Namaste!

May this be a prosperous and joyous year for our community and our temple! May we make strides in community service and in the repayment of our debts. Our successes in 2009 have clearly been due to the hard work and dedication of all our volunteers, our manager, and our priests. We have striven for greater empowerment of the volunteers, more de-centralization and transparency in all our committees, and more grass-roots management.

We have a great group of intelligent and high-achieving volunteers who, correctly, take pride in what they do and want to do it well! Let us be quick to praise and slow to criticize. Volunteers are inherent leaders who have insightful ideas and an ability to make things work. Our rules and processes should honor the ideas from the bottom up—ideas that, with repeated use, will become policies. Building consensus among volunteers takes time, but a climate of volunteer ownership fosters efficiency and stability and makes our involvement worthwhile. Our management credo should serve our volunteers, a group of people who initiate, lead, and execute projects every day. Thus, one goal for management in the new year should be to encourage the trend of volunteerism with policies that stimulate, rather than stifle, the enthusiasm of our volunteers.

Our priorities for 2010:

- Use the services of Anil Kumar (our new priest/cook) and volunteers effectively in the Food Committee under the leadership of Venkat Kothur and Leela Venky.
- Make the Front Desk more efficient by greater automation and stream-lining of processes of revenue and data collection under the leadership of GP Gurram and team.
- Increase efficiency in daily services offered and tours conducted.
- Continue to implement cost savings and cleanliness measures.
- Step up service oriented outreach projects like Sharing and Caring, Help to Haiti and to local communities.
- Give each other the opportunity to love, learn and support our community!

Thank you all!
Best wishes for a productive and prosperous New Year!
Sincerely
Mythili Chari
President
Executive Committee
An effort by numerous volunteers has been initiated here at the Hindu Temple to reach out to other nonprofit organizations and make our presence felt and known in this community. This is the beginning of our ‘Outreach Program’. Our very first such effort was to serve hot meals to 200 homeless people at the ‘Sharing And Caring Hands’ in July of 2009. It was a huge success and this prompted us to do it again in November of 2009. Many volunteers under the leadership of Janaki Byraiah, Vallabha Tantry and myself came together and successfully carried out this compassionate mission. It was not only gratifying but enjoyable. We had fun doing it. Majority of the items used for cooking were donated by devotees like you.

‘Sharing and Caring Hands’ program generated tremendous interest in our community and many of you have expressed interest to volunteer for future missions. This has encouraged us and led us to explore other opportunities around the greater metro area. Some of the future outreach programs that are being planned include, visits to old age homes like Presbyterian Home, visit to orphanages, Feed My Starving Children etc, along with cooking at the ‘Sharing And Caring Hands’ and ‘House Of Charity’.

Our plan is to draft a proposal that will outline our efforts and present it to the management committees of HSM. Subsequently, we shall communicate the proposal to the community thus, giving everyone an opportunity to be part of this noble effort.

Meanwhile, we urge you to forward any questions, comments or suggestions to me, Naina Varanasi, n.varanasi@comcast.net

Thank You
Naina Varanasi
Vice President
Executive Committee
Hindu Society of Minnesota
The interactive nature of these classes gets me motivated all the time and I have not missed a single class so far this year. I specifically would like to thank the teachers for making these classes interesting and interactive.

My name is Kishore Athreya and I am in HATS level 5. The classes are very enriching and are a great way to learn about Hindu religion, culture and heritage.

Amongst many things we covered the 4 main aspects – artha, kama, dharma and moksha, the Hindu scriptures, women leaders, varnas or caste system and also some of the main things to follow in everyday life. I learned how dharma should be part of my life. In the class along with the other students we discuss about many topics and look at Hinduism from all angles to get a better perspective of religion and life as a whole. For me these classes are a great way to learn about my religion Hinduism and its rich culture.

The interactive nature of these classes gets me motivated all the time and I have not missed a single class so far this year. I specifically would like to thank the teachers for making these classes interesting and interactive.

Excerpts from Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj’s book Inner and Outer Peace through Meditation.

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj, in his book, Inner and Outer Peace through Meditations, explains the role of meditation plays in giving us inner peace and bringing about world peace.

He states that “Peace begins with you.” Until each person finds peace within himself or herself there can not be outer peace in the world. Meditation helps us find this inner peace.

Many people look for peace and happiness in the outer world. They try to escape their problems by turning to drugs, alcohol, temptations, and pleasures in life. Unfortunately, these do not bring about permanent peace. When the effects wear off, we are still faced with the same problems. People try to find happiness by collecting riches, money and other belongings, but all these can not bring happiness because it can be destroyed.

True happiness can be found within us when we come in contact with that which is permanent, and that is out soul, the Light and Sound, and God. These are all made of spirit and consciousness, full of love and bliss. Within us is a world of peace, bliss and joy. Through meditation we can find it. This provides us the inner happiness that helps us get through life’s problems and pains. When we sit in meditation and find that it helps us look at life from a new angle of vision.

Through meditation, we see the world from a different angle. We see that the same Light of God that is in us is in all other people and all creation. We begin to love others and treat them as one family of God. We can not bear to see any-one else in pain. We begin to share what we have with others. So no one else goes hungry or without medical care. We will radiate love to everyone else. If each person lived in this way we will find a world of peace. By spending time in meditation, we will attain inner peace and will make the greatest contribution by bringing about outer peace.

Arvind Naik

Upcoming event: “A Symposium on Meditation”
April 17th, 2010 10:30 AM - 4:00 PM | Venue: Hindu Mandir of Minnesota
The festival of Vasant Panchami is celebrated on the fifth day (‘panchami’) of the bright half of the month Magha in the Hindu calendar. The festival marks the end of winter and beginning of spring (‘vasant’) in most parts of the Indian subcontinent. It is believed that on this day, Bhagawan Brahmā created Devi Saraswati to remove ignorance and to make human beings wise. Therefore, on this day, we worship Mother Saraswati. In eastern and southern India, children are taught to write their first letter on a board on this day. Books are placed in front of the icon of Saraswatiji for her blessings. Worship is commenced with burning of incense, and applying a tilak of sandalwood paste. In north India, Hindus also worship the Surya Deva and Mother Ganga to thank them for providing us with life giving water and energy. Hindus wear yellow clothes, make marigold flower garlands for worship and make yellow sweet-meats by adding saffron to them.

The four arms of Saraswati stand for the four-fold mind in Hindu philosophy. The white swan that she rides stands for purity and ‘viveka’ – discrimination between good and evil. The Veena (stringed instrument) that she plays stands for speech, music, arts and beauty. Her rosary of beads stands for the power and energy of letters, and also faith and devotion. She carries books representing the Vedas in another hand, whereas the fourth hand sometimes holds a lotus – representing creation, and the ability to stay pure in this world of evil.

Historically speaking, Bhagawan Krishṇa worshipped Saraswatiji on this day and became a master of the 16 arts. Today, Lord Shiva burned Kāmadeva, signifying the victory of wisdom over desire. In ancient times, dramas of Kālidāsa and other famous poets were enacted for audiences. In 1915, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya inaugurated the Benares Hindu University on this day. In Lahore (Pakistan), the day is celebrated as the Basant festival (involving kite flying and musical performances) in the memory of Hakikat Rai, a brave 12 year Hindu boy of Sialkot, who preferred death over forcible conversion to Islam in the year 1785 AD. Pakistani Muslims still celebrate this festival.

Vishal Agarwal

Patrika Team Change

As the Patrika editor for the last two years, I am honored to have been given the opportunity.

Thank you to my team members, Vidya Subramani, Manish Singhal, Noopur Narayan and Dolly Majumdar for your dedicated work on the Patrika for the last two years. My special appreciation goes to Manish, who has done an outstanding job giving a new life to the periodical by giving it a complete facelift.

I will also take this opportunity to welcome Anjali Agarwal as the new editor of the Patrika. Manish has kindly agreed to stay on to continue his wonderful work. My best wishes to the incoming team!

Padma Chintapalli
Makara Sankranti & Pongal

Makara Sankranti is celebrated as the harvest festival by Hindus all over the world. In that sense, Sankranti is the Thanksgiving festival originating from India, and records are there at least since 300 B.C. for the celebration of this annual event. This event follows the Sidereal solar calendar and is on the fourteenth of January, when the Sun moves from Cancer to Capricorn (Makara) in the celestial path, and starts to move northwards (Utharayanam). Sankranti is for worshipping Sun (the Universe) for light and rain that helps the crops, and thanking farmers and farm animals who provide us the food.

Food is considered as a privilege in Hindu scriptures, and is to be thanked for, shared with, and not to be wasted. Sun is considered in Gayatri Mantra as the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom. Saura, an ancient Hindu tradition worshipped Sun as God. The Konark Sun temple in Orissa is a famous temple for its unique architecture. The Utharayanam period is considered as an auspicious time. Bhishma Pitamaha (Grandfather), in Maha-Bharatha awaits Utharayanam, in a bed of arrows created for his penance as he requested Arjuna, his grandson. The Utharayanam is also considered as a morning period for Devas (Gods), as one human year is considered as one Deva day in the celestial reference of time.

In Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, a Maha Mela is conducted on Sankranti day. And it is the Kumbha Mela once every twelve years. During this day, the river bathing and Sun worship is the significance on the banks of the Ganga river. In West Bengal, the Sankranti is celebrated as Ganga Sagar. In Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, there are kite festivals to coincide with this festival. In Tamilnadu, there is a three day celebration: Bhogi (a day of decorations and colorful Rangoli in the house front), Pongal (worshipping Sun), Maatu Pongal (thanking farmers and farm animals).

The third day is also known as Kanu Pongal by sisters who pray for the well-being of their brothers, and brothers who give gifts to thank their sisters. In Punjab, it is Lohri and Magi with Bon fires, drums, and dance. The essence of Sankranti is really in respecting the Universe, and thanking the farmers, and farm animals, who provide us with food to live.

Shankar Rajagopalan

Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers to serve a helping hand in the day to day activities at the Temple. Volunteers wanted for various committees including front desk, parking, food, patrika, etc. You may please sign up on-line by clicking on the volunteer sign up form on our website www.hindumandirmn.org. Thanks!
Vaikuntha Ekadashi

Hindu Temple of Minnesota celebrated Vaikuntha Ekadashi on December 28, 2009. Following is a brief description of the religious significance of Vaikuntha Ekadashi.

Ekadashi (also known as eleven in Sanskrit) is celebrated on the 11th lunar day of each paksha (Shukla & Krishna) of the month. There are 24 Ekadashis in a year. Apart from them, there are two more Ekadashis that fall in the extra month that occurs every two and half years.

It is said that,

**Na GaayathryA para manthra: Na Maathu para dhaivatham**

**N KaasyA: paramam theertham Na EkAdsyaA : samam vratam**

(There is no manthram that is superior to Gaayathri manthram ; there is no God superior to the mother; there is no sanctifying holy place better than Kaasi and there is no vratam that is more sacred than EkAdasi Vratham.)

Vaikuntha Ekadasi is an important festival dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It falls on the 11th day of the month of Margashira (the Tamil month of Margazhi or December-January months in the English calendar). Vaikuntha Ekadesi festival is of great significance at the Tirupati Balaji Temple, Srirangam Sri Ranganatha Temple and at the Bhadrachalam Temple. In Kerala, it is known as Swarga Vathil Ekadashi.

There are numerous stories behind the Vaikuntha Ekadashi. It is believed that on this auspicious day the devas (Gods) and the asuras (Demons) churned the ksheera saagara (Ocean of Milk) to get amruta (Nectar of immortality), Kamadhenu (the Sacred Cow), Kalpa Vriksham (wish granting tree), Parijat Pushpam (Heavenly flower) etc. The most auspicious thing that happened during the churning of the ocean of milk is the appearance of Maha Lakshmi. The samudra manthana ended with the devas defeating the asuras. It was also on this day that the Lord Krishna gave Gitopadesha to Arjuna on the battlefield.

According to Padma Purana, the female energy of Lord Vishnu slayed demon Muran and protected the “Devas” (Gods). Impressed by the act, Lord Vishnu named the female energy “Ekadashi” and gave her the boon that those who worship “Ekadashi” on the day of her victory over Muran would reach “Vaikuntha” (the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu).

Ekadashi is about controlling the 5 sense organs (sight, sound, smell, touch & taste) and 5 motor organs (hand, feet, vocal chords, reproductive organs and excretory organs) and the mind. Ekadashi is all about controlling the 10 senses and the mind. Now-a-days, in Hindu religion, Ekadashi means a day to fast.

The fasting preparation starts on the day of Dashami. The person takes one sattvic meal on the day of the Dashami. Ekadashi day is meant for total fasting. Praying to Lord Vishnu is the order of the day. Fasting is broken on the next day (Dwadashi). Fasting gives a focused attention to the Lord, recuperates the digestive system and rejuvenates the body. According to Vishnu Purana, fasting on Vaikuntha Ekadashi is equivalent to fasting on the remaining 23 Ekadashis. In all cases, never torture your body in the name of religion. People with physical limitations can take fruits and milk. One certainly can bring a certain amount of flexibility in the way it is observed.
Manu Smriti says that if the world is to live in peace and prosperity, it is absolutely essential to propagate and cherish the Vedas. Baskar Gopalan is honored to be brought up in a Vedic family born in Kandamangalam Village near Tanjavore, Tamil Nadu, India to Sri K.S. Gopala Dekshidhar and (Late) Smt. Vijayalakshmi. His grandfather Subramaniya Dekshidhar had performed Soma Yagam (See below).

He currently lives in Maple Grove with his wife Banumathy, two daughters Vijaya and Vidhya and his dad Gopala Dekshidhar. He arrived in the United States (Houston) in April 1998 and was very pleased to see the Meenakshi Amman Temple in Houston. He also lived in California and enjoyed the pleasure of visiting the temple every week. When he moved to Minnesota in 2000, he never imagined that he would live so close to the temple and is much honored and blessed to volunteer at the temple. He is the webmaster for the temple website and has taken tremendous effort in introducing the technology to speed up the procedures. He also is a trustee member and participates in many important meetings at the temple. Baskar Gopalan holds a Masters degree in Computer Science from India and also has completed Masters Degree in Software Engineering from University of St Thomas, St. Paul, MN. He works as a consultant for major twin cities organization in Plymouth, MN.

His wife Banumathy is a Masters degree holder in Computer Science from India. She is working as Senior Programmer Analyst for a private company in Brooklyn Park, MN. His oldest daughter Vijaya is studying in 2nd grade. Vijaya is learning Bharathanantyam and Piano. She has performed in various cultural programs at the Temple. Vijaya also attends the HATS class at the temple. She is a very bright student and is selected in talent groups in her school. Swimming is her favorite activity. His youngest daughter Vidhya is 2 yrs old and keeps the whole family busy.

Baskar’s father, Gopala Dekshidhar is a Vedic Pundit and he is privileged to participate in many temple events. He has hosted a website called Kandamangalam.com to promote Sanathana Dharma and to help people around the world to perform various Hindu rituals. Baskar’s family is member of the Meenakshi Amman and Subramanya Swami Abhishekam group that meets twice a month at the temple. On 1st Friday (for Meenakshi Abhishekam) and on Shasti (for Subramanya Swami Abhishekam). They made many good friends within this group.

Baskar loves photography and has captured the various important events at the temple and posted them in the temple website. He is also learning Vedas from his dad and chants them at the temple whenever possible.

Note: Somayagam is a Yajna evolved by the great Indian saints in the Threthayuga for the prosperity of all living beings in the entire universe. It has gained much greater relevance in this conflict-ridden modern world marked by frequent wars, natural calamities, cut-throat competition and ecological disasters. The Yajna is globally recognized as a means of fostering universal harmony and brotherhood among mankind. It is said that, in the Puranic period, Somarasa was offered to the Devas to enable them to lead a nectar-like life.

Noopur Narayan
Thaipusam a Hindu festival celebrated mostly by the Tamil community on the full moon in the Tamil month of Thai (Jan/Feb). It is also referred to as Thaipooyam or Thaipoooyam in the Malayalam language. The word Thai-pusam is derived from the month name Thai and Pusam, which refers to a star that is at its highest point during the festival. The festival commemorates both the birthday of Murugan (also Subramaniam), the youngest son of god Shiva and his wife Parvati, and the occasion when Parvati gave Murugan a vel (spear) so he could vanquish the evil demon Soorapadman. (courtesy: wikipedia).

On 1/29/10 evening, our tamil devotees, celebrated Thaipoosam with pomp and flair. Some 50 plus families participated in the function where the priests, Shri Murali Bhattar, Shri Jignesh Joshi, Shri Gowtham Sharmaji, and Shri Ravikanth Chilkapati performed the wedding celebration of Subramanya Swamy amidst the chanting of the mantras and the devotees singing. A group of children performed a skit highlighting how Lord Subramaniyan landed from Mount Kailash to southern montains of Palani (in Tamil Nadu) where he took abode and became the famous God, known by many names amongst them, Karthikeyan, Skanda and Murugan. Many songs were sung honoring Subramnaya Smamy, by Veena, Nirmala, and the students of Vidyapeetam Indian Cultural School. The program ended with a sumptuous dinner and it was yet another wonderful evening at the temple for all those devotees who though far from our home country are enjoying the same rich traditions at our Hindu Mandir.

Thai Poosam is the most powerful day to pray to the Vel and Muruga for destruction of all enemies, diseases and debts.

Anjali Agarwal
The 2009 Diwali Program hosted by the Hindu Society of Minnesota, once again exceeded expectations and put forth a spectacular bonanza. The evening started off with sumptuous food catered by Bombay Bistro. The initial socialization time with family and friends was a starter to the show that everyone was waiting to watch and what a show it was!

The program started with the chanting of “MAHA LAKSHMI ASHTAKAM” by the temple pundits. A tribute to the multi diverse country that is our, Bharat, with all its twenty-two states and union territories, was represented by young children in the traditional attire who walked on stage to the music of A.R. Rahman. We did not forget our adopted state, the United States of America, the land we all choose to make our home. Dr. Kumud Sane and Mrs. Mythili Chari took some time to commend and appreciate the Shilipis, who worked on our magnificent temple and transformed a dream to reality with their untold talent and dedication. Dr. Sane also gave a brief introduction to the HATS (Hindu American Temple School) program, the latest venture at the Mandir, which is bonanza for families with young children who want to learn more about our culture and religion.

The program showcased all our frontiers from the north Punjabi Banghra to the eastern Kathak, and southern coast of Kerala, celebrating its Oman and the deep southern state of Tamil Nadu with its folk dance and the western part of India famous of its Garba and Dandia. The entire 2 hours of entertainment was worthy in all aspects, from watching classical performances, Bharatnatyam to Bollywood dhamaka. Nothing was left untold. Our pride and joy, Mr. A.R. Rahman’s Oscar award winning song, “Jai Ho” was also performed with gusto. A fantastic tribute to the King of Pop, Michael Jackson’s thriller had the auditorium in uproar.

The program had many lighter moments with jokes and commercials well written and performed by our talented youth. The MC did a splendid job of keeping the program moving at a steady pace. The show culminated with a fashion show that had everyone vying to maybe change professions…… We discovered new talent, any takers…..? Manish Malhotra? You need to visit Minneapolis!

Three Cheers to the Three Musketeers, Chetna Atreya, Sangeeta Chopra and Madhu Jain, the Cultural Committee leadership trio. You three have once again excelled. We give you an “A+” for putting forth a show that will be talked about until next year at least!

Anjali Agarwal
THE HINDU TEMPLE OF MINNESOTA
Proudly Presents
“INDIA’S COLORFUL CANVAS—HOLI”

Holi Show 2010
Saturday, February 27th, 2010

Venue – Nath Auditorium
Hindu Temple of MN
10530 Troy Lane N
Maple Grove, MN 55311

The Hindu Temple of Minnesota cordially invites you to join us as we celebrate
“HOLI – Festival of Colors”.
Colors – Red, Green, Yellow and countless,
A day’s canvas – a riot of colors
Lively crowd running hither and thither
Rainbow of colors, dashing from every nook and corner....

Come one, come all,
To our delicious chaat and food stalls...

Food Stalls & Rang Biranga Bazaar – 4:30 to 7:00 PM
Holi Program – 7:00 PM Sharp.

Event Ticket (Dinner NOT included)
VIP - $50.00, Adults: $ 12.00
All Participants & Kids (5-12 years): $ 8.00
Food Tickets will be sold at the mandir during the Bazaar.

For Ticket Reservations:
Madhu Jain: 763-493-2635 madhujaincool@yahoo.com
Sangeeta Chopra: 651-387-6552 sangeetachopra@edinarealty.com

Global Bazaar Booth Reservation / Brochure Ad and Food Stalls:
Madhu Jain: 763-493-2635 madhujaincool@yahoo.com
Sangeeta Chopra: 651-387-6552 sangeetachopra@edinarealty.com

With best compliments,
Hindu Temple of Minnesota Executive Committee - Cultural Coordinators
Chetna Atreya - 763-218-9750 chetna.dutt@gmail.com
Madhu Jain - 763-493-2635 madhujaincool@yahoo.com
Sangeeta Chopra  - 651-387-6552 sangeetachopra@edinarealty.com