never forget.

My mind snapped back to the present. I laughed as my younger cousin launched his food at the ground. After breakfast, I got ready. I brushed the tangles out of my wavy black hair. I chose a shirt that is not worthy of going outside, making it obvious that I did not want to go. Unfortunately, no one noticed my shirt. I put on the lightest jacket I could find so that I could just say that I’m cold as an excuse.



I opened the door and the cold air rushed past me suddenly, as if eager to get into the house which was nice and cozy. I took a deep breath of cold, fresh air. The sky was serene, but I was feeling peevish. I would rather stay inside reading, than out here in the cold!

I opened the door to the car and got inside. I shivered. My dad and sister burst into the car and we were off. My dad lightened the mood with his jokes. I just glared at him from the back seat and refused to say anything. My dad saw me glare at him and offered his hand from the front seat, looking at me in the mirror. I looked out of the window, my nose in the air.

Once we got there, we walked to the Lincoln Memorial. I shivered again.

“Dad, I’m cold. Can we go home?” I asked, shivering violently, even though I wasn’t that cold. I breathed on my hands which were actually freezing. Lakshmi was smart to bring gloves and a hat. I shivered once more.

“Of course not! You can take my jacket if you want”, said my Dad. I knew my dad won’t fall for silly tricks like that, but it was worth a try. We arrived at the Lincoln Memorial. My dad started jogging.

“Race ya!” he said and ran up the stairs. My sister followed. I groaned, and then took off. In the light sweater, I ran swiftly, surprised at how good it felt. My legs felt a wonderful stretch, as if I’ve never run before, yet I knew how. I veered left and right, to avoid jostling people. I reached the top of the stairs, barely even panting. My dad and my sister were waiting for me. The brisk weather prevented me from getting hot, so my body temperature felt just right. We went inside.

Suddenly, I stopped short.

“Whoa!” I breathed. There he was. Abraham Lincoln, sitting on his enormous chair.

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"It's picture time!" said my dad, holding up his phone. I went over to the huge statue and smiled. I didn't want to admit it, but I was having a great time. Next, we took a selfie.

"Race you!" I said, then shot forward. I was followed by my dad and sister. Of course, I was first down the steps because my dad was slowing down his pace so Lakshmi could at least be second. I cartwheeled over to the square shaped pond. The Washington monument looked beautiful. The pond sparkled in the sunlight. I posed.

"Come on, It's picture time!" I said, as Lakshmi came up to pose. My dad snapped several pictures of me and my sister, and then it was my turn. I took some perfect pictures of my dad and my sister then Lakshmi took a few pictures of me and my dad.

"Come on, it's time to go home!" said my Dad. I whined. Just when I was starting to have fun, we had to leave. My dad grinned triumphantly.

"I thought you wanted to go home and read!"

I rolled my eyes at him. We walked to the car, and then drank the hot chocolate that he brought. I hummed to the music. Before I knew it, we were home! I raced to the house, wanting to get into the warm house. I opened the door and shrugged out of my sweater and my boots. My little cousin waddled up toward me, smiling his huge, cute smile. I scooped him up.

"Hey there", I said, cuddling him.

"Come on, let's eat lunch!" said Nandini. I smiled at her, and then sat next to her at the table. As I ate the delicious meal, I realized that I just had a blast. An adventure. I realized that even small adventures are impactful. And it definitely won't end here.

Should Kids Get Paid for Doing Chores?

By **Dhruv Menon**, 7th grade

If you are a parent you probably have had second thoughts about giving your kids money for doing chores.



In this essay, I will be telling you why I don't think kids should get paid for doing chores. I will give you 2 reasons why it is not a good idea. If you think that giving your children money for doing chores is a good idea, it might seem like you don't want your child to be hardworking. My parents told me the reason they wouldn't give me money for doing chores is that they want me to be hardworking like they were at my age. So on with the essay (If I haven't convinced you yet I hope my essay does).

"Doing chores isn't the same as having a paying job", is a quote from an article in the National Geographic magazine. What this means is that kids could get used to doing much less work and still getting money which could make them think they can earn money easily, and might make them think that they do not have to work as hard as other people.

Continued on Page 33...

ANNIVERSARY



VISHU



KALAKRITI

A large collage of children's artwork and photos from the Kalakriti exhibition. The top features the title "KALAKRITI" in large red letters. Below it, a group of adults and children pose with their art. The collage includes various paintings: a tiger, a woman, a Buddha, a fish, a house, a landscape, and a "Save Mother Earth" message. There are also photos of children working at tables and a large group of children sitting on the floor in a hall.

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Ohmkaram
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National Geographic also says, “If parents pay you for doing chores you might decide later in life to take a week off & think it is ok to get not paid for that week.” So pretty much in the future, you might decide not to do a project for your job because you don’t really need that money at that time which could get you fired for not doing your work! So if you give them money for chores and they skip a week then it could give them the idea that “Oh I don’t want money right now, so I’ll just skip this chore.”

So acknowledging the other side of the argument does give some pretty good information like “Adults who did chores as a kid will be successful in their career.” But this is only effective if the kid learns how to manage his/her own money very well so that he/she doesn't make bad choices with it.

Another theory is “I will learn to organize my time better to get everything done.” But time management is only effective with kids who actually care about their grades and school. Even though paying your kids to do chores might teach them some life lessons it also could make them think that money can come very easily to them.

In conclusion, I think that kids should not get paid for doing chores - to me it just doesn’t sound like the right thing to do. For example people like Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, Satya Nadela (and many more) would never have gotten where they have without being hardworking. There are millions of people who have to go out into the world and earn money to make ends meet by working two jobs, becoming common laborers, and even straight-up begging people to help them live! So in my opinion by giving kids money for doing chores would teach them to be less hardworking, and infuse negative qualities in them. That’s why I think it is a straight-up insanely-bad idea!



So now that you have heard what I think about this topic, do you think kids should really get paid for doing chores? Will it make them better people? Will it help them work harder? Parents, what are your opinions on this? Do you agree or disagree with me?

Why Children in Middle School should have Phones?

By **Omkaar Alakkassery**, 8th grade

It is in middle school that many kids start making the seemingly outrageous request for a phone. Oftentimes parents will dismiss this idea saying that a phone is completely unnecessary at this age and that children will only get spoiled by the exposure to the internet and will become sucked into their devices. This is actually not completely true. Phones have many uses even at this age such as peace of mind and security for both the child and the parent.

In Middle School many children sign up for after school clubs and other activities and start going out with friends more often. Whenever this happens it can be very useful to have a way to contact the children such as to simply say “ I’m coming to pick you up” as this communication will make sure the kid is ready and expecting you to be there or the opposite “ I am running a little late.” This can really come in handy

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after school when they are finished with their activities and now they don't have to worry about when they will be picked up because you texted them.

Phones can also provide a confidence boost to children whenever they are out with friends or alone. They



will always have the assurance that they can contact someone if anything were to happen. Phones can also be handy in an emergency. Once I was stuck outside my house because I had forgotten my key and therefore couldn't get in. I would have sat there and panicked because I knew that my parents were busy at work and wouldn't be home for some time. This had happened on a cold day in December so I couldn't just stand and wait for an hour for my parents to arrive. BUT luckily I had my phone and it saved me that day. Within a few seconds of the original shock that I had forgotten my key I called up my mom and told her the news. She let me know that she wouldn't be home for a while so I asked if I could go to a friend's house and stay there until she came. She said sure, and so this situation which at first seemed dreadful had suddenly become much better. I had been picked up from the freezing cold and was on the way to my friend's house in five minutes. If I hadn't had a phone in that situation, I would have probably have had to stand outside in the cold and wait for my mom to get home. Instead I got to spend time with friends and went home when mom came to pick me up.

Another question you probably have is why should my child get a phone so early, why not wait until high school? Well, high school is a very important part of the child's life and they will have many things to focus on such as their studies. The whole point of giving the children a phone earlier is so they can get used to it. Whenever we get something new, especially if it is something as important as a phone which can provide access to the vast internet, we tend to have an obsession to it for a while. So for a period of nearly a year after I got it I had been using my phone for much longer than I do now, mostly spending time on the various new social media and games - that I had discovered - came with having a phone. After that period of time my usage dramatically dropped I started using my phone mostly for texting and keeping in contact with people and the occasional scroll through YouTube or Instagram. Having this short period of discovery and exploration of the new phone in middle school is much better than having it in high school because in middle school there is much less pressure on the kids and less work than compared to high school.

Another reason is that it gives us time to develop knowledge on how we should responsibly use our phones. This all adds up to less focus on social media and the internet - which enables us to focus more on our lives, studies and activities. This is what we should focus on in high school.

In conclusion it is good for a middle school student to have a phone because it can be very useful for communication with friends or with parents. Being given a phone early can also help children learn how to use it and manage their time with it well.



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Life Story of Sister Nivedita

Lakshita Senthil, 8th grade

Nivedita was born as Margaret Elizabeth Noble in Dunganon, Ireland on October 28, 1867 as the eldest daughter of Samuel Richmond and Mary Isabel. Her father and grandfather inspired her honest, religious, patriotic, and political personality. When she was 17, she taught at different schools around Ireland and England, opening her own schools later in her life. As she helped people regardless of their religious beliefs, she received opposition from the Church. So, when she sent a letter to the local newspaper she discovered the power of her pen, becoming a prolific column writer.

She met Swami Vivekananda (a world-famous Sanyasi) in the November of 1895 as he was explaining the Vedanta philosophy in London. His messages “We seek neither misery nor happiness but freedom alone” and “Service to humanity is the way to discover the divinity in one’s self” allowed her to attain peace within her heart. She then became extremely interested in the Vedanta

and Buddhism. Swami, seeing her achievements in education and politics, realized she was the person he was looking for to uplift the down trodden people and women in India. In the March of 1898, Swami arranged a public meeting to introduce her to the people of India where she met the Sarada Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna. On March 25, 1898, Swami gave Margaret the name Nivedita (means “Dedicated to God”) when he initiated her into the vow of Brahmacharya and converted her to Hinduism. In 1899, when Calcutta was ravaged with plague she cleaned drains and streets; she taught women that the value of an act, which is our duty, is as important as the result. Later, Swami promoted Nivedita as a Naishtika Brahmacharini and gave her the title “Sanyasini”.

As she created schools for girls of all ages, she realized that her task was not just woman making, but nation making.

Many reasons embittered her against the British. Nivedita attacked Viceroy Lord Curzon for the Universities Act of 1902 and the Division of Bengal of 1905. After Swami Vivekananda’s passing away in 1902, Nivedita resigned from the Ramakrishna Mission (Indian socio-religious organization) due to the issue of her active participation in politics. In 1905, in the Indian National Congress, she mediated the arguments between the Moderates and the Extremists, introduced the “Bhagava Dhwaj” as the national flag, supported the Swadeshi movement, and introduced “Vandematram” as her school prayer song. Nivedita attracted youngsters by an inspiring message, “By no means be found sleeping when the cry comes for battle”.

Nivedita strived to combine spirituality and modern science. She morally supported scientist Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose for his research and helped many writers, including Thirrumala Chari, publish magazines and journals. She wrote many books such as “Kali the mother”, “Master as I saw him”, “Web of Indian life”, and “Cradle tales of Hinduism”.

Enormous work strain eventually took her life through an attack of blood dysentery. During her last days she got absorbed in formless Divinity and left her possessions to the Ramakrishna Mission. 43 years old, she breathed her last words—“The ship is sinking but I shall see the sunrise”— on October 13, 1911 in Darjeeling. Her life is a personification of service and compassion, and a symbol of devotion and sacrifice.



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Segway Ninebot Kickstart

Vaibhav Nair, 7th grade

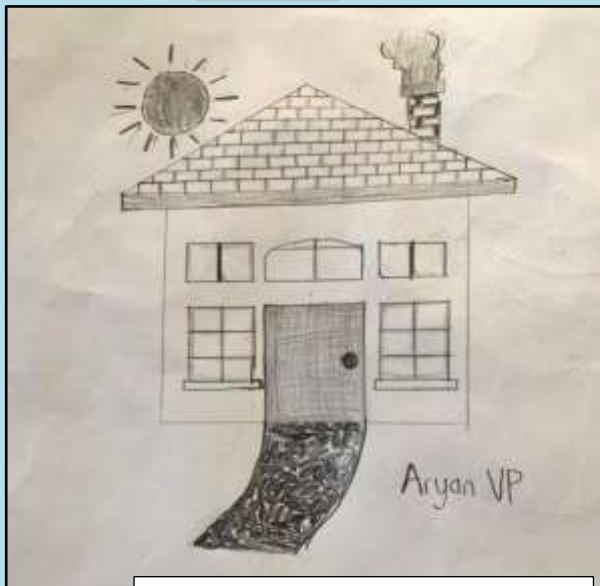
Have you seen the Mall cops cruising inside the Malls in the cool Segway? I was amazed to see that and always wanted to have one similar to that. Few months back I got a Skating board - Rib Stik as a gift. It was so much fun but I fell down several times in the uneven driveway and sidewalk. Then I saw the Ninebot kick scooter at Costco and it was a cross between a Segway and Scooter. What's more, the risk of falling down was less. I looked at the box - it was electric as well.



My parents bought me the Segway Ninebot scooter from Costco. I could now go to the Library that was 2 miles away, to the Park, to the playground and to friends who stay close by. I could also go by myself to the Volleyball practice without having to depend on my parents. After we purchased the scooter, the first question I had was if it would go uphill easily? The box said it would go up a 15% incline. But, what is a 15% incline? I knew that the road taking me to the Library was steep but I did not know how steep it was. Would it go? Only way to find out is to try it myself. I first thought I would test it in a less steep road, the road that goes towards the Park. There are several factors that determine this - the actual grade/climb angle of the road, the weight of the rider, the battery charge left on the scooter to name a few. It is also important to understand how electric scooters work and how torque helps the motor perform better. The battery and the motor have a direct impact on the performance of the scooter. The more powerful they are, the better the performance. Another factor is the grip of the tire. This scooter is a kick scooter, meaning you have to give a slight push before holding the throttle down. The moment you kick-start your bike, the crankshaft is prompted to rotate, which pushes the piston against the piston head. This builds up and when you hold the throttle, the scooter goes. Though the scooter can go up to 15 miles/hour I feel the scooter is safe as it has a dual brake system - electrical and mechanical brakes.

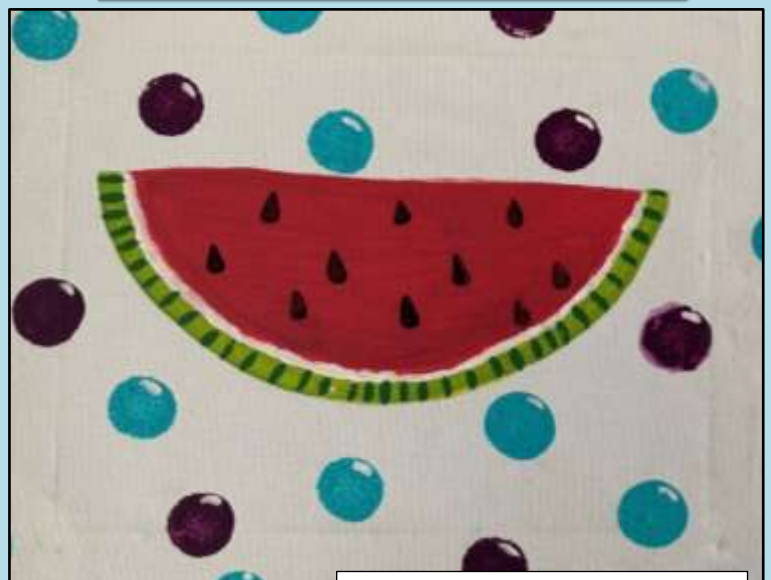
After riding on this Segway Ninebot for over a couple of weeks, I am happy with its battery, water resistance and speed. I am not very happy with its going uphill. I am going to try it more when the weather gets better. Please feel free to check with me if you plan to buy it for someone you love.

Home



By Aryan Valsapradeep, 7th grade

The Wonderful Watermelon



By Hritika Malugu, 6th grade

This Conscious Universe

By Dr. Sudhirdas Prayaga

In this article I am attempting to describe the nature of reality according to Hindu philosophy. According to Vedanta (Hindu philosophy) the whole universe is or encompassed by a single supreme consciousness (other poor translations are god, spirit or being), *the Brahman*.

God is omnipresent and everything in the universe (*Isavasya Upanishad-1*).

*isavasyam idam sarvam yat kinca jagatyam jagat
tena tyaktena bhunjitha magrdhah kasya sviddhanam*

ഈശ്വരസം ഇദം സർവ്വം യത്കിഞ്ച ജഗത്യാം ജഗത്
തേനത്യക്തേന ഭുഞ്ജിതാഹ മാഗ്രിഹത കശ്യസ്യധനം

There is nothing else in the universe other than God (*Gita 7.7*).

*Mathaha paratharam naanydhu kinchidhasthi dhanamjaya
Mayi sarvamitham protham suthre manigana eva*

മതഹ പരതരം നാന്യത് കിഞ്ചിതസ്തി യനഞ്ചയ
മയി സർവമിദം പ്രോതം സൂത്രേ മണിഗണ ഏവ

God is within and outside of everything in this universe (*Isavasya Upanishad-5*).

*tadejati tannaijati taddüre taduvantike
tadantarasya sarvasya tadusarvasyasya bāhyataù*

തദേജതി തന്നൈജതി തദൂരേ തദ്വന്തികേ
തദന്തരസ്യ സർവ്വസ്യ തദുസർവ്വസ്യാസ്യ ബാഹ്യത

God is within you and without you (*Gita 13.16*).

*Bhahirandhscha bhoothanamacharam charam eva cha
Sushmathvathadhavigneyam doorastham chanandhike cha thad*

ബഹിരന്തശ്ച ഭൂതനാമചരം ചരം ഏവ ച
സൂഷ്മത്വതഥവിജ്ഞേയം ദൂരസ്ഥം ചാന്തികേ ച തദ്

Thus, unlike the God of the Abrahamic religions where god is independent and separate from his creations, Hindus believe that God is not separate from oneself or the universe (the subject and object are the same).

According to Hindu philosophy, the observable universe or the *Prakruthi* is made of 8 building blocks (*Gita 7.4*).

*Bhoomiaapo nalovaayu khammano budhir evacha
Ahamkaaram ithiyame bhinna prakrithi ashtadha*

ഭൂമിരപോനലോ വായു ഖമ് മനോ ബുദ്ധി ഏവ ച
അഹംകാര ഇതീയമേ ഭിന്നപ്രകൃതിരാഷ്ടത

These are *bhoomi* or solid, *aapaha* or liquid, *vaayu* or gas, *analaha* or energy, *kham* or space, *manaha* or mind, *buddhi* or intellect and *ahamkaaram* or self-knowledge (or self-awareness). This self-awareness, which is distinct from our consciousness, is destructible and last only during our lifetime. While our consciousness is part of the supreme consciousness and is indestructible and eternal.

Vedanta considers universe to be made of three aspects, *sthulam* (macro), *sukshmam* (micro) and *Karanam* (causal). *Sthulam* is the visible universe we know, *Sukshmam* is the atoms and other particle of which the Universe is made off and *Karanam* is the consciousness which encompasses everything in the universe and the reason for everything. There is no beginning or end in terms of time, space, etc. There are the cycles of creation and destruction of the physical universe, but the supreme consciousness has no change and is eternal.

The self of our self-reference is due to a tangled hierarchy, but our consciousness is the consciousness of the Being that is beyond the subject-object split.

– Amit Goswami, *The Self-Aware Universe*

Do You Have A Stable Spine?

By Dr. Suresh Krishnan MD

Having a stable spine is important as we grow older when aches and pains start creeping in. I would recommend some simple tests you do at home by yourself and check if you can pass them. Do not attempt if you have issues already because these tests can exacerbate your condition if they are pre-existing. If you get significant pain while performing these tests you should stop immediately. You are performing these tests at your own risk.

PREPARING FOR THE TEST: You will need the help of an assistant and a timer.

CAUTION: If you experience significant pain with any of the following maneuver **STOP** right away.

TESTING THE UPPER NECK. The neck has some muscles called the scalenes which help stabilize the upper cervical spine. The first test is simple. Check if you can raise arms out to the sides, all the way above the head. If you can do so easily, it is good. If you have difficulty in lifting your arms above the head, have someone hold your head firmly so that it does not move. If you try to raise your arms again in the same way and you find it easier and less painful then you might have an unstable upper cervical spine. This means the muscles and ligaments stabilizing your upper neck may not be strong enough.

Scoring: if you have no problem lifting your arms all the way then you have no issues. Give yourself a 3. If you have some difference but can lift your arms all the way up then give yourself 2. If you feel a difference, and can get your arms above the shoulders but not all the way up, your score is one. If you can't get your arms above the shoulder level you score a 0.



TESTING YOUR DEEP NECK FLEXORS: The second neck test is a bit more challenging. A researcher from Australia developed this test. Lie down on a flat firm surface. Have a timer and have someone monitor you. Tuck your chin in or flex your head all the way to the chest. Then lift your head 2-3 inches. If you can hold the head up for 38 seconds (men) 29 seconds (women) you pass the test. The clock stops if you lose any degree if you are unable to maintain the position then your deep neck flexors are weak. When these muscles are weak patients often report headaches and pain. If you have significant pain stop right away. Write down your timed score. You will be able to tell the difference after treatment and know if the treatment helped you or not.

TESTING YOUR NECK EXTENSORS: The third neck test was developed by an American Physical therapist. You will have to lie face down on a table with the head and neck off the edge of the table so that you flex your neck freely. The test is to be able to hold the head up in a neutral position with face parallel to the floor so that the neck and head are in a straight line. You should be able to hold this position for at least 20 seconds. If, you are able, to do so without pain and without flexing or extending the neck your neck extensors are normal. If you lifted your head up your deep extensors are weak and if you bent your head forward your superficial extensors are weak. You must write down the time you were able to hold the neutral position for future reference.

TESTING THE SHOULDER / ROTATOR CUFF MUSCLES: Wondering what's the purpose of testing the shoulder muscles when you want to check the spine? The shoulder is linked to the neck by muscles that connect them together and the stability of the neck spine is also tested by the strength of the rotator cuff muscles. This is how the test goes. In the standing position turn your thumb inwards so that it points to the body. Raise arm to the shoulder level and repeat for 10 times. Next bring your arm back with your thumb still pointing to the body and then bring the arm to the shoulder level 10 times. Repeat the same after moving the arm to the front for 10 times. Note if you have pain or fatigue with this. If you have some fatigue but can finish the test, you are most likely normal there. If you are unable to finish the test due to fatigue you will need to strengthen the muscles of the rotator cuff.

Scoring: If you can finish the test with some fatigue you score 3/3. If you can finish with pain and fatigue you score 2/3. If you cannot finish due to pain or fatigue you score 1/3. If you can't do this at all you score 0/3.

CORE- ABDOMINALS: This test was developed by the Japanese and are 2 stability tests for the lower back. Begin by lying down face up. Bend your knees and hips to 90 degrees. Next flex your neck and bring your chin to the chest. Men, if you can hold this position for 3 minutes you pass. Women if you can hold the position for 1.5 minutes or 85 seconds you pass. This will test your flexor muscles of the abdomen and also if you experience pain, it may be due to disc being compressed while the spine is flexed and the body protects the disc by not allowing too much pressure to be exerted on the weakened disc.

CORE- LOW BACK EXTENSORS: For this test you must lie face down on a firm pillow placed under your abdomen. Have a firm pillow with enough height to keep your chest off the floor. You should be able to keep your neck flexed. Men, you will pass if you can hold this position for 208 seconds. Women you will pass if you can hold this position for 124 seconds. If you have pain with extension, you may be suffering from spinal stenosis or lumbar facet arthritis.

Scoring: Write down your timed score.

HIP/ KNEE STABILITY: There is a single test for the Hip and Knee stability because they are both linked together. The test is done as follows. Stand and balance on one foot, (the side you want to test). Now you perform a single leg squat while trying to keep your body as straight as possible. If you are stable for one half of the knee bend and coming back, up you pass the test on that side. If you tilt your body to that side and or your knee moves inward, you fail the test. Which means you have an unstable knee or hip. If you can't perform half the squat, you fail as well.

Scoring: write down how many seconds you can hold in the position for each side.

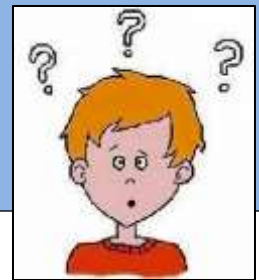
ANKLE TEST: This test is pretty much the same as hip knee test. Stand on one leg and test if you hold for 10 seconds without moving your ankle to either side, you pass the test. If you fail, then you have an unstable ankle. This can cause your knee joint or the patella to have problems sooner or later.

Scoring: Write down your timed score for each side, as the number of seconds you can hold the ankle stable.

If you are failing any of these tests, it means you have poor stability in these areas. Pain can shut down muscles. You can have weak muscles or irritated nerves that make them weaker or misfire. If pain is the cause, finding and fixing it would resolve the problem. If it's weak muscle then strengthening would help. Finally, if it's irritated nerves no amount of muscle strengthening would help and you would need to reduce the nerve irritation.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CALL 636 -202- 0017 OR VISIT WWW.IPAINCARE.COM

Crazy & Quirky Laws in the United States of America



Arizona: It is unlawful to refuse a person a glass of water.

Arkansas: It's strictly prohibited to pronounce "Arkansas" incorrectly.

Kansas: If two trains meet on the same track, neither shall proceed until the other has passed.

Louisiana: It is a \$500 fine to instruct a pizza delivery man to deliver a pizza to your friend without them knowing.

Massachusetts: Snoring is prohibited unless all bedroom windows are closed and securely locked.

Michigan: A woman isn't allowed to cut her own hair without her husband's permission.

Missouri: Single men between the ages of twenty-one and fifty must pay an annual tax of one dollar (enacted 1820).

Nebraska: If a child burps during church, his parent may be arrested.

North Carolina: Elephants may not be used to plow cotton fields.

New Jersey: You may not slurp your soup.

Virginia: It is illegal to tickle women.

Texas: It is illegal to milk another person's cow.

Utah: Birds have the right of way on all highways.

North Dakota: It is illegal to lie down and fall asleep with your shoes on.

Washington: No person may walk about in public if he or she has the common cold.



Blooms of Kerala:



Hibiscus:

Hibiscus/Chemparathy(in Malayalam) is a prominent flower-plant in Kerala. It adorns the front yard of houses in Kerala. This very tropical, trumpet-shaped flower has large petals of five or more and comes in vibrant colors of red, yellow, orange, peach, pink, purple and white.

In Kerala, esp. red hibiscus is used in temples for performing pujas-offered as garlands on deities, most popularly used to worship Goddesses (Bhagawati). Besides, this flower is used to decorate Pookalam (flower arrangement on the floor) during the festive season of 'Onam'.

Hibiscus has many health benefits too. It is rich in vitamin C. The flower, the leaves and other parts of the plant are used in Ayurvedic medicine. Hibiscus tea is good to fight cold and other related infections. Hibiscus oil is used to keep healthy hair. Juice from the flower and leaves are used as

shampoo. THIS BEAUTIFUL FLOWER IS FULL OF GOODNESS!

By Latha Madhu

Jamanthi:

Marigold, scientifically known as *Tagetes erecta*, are a favorite no fuss Annual that can bring the color of sunshine to your garden. Marigolds are the staple flower of India. They are screechingly bright and fantastic. Natives of Central America, the Marigold found its way to India in the 16th century and has been there ever since.

From Dussehra to Diwali, marigolds are everywhere. Garlands of glowing orange blooms are hung for auspicious reasons and flowers are offered in rituals. Marigolds are so deeply part of these Indian festivals that it is a real surprise to learn that the most commonly used kinds originated in Mexico and have been in India barely 350 years.

Marigolds were originally flowers of the *Calendula* family and it is also called 'Herb of the Sun,' the distinct fragrance of these flowers helps improve one's mood and ward-off stress.

The orange and yellow color of marigolds is considered auspicious for new beginnings and important events of life. Marigold is best suited for a morning set up as natural light does justice to the vibrant shades of this wonderful flower.

The Portuguese brought the Marigold to India from their trade route from Central America to Goa, India. The Marigold is one of the most cultivated flowers in all of India, the hub of cultivation being Calcutta. The fields of marigold flowers are breathtaking. The shades of yellow are so bright, that when you stand next to them they create a reflection that turns your skin to gold.

Scientifically, marigold has a plethora of benefits for its anti-inflammatory, anti-spasmodic and anti-cancer properties. It is a rich source of antioxidants, antibiotics and vitamin-C too. Moreover, the fragrance of marigolds, keeps mosquitoes, bugs and other insects away.



By Sreemani Rajesh



Pic Credit: Aruna at Malayalam Wikipedia,
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Thumpa:

Thumba flower (thumbapoo) is one of the favorite flowers of all Malayalees as it is closely related to the biggest festival of Kerala - Onam. Thumba is a small white flower that is used in the Onam Pookkalam from Day 1 (Atham) of Onam till Thiruvonam. It flowers during the Chingam - Malayalam month and can be seen in most of the fields and grounds with dry sandy soil.

Thumbapoo gives a nostalgic feeling for me since during Onam season I used to go with my friends and cousins to our nearby temple ground to pluck these flowers to arrange Onapookkalam. As the years pass by we are seeing lesser of these flowers.

The scientific name of the Thumba plant is *Leucas aspera*. It is known to be used in traditional medicines too.

By Sona Mukesh

Note: Flower pictures courtesy of Latha Unni & Anjana Prayaga.

The Citizenship Amendment Act: What is it and What does it try to solve?

By Vimal Nair



Immigration to India started way back in the 12th Century when Parsis from Iran immigrated to India to avoid religious persecution. India has been a welcoming nation for many such immigrant populations throughout history - during Partition, then from Bangladesh, Tibetans (during the China war), Afghans (during Soviet-Afghan war), Srilankan Tamils (Civil war) and most recently the Rohingyas from Myanmar. It is said, in Assam,

that due to continuous and unmonitored immigration from Bangladesh, the Immigrant Refugee population has surpassed the Local population. This led to the Assam andolan. This is when the need for the NRC (National Register of Citizens) became important.

What does the Constitution of India say about Citizenship? People who were born before 1950 and were in India are automatically Indian citizens according to the Constitution. Regarding the status of Immigrants in India after 1950 is defined in the Citizenship of India Act, 1955. This Act also defines who is an Illegal Immigrant. According to this, anybody who has entered India illegally (fraudulent documents etc.) or if they have overstayed their allowed stay permit are deemed Illegal. The Amendment to this act changes this definition by excluding people belonging to 6 communities from three neighbouring Islamic countries from being excluded from the "illegal" list. The other thing this amendment will change is the process to acquire citizenship. Which are the 6 communities? These six communities (Hindus, Parsis, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist and Jains) are religious minorities staying in the three Islamic countries and have been subjected to religious persecution in these non-secular countries where religious discrimination has been built into their legal framework. For example in Pakistan up until 2017, Hindu marriages did not have legal recognition. Earlier CAA meant anybody who legally stayed in India for a period of 11 years would be eligible to become a Citizen but with this amendment, it relaxes and expands to make immigrants become citizens if they are from one of the 6 communities of these 3 countries.

Why the protest? On the face of it makes the lives of Muslim illegal immigrants harder. There is also a fair chance that other people from Muslim communities can also be targeted and required to prove their citizenship before administrative authorities can be problematic. The Civil servants who are already perceived to be corrupt can take advantage of people from specific communities. In fact the presence of a "doubtful citizen" section itself lends to a possibility of high handedness and arbitrary decision making.

Most of the protest, I feel is because of the fear of CAA will be combined with NRC and will result in illegal Muslims being deported where as illegal people from other communities would be spared. Theoretically, I am in favor of CAA provided that the Immigrants are treated with dignity and the benefit of the doubt is always given to people who have difficulty providing the documents. I hope that the Tax dollars that the Indian citizens pay reach and benefit their own citizens first.

ദൈവത്തിന്റെ വികൃതികൾ

അമൃത കോശേരി

അമേരിക്കയിലുള്ള ഒരു വ്യഭസനത്തിലേക്കു ഒന്നു കടന്നു ചെല്ലാം. എട്ട് അന്തേവാസികളാണ് ഈ വ്യഭസനത്തിലുള്ളത്. വ്യത്യസ്തമായ ഇഷ്ടങ്ങളും അനിഷ്ടങ്ങളും ഉള്ളവർ, വ്യത്യസ്ത അഭിപ്രായങ്ങൾ ഉള്ളവർ. ഇവിടെ എത്തുന്നതിനു തൊട്ട് മുൻപ് വരെ ജീവിതം അങ്ങേയറ്റം ആസ്വാദിച്ച ചിലർ. ഒപ്പം ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ താഴ്വരകൾ മാത്രം കണ്ട ചിലർ. അങ്ങനെ ഇനിയുള്ള നാളുകൾ മുന്നോട്ടു പോകാൻ അല്പം പരസഹായം ആവശ്യമുള്ളതിനാൽ ഇവിടെയാണ് അവർ എത്തിനിൽക്കുന്നത്. ഈ "കഥയിലെ" രണ്ടു കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളെ നമുക്ക് പരിചയപ്പെടാം.

Dana Johnson, അതാണ് യഥാർത്ഥ പേര്. പക്ഷേ DD എന്നാണ് വിളിക്കാറ്. 85 വയസ്സുണ്ട്. കഴുത്തിനൊപ്പമുള്ള മുടി മുഴുവനായി നറച്ചിട്ടില്ല. പ്രായത്തിന്റെ ചുളിവുകൾ മുഖത്തു പ്രത്യക്ഷം. പല്ല് വെപ്പാണെന്ന് ചിരി കണ്ടാലറിയാം. എന്നാൽ നീലക്കണ്ണുകളുടെ ആ തിളക്കം ഇപ്പോഴും ഉണ്ട്. ഇതിനുപുറമെ അപാര ഓർമ്മശക്തിയും ബുദ്ധിയും. ഏതാണ്ട് നാൽപ്പതു വർഷത്തോളം North Carolinaയിൽ ഒരു ഹോസ്പിറ്റലിൽ നേഴ്സ് ആയി സേവനം അനുഷ്ഠിച്ചു. ഇതിനിടയിൽ ഭർത്താവ് മരിച്ചു. പിന്നീട് ഓട്ടിസം ഉള്ള കുട്ടികളുമായി ഇടപഴകിയുള്ള ഒരു ജോലിയിലായിരുന്നു. ഒരു വീഴ്ചയോടു കൂടി DD-യുടെ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ താളം തെറ്റി. നടുവിൻ ക്ഷതമേറ്റതിനാൽ ഇനി മുന്നോട്ടുപോകാൻ ഒരു കുട്ടു കിട്ടി, ഒരു വീൽചെയർ... അങ്ങനെയാണ് DD ഇവിടെ എത്തുന്നത്.

DDക്ക് ഒരു മകളുണ്ട്. Liz എന്നാണ് പേര്. അടുത്ത ആഴ്ചയാണ് Halloween. അന്നാണ് DDയുടെ പേരക്കുട്ടിയുടെ ജന്മദിനം. Oliviaക്ക് അഞ്ചു വയസ്സ് തികയും. അവൾക്കു കൊടുക്കാനായി ഒരു ബാർബിയെ വാങ്ങിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. Birthdayക്ക് മുൻപ് Oliviaക്ക് അത് കൊടുക്കണം. "Can I call my daughter, please?" DD വിനയത്തോടെ എന്നോട് ചോദിച്ചു. "Sure honey," ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞു. നമ്പർ ഡയല് ചെയ്തു ഞാൻ DDക്കു കൊടുത്തു. സംസാരിച്ചു ഫോൺ വെച്ചതിനു ശേഷം അതീവസന്തോഷത്തോടെ DD പറഞ്ഞു. "They are celebrating her birthday on Saturday evening. Liz said she and Olivia can stop by before Friday to see me. I am so excited to see them." "That's great, DD." ഞാനും ഡിഡിയുടെ സന്തോഷത്തിൽ പങ്കു ചേർന്നു. ഇവിടെ നിന്ന് വളരെ അടുത്താണ് മകളും കുടുംബവും താമസിക്കുന്നത്. എങ്കിലും വളരെ അപൂർവ്വമായിട്ടേ വരാറുള്ളൂ. ശനിയാഴ്ചയാവാൻ ഇനി ആറു ദിവസം കൂടിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. DDയുടെ diaryയിൽ ഉണ്ട് Oliviaയുടെ ചിത്രം. ഒന്ന് രണ്ട് തവണ എനിക്ക് കാണിച്ചു തന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. നോക്കിയാൽ കണ്ണെടുക്കാൻ തോന്നില്ല. ചുവന്ന ചുണ്ടുകളും ചെമ്പിച്ച ചുരുളൻ മുടിയും കുഞ്ഞി കീരി പല്ലുകളും നീല കണ്ണുകളും, ഒരു ബൊമ്മ പോലെയുണ്ടാവും കാണാൻ.

ബുധനാഴ്ചയായിട്ടും മകളുടെ വിളിയൊന്നും കാണാനില്ല. വ്യാഴാഴ്ച വൈകുന്നേരം വിവരം അറിയാൻ DD വീണ്ടും വിളിച്ചു. ശനിയാഴ്ച രാവിലെ വരാമെന്നു പറഞ്ഞുറപ്പിച്ചു. DDക്ക് ആശ്വാസമായി. അങ്ങനെ ശനിയാഴ്ച വന്നെത്തി. വർണ്ണക്കടലാസിൽ പൊതിഞ്ഞ സമ്മാനം മടിയിൽ വെച്ച് വീൽചെയർ സ്വയം തിരിച്ചു DD ലിവിങ് റൂമിലെത്തി. Elizabeth Taylorന്റെ White Diamonds ആണ് DD യുടെ ഇഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട പെർഫ്യൂം. അതിന്റെ സുഗന്ധം അവിടമകെ പരന്നു.

ഉച്ച കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടും മകളെ കാണാതായപ്പോൾ DD ആകെ അസ്വസ്ഥയായി. ഓരോ തവണയും വാതിൽ തുറക്കുമ്പോൾ അത് മകളാണോ എന്ന് എത്തിനോക്കും. സന്ധ്യയായി. അത്താഴത്തിനുള്ള സമയമായി. DD ഒന്നും കഴിച്ചില്ല. ഒരു ഗ്ലാസ് പാൽ മാത്രം കുടിച്ചു. ചോദിച്ചപ്പോൾ "I am not hungry" എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞിട്ട് ഒഴിവാക്കി. രാത്രി കിടക്കാനായി മുറിയിൽ ചെന്നപ്പോൾ diary-യിൽ നിന്ന് Oliviaയുടെ ഫോട്ടോ എടുക്കാൻ പറഞ്ഞു. കുറച്ചു നേരം ഫോട്ടോ നോക്കിയിട്ട് DD എന്നോട് ചോദിച്ചു. "Isn't she beautiful?" DDയെ തലോടികൊണ്ടു ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞു, "She looks like a princess." DD പുഞ്ചിരിച്ചു. "Do you want me to put it back, DD?" ഞാൻ ചോദിച്ചു. "I am going to hold her tonight," DD പറഞ്ഞു. ഫോട്ടോ നെഞ്ചിൽ വെച്ച് DD കിടന്നു. Goodnight പറഞ്ഞു ലൈറ്റ് അണച്ച് വാതിൽ ചാരി ഞാൻ നടന്നകന്നു.....

കഥയിലെ അടുത്ത നായികയാണ് Dorothea Sommers. Thea എന്നാണ് വിളിപ്പേര്. DDയുടെ അതേ പ്രായം. വെളുത്ത പഞ്ഞിക്കെട്ട് പോലെയുള്ള മുടി. ഒരിഴ പോലും കറുത്തതില്ല. ബോബ് കട്ട് ചെയ്ത് കണ്ടാൽ നല്ല ആവൃത്തമുള്ള ഒരു സുന്ദരി മദ്രാമു മുത്തശ്ശി. Tennesseeയിലെ ഒരു ഹോസ്പിറ്റലിൽ ഉയർന്ന സ്ഥാനത്തിരുന്ന ഒരു വ്യക്തിയാണെന്ന് മാത്രമേ അറിയൂ. Stage-3 Alzheimer's ആണ്. മറവിയുടെ മുർദ്ധ്യാവസ്ഥ. ഭക്ഷണപ്രിയയാണ് Thea. എപ്പോഴും കഴിക്കണം. എന്നാൽ കഴിച്ച കാര്യം കഴിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞാൽ മറക്കും. അതുകൊണ്ടു എപ്പോഴും "I am hungry" "I am hungry" എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞുകൊണ്ടേയിരിക്കും. ആദ്യമൊക്കെ എനിക്ക് ചിരിയാണ് വന്നത്. ഇങ്ങനെയും ഉണ്ടോ ഒരു അസുഖം എന്നാലോചിച്ച്. പിന്നീട് അതിന്റെ ഗൗരവം മനസ്സിലായി.

Theaക്കും ഒരു മകളുണ്ട്, Connie. എല്ലാ മാസവും അമ്മയുടെ വിശേഷങ്ങളറിയാൻ Tennesseeയിൽ നിന്ന് വിളിക്കും. ഓർമ്മക്കുറവ് മൂലം താൻ മകളോടാണ് സംസാരിക്കുന്നത് എന്നറിയാതെ Thea എന്തൊക്കെയോ പറയും. ഒന്ന് രണ്ട് മാസം കൂടുമ്പോൾ അമ്മയെ കാണാൻ പറഞ്ഞതും Connie. ഇപ്രാവശ്യം Thanksgivingന് Connie വന്നു. എന്നാൽ മകളെ കണ്ടതും Theaയുടെ ആദ്യത്തെ ചോദ്യം ഇതായിരുന്നു. "Who are you?" പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കാത്ത ചോദ്യമായതിനാൽ ഒരു നിമിഷം കഴിഞ്ഞു Connie പറഞ്ഞു. "I am your little bear, your daughter Connie." ഒന്ന് സൂക്ഷിച്ചു നോക്കിയിട്ട് Thea പറഞ്ഞു. "I am hungry."

കുറച്ചു നേരം മുറിയിൽ പോയി അമ്മയുമായി സംസാരിച്ചിരുന്നു Connie. പിന്നെ അമ്മയെയും കൂട്ടി പുറത്തു പോയി. Theaക്ക് അത്യാവശ്യമുള്ള ചില സാധനങ്ങളും ഉടുപ്പുകളും വാങ്ങി പിന്നെ ഹോട്ടലിൽ പോയി ഭക്ഷണവും കഴിച്ചിട്ടാണ് വൈകുന്നേരം അവർ വന്നത്. കുറച്ചു നേരം കൂടി മുറിയിൽ ഇരുന്ന് സംസാരിച്ച ശേഷം Connie യാത്ര പറഞ്ഞു. "I love you mama. I will come and see you in a couple of months. Don't give trouble to these people, ok mama." അമ്മയെ കെട്ടിപിടിച്ചു നിറകണ്ണുകളോടെ Connie പോയി. ഞാൻ Theaയുടെ മുറിയിലേക്ക് പോയി. "Did you have a good time today, Thea?" മകൾ കൊണ്ടുവന്ന സാധനങ്ങൾ അടുക്കി വെക്കുന്നതിനിടയിൽ ഞാൻ ചോദിച്ചു. "I am hungry." Thea പറഞ്ഞു.

താൻ മകളാണെന്നും തന്നെ ഓർമ്മയുണ്ടാകില്ല എന്നറിഞ്ഞിട്ടും അമ്മയെ കാണാൻ പറഞ്ഞെന്നു Connie. ഒരു വിളിപ്പാടകലെ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടും മകളെ കാണാൻ കൊതിക്കുന്ന 'അമ്മ. വിധി, യോഗം എന്നൊക്കെ പറയാം നമുക്കിതിനെ. അല്ലെങ്കിൽ, ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കൊച്ചു വികൃതികളായിട്ടും കാണാം.

Scholarship Program 2019

Ohmkaram supports many voluntary and charitable activities. In addition to supporting its own members Ohmkaram strives to help the needy who struggle with meeting the cost of an academic education. Ohmkaram scholarship fund was established to help poor and deserving bright students with financial need in Kerala.

There are two types of Scholarships - donor sponsored Scholarship & scholarship provided by the general fund. In donor sponsored scholarship, fund is fully generated or provided by the donor. So the donor can select a candidate for Scholarship and decide on the amount of award. Fund for the other type of scholarship is collected by fund raising or by member contribution. Selection of the scholar and the amount of the award are decided by the Scholarship committee. You can be a part of this activity by volunteering to run the program or donating some money to the fund. For more information please check the scholarship tab in Ohmkaram.org

Eligibility for awarding the scholarship:

1. Student should be domiciled in Kerala.
2. Student should attend a professional course of any year.
3. Student should be enrolled in any institute in Kerala.
4. Scholarship will be awarded to a student only once in life time.

This year's scholarship was awarded to Ms. Soorya R from Alathur. She is currently a Law student at the Kozhikode Government Law College.



"I am Soorya, an LL.B student. I and my family express our sincere thanks to the faculties of Ohmkaram for granting me this year's scholarship. We are in need of financial support to pursue my studies. I wish to use this amount for my future studies. This scholarship is not only a support but also an encouragement to me."

- Soorya R

Soorya R is a 3rd year Law student at Government Law College, Kozhikode, Kerala. Her father Mr. Ramachandran K is an auto driver in Thenkurussi from Alathur Thaluk of Palakkad district.

The committee felt that Mr. Ramachandran's income of Rs. 30,000 per year was insufficient to feed his family and send his daughter to the law college in Kozhikode.

Soorya has scored an average of 62% marks in the two years of college she has already completed.

We at Ohmkaram wish Soorya Good Luck on her future!!



മലയാളം സ്കൂൾ

Malayalam School of Saint Louis

Malayalam School of Saint Louis Entering 13th Year of Service to Community

Malayalam School of Saint Louis is entering 13th year of service to the community. Malayalam School of Saint Louis is a voluntary organization open to public and free to attend. It is an affiliate program sponsored by Ohmkaram, a nonprofit voluntary organization of Malayalees in St Louis, Missouri, USA. Malayalam School was started with the perception for the need to educate our next generation of Malayalees growing up in St Louis. But we also have some adults taking Malayalam classes.

The school meet twice a month for 1 ½ hours each and runs from August through May every year. This year we have 23 students enrolled in Malayalam School. All classes are run by dedicated volunteer teachers. Course structure is developed into four levels, from entry level to proficient. Graduates of Malayalam School are proficient in reading, writing, and speaking in Malayalam.

Photo taken on Malayalam School Annual Day held in May 5, 2019 at Mahatama Gandhi Center



More information about the school is available on its website.

<http://www.ohmkaram.org/MalayalamSchool.html>

Email: malayalamschool@yahoo.com

Call Anjana Prayaga at 636-293-1174



OHMKARAM

...a nonprofit voluntary organization of Malayali Hindus in the Greater St. Louis area.

Ohmkaram is created with a **vision** to encourage active participation in the **Hindu culture**, foster **cooperation** and **unity** among **Kerala Hindus** throughout St. Louis and adjoining cities. In the midst of a collage of cultures, it is easy to forget and even lose track of many subtleties of our tradition that give a meaning to our identity. The **mission** of this organization will be to **rejuvenate** and **reinforce** the Kerala Hindu **traditions**. Participation and **Involvement** of our **youth** will be facilitated enabling them to appreciate our **cultural roots**. This Organization will also serve as a platform for effective **networking** of Hindus from Kerala or anyone interested in Kerala Hindu culture. This association will try to provide **Hindu cultural resources** not available through other sources in the Greater St. Louis area.

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