

SPANDAN

G.S.C.A. Newsletter – SPRING ISSUE – 2011 (Issue 1, Volume 1)



Students of sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik create a sand image of Goddess Saraswati on the eve of Saraswati puja at Puri beach in Orissa.

Message from the Chairman's Desk



Happy New Year to all of you. We welcome the 2011 and bid goodbye to 2010. Actually last year posed great challenges to all members. Unprecedented global economic uncertainty affected most of us, in one way or the other. Even we had to cut short some of programs due to lack of funds. However, GSCA members joined hands to raise funds, against all the odds, and helped sustain our regular programs like Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Holiday Party for the enjoyment of our members and patrons. We survived the toughest year with 30 inches of snowfall in our area causing total shutdown of roads, transportation and airports. Days after, everything is back to normal. That is called human challenge to nature's play. We are not looking back. We will look forward to make our lives more meaningful with our family and friends, in the years to come. Recently, we successfully completed our latest event, Saraswati Puja, with a new brand of cultural programs, Arts and craft and essay competition for the young generations.

Summer is coming with so many festivals at our doorsteps. Tagore's 150th anniversary on May 14, Ananda Utshav on May 27,28, and 29, NABC in July 1,2,&3, followed by GSCA Picnic on July 16. I guess lot of us would like to postpone visiting India this summer as we have plenty of fun right here. We are thankful to various organizations who arranged this summer extravaganza for our enjoyment.

Lastly, I'd like to share my recent visit to Egypt. I had a glimpse of people who lived 5000 years ago, with Art, Architecture, Religion and a Civilization of their own. They were masters of engineering and medical science, made excellent perfumes and preservatives and built Massive Temples, Pyramids, Royal Burial Caves, 500 feet deep inside mountains that dwarf modern engineering. These massive structures are being discovered, out of new excavations, almost on a daily basis, in various parts of Egypt. The experience of cruising along the legendary Nile River onboard the most luxurious ships with fabulous foods and Middle Eastern entertainment will ever remain in my memory. Enjoy the Newsletter. Stay warm and safe.

- Sadhan Guha, Chairman, GSCA

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Upcoming GSCA events:

1. Annual General Meeting, Saturday, Mar 26, 2011
2. Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary Celebration – May 14 & May 15, 2011
3. GSCA Annual Picnic at Mercer County Park, Sunday, July 17, 2011

More details on **PAGE 10** or visit www.gsc.us for the complete listing.

The New Health Care Reforms: Shedding Light on the **Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act** By **Adityadeb Sanyal (Riju)**

As many of you know, Congress passed a landmark health care reform bill on March 23, 2010, to expand health care insurance and delivery. At the time that the law was passed, there was so much false information being circulated about the bill, that very few people could make an accurate judgment of the changes taking place. For example, 4 out of 10 Americans thought they would have to change the health care they had, but really, most people will not have to change anything. Many of us will not notice any difference because the law is aimed at those having the hardest time finding affordable health coverage, namely low-income individuals and small businesses. To give a clearer picture, let me outline some of the main differences between the current health care system and the new one.

Pre-Existing Conditions

- **Current System:** Health insurance companies are allowed to deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, a medical condition that you already had before signing up for coverage. Because health insurance companies in the U.S. want to make profits, they avoid paying for people who need health care the most. Insurance companies can also charge higher premiums, which are the amount you pay each month to stay insured, in order to chase away their most costly clients.
- **New System:** Health insurance companies will not be able to refuse to cover people with pre-existing conditions or raise their premiums. This policy has started for children in September 2010 and will start for adults in 2014. For example, Patrick, a single dad who lost his job, has a fourteen-year old daughter with scoliosis. With the new bill, insurance firms cannot deny his daughter coverage or raise premiums as they did before, saving him from falling into massive debt.

Insurance Coverage Requirement

- **Current System:** 50.7 million Americans are uninsured. Uninsured people do not pay premiums, so their hospital bills get spread out to everyone else. In 2009, to cover uninsured people, the average insured American paid an extra \$410 in annual premiums while families paid an extra \$1100. In addition, only 4 out of 10 adults under the poverty line have Medicaid, the health coverage for low-income people, because of its current income restrictions, leaving many uninsured.
- **New System:** Every American citizen will be required to have health coverage in 2014, otherwise they must pay a yearly fine starting at \$95. With more healthy people purchasing health insurance, the premiums will drop for everyone. Medicaid will expand to cover more than 16 million people and federal subsidies will also be available for low-income individuals to buy private insurance.

Minimum Health Benefits and Online Health Exchanges

- **Current System:** Some insurance plans known as “limited benefit” health plans are very cheap, but offer very little coverage, so if you have a serious illness, you will be in debt. Many insurance companies also do not disclose all their payment information before signing up and often have annual and lifetime limits on each person’s medical expenses. These limits can cause debt during a serious illness.
- **New System:** All private health care plans in 2014 must include some minimum benefits including emergency services, hospitalization, maternity and newborn care, mental health care, prescription drugs, rehabilitative service, preventive service, and oral and vision care. There will be no “health czar” in the government that will dictate every single person’s coverage; this is just a minimum guideline. In 2014, the government will set up a “health insurance exchange” online where customers will have all the payment information available to them and can compare plans among different insurance companies to select the plan that is best for them. Small businesses can also select these plans to provide health insurance for their workers. All health insurance companies must ban annual and lifetime limits on an individual’s medical costs by 2014.

Health Care Cost-Effectiveness

- **Current System:** The U.S. spends more than \$2 trillion on health care every year, more than any other developed country, yet America still ranks relatively low on life expectancy and infant mortality. Medicare, the health coverage for senior citizens, costs three times as much in some places than in others and much of the money often goes to administrative costs rather than health care. In addition, many doctors administer multiple tests to increase their paychecks rather than effectively treat the patient, resulting in wasteful medical spending.
- **New System:** Medicare providers will undergo payment cuts as an incentive to become more efficient. The government will also distribute money from high-spending Medicare providers to low-spending providers. Pharmaceutical companies will provide 50% discounts on prescription drugs for Medicare customers after they have paid a certain amount on drugs each year to help close the “donut hole” in senior citizens’ prescription drug costs. New plans will cover preventive services such as immunizations, blood tests, and screenings. With greater prevention, less people will have to be treated, reducing medical costs. There will also be federal funding for comparative effectiveness research to evaluate different methods for treatment and help doctors decide which method is best. Doctors that use this research to select the most effective tests and cut down on unnecessary tests will be given rewards. Hospitals treating Medicare patients that are readmitted for heart attacks, heart failure, and pneumonia will be paid less as punishment for their poor treatment. In addition, hospitals that receive federal grants for treating uninsured patients, especially in inner cities, will no longer need these grants because everyone will be required to be insured.

It is quite clear that the current health care system is inadequate in providing coverage and is hurting the people that need health care coverage the most. The government has a plan to expand health insurance in order to make health care delivery more efficient and cost-effective. While there will be sacrifices along the way, such as higher taxes for the wealthiest 2% and less tax deductions on medical expenses for the middle class, the overall outcome will be lower premiums and better health care coverage in the U.S.

For more information, read **The New Health Care System: Everything You Need to Know** by David Nather or visit **www.healthcare.gov**.

Growing Up With GSCA

By Arpana (Molly) Debroy

When I think about my childhood growing up in New Jersey, some of my fondest and most poignant memories are associated with celebrating Saraswati Puja and Durga Puja with family and friends. In 1975 a few young enthusiastic Bengalis including my father Asit Ray, Dwipen Ghosh, the late Ramen Chakravarty and the late Satya N Ray founded the Garden State Puja Committee (GSPC). The 1976 Saraswati Puja marked my introduction to our organization. For our parents, organizing and participating in Pujas gave a sense of belonging and community, something they missed greatly since leaving India for the U.S. It was an opportunity for them to bring a treasured part of Bengali culture to their newly adopted homes and experience it with others facing the same struggles and having similar feelings of fear and hope of an unknown future in a new land.

Thanks to Pujas, I was lucky to have met many of my childhood Bengali friends through the rapid growth of members, some of whom I am still in touch with. I can still clearly picture the school gymnasium where the early Saraswati Pujas were held. The smell of marigolds, the image of trays filled to the brim with colorful, freshly-cut fruits are still fresh in my mind, as are the sounds of the ghanta (bell) rung by the priest and the Mashis' powerful ululation attracting everyone's attention. I also remember my mother explaining to me the importance of fasting before Anjali and praying to Ma Saraswati for help with my studies, what to do with the Charnamrita scooped into my hand, and telling me to bow my head for the eagerly awaited finale of Santir Jal showered on us by the priest. While offering Anjali, we tried our best to repeat the difficult Sanskrit mantras which we did not quite understand, but somehow the words still resonated with us.

Along with the religious aspects of Puja came the cultural programs. At first we would spend most of our time playing in the hallways. We would periodically watch certain segments while taking breaks from our overzealous games of tag and hide-n-go-seek. As we grew older however, we took more of an interest in the programs and started to participate in them regularly. At the 1979 Saraswati Puja, I participated in a children's dance drama directed by the late Kuntala Kakima (Bagchi), which was photographed in the Jersey City newspaper. Our organization was recognized for the performance at a time when the presence of Indians in the U.S. was scarce. Needless to say, my young friends and I were quite excited to see our own picture in the paper! Over the years, I continued to participate in dance programs at each Saraswati Puja, mostly looking forward to the fun times with my friends at the rehearsals leading up to the day of the show. I was taught dance recitals by different choreographers, such as Suparna Guha, from styles of Rabindra Sangeet to classical and folk. From then on, the anticipation of Puja was embedded in me.

In 1981, GSPC embarked on organizing its first Durga Puja. By that time, I had started taking Bharata Natyam lessons at the Academy of Indian Dance under the tutelage of Reeta Baidyaroy. Dance became a commitment rather than just spending a few minutes on stage during cultural programs. I learned about the different styles of each region, and the mythology of our rich culture and religion. My younger sister Urmi started at the dance school soon after. As we matured, a respect grew for the ancient art forms of dance. We were fortunate to be instructed by Gurujis from Kolkata through the school, which allowed us to showcase intense dance dramas at Durga Puja.

In 1992, our Puja moved to Plainfield, following a decision by the senior members to part ways from GSPC and form the Garden State Cultural Association(GSCA). The younger folks were not affected by the transition very much, since most of the management by Kakus and Mashis of the Puja remained the same. However, I do recall many late night meetings between my father, Sandip Mama, Narayan Kaku and others discussing serious matters during the partition. The future of the organization was in jeopardy and it was a stressful time for all of them. Thanks to a great deal of hard work and determination, GSCA grew to be even more successful than before.

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Growing Up With GSCA (continued)

By Arpana (Molly) Debroy

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In my college years, there seemed to be a surge of youth members of the organization. With the inspiration and guidance from Prasun Kaku (Chakravarty), Narayan Kaku (Roy) and Dipen Kaku (Dutta), I was asked to help stage "Ramayana" at two different times and also "Pujarini", with a great cast of kids. There were countless hours of rehearsals involving memorizing lines, audio recording, dance, and costume. The kids all shared a common thread of showing pride in their performances, which ultimately brought success. These "kids" including Rana, Guddi, Urmi, Soumi, Neil, Shumona, Aditi, Sourav, Anupam, Kingshuk, Rituparna, Lia (Dutta), Mala (Sarcar), Partha and Pallav are now well established adults in our community. As the years went on, my sister, Urmi and I continued to choreograph dance recitals intermittently at Saraswati and Durga Pujas. It was harder to manage large scale productions with the both of us pursuing our higher education and careers. We made it a point to stay involved in any way we could, and dabbled in judging art competitions, collecting donations/dues, and helping with prasad/food distribution. These experiences made me appreciate how hard the dedicated organizers work to make these events come together

During the past decade, GSCA has made leaps and bounds thanks in large parts to the efforts of newer members taking on leadership roles. With the help of founding members, they have taken the initiative and made the commitment to take GSCA into a new era, facilitated by technology and detailed planning. New successful initiatives that have been implemented successfully in recent years are a dynamic and modern website, pre-registration during Durga Puja and other events, the GSCA newsletter Spandan, crowd management techniques at events, and many others.

Growing up with GSCA was like growing up in an extended family. Although it is sometimes a challenge for us with today's busy schedule to participate in the puja, my family and I try not to miss a single one...embracing generational friends, catching up with the newer ones, and watching the fresh faces of children that continue the tradition. In last year's Durga Puja, my five-year old son, Gourav, started participating in the art competition. It gave me a sense of things coming full circle and a glimpse of the satisfaction our parents must feel to have established an organization from the ground up, that keeps alive old traditions. Seeing my sons and other children participate makes me feel proud to be a part of it all from the beginning, and confident that our traditions will continue for generations to come. Being a part of GSCA has had a great influence on shaping me as a Bengali, an Indian-American and a person. I have gained strong community spirit and a sense of belonging and pride in who I am. This pride and spirit will inspire me to instill these same values and traditions in my own children.

THE JERSEY JOURNAL, MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 1979

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ASIAN LORE — The Junior Puja Dancers perform at Martin Luther King School in Jersey City as part of a program of Indian culture sponsored by the Garden State Saraswati Puja Festival Committee.

Amader Rannaghar

By Bimal Saha



It was on that eventful Saturday in 1984 when my wife and I went to see the Garden State Durga Puja in Jersey City that my association with GSPC (Garden State Puja Committee) began. We arrived there a little before 6:00pm and found the kitchen was closed and there was no food being served. We were hungry but we realized it was our fault because we had reached pretty late. This was a good lesson for me and a blessing in disguise. I understood the patron's side of things and what they expect from the kitchen. So, the following year, in 1985, I joined the kitchen to help them. Ramen Chakraborty and Ramen Nandi were the main Cooks at that time. I learned how to cook Bhuna Khichuri from Ramen Chakraborty (RamenDa).

Many years later, in 1992, Garden State Cultural Association was formed and started Durga puja and Saraswati puja in the Plainfield high school in Plainfield, NJ. RamenDa, Ramen Nandi, Sujit Mukherji and I were in-charge of the kitchen. We cooked food, washed pots and pans, as well as cleaned the floor. Sandip Saha helped us wash pots and pans and cleaning the kitchen at night. We didn't have enough money to hire anybody at that time. Sandip and RamenDa used store coupons to buy groceries. Ramen Nandi went to farmers Market to buy vegetables to save money. This went on for several years while we worked hard and enjoyed every minute of it. We were such a good team!

After coming to Plainfield High school, I changed the recipe of goat meat curry, adding a few ingredients and making it more delicious to the patrons taste. It is vastly different than cooking in a restaurant. For the last 18 years I am cooking the Goat meat Curry for GSCA. Also we changed from Bhuna Khichuri to plain (patla) Khichuri by the demand of our patrons. We always tried to ensure that everybody got food and no one stayed hungry even if they came late, especially on Saturday. Four years ago, we estimated that about fifteen to seventeen hundred people would show up but over two thousand five hundred people came that Saturday. We cooked again to accommodate the additional patrons and used up all of Sunday's groceries in doing so. We even bought the groceries from the supermarket to serve our patrons who came very late. It was hard to estimate in those days. Now we have better idea because of the pre-registration system that was introduced a couple of years back.

Sadly, Sujit Mukherjee moved to California, Ramen Nandi went to help Bharat Shevasram Shangha, and five years ago Ramen Chakraborty (RamenDa) passed away. I was left alone in the kitchen. My brother Nirmal started helping me after that. Benu Paul is a great help in the kitchen and Sandip Saha is the last person to leave kitchen, which helps me a lot. He makes sure everybody gets food even if someone comes late. Our young members do not like to work in the kitchen. In early year, we used to cook goat meat 150lb to 200lb but now we are cooking 700lb to 800 lb. So we are trying to hire helper from outside now. Believe me; I don't get time to offer Anjali to Ma Durga while I'm in the kitchen. So, cooking is my prayer and Anjali to Ma Durga...Mother is happy when her children are happy. Also, it is my service to my people whom I love.

What did I learn from GSCA in all these years? I learned to respect others and their opinions; not to get upset when my idea is disapproved; work as a team; and not to bring our own agenda.

Spandan Tidbit: There's Water on the Moon

Last year, NASA sent a Centaur rocket into a shadowed lunar crater and found the first signs that the moon is full of water. Technically, the LCROSS (Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite) mission sent back the first samples of water at the end of 2009, but the final numbers weren't in until October.

This crater, near the Moon's South Pole, contained 154 kg (341 pounds) of water, and almost 5.6% of the soils there could be moist. Also, in March, a radar instrument on India's Chandrayaan-I orbiter found millions of tons of water at the North Pole, too.

RECIPE: Braised Rabbit with Marsala Wine and Wild Mushrooms

by Anindita Dey



(pictures above are not authentic...just representations of the recipe)

Ingredients:

3 tablespoons olive oil, 1 cup diced onions, 1 cup sliced celery, 1 cup peeled and sliced carrots, 1/3 cup peeled and sliced parsnips, 3 cloves garlic peeled (optional, but it adds a lot of flavor to the stock), 2 cups [Marsala wine](#), 2 rabbits, either whole or cut into serving pieces, blanched as described above if needed, 6 large dried [shiitake mushrooms](#), a.k.a. Chinese black mushrooms, 1 bay leaf, 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves, 1 teaspoon salt, freshly ground [black pepper](#) to taste, 4 tablespoons butter divided, 8 oz fresh shiitake mushrooms, stems removed, caps sliced thinly, 2 tablespoons butter, 2 cups thinly sliced onions, 3 cloves garlic, finely minced, 2 cups Marsala wine, divided, 1 1/2 [tablespoon tomato paste](#), [Kitchen Bouquet](#) or thick soy sauce as needed, [Roux Brun](#)..(with half butter and half flour) recipe given below, salt and [freshly ground pepper](#) to taste, 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves, 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves, finely chopped

Method: Heat olive oil at the bottom of your stockpot or large [Dutch oven](#) on medium heat. When it is hot, add the onions, celery, carrots, parsnips, garlic cloves, and cook, stirring until the onion is translucent. Lay the rabbit down on top of the vegetables, and pour the first two cups of Marsala wine over everything. Add enough water to just barely cover the rabbits. Add the dried shiitake mushrooms, bay leaf, the first measure of thyme, the teaspoon of salt and the freshly ground pepper. Bring to a nice slow simmer. Do not allow to boil. Turn the heat down and allow it to cook uncovered for 1-1/2 hours at the same slow simmer. Test the rabbit meat—if it is properly fork tender as described above, remove it from the pot, drizzling a bit of the cooking liquid over it to keep it moist as it cools. Turn the heat up on the liquid in the pot and bring to a boil. Cook the stock down until it is reduced by half. While the stock is reducing, melt the 1 tablespoon of the first measure of butter in a sauté pan over medium high heat and allow it to become foamy. Then, add 1/4 of the fresh shiitake mushrooms, and cook, stirring until they are lightly browned and. Set aside in a bowl. Repeat for the remaining mushrooms, using one tablespoon of butter and 1/4 of the mushrooms for each pan.

Take the second measure of butter and melt it in the same pan you cooked the mushrooms in. Add the onions, salt lightly and cook until they are a deep golden color. Add the garlic and keep cooking and stirring until the onions are a medium brown color and the garlic is golden. Deglaze the pan with 1/2 cup of the second measure of Marsala wine. Add the onions and garlic to the mushrooms which are set aside. The remaining 1 1/2 cups of Marsala wine goes into a small saucepan. Over medium heat, simmer until it reduces by half. Turn off heat and set aside. When the stock has reduced by half, set a colander over a large bowl, and scoop all of the vegetables out of the stock. Squeeze out the dried mushrooms into the bowl, and then squish the cooked vegetables in the colander so that all of their juices run into the bowl. Discard the dried mushrooms and vegetables, rinse out the colander and line it with cheesecloth. Pour the remaining stock into the bowl, straining it into the cheesecloth lined colander. Wash out your pot and put it back on low heat. Add the strained stock, the reduced Marsala wine and bring to a boil.

Heat your roux up in a small sauté pan until it is bubbling. Scrape the roux into the boiling stock and whisk like mad until it thickens nicely. Whisk in the tomato paste until it is completely combined. Stir in the [sautéed mushrooms](#) and [caramelized onions](#). If the sauce is too pale, add a teaspoon or so of [Kitchen Bouquet](#) or thick soy sauce. Remove the rabbit meat from the bones and add to the sauce, making certain to not accidentally slip any bones into the pot. Stir the thyme and rosemary into the sauced rabbit, and season to taste with [salt and pepper](#). Serve over wide noodles or mashed potatoes—This should feed up to six or eight hungry adults.

[Recipe for Roux Brun](#)

What you use as a stirring utensil is up to you; I prefer a wooden or bamboo spoon or paddle. You stir the flour into the fat until a pasty mass is formed—it should, at first, look rather like wet sand. The perfect texture is the kind of [sand and water mixture](#) you would use to make a sand castle— Anything less solid will be what is termed a “slack roux” and it will, as it cooks, become too thin and will lack much thickening ability. If your roux is too liquidy from the beginning, add a bit of flour—a tablespoon or so at a time, to correct the texture. Sometimes the fat will absorb a bit more flour than an equal amount. Don't worry about it, just stir it in, and keep stirring. And, when I say keep stirring, I mean, you want to make sure your implement gets all around that pan, on all sides, and across the center.

Why do I do this? Because the way roux cooks, is it cooks from the bottom up. The flour-fat mixture on the bottom begins to brown, and if you leave it on the bottom, without stirring it back into the rest of the mass of roux, it can burn, and then ruin the entire batch. So, the purpose of stirring is to continually move the roux that is cooking off the bottom and into the rest of the roux, thus allowing more of the cooler, uncooked roux to get into contact with the hotter, bottom part of the pan. This action makes the roux cook evenly. How long do you cook your roux? until it's done :)

A Day as a Dollar Bill

By Arunabha Debnath

Ah, how good it felt to be fresh, out fo the printing press. However, that feeling didn't last long as I was immediately snatched up by greedy hands, ending up stuffed into a dishonest employee's pocket. As he walked out, I could hear the cacophony of machines making dollar bills like myself.

As the man drove away, singing off-tune to Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance," I took a little hiatus from the unintentional torture of listening to that noise he called singing, and promptly fell asleep. I woke up realizing that the car had stopped. Suddenly, huge fingers pulled me out of that tight suffocating pocket and handed me to another person with smelly, greasy hands. As soon as I adjusted to the light, I realized that we were at a gas station. I saw the man drive away with a bag of chips in his hands, leaving me behind only to be stuffed into the rather spacious cash register.

However, my seclusion didn't last very long. Just five minutes later, I heard shouting, "This is a hold up! Give me all your money!" Suddenly, I was out in the open air again, grimacing at the lights that made my eyes burn. But, these thoughts were immediately kicked out of my mind when I was roughly grabbed by a boy, who was not more than 15 years old, holding a gun. Seeing the weapon, I instantly fainted.

When I came to, I was being bounced up and down as if I was on a see-saw. I realized I was in a bag. I heard gasping, shouting, and sirens. While this was going on, someone was shouting into a bullhorn maybe, "Stop and put your hands up or we will shoot!" The boy sarcastically replied, "Sure, you will." However, his doggedness suddenly left him as a shot rang out. He collapsed to the ground, yelling, "My leg! It hurts so bad!" The officers ran out of their car, snatched the money that had fallen out of the bag and called their colleagues to come in.

As my adrenaline wore down, I realized that these events had really taken a toll on me (one dollar bills get tired very quickly) and once again, fell asleep.

As I awoke for the second time that day, I heard two men talking about Texas. After a brief conversation, I was stuffed into an envelope marked, "US Treasury" and handed over to the other man. I was very curious where I was headed. So while pondering, I didn't really hear the off-tune song that should have been very familiar to me. As I was taken out, I heard that same cacophony of machines that I had heard at birth. After a long journey...I was finally home!

This was the winning essay in the junior category at the Saraswati Puja Essay Competition held on February 5, 2011.

Bengali Calendar 1416

(March to May 2011)

March (Phanqun – Chaitra)

2nd --- Shivaratri

3rd ---- Birth Tithi of
Bamakhya

6th --- [Birth tithi of Ramakrishna](#)

19th --- [Dolyatra](#)

20th ---- Holi

April (Chaitra- boisakh1418)

9th --- Basanti Pujo

11th --- Annapurna Puja

13th -- Neel Puja & Upabas

14th --- Charak

15th --- [Nabobarsha](#) (New Year)

16th --- Mahabir Jayanti

May (Boisakh—Jaishtho)

6th -- [Akhshay tritiya](#)

9th --- [Birth Day of Rabindranath](#)

17th --- Budha Purnima

More in the next issue...

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Teenager Woes

By Ankita Chakrabarti

Teenagers are often the most misunderstood people in any setting; whether it be at home, with family, or friends. Teenagers just happen to be transfixed at that awkward stage – between childhood and becoming an adult; representing neither the innocence associated with children nor the full maturity that blossoms upon coming of age. These youth are commonly described as ‘moody, difficult, and impossible to understand.’ Teenage years though, are probably the most stressful and perplexing of all ages; where a soft haven is hard to locate and a myriad of new issues concerning life, health, and studies must be dealt with.

Firstly, teenagers are extremely misunderstood by those around them because they’re simply one in a plethora of types of young people with varying mentalities. With influences shaping teens from all around, parents in particular often feel lost when they realize they no longer have complete control over their child. Negative peer pressure may be causing a teen to bend towards the opposite direction, wavering between what is right or wrong. “Should I be taking drugs or consuming alcohol?” “Why don’t my parents understand; it’s the popular trend in society?” These are thoughts that run through a teenager’s mind constantly and sometimes they do cave in to those around them. This strikes parents and elders as an extremely bad thing that their children are not bound to any morals, but once again they do not fully understand the propelling cause behind their teen’s actions.

Drugs, drinks, sexual activities, and violence are all prominent issues in our world. So elders should open their eyes to see that teenagers face these tough decisions from day to day, and maybe increased understanding will come hand in hand with these realizations.

Trends – perhaps the most powerful influence on young people anywhere. Teens particularly possess not enough experience and skill to realize what is wrong for them to do and what will drastically alter their near future. Elders have to consider that teens already have enough on their plate with loads of school work, parties/hanging out with friends, and worrying about college or grades, when the mind is busy trying to sort out all this, the common sense of doing what is best for oneself and not just modeling the popular trend is definitely not so common. Teens do not have proper judgment and can’t discern what would be the best possible thing to do. So, additionally, adults must keep in mind that the thought process that comes granted for them does not flow nearly as easily for teens. Therefore, next time you see a teen wearing indecent clothing, smoking, or ditching school with friends, before completely berating and insulting them in your head, take a moment to consider why they may have been influenced to do so; it may alter your judgment significantly.

Most importantly, it should be known that teenagers lead the same hectic lives as adults and elders, but without a clear game plan in mind. What is the final outcome? Muddled feelings, unclear explanations, and possible depression may result. For all elders who truly believe that teens are a pain and cannot be understood, take an insight back into your younger years. An accurate look into your teen’s troubled current life can be given when considering your past problems.

Difficult teachers that are majorly disliked, ferocious bullies, girls gossiping about every iota of current drama, financial difficulties, college admissions – can one’s head be kept completely cool and calm amidst all these issues? So please just reconsider a teenager’s position, maturity level, and amount of dealings in life – perhaps elders will discover these ‘woes’ are not so hard to understand after all. A teenager is in fact a gem in society, treated as an ordinary rock, and adults must clear their harsh judgment to reveal the underlying diamond that lies hidden.

This was the winning essay in the senior category at the Saraswati Puja Essay Competition held on February 5, 2011.

Upcoming GSCA events

Annual General Meeting, Saturday, Mar 26, 2011

Edison First Aid Squad #2, 12 noon to 5 p.m.

Please join in this important members-only annual event. We will discuss GSCA annual budget and need your approval. You will also be able to hear reports from various committees. The newly elected Board of Trustees will be announced, and several other important topics will be discussed. Hear and be heard.

There are no admission fees for members and their kids. Lunch will be served along with beverages at 12 noon.

Please be on time.

Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary Celebration

Several cultural organizations of the tri-state area including GSCA have joined hands to have a historic, two-day celebration of Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary. Note: GSCA will celebrate this event in lieu of Baishakhi. GSCA is also considering staging its in-house musical production at this event. Please support our team by attending. They need your cheers!

Organized by: **Cultural Association of Bengal (New York), Garden State Cultural Association (GSCA), Kallol of New Jersey, New Jersey Puja Association (NJPA), and many other organizations**

May 14, 2011

Mastrobuono Theater & Nicholas Music Center
85 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Douglass Campus - Rutgers University

May 15, 2011

Hindu Temple
Bowne Street Flushing,
New York, NY

For more information please visit... <http://www.cabusa.org/rabindranath/index.html>

GSCA Annual Picnic at Mercer County Park

Sunday, July 17, 2011

Majority of the members voted in an anonymous survey conducted by the BOT for trying out this different venue: Mercer County Park, Princeton Junction. The BOT is pleased to announce that we are able to reserve our picnic spot at this new venue for this year. Moreover, the entry fees for members and their kids are already included in the annual membership, which means members attending the Picnic will not have to pay any additional fees.

As always, we will have a lot of fun, games and food. If you are interested to explore our new picnic spot, please visit

http://www.state.nj.us/counties/mercer/commissions/park/mercer_park.html

End Quote:

“All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark.”

- Swami Vivekananda

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