

HINDU CONNECTIONS

March, 2006

MAHA SHIVARATRI CELEBRATED

AHA-Reporter ; Vaishnavi Mannar

The American Hindu Association celebrated Maha Shivaratri festival on March 4, 2006, at the Chavez Elementary School, 3502 Maple Grove Drive, Madison, WI 53719. Special Shiva Puja was conducted by the priest from Hindu Temple of Wisconsin to mark the occasion. The devotees performed abhishekam to the special Shiva



Lingam. Devotees were provided with individual lingams as prasadam to take home. Special archana was also performed. Shiva Ashtottara Naamaavali, Lingastakam, Mantra Pushpam and special Shiva Magala Aarathi was



chanted. Over 200 devotees participated with great enthusiasm and devotion.

Handouts with Lingastakam, Shiva Ashtothara namavalli, Shiva aarathi was provided to the devotees. Dr. Balachandran had also provided a detailed write up on the significance of Shivaratri day and of the rituals. The article is also available at www.americanhindu.net/Shivaratri.mht Anyone interested in learning more about Shiva Ratri and the Vedic significance of Shiva Ratri is encouraged to visit

the site. After the conclusion of the puja dinner was served. The devotees dispersed with the blessings of Om Nama Shivaya ! To view the Shivaratri festival pictures..... Please go to www.americanhindu.net/2006_Shivaratri.htm .

Shivaratri is of five kinds - Dr. Balachandran
www.americanhindu.net/Shivaratri.mht

I. Shivaratri

1. Nitya Shivaratri: Nitya Shivaratri is on chaturdasi, fourteenth day, after each amavasya (new moon) and pournami (full moon). There are 24 Nitya Shivaratri in a year.

2. Paksha Shivaratri: Paksha Shivaratri is Shiva worship for 13 days from the day after pournami in Thai, Pousha, Pushyam (Chandramaanam), Makaram (Souramaanam), or Pushyam.

3. Masa (Monthly) Shivaratri: Masa Shivaratri is on krishna paksha chaturdasi each month.

4. Yoga Shivaratri: Yoga Shivaratri occurs each month on the Monday that is chaturdasi from sunrise to 10 in the morning or is an amavasya for twenty four hours from sunrise.

5. Maha Shivaratri. Maha Shivaratri is at midnight on Chaturdasi (Magha Bahula Chaturdasi), fourteenth day, in krishna paksha (moon declension) in the month of Maasi, Makham (Chandramaanam), Kumbam (Souramaanam), or Maakhamu. Note that Magha, Makam, or Maham is the tenth star (natchaththiram = constellation) among the twenty seven stars (Vedas refer to 28 stars) in the Hindu astrological system. The Maham natchaththiram in the month of Maasi, Makham (Chandramaanam), Kumbam (Souramaanam), or Maakhamu is considered a special day. For more information, visit "**source**" above.

STEPS OF HINDU PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT # 1

The first group of religious ideas that we see coming up – I mean recognized religious ideas, and not the very low ideas, which do not deserve the name of religion -- all include the idea of inspiration and revealed books and so forth. The first group of religious ideas starts with the idea of God. Here is the universe, and this universe is created by a certain Being. Everything that is in this universe has

been created by Him. Along with that, at a later stage, comes the idea of soul – that there is this body, and something inside this body which is not the body. This is the most primitive idea of religion that we know. We can find a few followers of that in India, but it was given up very early. The Indian religions take a peculiar start. It is only by strict analysis, and much calculation and conjecture, that we can ever think that that stage existed in Indian religions.

The tangible state in which we find them is the next step, not the first one. At the earliest step the idea of creation is very peculiar, and it is that the whole universe is created out of zero, at the will of God; that all this universe did not exist, and out of this nothingness all this has come. In the next stage we find this conclusion is questioned. How can existence be produced out of non - existence? At the first step in the Vedanta this question is asked. If this universe is existent it must have come out of something, because it was very easy to see that nothing comes out of nothing, anywhere. All work that is done by human hands requires materials. If a house is built, the material was existing before; if a boat is made, the material existed before; if any implements are made, the materials were existing before. So the effect is produced. Naturally, therefore, the first idea that this world was created out of nothing was rejected, and some material out of which this world was created was wanted. The whole history of religion, in fact, is this search after that material.

Swami Vivekananda

Creative Corner:

Why do Hindus wear a dot near the middle of their forehead?

Nisha Pillay Grade- 9

A person who wears a dot on the middle of her forehead is a sign that she is a proud Hindu. This dot is called a Bindi. In the olden days, all men and women both wore the Bindi. Today, it is the women who are most faithful in wearing the Bindi. The Bindi has a mystical meaning. It represents the third eye of the spiritual sight, which the regular eye cannot see.

The Bindi is made up of red powder or sandal paste. The red powder is called sindur, traditionally made from powdered turmeric juice and fresh lime juice.

A woman who wears a red Bindi shows that she is a married woman. Black Bindis are usually worn by babies and young children to ward off the evil eye. As an exotic fashion statement, the color of the Bindi sometimes compliments the color of the woman's sari.

In different parts of the world, different symbols are worn to identify their religion. The Christians have the cross, the Jewish boys have small leather cases to hold spiritual passages, the Muslim women wears a scarf on their head called hijab and the Hindu women wears the Bindi on their forehead.

I believe that if you are a Hindu, you should not be ashamed to wear the Bindi. No matter where you are, whether in the United States, Canada, Europe or any other

places in the world, one should wear the Bindi proudly. The Bindi will distinguish you from others and you will never be mistaken for a different nationality or religion.

Never be intimidated when someone ask you what the dot means because you now have enough information to give a good answer, which will probably lead to more questions about your religion.

Health Concern - Recognizing a Stroke:

A neurologist says that if he can get to a stroke victim within 3 hours he can totally reverse the effects of a stroke...totally. He said the trick was getting a stroke recognized, diagnosed an getting to the patient within 3 hours which is tough.

RECOGNIZING A STROKE

Thank God for the sense to remember the "3" steps. Read and Learn! Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke. Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

- 1. Ask the individual to SMILE.**
- 2. Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.**
- 3. Ask the person to SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE**

Coherently - i.e., "It is sunny out today."). If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call 9-1-1 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

Harvard Forum Debates California Textbooks

www.lokvani.com BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, February 4, 2006: Harvard Professor Michael Witzel spoke at a forum defending his position in the California Textbook adoption process. The forum was organized by Dharma Club of Harvard University on February 3. The members of the club, who were discussing the issue of textbooks and role of Professor Michael Witzel in this process, decided to invite the professor to speak to the forum. Krishna Maheshwari, Harvard Business School student and a member of Hindu Students Council spoke on why corrections were necessary. For this informative debate, click "source" above.

Quotes & Quips

Mr. Smith climbs to the top of Mt. Everest to get close enough to talk to God Shiva.

Looking up, he asks the Lord Shiva , " God, what does a million years mean to you?"

The Lord Shiva replies, "A minute."

Smith asks, "And what does a million dollars mean to you?"

The Lord Shiva replies, "A penny."

Smith asks, "Can I have a penny?"

The Lord Shiva replies, "In a minute."

"We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."

Sir Winston Churchill

Greek Authorities Have Durga Billboard Removed

www.hindustantimes.com LONDON, ENGLAND, February 16, 2006: Greek authorities have ordered an Athen discotheque to remove one advertisement of a whiskey brand, which used the image of goddess Durga, after it irked Hindus around the world, a community leader said on Thursday. The offending poster was removed from the discotheque as a result of direct communication from the Greek Embassy in New Delhi to the authorities in Athens to have the poster removed immediately as otherwise there would be a strong reaction from Hindus worldwide, Bimal K. Das of the UK's National Council of Hindu Temples said.

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Balagokulam KBRE Contest - Kaun Banega Ramayan Expert.

The KBRE contest is aimed at increasing the awareness of Ramayan among children in USA. The stories from Ramayan are a very simple yet effective way of keeping children in USA in touch with our culture and heritage. The contest is designed for the children and hence kept very simple yet informative.

What is it?

- * A contest about Ramayan for the children of USA
- * To be held on the occasion of the birth centenary of Param Pujaneeya Shri Guru ji

What is the structure of the contest?

- * Online registration at <http://www.balgokulam.org/contest/>
- * A preliminary online quiz (several free practice tests and 3 Real tests)
- * In-person contest at Madison & eligibility: Students who score atleast minimum marks (Min marks are different for each age group) among 3 real online tests taken before March 31st.

Cost of Registration: \$11/- Registered students can get material to prepare for this contest from this site.

When is it?

- * Online quiz: upto March 31st 2006
- * In-person contest: April 2006 1st week
- * Announcement of awards: May 2006

Editorial Board: American Hindu Association

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