



BRAHMA BHARATI

A Quarterly Publication of Brahman Samaj of North America



Volume 12 Number 2

Editor: Anjana Bhargava

June 2010

BSNA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE- 2010



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President Message

Dear BSNA Family:

Finally, winter is behind us and the oncoming of spring indicates the beginning of new creation. By the time this issue of Brahma Bharati goes to press it will be summer. During the first two quarters of the year, BSNA has been preparing for the coming months.

The BSNA Virginia Chapter was to host the 16th annual convention of BSNA in Richmond, VA. However, after seriously considering the poor status of registration (due to lack of interest from members) and all other options, the 2010 convention had to be cancelled to avoid heavy financial losses to BSNA.

In addition to annual conventions the Executive Committee is considering organizing regional mini-conventions that will maximize the participation of members from neighboring chapters while posing only a minimal financial burden. We are currently preparing more detailed plans for these conventions. We are also planning to organize "Community Service" activities at the regional level which are a number of activities that might be done for the benefit of our communities. We have set goals to take some initiatives in this direction.

We encourage people of any Indian language speaking background to become part of the BSNA family and propagate their language, customs and culture through the platform of BSNA. The exchange of ideas in a

cordial and respectful manner among all the members is very important and is a responsibility of all members to help strengthen our communities. We are always open to ideas for improving BSNA's services to its members. Please forward your suggestions along with the mechanism to materialize them within BSNA resources and capabilities.

I encourage all eligible BSNA youth (and their parents/grandparents) to apply for the BSNA Scholarship. The awarding of this scholarship is an important achievement in the area of *Vedic Value System*. Remember - values instilled in early age last for life. The information is provided in this publication as well as it is available on the BSNA web site (www.bsna.org). If you would like to sponsor \$500 per student scholarship please let the Scholarship Committee Chair know.

BSNA members are sponsoring scholarships to help needy students in India. If you are interested in certain projects by which you would like to help the community please let us know and we will try to facilitate your activity.

BSNA is for service to all and disservice to none.

Best regards,

Om Sharma

The president of BSNA Dr. Om Sharma sent the following letter to the Prime Minister of India requesting to repeal the unreasonable fee imposed for the Indian citizenship renunciation. .



Established September 1994

Brahman Samaj of North America

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Thanks to Mr. Ajoy Dube, BSNA Life Member, Dr. Om Sharma, BSNA President, and other community leaders, here is a good news about the Indian citizenship renunciation fees.

In supercession of previous rules, Government of India has decided that Person of Indian origin who has already acquired foreign citizenship until 31 May 2010 will not be required to pay renunciation fees of

\$175.00; he/she will be required to pay Miscellaneous fees of USD 20.00 when getting the old Indian passport cancelled/ surrendered.

In future those Indian citizens who acquire foreign citizenship on or after June 1, 2010 will have to submit declaration of renunciation of their Indian citizenship forms as given on website and fees of \$175.00

From the President's Office: Appointment of New Board of Trustees

It is my pleasure to announce that the following respected Brahman Leaders were appointed to the BSNA Board of Trustees for 3 years effective February 1, 2010. Any of these new BOTs does not need introduction as they are very well known in their respective fields of profession as well as within the Brahman community. They are recognized for their significant contributions to the BSNA activities and goals in the last several years.

Honorable Upendra Chivukula, NJ Assemblyman
Shri Jagar N. Sharma, NY

Constituted Ad Hoc Committees and appointed their Chairs

Religious Information	Mr. K.J. Sharma - Chair Dr. Virendra Pandey
Education/Scholarship	Mr. Mahendra Misra - Chair
BSNA Community Center	Mr. Upendra Chivukula - Chair Mr. K.J. Sharma Dr. Virendra Pandey Mr. Purushottam Sharma
Web Site and BSNA Database Maintenance	Mr. Raga Misra
Finance Committee	Mr. Hari Sharma - Chair Mr. Purushottam Sharma
Publication	Mrs. Anjana Bhargava - Chair Dr. Satish Misra
Coordination with Other Organizations	Dr. Akkaraju Sarma - Chair Dr. Ramagopal Mudumbi Mr. Girish Shelat
Capital Program	Dr. Om Sharma, DC
BSNA Youth Group President	Ms. Jyotsna Upadhyay

Announcement - New Youth President

Jyotsna Upadhyay was recently appointed as President of the Youth Group of BSNA. Jyotsna was born and raised in India; she has learned many of the beliefs and customs in the Hindu religion. She is currently residing in Richmond, VA. Coming to the US from India in 2003, she started attending BSNA conventions in 2005. She goes to Virginia Commonwealth University pursuing Bachelor Degree in Biomedical Engineering with Minor in Chemistry and Math. She has a vision to help instill love and passion for the Brahman culture and traditions in the hearts of our young generation. She is interested in painting, dancing, reading novels, and performing community service.

Youth Forum by Aradhna Sharma

Exciting changes are being made to the BSNA website in the Youth Forum link! We are making Youth Forum link interactive with high hopes of getting to know each other better and continue to interact with one another more often. In the Youth Forum there will be two categories: one for past memories in which you can post your chapter memories/pictures or convention memories and another category that can be used to post articles about anything that interests you from daily life as a Brahman to information about our heritage, culture and literature.

Youth Forum is entertaining and a good way to keep in touch with our community. If you have questions or ideas, let me know ASAP before we complete the design cycle.. I can be emailed at aradhnasharma21@gmail.com.

Worth Repeating

Address given by viceroy of India Lord Mcaulay to the British Parliament on February 2, 1835.

"I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief, such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation."

Rest we all know that he introduced the education system which he described above in India and it changed the country's destiny.

The Real Question: What is the Definition of Brahman today? By Meha Bhargava

I am writing here a little something about our culture. As we all do for any issue that must be resolved, I resorted to Wikipedia :) Wikipedia describes our people as "the class of educators, doctors, law makers, scholars, priests and preachers of Dharma in Hinduism. It is said to occupy the highest position among the four varnas of India." I mean, thank you Wiki, we are definitely the coolest...But, what does that mean for the Youth?

I assume that none of our generation in America really believes or follows the caste system, nor will pass this concept onto our children. I respect this definition arose from our predecessors and ancestors who developed this hierarchal system, and thus gave us a wonderful category to fall into. Because of this categorization, we have the BSNA and something more to be proud of. It brings us together as a community, and allows us to share something deeper than our brown skin and religion. It allows us to find a subset of unity in this broad religion we all believe in.

With that said, what do we tell our children? I am sure our parents respect that we grasp onto this knowledge they bestowed upon us. We are the Youth of this organization, and respect its presence. However, if we try this logic on future generation, I believe they will have a tough time understanding. They will think we are doing this solely to join a "club" with no deeper meaning. They will ask why we are celebrating being Brahman, and separating ourselves from the rest of the Hindu culture if we no longer believe in the caste system.

Thus, I think as the Youth of BSNA we should really look for a reason to keep this organization alive; a reason that is not based in the roots of India and its History, but a reason that is fitted to our new ABCD culture and how we think. Our parents want us to hold onto our roots and pass it down from generation to generation. Hinduism will never change, however the way we engage in the religion will change from year to year, decade to decade, and century to century. We just need to find out how to understand Brahmanism in the context of today, so we can teach it to the kids of tomorrow. This is something we as the BSNA Youth need to investigate...One thing Wikipedia just cannot help us with.

युवक हमारा भटक रहा है

Our confused Brahman Youth

युवक हमारा भटक रहा है ये सब हमको खटक रहा है
जब रामायण और गीता का मूल्य नहीं कुछ रह जाता है
माता पिता का दिया हुआ संस्कार हवा में वह जाता है
लुप्त हुए उपदेश पश्चिमी रंग रलियों में
उलझ गए आकर्षित होकर दुष्ट विचारों की गलियों में
त्याग दिया सात्विक भोजन जब मिल बैठे यारों मित्रों में
भुला दिया ब्राह्मण वैल्यू को घुसे अनैतिक चरित्रों में
ध्यान अधिक नाइट क्लब और डिस्को में अटक रहा है
युवक हमारा भटक रहा है ये सब हमको खटक रहा है

एक युवक हमसे यूं बोले अंकल जी हमको समझाओ
'What is this Brahman Value' एक बार फिर से दोहराओ

हमको तो इन शब्दों में कुछ Racist Tone नजर आती है
जो बाकी वर्गों से हमको दूर हटा कर ले जाती है
जातिवाद की ये सब बातें अमेरिका में नहीं चलेंगी
विघटनकारी संस्थाओं को कभी सफलता नहीं मिलेगी
हमको तो अब ब्राह्मण कहना और कहलाना खटक रहा है
युवक हमारा भटक रहा है ये सब हमको खटक रहा है

यह सुन कर हम स्तब्ध हो गए सोचें इसका उत्तर क्या दें
हम तो खुद ऐसे ब्राह्मण जो पूरा धर्म भी नहीं निभाते
हिम्मत कर बोले केवल कोई जन्म से ब्राह्मण नहीं कहाता
गुण और कर्म की खातिर ही वो इस दुनिया में नाम है पाता
एक शूद्र भी शुभ कर्मों से ब्राह्मण का दर्जा पायेगा
और दुराचारी ब्राह्मण फिर निम्न जाति में लौट आयेगा
वेद शास्त्र की शिक्षाओं का नित्य कर्म से पालन करना
ब्राह्मण का ये धर्म और लोगों को भी है शिक्षित करना
Brahman Value से ही अब तक धर्म हमारा लटक रहा है
युवक हमारा भटक रहा है ये सब हमको खटक रहा है

हरिशरमा

UPCOMING HINDU FESTIVALS

Ganga Dussehra – June 20



During this festival ten days of the month are devoted to the worship of Holy River Ganga venerated by the Hindus as a mother as well as a goddess. Places such as Rishikesh, Haridwar, Garh-Mukteswar, Prayag, Varanasi etc where Ganga flows hold special significance on this day. Devotees flock to these places and Varanasi with its numerous ghats situated on the west bank of the Ganga, to touch the river water, bathe in it and take the river clay home to venerate. In Haridwar, 'aratis' are performed at twilight and a large number of devotees meditate on riverbanks.

Nirjala Ekadasi—June 22

Also known as Pandava Ekadashi or Bhimasena Ekadashi is observed on the eleventh day during Jyeshtha masa

Rath Yaatra—July 13

Ratha Yaatra, the Festival of Chariots of Lord Jagannatha is celebrated every year at Puri, the temple town in Orissa, on the east coast of India. The presiding deities of the main temple, Sri Mandira, Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra, with the celestial wheel Sudarshana are taken out from the temple precincts in an elaborate ritual procession to their respective chariots. The huge, colourfully decorated chariots, are drawn by hundreds and thousands of devotees on the bada danda, the grand avenue to the Gundicha temple, some two miles away to the North. After a stay for seven days, the deities return to their abode in Srimandira.



Guru Poornima—July 25

Among the 12-13 full moons in a year the vaishakha full moon is dedicated to Buddha (his birth and enlightenment), jyeshtha full moon to mother earth and the aashadha full moon is dedicated to the memory of masters. This is Guru-Purnima.



It is the day when the disciple wakes up in his fullness and in the wakefulness he can't be but grateful. This gratitude is not of dwaita (you and me), but of advaita. It is not a river moving from somewhere to somewhere, but is the ocean moving within itself. So, gratefulness on Guru-Purnima symbolizes that fullness. The purpose of the Guru Purnima celebration is to turn back and review and see in this last one year how much one has progressed in life. For a seeker, Guru Purnima is a day of significance. It is the day to review one's progress on the spiritual path and renew one's determination and focus on the goal. As the

August 24 – Raksha Bandhan/Rakhi

Rakhi is basically a sacred thread of protection embellished with the love and affection of a sister for her brother. This day is also known as Raksha Bandhan and celebrated on the full moon day of the Hindu month of Shrawana in India. This frail thread of Rakhi is considered a stronger than iron chains as it binds the most beautiful relationship in an inseparable bond of love and trust. Rakhi festival also has a social significance because it underlines the notion that everybody should live in harmonious coexistence with each other.



Janmashtami—September 1



Janmashtami celebrates the birth of one of the most famous Gods of Hindu religion, Bhagwan Krishna, on the eighth day (Ashtami) in the month of Sravana or Savana. Lord Sri Krishna was born on the 'Rohini' nakshatram (star). It is generally celebrated in the month of August-September according to the Christian Calendar. Legend has it that Sri Krishna was born on a dark, stormy and windy night to end the rule and atrocities of his maternal uncle, Kansa.

Chapter News

The festival of Lohri or Makar Sankranti was celebrated by the members of BSNA, **Sacramento Chapter** on Sunday, January 24, 2010 at Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Sacramento.

Before the formal commencement of the celebration, delicious snacks were served. The Havan ceremony began with the chanting of prayers. Everyone offered Aahuti in the sacred fire. Pundit Venkatesh Damle chanted special prayers for all the newborn babies for their good health, happiness, long life, intelligence and success in life. The Havan ceremony concluded with the Shanti Paath for world peace and prosperity for all.

The highlight of the day was the lighting of the holy fire of Lohri, a novel thing for Sacramento amidst the beating of the Dhol (drum) and Lohri music in the Temple parking lot. Everyone, young and adults sang and danced to beautiful Lohri music led by Anjana Bhargava and others. The singing and Bhangra lasted for over an hour around the blazing hot Lohri fire. Everyone had lots of fun, especially the young children who wanted to keep fire on little longer. Their interest and enthusiasm was very encouraging and captivating. After the Lohri celebration, a sumptuous dinner was served to about one hundred fifty people.

Chapter President, Mr. Manohar Ratti; Vice-president, Mr. Madan Lal Sharma; Secretary, Mr. Vinod K. Sharma and Treasurer, Mr. Baldev Sharma welcomed all the members present, old and new and wished everyone a very happy, peaceful and prosperous new year. Families got to introduce themselves afterwards.

Board members and everyone present were extremely happy to see a big number of new families attending the Lohri festival: Mr. Ashok Kapil and family of Sacramento, Mr. Anil Bhardwaj and family of Elk Grove, Master Deepak Sharma and family from Sacramento. Mr. Ashok Bhardwaj and family from Sacramento, Mr. Vijay Kumar Sharma and family from West Sacramento, Mr. Vinod Bharatdwaj and family from Sacramento, Mr. Krishan Mohan and family of Stockton, Mr. Rajender Mohan and family of Stockton, Pundit Ram Niwas Pandey and family of Sacramento, Mr. Ramesh Sharma and family of Folsom, Pundit Durga Prasad of West Sacramento and Pundit Parmod of Sacramento. A special welcome to all these new families.

Six of these families became members of Sacramento Chapter, viz, Mr & Mrs. Ashok Kapil, Mr. & Mrs. Ashok Bharatdwaj, Mr. & Mrs. Anil Bharatdwaj, Mr. & Mrs. Ramesh Sharma, Master Deepak, and Mr. & Mrs. Krishan Mohan. Sacramento Chapter extends a very special welcome to these families. Pretty soon the Sacramento Chapter will reach its goal of over one hundred members that the BSNA will be proud to reckon with its strength and force.

In his concluding remarks the president and his team thanked everyone for supporting the Lohri program with their attendance in such a large number. He requested for their continued support and participate in future events even in greater numbers. He thanked Mr. Surendra Singh, the president of Lakshmi Narayan Temple, for graciously offering the use of temple premises for the celebration.



Sacramento Chapter Officers: (L to R) Shri Manohar Ratti (President); Shri Baldev Sharma (Treasurer); Shri Madan Lal Sharma (Vice-President); Shri Vinod Kumar Sharma (General Secretary).



Families Performing the Havan Ceremony



Lohri Ki Masti with Mr. Vinod Sharma playing Dhol



Anuj Bharatdwaj carting a pot of peanuts for distribution. Children participated very enthusiastically. Brahman Samaj encourages them wholeheartedly.



BSNA Chapter Presidents (2010-2012)

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California (Bay Area)	Mr. Kuldeep Sharma	Fremont, CA	510-796-3470	kuldeeps@ci.tracy.ca.us
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California (Sacramento)	Mr. Manohar Ratti	Sacramento	916-681-7681	mlratti@aol.com
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Congratulations

Dr. Shri Kant Mishra has been awarded **Distinguished Physician Award** by Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) in recognition of his achievements in the field of medicine.

Shri Kant Mishra is professor of Neurology, and co-ordinator of Integrative Medicine Program at Keck School of Medicine, USC

Dr. Mishra is a Neurologist with special interest in Neuro-muscular disorders. He is a member of many prestigious Neuroscience and integrative medicine Societies. He serves on various intramural and extramural committees in Neuroscience and integrative medicine in the USA.

He is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of WBO, and have been helping BSNA and WBO since the inception of these organizations in different ways to reach out to Brahman communities throughout the world.

Dr. Mishra; we are proud of your services to the humanity and accomplishments.



Role of Mandirs and Temples in Hindu Diaspora in Continental USA

Introduction:

History has made it evident that South Asians are becoming a force that the “mainstream” population has to recognize and be accommodated. As we progress towards the third decade, around 2035, much of U.S.A. will be a blended nation. We, South Asians, have always been categorized (right or wrong) as “model minorities” and a goal oriented ethnic group. As we all know, what affects other human groups, affects South Asians too. Are we prepared for changes in our adopted motherland? How best can we develop ourselves to cope with mechanisms? Stepping back for a moment into our roots, India, most of us have extended families that provide the support mechanisms. In USA for example, many ethnic minorities including Hindus, rarely have those support mechanisms. The affected families have to resolve issues on their own. Where can one look for help beyond traditional sources? And how do these families express their feelings awhat the Diaspora community has done to resolve these rapidly evol-

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ing issues? To digress for a moment, some families have used creative writing to cope up with the issues, looking for any support out there (more later). Other ethnic groups have sought help in pastoral communities. This source of help unfortunately is very minimal at this time for South Asians. Historically speaking, in USA, the Jewish groups were in similar situation in 1930's and '40's. The Afro-American ethnic groups have had strong pastoral supports for several years thru their churches.

Recently, I read a book titled, "I Want My Son Back", by a physician, Uma Eyyunni. It makes us look at the issues and - reflects "How can we help"? The author takes us thru the travails of Anna and Robert (fictitious names) that lead a tranquil life with a growing family, two children that were raised from infancy in USA, when one of the older children had a non-traumatic accident ending with a mental disorder. As most people know, individuals struggling with a disorder like schizophrenia, some hear "inner" voices those normal individuals are not hearing. They fear that others may harm them. These experiences are terrifying and can cause fearfulness, withdrawal or extreme agitation to the care givers. Many afflicted with schizophrenia have difficulty in holding a job or caring for themselves. No need to say, this is stressful on the natal families. These situations affect the society they function in as well. Anna and Robert go through these hardships. One of the main issues here is the lack of "awareness" in South Asian society at large. Most of the time families are all in denial, that, "it won't happen to us". However, the simple truth is, it can happen to anybody. The social stigma associated with this illness is exponentially high in South Asian community as compared to other communities. The social responses seen with other chronic illnesses such as cancer or diabetes are sympathy with empathy. When it comes to say mental disorders, autism, etc. this is replaced by avoidance, shame, anger, resentment and fear of the affected member. Affected family is treated likewise.

Some Thoughts : What can we do?

Permit me to use the words "Hindu Mandirs" (may substitute the word with Jain, Buddhist and similar centers) and they can begin to help. A recent count indicates that over 400 mandirs are in our adopted land. This is good and where there is a need, a mandir can be built within the economic means. Some are exceedingly well to do financially and these must consider adding more facilities for the special needs groups. To start with, they can have targeted committees to look into the special needs groups. One could set up a day in the week or month when these individuals can come

and spend time in worship. Celebrate a birthday, visit Bala Vihar

Vidyalayas, get exposed to our Hindu Religion and Culture, join a summer camp for a day or two where possible, get our Information Technology Gurus to develop and access lap tops to help.

Other issues:

As most mandirs built in recent years fulfill American Disability Act requirements, Mandirs should have handicap access. If not, that area needs to be addressed. The traditional principles of mandirs is to promote not only for worship with access to all but also being community centers. This encourages every member to be a resource for others in need. Mandirs should emphasize the need for empathetic support to all. This provides satisfaction and salvation for both the helpers and the helped in a sanctified setting. We have a number of South Asian and Mandir Websites. A link to special needs contacts be made. In future, multiple links special needs groups at various mandirs in other cities can be provided. Utilize National Association Mental Illnesses (NAMI) model incorporating the appropriate south Asians socio- cultural needs. With 38 % of South Asian Physicians in USA, a Hindu oriented psychiatrist and related professionals may write an insert to the resource NAMI manual that will be good for mandirs. Similar analogies apply. This can be at a National Website like AAPI. I am aware that some very thoughtful persons have developed group homes for South Asians, like India Home in NYC, USA and use these individuals as resource persons to expand these institutions.

Just what can all of us do? First and foremost be sensitive. Look out empathetically and help without being sought. Is this not the time for us to have support mechanisms within our extended families? Our goal is to enable person and families with these overwhelming issues to flourish. We must not be passive objects that are supported by special programs, needing special accommodations etc. Our goal is to help special needs families in handling the rigors of western societal expectations. Reverence for life is important. This is a two-way street. If you identify someone (a family) that has special needs; find some time to spend a day with them to lighten their needs. Can we all schedule a day or weekend to do this? How can you support? Increase awareness by education, organize support groups and caring circles. Set up family support groups for all, taking care of those with mental illnesses and other needs. Provide a designated day when they come to our mandirs and join us all. Can we create a Friendship Connection? We should set up for every challenged person to say "my friend(s) is (are) coming to see me (us).... Today! Hari Om.

Akkaraju Sarma, M.D.

BSNA Scholarship for the High School Students

Who can apply? Any high school senior whose family is member of BSNA and has received admission to an undergraduate degree granting college within North America.

What is the scholarship amount? The Scholarship amount is \$500.

- The scholarships will be granted to high school graduates going to college based on: (a) Grades, (b) participation in extra curricular activities, (c) participation in BSNA activities, (d) Needs, and any other criterion to be specified, and (e) an essay submitted by the candidate.

-The scholarship winners will be announced during the Annual Convention, generally held around July 4th every year, and their names and details will be published in Brahma Vani and Brahma Bharati.

Mahendra Misra, Chair Scholarship Committee

Email Address: mahendramisra@hotmail.com

2010 BSNA SCHOLARSHIP FORM

Name	Last	First
Address		
Email Address		
Phone Number		
Parents Address (If Different)		
High School Name & Address		
College Name &Address		
Class Rank(If available) and GPA		
Extra Curriculum Activities		
List of BSNA Activities Participated		
Attach Brief Bio Data with Photo		
Attach Essay	Essay subject: "My Experiences of Keeping Brahman Values While Growing in America"	

FROM: BSNA
P.O. Box 716
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Brahma Bharati is a publication of Brahman Samaj of North America (BSNA), a not-for-profit organization registered in the state of New York. It is sent to its members free of charge. It is also posted on the BSNA homepage (<http://www.bsna.org>).

Members may send articles and/or comments for publication to Mrs. Anjana Bhargava editor at: bharfam4@sbcglobal.net

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