

Summer

2011



# Sandesh

“The Message”

A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley

## From Editors' Desk

We thought the unusually hot summer required an unusual theme for this issue. We hope to 'cool you off' with childhood memories of summers spent here and in India. In several parts of India, sizzling hot, humid summer days are broken up by cool monsoon rains, soothing bodies and souls. We hope you will find the stories of hot summers and monsoon rains fascinating and they will take you down your own memory lane. On the journey, you may want to take with you one of the refreshing drinks for which we have included recipes. Happy summer!

Sandesh

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Publication

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## Indian summers of my youth

By B. S. Sridhar

The magical months of summer! The one season, we in Wisconsin so eagerly look forward to while digging ourselves out of foot deep snow in the bone-chilling cold of December, January, February.... Yes, I feel entitled to my summers and enjoy them immensely – the picnics, barbecues, camping, graduation parties, and even some boating. This year, my wife and I have planned a two-week vacation that takes us through Italy and Paris. Yet, I feel that as we age beyond childhood, our summer indulgences have become too planned, predictable, contrived, carefully budgeted, and technologically rendered more comfortable (cars, air-conditioning, GPS, Internet).

Maybe it is my age or my faulty glorified memories that I treasure the memories of summers from my childhood over the present. We had little money, but, we had plenty of time, imagination, spontaneity, and curiosity that made our summers very memorable.

Much of my childhood was spent in the relatively small, unsophisticated, almost rural towns of the state of Karnataka. Typically, summers meant escaping to Bengaluru, my ancestral hometown that is situated 3000 feet above the sea level. Before globalization manifested into non-stop immigration, and ruthless defoliation, Bengaluru had a very pleasant climate. Its summers were gorgeous with temperatures ranging between 70 and 80 F. No sooner the schools would close, we would board the train to Bengaluru to escape the 110 plus heat of towns like Raichur, Bidar and Gangavathi. The train would slither between the hot granite rock formations, rumbling across the steel bridges spanning over near-

dry rivers, reaching for comfort in the cool clean air of Bengaluru. The rail cars would be packed beyond capacity with other summer escapees, like the proverbial can of sardines. The hot air of the Deccan plains would rush through the windows, making travel even more miserable. Tempers would flare. Children would cry. Lacking refrigeration, our packed lunches would have become inedible. We would all look for relief. That is when some enterprising fellow travelers would cover the windows with removable screens made of a fragrant fiber called *khas* (vetiver). Within minutes the hot rushing air would have been tamed into fragrant breeze. With tempers and bodies cooled, the passengers would then settle down for a journey marked by camaraderie.

Summers in Bengaluru meant spending time with my countless cousins, uncles, and aunts – once, twice, thrice, and several times removed. It was also the prime season for weddings, and *upanayanams* (something akin to bar-mitzvah for boys). Each wedding typically lasted three to four days. My countless cousins, uncles, and aunts – once, twice, thrice, and several times removed would all be there. In addition, there would be several hundred more guests made up of neighbors, colleagues, friends, and friends of friends.

Summers also brought a wide variety of mangoes. My grandfather took great pleasure in ordering several baskets of mangoes to feed his large extended family. We the kids were not to be trusted to keep our clothes unstained by the dripping mango juice. What a sight to behold – a dozen cousins, all under ten, stripped down to their underwear, sitting in a line, savoring their

mangoes as the juice covered their tiny faces, before dripping down their elbows, and then down to the drain. A quick wash down waited the satisfied urchins!

Later in our preteen years, summers meant spending hours on end, playing bare foot cricket, in any of the parks or open spaces available in the cities of Mysore or Bengaluru. All we needed was a bat and a used tennis ball. Any three sticks or a rock that stood three feet tall or a wall on which we drew the three wickets, served us well. We built our dream careers as world-renowned cricketers while the melting asphalt on the roads and the tiny sharp pebbles from the dirt below, tortured our soles. Two of my friends went on to represent India in test cricket. Despite their laurels studded careers, to this day, they both fondly recall the innocent pleasures of tennis ball cricket!

I spent two summers in the sun-dried Gangavathi, a small town of some 30,000, located in the hot plains of the Deccan plateau. In some ways, those might be counted as my most memorable summers. With no weddings to attend, and no cousins to visit, my brother and I had all the time to discover the pleasures this town offered. Our group of friends would hike through the hills in search of the fabled footprints left behind by the mythological Sugreeva from the Hindu epic Ramayana or those of Chatrapati Shivaji, the Maratha warrior of the 17<sup>th</sup> century who valiantly fought the Mughals. Neither the hot parched earth under our bear soles nor the snakes, the scorpions and other wild creatures that inhabited those hills ever deterred us. We felt invulnerable.

On some hot days, when hills were uninviting, the shallow, dirty stream of Durgamma Halla was ever so welcoming. When the consensus of the

group favored the relatively cleaner, safer waters of the Tungabhadra canal, we would trudge some three miles to a village called Juntakal, and jump into the cool water. The concept of swimwear was alien to us. After a few hours spent cooling off, we would put on our shirts and let the Sun dry our bodies, and our clothes on our way home. By the way, the elders seldom worried about our long absences during the day!

Also memorable were the cool summer nights when we slept under the star lit skies. In Raichur, we had a large stony platform in front of our home that served as a meeting place for the several tenants that lived in that estate. A neem-tree hovered over the platform providing shade from the red hot Sun. On summer nights, neighbors would take turns, pouring buckets of water to cool off the platform. At nights several families slept on the platform - a sort of a communal sleepover. We would fall asleep while my father would introduce the stars and constellations in the clear summer sky. In the middle of the night, a cacophony of disturbed birds would wake us up. Now feeling thirsty, we would just walk over to the corner to find an earthen water dispenser called the *hooji* (*matka*, in the North). These unglazed pots made of clay had thousands of pores through which the pot "breathed" and "sweated". In the process the water, in the pot would be refreshingly cool. Add a petal or two of roses or a few drops of lemon, the *hooji* delivered you cool *nirvana*!

Occasionally, on full moon days of summer, we would be invited to a near by sugarcane farm. We would ride in a bullock cart, a more torturous transportation experience I seldom recall. Upon arrival, we would run into the fields and pluck sugarcane of choice off the ground, and go at it. Tearing into sugarcane called for a careful use of one's incisors to peel the skin while not

letting the fiber tear into your tongue. The molars would then take over to crush the sugarcane to release its juice. In one moment we would have been transported to one great sweet existence!

We would then amble over to a large crusher that was powered by two listless buffaloes that went round and round, crushing the sugarcane into juice. Our hosts would then treat us to tall glasses of fresh sugarcane juice with a dash of lemon and ginger. Sugarcane juice collected from the crusher would be transferred to a large, ugly looking cupola that measured at least 10 feet in diameter. Dried sugarcane fiber and firewood were lit underneath. The boiled juice after evaporation would yield *jaggery* (unrefined, brown sugar). The very dark sediment is recovered as molasses. By now the moon would have lit up the summer sky and the cool breeze would envelop us as we moved away from the cupola for our dinner. There are few dinners I remember all my life. The soul food consisted of flattened, unleavened bread called *bhaakri*, eaten with hot spicy chutney made of red chillies, warm jaggery, and dark molasses. You washed all these down with what else? More sugarcane juice. It would be a long, oscillating cart ride journey back home. By the time the bullocks would deliver us back to the town it would be well past our sleeping time.

These are my memories of the glorious Indian summers of my youth. As Jean Paul Richter, the famous 18<sup>th</sup> century German writer and humorist said: "Our memories are the only paradise from which we can never be expelled." □

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A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken.

~ James Dent

If a June night could talk, it would probably boast it invented romance.

~Bern Williams

Summer set lip to earth's bosom bare,  
And left the flushed print in a poppy there.

~Francis Thompson

## A child's summers in Appleton

By Terry Dawson

In the vague distance of childhood one summer seems much like another. My friends – boys of the neighborhood – and I were happy that Wisconsin had four seasons, but years ago winters were longer and snow banks higher, while springtimes stretched slowly through their Mays until the long-awaited end of school and three months of freedom to play and explore.

When we were very little, there was not much escape from the heat except backyard wading pools, which in those days were inflatable and took an industrious mother a long time to blow up the sides so the four foot plastic circle could be filled with a few inches of water to splash and lie down in. Or we could run though the spray of the garden hose or lawn sprinkler. And of course everyone had a squirt gun to fill with water and shoot a thin stream as much as six or eight feet to splash each other, with the gun running out of water in a few minutes and sending us back to hoses or faucets to reload.

On some of the long evenings or on weekends, my father, mother, younger brother and I would get in the car and drive to one of the beaches of Lake Winnebago. In June and July, before the algae in the lake grew too thickly green for good swimming, we enjoyed the shallow sandy places at Waverly Beach, High Cliff and Fire Lane 8, where my father had gone in his own childhood, twenty-five years before.

The summer I turned eight years old, my parents decided I needed to learn to swim and could handle some independence. So I was enrolled in a City swimming class at Erb Pool and taught to memorize and carefully follow a two-mile bike route through the streets from our house to the park. Erb Pool in those days was known as “the bird bath” because it had the shape of a round bowl. The deep center had an island for diving, but this was fenced off and could only be entered through a gate where a lifeguard shooed away those not yet qualified as swimmers. The outer, more

shallow section of the pool was for play and classes, and it was there that I went three days a week, learning the kicks and arm movements to win the right to enter deep water. Kids who were taking classes or just hanging out at the pool would get a pool pass which was sewn or pinned to the swimsuit. We entered through changing rooms, left our street clothes in wire baskets with an attendant, and entered the pool area. Cooling off was not always an ideal, if the weather for morning classes was cool, then the water was chilly and I only wanted to get warmer. But I learned some swimming, and after the summer continued with weekly lessons at the YMCA.

As I grew older our family trips went further afield, to my uncle's cottage on Miner Lake near Waupaca, on weekend camping trips with my parents and grandparents to Bear Lake in Manawa, Silver Lake by Wautoma, or Point Beach on Lake Michigan. The water in Lake Michigan seemed too cold for decent swimming, but once numb from the cold you were bothered less. The worst aspect of these trips was the “one hour rule” which parents rigorously enforced in the strange apparent belief that entering water within a full sixty minutes after consuming any food -- even wading in ankle deep water -- might cause a poor child to become suddenly seized with terrible immobilizing cramps and drown. This meant that beach picnics were followed by a lengthy period of children whining, until the debilitating effect wore off and we could safely enter the lake.

One resort on Silver Lake had a family campground in the woods with a small beach. The lake was warm and clear, and got deeper only gradually. By the time I was ten years old, I was a fairly good swimmer and armed with a face mask, snorkel, and butterfly net I was the scourge of the bluegills, sunfish and small perch that swam a few feet below the surface. Under four feet of water, I was Mike Nelson, the heroic diver of the

television show “Sea Hunt.”

But weekend trips and family vacations were the exception; most summer days were spent on streets and playgrounds. Of course, each family in its turn had lemonade stands, which may have offered the prospect of making money, but really had two uses: keeping the kids busy and helping them learn that business plans were a cruel necessity, as no-one ever really made any money.

Appleton was a smaller city in the 1950s, and only a near my house and close to downtown were small muddy ponds where we caught tadpoles which occasionally survived to become frogs. An elderly neighbor a block away had a small apple orchard. As much as he hated having children who might damage his trees or get injured on his property, neighborhood boys loved climbing his trees even more. Apple trees are easy to climb and we only wanted to perch up high among the branches and green leaves, to enjoy the view and breeze.

As I approached my teen years it became time to look for summer work. When I was thirteen I got a job selling popsicles. In those days this was entirely a pedal-powered operation, with a large ice box mounted on the two wheeled axle of a tricycle and the operator sitting behind, laboriously working to push the frozen load up and down the streets of an assigned neighborhood, for 15% commission on sales. The workdays were long, nine or ten hours, and when after a week it appeared I was getting exhausted for about 15 cents an hour, my parents did not think this much better than a lemonade stand, and I quit. The next autumn I started washing dishes at a cafeteria; summers were never quite so free again. □

*Terry Dawson is a third-generation Appleton native and is retired from the Appleton Public Library. He is active in several community organizations including IndUS, Toward Community: Unity in Diversity and NEW World Cinema*

## Cooling Off

I notice them playing in the puddles watched over by the cloud  
 . . . a smooth, bean shaped cloud, reflecting the city.  
 Unpredictable torrents punctuate eager screams  
 Indulgent parents engage, smile, and then unwillingly get sucked into an electronic vortex.  
 I feel the wet breeze, hear the medley of delight, and return  
 . . . to the overfilled ditches, the search for frogs, beasts real and imagined.  
 Minutes that stretched into days, splashing, drying up, and splashing again  
 Waiting parents, admonishing while attempting to hide their empathic smiles.  
 I look past the carefully maintained flower beds and lawns, and see  
 . . . wet fields merging with groves, drenched farmers, and recalcitrant cattle.  
 Mud turning into fragrant clay, the joyous leaves, birds swooping down in jubilation  
 Delighted parents, smiling with relief, celebrate the transformation.  
 In different environs, cased within idiosyncratic bubbles,  
 We all stop together, to cool off.

*Mahesh Subramony lives in Sycamore, IL with his wife, Ritu, and daughter Vani. He was inspired to write this poem during one of their visits to the Millennium Park in Chicago.*

## Summer giggles from my childhood

*By Kamal Varma*

I have been sitting at my dining table for the last hour, fruitlessly planning activities we can do with our grandchildren when they visit this summer. Every year they come for a week and we try to find new things to do with them or take them to some new places. My husband, who is watching me struggle, suddenly asks, "What did you do during your summer vacations?" As I think about it, I find myself smiling and I tear up as I recall the happy memories of the fun and mischievous things I used to do with my sisters and friends in the hot days of summer in India.

We, five sisters were two years apart from each other. I, being the eldest, had an advantage over them as I got my way most of the time. We had no school in the months of June and July. It used to be over 100 degrees some days and we did not have air-conditioning in our house at that time. We were not allowed to go out until sunset and were stuck in the house. However, the word 'boredom' was not in our vocabulary. All year our parents told us to just study

and do homework. All extracurricular activities were reserved for the summer. These included learning sowing, music and all other boring things you needed to know to find a good husband. They never told us what to do for fun as this word was not in their vocabulary. Now when I think about that time, we pretty much depended on our own creativity and imagination.

Two days a week a teacher came to the house to teach me music and two other days, one came to teach me classical dance. These things were at my parents' request but they were fun. The rest of the time was mine. One of the rooms in the house was fairly dark and had very little furniture. There was one wide hard wood bench and few rope-strung cots. As soon as lunch was over and it was time for us to take rest, we would block the drain in that room and fill it with water and start the ceiling fan on full speed. This was our 'air-conditioned' room. Before you get worried, all the houses were made of concrete with stone floors and designed to be washed out,

hence the drain in the floor. All afternoon we would sing songs together, read comic books and make plans for the evening.

My parents never bought toys separately for each of us. It was mostly board games like Snakes and Ladders, playing cards, Carrom Board, a few balls, jumping rope, etc. to share. We would gather five or ten smooth stones and play a game similar to Jacks with them for hours. The entire summer evaporated in playing hop-scotch or some other games in the courtyard at the center of our house. Some time we invited friends but most of the time, it was just us sisters. We always had each other and always found some game to entertain ourselves.

One of our favorite games was to play with our handmade dolls. My aunt always made those dolls for us by rolling some old fabric long enough so that it could be folded in two. She then rolled another piece of fabric to create two hands sticking out both sides and with red and black pens she would paint a

smile and two big eyes. We would cover it with another shiny or silky piece of cloth for a sari and there was our doll. We would ask her to make several sizes so we could have a whole family of dolls. There would be a male which was always tall and big, a female and few others as children. At least once a week one of our friends or I would arrange a wedding for our dolls where we followed all the rituals we knew of from Indian weddings. Our parents supported us with providing a variety of food and gave some money to even buy sweets to serve our guests. It was the best indoor game we ever played. The sky was the limit to our imagination in creating a wedding with all kinds of decorations using paper and glue, music, dance and the best feast. There was never a dull moment in those weddings.

June and July are the best months for fresh summer fruits in India and mango is the king of all fruits. Eating mangoes was not just about eating a fruit, it was a complete process that required planning

and lasted all afternoon. My grandfather, who lived with us in our extended family, would plan a trip to a special market selling only mangoes and he would buy several varieties in bulk so there would be enough until his next trip. We would eagerly wait all morning for his return. When he finally returned, all of us would get busy washing the mangoes, putting them in bags, tying them with a rope and hanging them part way down our neighbor's well so that they would be nice and cold by the afternoon. That occupied us for a couple of hours but waiting till the afternoon was a real test of patience. The sweet smell of mangoes would stay with us in our 'air-conditioned' room. Finally, the fun would begin when my mother would make us sit in a row with little buckets for the peels and pits and she would distribute the mangoes among all of us evenly so we would not fight. Despite her best efforts, we always found something to fight about. We would challenge each other on who could finish

their mangoes quickly and teased the sister that had already finished her share. When we finished gorging ourselves, mom would get a hose and wash up all the dripping juice from our hands, arms and faces. I still remember with great fondness those silly fights, sitting together looking at each other with our mango filled faces and the satisfaction on my grandfather's face.

As I think of my childhood summer memories, it occurs to me that keeping our grandchildren entertained didn't need a grand plan. I think I'll stop by the grocery store for some mangoes and watermelon and I'll also dust off the board games and Carrom Board in our basement. Should be fun! □

*Kamal Varma is a retired teacher, who hails from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh where the summer means high temperatures and humidity. She resides in Appleton, WI and is an active member of several community organizations including IndUS of Fox Valley. She has a passion for cooking and her family.*

## Indian Summer

*By Anu Varma*

It was June 1983 when my parents, brother and I returned for a 3 month visit to India, after an 8 year absence. Even at the early morning hour of our arrival, the mood was festive and exhilarating as at least 20 people came to meet us at the airport. I was 15 and an awkward teenager at the time. I braced to meet the family I hadn't seen in years with both excitement and trepidation.

Eight years may not seem like a long time but for a 15 year old, it was a lifetime. You would think that my memories of my family and country would have faded over time and I would have returned a stranger. That was definitely not the case. Over the years, my parents had kept the memories alive for us all and had managed to stay in touch with everyone through long letters sent slower than snails around the globe.

It was a whirlwind from the moment of arrival to our departure 3 months later. We soaked in the music, food, heat, smells (good, bad and ugly) and most

importantly the family. It was summer in India which meant temperatures were above 100 degrees and there was drenching humidity. After taking a shower with a bucket of cold water, we dusted ourselves in talcum powder only to wonder why we had bothered because we were sweaty and in need of another shower within the hour. Most of my family were middle-class and didn't have air conditioned homes at the time. At my grandparents' home, we had a cooler that stood on the window and blew air over water into the house to keep it cool. Unfortunately, it also sometimes blew in the not-so-wonderful smells from the alley.

My family was thrilled to be back together and we all packed ourselves in one house or another as no one wanted to miss a moment of the fun. At night, we moved out all the furniture from the main living space and lay out bedding for 10-20 at a time. The fans whirred overhead in a feeble attempt to keep us cool. During the day we laughed, teased,

shared old memories and told new stories. Through it all there were always a lot of snacks, meals and hot tea. Yes, I did say hot tea in 100 degree weather. Apparently, the hot tea creates equilibrium in your body and cools you down. I never believed in the theory enough to partake in it and stuck to my favorite, shikanji, sweet and tart limeade.

Oh, but the food... the glorious food. We were in gastric heaven and hell at the same time. Our mouths watered at the site of the 'chat walla' as he came down the alley by my grandparent's home. He still served up spicy, hot goodness in bowls made from leaves as I had remembered from the summers we spent with my grandparents. We devoured all the different varieties of mangoes, the fresh jamun served in a bowl with spices and all the other wonderful fruits we hadn't seen in years. Our families served up feasts that had that had the loving touch of a home cooked meal made with all the fresh seasonal vegetables that we didn't get in Appleton WI. However, it

was the restaurant and street food that we craved. All this gluttony was not without punishment. We spent many hours in the Indian style bathrooms regretting our choices only to succumb to our greedy guts again within a day or two of recovery. It was all well worth it!

As we traveled from town to town visiting family, we were entrenched in all the chaos, excitement, drama and festivity that define Indian culture. I never missed an opportunity for a rickshaw ride as it allowed us to get on to the streets, close to all the activity, and watch the world go by at a slow enough pace that you could soak it all in. All the chaos of the traffic was like being in a real-life video game. My aunts were shocked that we wanted to ride the rickshaw in the mid-day heat. They were forever worried that I would ruin my fair complexion. My complexion reminded them of their own cherished complexion that had been tirelessly protected from the harsh Indian sun. Having made my new home in a culture

that worshipped a good tan, I didn't see the problem.

The time with my cousins was the best. We reconnected as if we had never been apart and easily fell into teenage friendships, forgetting that the last time we had been together we had played with dolls. In the evening as it cooled down, my cousin Shobhna and I showered, dressed in cute Indian outfits and went for walks in the neighborhood. Of course, we were not the only ones with 'walks' on our minds. This was the popular method by which boys and girls met each other or admired from afar. Shobhna and I nursed a crush or two that summer that we kept secret from our families with code names and words as dating was strictly forbidden.

At my grandparents' home, as it cooled down, we would gather on their rooftop terrace to fly kites along with all the others in the neighborhood and city. There were monkeys on the rooftops as well and they would occasionally come into the house which annoyed my

grandmother and made us laugh. The sweetest memories I carry are those of my grandparents. All four of them were there and so thrilled to have their family complete once again. The joy we all felt is evidenced in the pictures we have from that trip.

The summer we spent in the bosom of our family and country had a profound impact on me. The trip was the return of my heart to its roots, like a river when it meets the sea. My love for my culture and family has defined who I am today even though my home is here in the United States. I continue to straddle both cultures, take the best of both and teach my daughter to do the same. However, fortunately, I have learned the benefits of sunscreen and the value of a great home cooked meal! □

*Anu Varma is the Director of the IT Department at Menasha Corporation. She lives in Appleton with her daughter Shanti, a beautiful, fun and inspiring 16 year old. Her passions include writing, reading, traveling, learning and the issues related to women and children are of special concern for her.*

## Memories of Monsoon

*By Shekar Rao*

As I started to write about "Cooling", I stopped and wondered what "cooling" meant. "Cool, as cucumber", or "Cool Dude" may be. Cool drinks, cool color? Or, was it just I that was cool to the idea of writing on this topic. All sorts of meanings and connotations for the word came up as I was warming up to the topic of "Cooling". I could not make up my mind and put the pen away, rather put the laptop down several times.

It had been raining for a couple of days. One evening when I was taking a stroll on the walking trail by the Butterfly pond in High Cliff where I go for my evening walks, I had this happen to me. Suddenly from the bushes a frog jumped on to my path and made me jump too. One lone frog, a tiny one just hatched a few days ago! As I stood there watching it hop, hop and hop forward across the path and land in a puddle, my mind was hopping too. But only backwards,

several decades ago to a distant time and to a distant land left far behind.

Back in our little village as a six-year-old, me along with a bunch of neighborhood kids would gather around our house. Sitting at the edge of the open porch in front of the house with our bare feet dangling in air, we would watch passers by and eat mangoes, the whole mangoes, mind you and not the ones cut into slices. Believe me, the taste and experience is altogether different. That is what we kids did those days to cool ourselves. Mango season was coming to a close and monsoon season was approaching. The hot summer had scorched the earth and left it dry. The dirt was a fine powder. The farmers would look up to the sky and pray to Lord Indra, the god of rain. And suddenly one day the dark clouds gather and soon enough, the first drops fall from the sky on the hot dry earth. As the

big drops fell, the hot dust would roll into tiny round balls and the water would vaporize. Ah! The smell of the earth, rather the fragrance of Mother Earth, I can never forget. Even the memory of that lightens me up and stirs my soul to this day. The rain would come down in torrents day after day with occasional breaks in the gently moving clouds carrying the message of hope to the farmers. A couple of weeks would pass by and the gutters along the street in front of the houses would be full with water flowing swiftly. The monsoon rain was "Cooling" for us!

Other kids from the neighborhood would join me. We would make paper boats and float them in the gutters and streams. We would construct makeshift bridges with twigs and stones across the streams. We would sit on the front porch and watch our boats sail away to the next house, and to the next and then

onwards till they disappeared from our view or sometimes, sadly, capsized.

A few more days pass by and the incessant rain cooled down the earth and rendered it green and luscious again. Then one day, while we were sitting there eating from the season's last basket of mangoes, there would appear on our front porch suddenly from nowhere, hundreds of tiny frogs and tadpoles from the gushing water. They were jumping in out of the flowing streams and puddles of water. The symphony of their croaking to the accompaniment of the sound of lashing raindrops was music to my ears. We would catch some of

them and then let them go. To this day, the memory of their sight and sound lightens my heart and fills me with hope for the living earth.

There we were, not just watching Life, rather living it, floating paper boats, laughing and giggling with raindrops lashing on our faces. That was Life and whenever I see a frog hopping out of a pond or a stream, I am taken back to that wonderland and I feel restored. The bright and young ones of today will do well to go out and play with frogs, crickets and fireflies instead of watching cartoons. May be the biologist is right in

claiming that our survival is closely linked to the frog's.

As for me, thank you, little frog. I am indebted to you for taking me down the memory lane, teaching me how resilient life on earth is and how joyful is the childhood. "Too bad it comes only once," whispers the kid hopping inside the grandpa. □

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## Goddess on a lotus

*By Mohan Viswanathan*

Last night I woke up several times. It must have been the sound of thunder and flashes of lightning just before the thunder. Whenever this happens, I try to crawl closer to my dad, under the sheets. Well, what do you expect? It's true that I am in the third grade, but I am only five. I know it's hard to believe, but that's another story! Grownups say if thunder comes close to lightning, it is dangerous. So as soon as I see the flash of lightning, I try to count and see how much later I hear the sound. My dad said the more numbers I can count the farther the lightning and safer it is!

It has been raining constantly for the past few days. There is no chance to go out to the yard and play. And there is nobody to play with either. I watch the rain water swirling around the coconut trees in the yard. I tear out pages from my notebook and make paper boats. I just learned to make them all by myself. The ones with a cone in the middle. I make small, tiny ones and huge ones.

The rain has stopped now. But the water

seems to flow around the trees towards the pond. I drop the paper boats into the water, one by one, and see them float around the trees, and then beyond where I can't see, behind the house. They must be on their way towards the pond.

The pond at the edge of our yard must be full of water. Lotus buds I saw the other day must have bloomed. And then, I recall the picture on our wall calendar. I go inside and look at it again. A beautiful lady in a pink saree, sitting on a lotus flower, with a veena in her hand. My mom said it is goddess Saraswathi. Why does she have to sit on a flower? Wouldn't it crush the poor flower?

Do all lotus flowers have a goddess in each of them? Or only some? I want to go and check. What if the lady is sitting there all alone in this rain? But I am not allowed to go by myself to the pond.

It has stopped raining now and nobody is around. I step into the pool of water that has collected beyond the steps. Each footstep makes a funny, splashing sound.

I don't want to scare the goddess away. I start wading slowly through the ankle-deep water, towards the pond. I see a lotus flower in the distance, in full bloom. I have to get close to it and check. The water is up to my knees now. I can see the lotus clearly. The pink petals with beads of water on them. But there is no lady sitting on it!

I see my paper boats, around the lotus flower, stuck among the floating leaves. They are soggy and drowning. I feel rain drops running down my cheeks. Why are they salty?

I hear my mom calling out to me from inside the house. Running back from the pond I get drenched. Water dripping from my clothes make a dotted line on the floor behind me inside the house. I want to ask my parents about the picture of the goddess on the wall calendar. □

*Mohan Viswanathan is a scientist at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD. He spent the first 23 years of his life in Kerala. Fond memories of the ponds and streams of his childhood are still with him.*

*The pitiless heat of the blazing Sun*

*Lovers seek reprieve*

*By the pools and fountains*

*In perfumes and wine.*

*The moonbeams of the evening*

*Like melodies from veena*

*Stir passions on their lips and in their hearts.*

*Canto I (Stanzas 1.1 and 1.3), Meghdoot by Kalidasa*

(circa 4th century CE) Translation by B. S. Sridhar

~ ~

*Stray birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.*

*And yellow leaves of autumn, which have no songs, flutter and fall there with a sigh.*

*Stray Birds by Rabindranatah Tagore*

*During the hot summer days in different parts of India people make different drinks to cool off. Some of these drinks have medicinal value to cure heat strokes. Here we give recipes of some such drinks.*

### **Aam Panna (Green mango drink)**

Aam Panna is renowned for its heat resistant properties. It is made from green mangoes and it is used as a tasty and healthy beverage to fight against the intense Indian summer heat. It quenches thirst and prevents the excessive loss of sodium chloride and iron during summer due to excessive sweating.

#### **How to prepare it:**

1. Wash the mangoes. Boil water in a pot.
2. Boil mangoes till they are soft. It will take about 10-15 minutes. You can pressure cook the mangoes.
3. Let the mangoes cool. Remove the skin and the inner seed and keep the pulp.
4. Blend the pulp well with the jiggery in the blender or you can mash it well with your hand.
5. Add cardamom powder. The thick pulp is ready.
6. You can prepare the pulp and keep it in the fridge.
7. When you want to serve, add about ¼ cup pulp into a glass, top with cold water. Stir to mix well or you can use a hand blender or a mixer. Add ice cubes and serve.

You can add rock salt / pepper powder or nutmeg powder for extra flavor and taste.

### **Neebu Shikanji (Lemon Drink)**

Neebu Shikanji is a very popular summer drink of Indian subcontinent. It is made from freshly squeezed lemon juice, sugar, and a hint of black salt.

#### **How to prepare it:**

1. Mix sugar in 4 cups of water.
2. Add freshly squeezed lemon juice and black salt (to your test). Mix Well
3. Put some ice cubes in a glass and pour the sugar-lemon juice mixture

4. Decorate with a slice of lime and mint leaves.

crushed ice.

Garnish with rose petals!

### **Thandai**

Thandai is a wonderful cold refreshing and healthy flavored milk that is traditionally prepared during the Holi festival (festival of colors). When people become a little exhausted after playing exciting yet tiresome holi a glass of Thandai offers instant energy and cools the body.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1/2 cup almonds (badam)
- 1 1/2 cup Milk
- 4 tablespoons Sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoon whole black pepper (kali mirch)
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds (saunf)
- 2 tablespoon poppy seeds (khuskhus)
- 4 green cardamom (ilatchi)
- 2 tablespoons rosewater
- 2 cup water, adjust as needed

#### **How to prepare it:**

1. Soak almonds in water for at least 6 hours. Peel off the skin.
2. Grind black pepper, fennel seeds, poppy seeds, and cardamom.
3. Using a blender and adding just enough water, blend the almonds.
4. In the same blender add the grinded spices and about ½ cup of water with almond paste. Blend until creamy.
5. Add 1 cup of water and sugar blend until sugar dissolve.
6. Strain the mix through the fine strainer or cheesecloth.
7. Return the left over ground paste to the blender with rest of the water.
8. Blend again and extract the liquid once more.
9. Discard remaining ground mash.
10. Mix the almond liquid, milk, and rose water.
11. Thandai is ready serve over the

### **Mango Lassi**

Lassi is a popular yogurt-based drink of the Indian Subcontinent. It is made by blending yogurt with water and Indian spices. Mango lassi is most commonly found in India and Pakistan though it is gaining popularity worldwide. It is made from yogurt, water and mango pulp.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 2 ripe, sweet mangos
- 1 1/2 cup plain nonfat yogurt
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 cup ice (1 tray of ice)

#### **How to prepare it:**

Peel and dice the mango and puree in a blender. Add the rest of the ingredients and puree until the ice is crushed and the drink is frothy. Serve in tall glasses with additional ice, if desired.

### **Mattha: A cool, savory buttermilk drink**

#### **Ingredients:**

- Buttermilk 2 cups
- Water 1 cup
- Ginger paste 1/2 tsp
- Hot pepper paste 1/2 tsp
- Cumin powder 1/4 tsp
- Cilantro 1 tbsp chopped
- Mint 1-2 leaves

#### **How to prepare it:**

Add little 1 cup of water to thin buttermilk. Add the ginger-pepper paste, cumin powder and herbs. Mix well and check the taste. It should not be too spicy or too sour. The right flavor should have a hint of spice from the ginger & hot peppers. Garnish with chopped cilantro. Refrigerate and serve chilled.

Tip: You can use plain yogurt instead of buttermilk. Add water, pinch of salt and whisk it to make buttermilk.

## News ...

### An Evening with Adoor Gopalakrishnan

On March 21, 2011 IndUS of Fox Valley in collaboration with Lawrence University organized an evening with India's one of the most celebrated filmmakers Adoor Gopalakrishnan. The event started by screening Adoor's highly acclaimed film *Nizhalkkuthu* (Shadow Kill) followed by a conversation with Adoor. The event was a great success. The movie was well received and during the discussion there the audience shared their perspective with him and asked several questions about his craft, his philosophy and his technique. Sandhya Sridhar, President of IndUS of Fox



Valley in appreciation of Adoor's contribution to Indian cinema, presented him a souvenir .

### Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Neenah

On March 13, 2011 Dr. Sridhar made a power point presentation on India to the Sunday school kids at the Our Saviour Lutheran church in Neenah. Several IndUS volunteers helped with food samples, dress up, bindis etc. Our little tots Esha Patkar and Ninad Raut performed a dance to Indian Bollywood music.

### Diversity Fair at Neenah High School:

On May 6, 2011 indUS participated in the Diversity Fair at Neenah High School. We have been getting a

tremendous response every year from students wanting to taste food samples, wear bindis, and Indian outfits.

Hundreds of high-school students lined



up for Indian henna tattoos from which an amount of \$300 was raised, which



was donated to ADIRE, a non-profit organization with a mission to improve the lives of rural poor in India. To meet the constantly growing line of students, at least six volunteers were applying henna at any given point of time. Teachers and students were interested in the display of 'facts and pictorial charts' on India made by Sridevi Buddi.

### India Heritage Day, Midwest I-Child in Green Lake:

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, like in the years past, IndUS participated in India Heritage Day celebration organized by Midwest I-Child in Green Lake, Wisconsin. We shared Indian games, story time, arts, crafts and cooking demonstrations to create a sense of heritage in families of 75 children adopted from India. Games like Chess,

Snakes and ladders, "Parchessi", Cowri shells and Carrom, which originated in India, were introduced by Shekar Rao, Shivani Bhardwaj and Sridevi Buddi. Dr. B. S. Sridhar captured the younger kids' attention with animated and musical tales from Panchtantra projected on a large screen.

By popular demand from the parents we had cooking demos. Viju Rao, Priya



Kaushika and Sandhya Sridhar demonstrated "poha", a savory flattened rice dish, "Shakkar Para", fried sugar cookies and "Masala Chai", spiced milky tea, which made a wonderful mid-afternoon snack and was relished by all.

Something new this year was introducing children to popular Indian festivals: Raksha Bandhan and Holi. Raksha Bandhan is a day that celebrates bonds between brothers and sisters. Sisters tie a "rakhi", a sacred thread on their brother's wrist to signify this bond, brothers, in return make a promise to protect their sisters. Sridevi Buddi explained the significance of Raksha Bandhan, and with help of Rajeev Buddi, Shivani Bhardwaj and Natasha Malloy led the children through a craft activity of making colorful rakhis. They took them home as souvenirs.

Major highlight of the day was playing Holi. The kids had a field day smearing



colors on each other and on grown-ups. Introduction to Holi, a colorful spring festival, turned out to be a great finale

to a fun-filled day. It was enjoyed by all, with encore requests for next year.

### Formation of Steering Committee for IndUS-2011

Mark your calendars. Our annual showcase event IndUS 2011 will be celebrated on November 19th, 2011 at Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. The theme this year is *Freedom: India's Tryst with Destiny*.

Several veteran and new members of IndUS met on June 18th, 2011 and formed a steering committee. Yogesh Maheshwari will chair the steering committee. Do you wish to share your talents? Would you like to work with a dedicated group of volunteers? If so, please send an email to Yogesh Maheshwari at [y\\_maheshwari@hotmail.com](mailto:y_maheshwari@hotmail.com). You are welcome to join any of the following committees: Publicity, Decorations, Reception, Banquet, Exhibition, Cultural program and sponsorship & Donations. We would love to have you on board.

### Let's Share

IndUS of Fox Valley has been conducting its Let's Share program for the last year and a half. "Let's Share" program was initially instilled with a goal of providing a forum to come together, share, learn, discuss various topics. While we do believe that such activity happens all the time at parties and get togethers, IndUS wanted to provide a semi-structured, and yet an informal, friendly setting for personal growth and networking.

Most of us would agree that there is tremendous amount of expertise and wisdom within the local community who have excelled in diverse fields. We have very accomplished professionals in the field of medicine, science and technology, management, entrepreneurship, art, music, and so on. Using Let's Share as one of the avenues, IndUS tries to bring together like minded people who want to share and learn from each other. The format involves inviting a guest speaker or two who are experts on the chosen topic and they share their expertise with other members.

This year we had three sessions, which have been a great success. We usually meet during the last week of every month with a new topic and a new speaker(s). The speakers present their thoughts which are followed by a Q & A session. Our first session was held at Lawrence University and the other two at Harmony Café, Appleton. Our goal has been to cover a wide range of topics like, health, career, finance, personal development, management, business oriented, parenting etc. in this forum.

On Sunday, January 30, 2011, Mr. Morgan Wiswall - Purchase Manager, Menasha Corporation & Mr. Kartik Ravel - Vice President, Fujitsu talked about "Sustainability in Practice: What We Can Do?". The speakers presented various ideas for understanding and practicing sustainability from a common man's perspective. Mr. Ravel specifically talked about carbon footprint and its potential impacts on environment, with emphasis on IT perspective. Whereas Mr. Wiswall demonstrated that by investing in Sustainability an organization not only benefits in the long run but also has numerous indirect benefits associated with it.

On Sunday, February 27, 2011, Mr. Tim Higgins - President, Chiropractic Services Network Inc. & Dr. B. S. Sridhar - Management Professor, UW Oshkosh shared their thoughts and experience about "The Art and Power of Networking". They brought to light the importance of networking in today increasingly competitive market, and how it can be used to one's advantage.

On Monday, June 27, 2011 Dr. Michael Ketterhagen - Professor of Theology and a Yoga Teacher at the Yoga Center in Fond du Lac along with Ms. Suzy Midbrod Weyenberg - Yoga Teacher, Empower Yoga, Appleton talked about "Myths and Realities of Yoga". As the topic's name suggests, the speakers revealed some of the misconceptions that people may have about Yoga. Mr. Ketterhagen showed to the audience, how Yoga is outlined in per Yoga Sutras, while Ms. Suzy, a Yoga teacher

showed how Yogaasanas are perceived in America and the many benefits of Asana practice in modern times.

### Seminar on World Music: IndUS Teams Up With Lawrence University

Lawrence University of Appleton organized a three-day seminar on World Music. IndUS was invited to introduce the participants to Indian music on Wednesday, July 13, 2011, the second day of the series. Dr. B. S. Sridhar led the seminar with a multimedia presentation that consisted of a lecture-discussion supported by live demonstration by Mrs. Shreemayi Kar (Hindustani Music) and Mrs. Rajalakshmi Priyanath (Carnatic



Music). The participants and the presenters engaged in lively discussion over lunch at Sai Ram, an Indian restaurant. In the afternoon, the participants learned about several Indian musical instruments and watched video clips featuring many celebrated musicians from India.

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Mr. Yogesh Maheshwari  
(*IndUS Banquet 2011*)  
Dr. Badri Varma  
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Visit our website at

[www.indusfoxvalley.org](http://www.indusfoxvalley.org)

Contact us at  
[indusfoxvalley@yahoo.com](mailto:indusfoxvalley@yahoo.com)

Following a presentation on the symbiotic relationship between Indian classical music and dance, Saraswathy Divya Ramachandran gave a demonstration of a Bharatanatyam dance. The seminar concluded with Dr. Sandhya Sridhar getting the participants to learn, and dance *dandiya raas*, a very popular form of Indian folk dance from the state of Gujarat. Judging from the reception and feedback, the seminar was a great success.

**Upcoming events****Let's Share**

The next Let's Share event will be held on Thursday, July 21, 2011 at 6:30 PM at Appleton Public Library (Meeting Room B). The topic is The Aging Brain and the guest speaker is Dr. H. A. Majid MD. Dr. Majid is a neurologist and has worked with Affinity Health System.

**IndUS-2011**

The annual IndUS banquet has become an established tradition in the Fox Valley. Over the years, our themes have educated and entertained the people about various aspects of India: Indian Architecture, Cinema, Dance and Music, Festivals, Folk Arts, Health and Wellness Science & Technology, Textile and Jewelry, and Tourism. Everyone of the previous annual banquet have been successful, sold out events.

IndUS-2011 will be celebrated on Saturday, November 19, 2011, at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, from 5 to 9:30 p.m. As in the years past, the IndUS volunteers were invited to vote for a theme. The theme for IndUS-2011 is: Freedom: *India's Tryst With Destiny*.

The selection of the theme was in no small measure inspired by the recent upsurge in Northern Africa, Middle East and Asia where people have sought basic freedoms. IndUS-2011 will trace the evolution of Indian freedom struggle that demonstrated the power of nonviolence against the might of the British Empire. Parallels between the Indian Satyagraha and the Civil Rights movement in the US will be captured in this year's event.

*Continued on Page 12*

**IndUS-2011****Registration Form**

Your Name & Address

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Tickets Needed**

IndUS member	x \$35	\$
Non-Member	x \$40	\$
Full-Time Student	x \$25	\$
Table for Ten	x \$400	\$
Tickets Sub-Total		\$

**IndUS Membership**

Individual Member	\$ 10
Family Member	\$ 20
Life Membership	\$ 200
Benefactor (\$100-\$ 499)	\$
Patron (\$500 +)	\$
Donation (If any)	\$

**Grand Total (Tickets, Membership Dues, & Donation) \$**

Complete the form and mail with your check payable to IndUS of Fox Valley to

*Ms. Kamal Varma*  
2275 Tannenbaum Trail  
Appleton, WI 54914

Tel: 920.731.0834

[kvarma27@gmail.com](mailto:kvarma27@gmail.com)

The three main component of IndUS-2011 are the Exhibition & Reception; The Banquet, and Cultural Program.

### **Exhibition & Reception**

*(5:00 to 6:30 p.m.)*

*While you enjoy the social hour, do visit the exhibition area. Our volunteers work hard to put together exhibits that are both entertaining and informative. The exhibition will highlight the major milestones of Indian freedom struggle while capturing its influence on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.*

### **Banquet**

*(6:30 – 8:15 p.m.)*

*Chef Professor Peter D'Souza, UW-Stout, an internationally acclaimed culinary artist, returns with his new creations. Enjoy the delicious cuisine and choicest wines while you socialize with interesting and diverse guests at your table.*

### **Cultural Program**

*(8:15 to 9:30 p.m.)*

*A riveting, colorful revue traces the evolution of Indian freedom struggle that ends with Satyagraha, the non-*

*violent movement that dismantled of the British Empire, making India's Tryst With Destiny possible. This multi-media experience transports you an era of idealism and selflessness that underscored the liberation of the oppressed people.*

Please use the IndUS-2011 Registration Form, appearing on Page 11, to reserve your seat. Avoid disappointment as every one of the previous annual events have been sold out and this year we have lowered the number to ensure better guest-satisfaction.

### **IndUS Of Fox Valley**

3600 N. Shawnee Ave.  
Appleton WI 54914

### **IndUS of Fox Valley**

*Presents*

## **IndUS - 2011**

***Freedom: India's Tryst with  
Destiny***

**Saturday, November 19, 2011**

**5:00 to 9:30 p.m.**

**Radisson Paper Valley Hotel  
Appleton**

***Exhibition  
Social Hour  
Authentic Indian Cuisine  
Cultural Program***