



Gana

The AHA Newsletter

From my Perspective | President of AHA, Narend Reddy

First of all, I would like to thank the editorial board of Gana for taking this great initiative to start this newsletter. This is a great way that the youth of our community can get involved in the organization's activities towards serving the community needs. I would highly encourage all the youth in community to contact the editors and become part of the Gana editorial group, so your views and perspectives are heard and seen.

I take this opportunity to thank the community members in supporting AHA through various programs and donations as we work hard to complete the temple and community center project. The project construction has been in full swing in the last few months and most of the finishing works are wrapping up. The building's interior works will be coming to an end in the next 2 months, while a lot of the outside work is now going to take place. This may pose some disruptions to the access and parking areas for events so everyone's patience is requested. AHA Management has started the planning and preliminary works for the temple consecration and more details of this will be provided once finalized.

From my perspective, a lot of the development works for the facilities needed for the AHA activities is coming to an end and in the very near future the community can start to use these facilities. We look forward to everyone's continued support through regular monthly donations via the Dollar-A-Day program and also in participation of regular community activities.



A Comprehensive Guide to Navratri 2016
- page 4



Looking back on Janmashtami,
celebrated this year on the 25th of
August – on page 7

Introducing *Gana*!

Welcome to *Gana*! *Gana* is the American Hindu Association's newsletter, published bimonthly. We strive to promote temple events and fundraisers, publish informative, unique pieces on the different customs and rituals that make Hinduism such a rich, beautiful religion, as well as showcase original essays and works of art made by young people in the AHA community.

Gana was first conceived as a way to communicate with the Hindu community in Madison. It eventually became a way to encourage youth involvement in temple happenings.

Every issue of *Gana* is managed, created, and published by students in the AHA community. *Gana* is brand new and we are looking for more people to join the editorial board of *Gana* – so whether you're a teen interested in getting more involved with the AHA community or you're just looking for volunteer hours to put on your resume, check out our Youth Spotlight on page 9.

In addition to being sent out via email every two months, issues of *Gana* will soon be available at local Indian stores and the temple. Please enjoy the first issue of *Gana*!

CONTRIBUTE TO GANA

If you are older than 18 and are looking to submit writing relating to your perspective or knowledge on Hinduism and the Indian culture and diaspora, please send your submissions to gana_editors@svtemple.org.

If you are between the ages of 5 and 18 and are looking to submit writing or artwork, please refer to our Youth Spotlight on page ____.

If you are between the ages of 13 and 18 and are looking to be a full-time editor and contributor, please apply to our editorial board by referring to the Youth Spotlight on page ____.



Stay Healthy while Raising Funds for our Temple and Community Center -

We have started a healthy living initiative which also helps raise funds for our temple by encouraging people to join a movement to work out for 1 month by challenging themselves to achieve 100k (60 miles) of walking or running. It will be fun while raising awareness about healthy living as a community



Start moving with us by signing up for the American Hindu Association (AHA) 100k Community Health Challenge on MapMyRun this fall!!

A few simple steps to follow:

1. Click <http://mmf.cc/runfst> to download the App (iOS or Android)
2. Create a Sign in.
3. Search for Narend Reddy under "Find Friends" (...More at bottom right, will have to scroll down a bit.and "Add" me as friend
4. I will then invite you to join the Challenge

FOR A GOOD CAUSE: Grab your friends, families and start the AHA 100k Run/Walk Community Health Challenge while supporting a great cause for our community. ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE AHA COMMUNITY CENTER PROJECT.

DURATION: The 30 day Challenge started on August 19 and ends on September 17 with a 5k run/walk and picnic in Fitchburg, WI (details to follow).

ENTRY FEE: \$50 Tax deductible donation (per participant). Visit <http://aha-svtemple.org/donations-page> for details on payments by credit card or send a check payable to AHA, P.O. Box 628243 Middleton, WI 53562. You will receive a donation receipt from AHA.



Like us on
Facebook

Like the temple's Facebook page for updates on temple events –
@ahamadison.



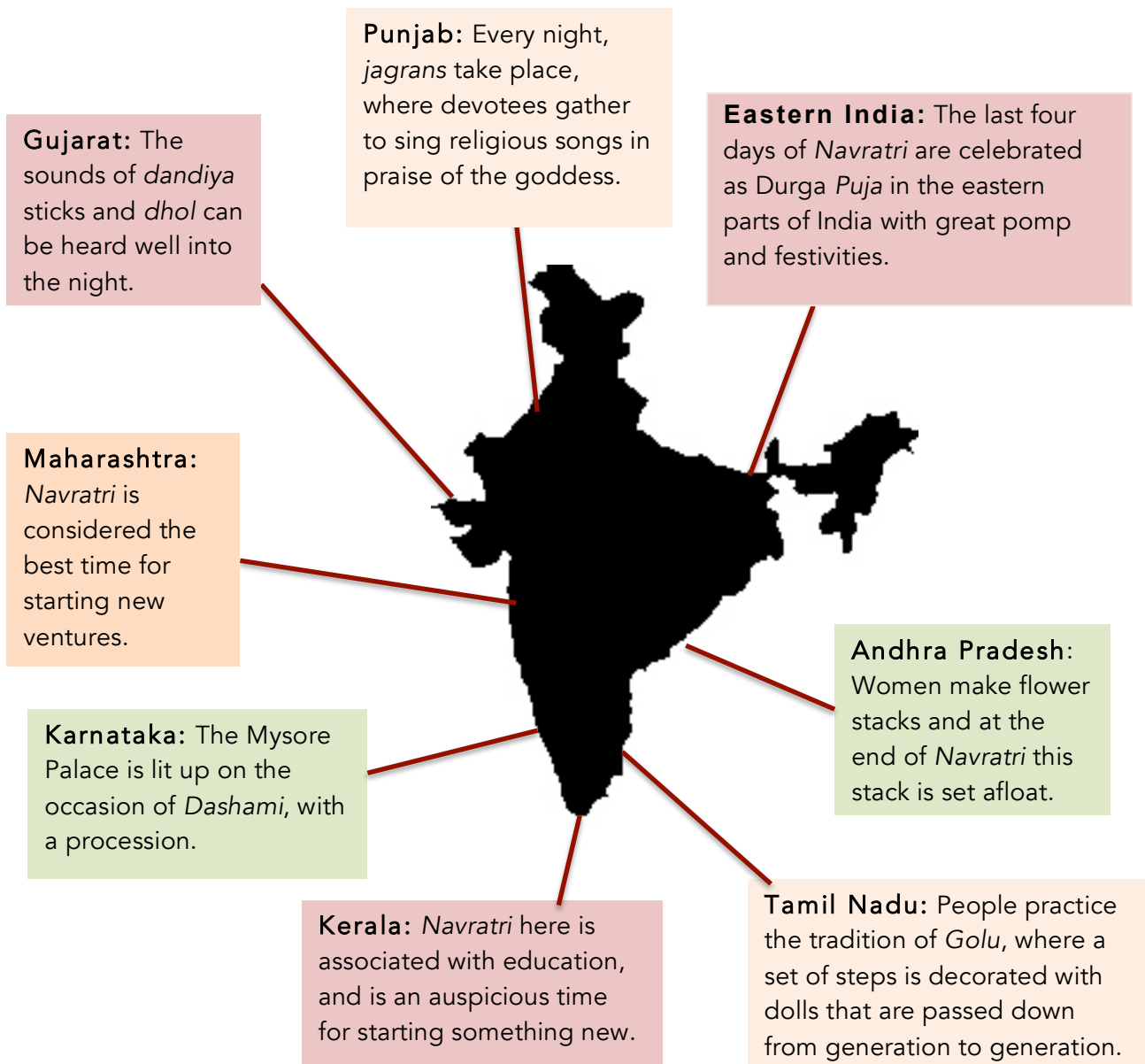
Request a Puja Sponsorship

Sign up at <http://aha-svtemple.org/puja-services/puja-sponsorship-form/>.

Resident Priest: Nandhakumar Rajagopal
(Madhavan Bhattar)

A Comprehensive Guide to *Navratri* 2016

Navratri is the season of festivities in India – not only a celebration of good over evil and Goddess Durga's defeat of the demon Mahishasura, but a time to sing *bhajans*, dance, eat, and come together with family and friends. Here in the U.S, while our celebrations are somewhat limited and different from the collective spirit of festivity that grips India at this time, traditions undoubtedly carry over as friends and members of the local Indian community gather to celebrate in a similar fashion. The Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Wisconsin wishes you a very happy, healthy, safe and prosperous *Navratri*, and we hope that you will join us for *pujas* and celebrations throughout the nine days, as well as *Dandiya Nite* on the eighth of October.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(please note that many of these explanations may vary amongst different regions)

October 1 and 2 (Pratipada) – To commence *Navratri*, a ritual called *Ghatasthapana* is performed. During these two days the goddess is worshipped as *Shailputri*, an incarnation of Goddess Parvati.

October 3 (Dwitiya) – On this day the goddess is worshipped as *Brahmcharini*, the unmarried form of Goddess Parvati.

October 4 (Tritiya) – This is when the goddess is worshipped as *Chandraghanta*, the married form of Goddess Parvati. She is depicted riding on a tigress, and is associated with bravery and courage.

October 5 (Chaturthi) – The goddess is worshipped as *Kushmanda*, who lived inside the sun and is believed to have created the universe.

October 6 (Panchami) – On this day the goddess is worshipped as *Skandamata*, the mother of Kartikeya, who is the son of Lord Shiva and brother of Lord Ganesha.

October 7 (Shasthi) – On this day the goddess is worshipped as *Katyayani*, the form of Goddess Durga that defeated the demon Mahishasura.

October 8 (Saptami) – This is when the goddess is worshipped as *Kalaratri*, the dark night. This is the goddess's fiercest form and represents protection from all troubles.

October 9 (Ashtami) – The Goddess is worshipped as *Mahagauri*, who represents beauty, grace, and the cleansing of sins.

October 10 (Navami) – On this day the goddess is worshipped as *Siddhidatri*, who embodies all eight siddhis (supernatural powers). The tenth day of *Navratri* is also known as *Vijaya Dashami/Dussehra*, which is the day when teachers and gurus are honored.

SIGNIFICANCE

There are two aspects of *Navratri* – the worship of Goddess Durga in her many forms, and the celebration of Lord Rama's victory over evil. Worship of Goddess Durga is associated with the first nine days of *Navratri*, while the ten days of *Navratri* are when *Ras-Leelas* depicting Lord Rama's journey from Ayodhya to Lanka take place.



JOIN US FOR DANDIYA!

Dandiya is a traditional dance from the state of Gujarat that is performed along with *garba* every evening during the festival of *Navratri*. For the past two years, AHA and the Hindu Temple of Wisconsin have hosted a wildly successful *Dandiya Nite*, with live music, food, and fun, and this year we invite you to join us on **Sunday, October 9th at 5:30 PM (Kromrey Middle School, Middleton, WI)** to celebrate *Navratri* with the Madison community. For more information about the event, like the 'Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Wisconsin' on Facebook for updates.



Just for Fun...

According to most calendars, these are the colors that you should wear on each day of *Navratri* to bring the most health, happiness, and prosperity to your home.

- October 1: Gray
- October 2: Orange
- October 3: White
- October 4: Red
- October 5: Royal Blue
- October 6: Yellow
- October 7: Green
- October 8: Peacock Green
- October 9: Purple



DIWALI

Celebrated twenty days after *Dussehra*, *Diwali* is the celebration of Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya after defeating Ravana and rescuing his wife, Sita. *Diwali* is known as the festival of lights, as well as the triumph of good over evil, because as Lord Rama returned home the streets of Ayodhya were lit with *diyas* to celebrate.



Janmashtami – More than Just a Birthday



This year, the annual celebration of the birth of Krishna fell on August 25 and 26- seven days after Raksha Bandhan. It is said that Krishna was born at midnight (in this case, midnight of August 25), which is when the festivities officially commence in the form of fasting, singing bhajans, putting on plays, smashing pots of butter, and cooking dishes to welcome Lord Krishna.

Janmashtami is one of the biggest religious festivals in the world - it's celebrated by 930 million people around the world, with 2 million in the U.S alone. But why? What makes the birth of Krishna, the 8th avatar of Lord Vishnu, such a momentous occasion in the Hindu religion? Here are a few interesting facts about the birth and life of Krishna, some of which we guarantee you never knew and most of which will reinforce the significance of Lord Krishna in our worship and leave you in awe of the mischievous, blue-skinned cowherd that dances through our bhajans and captures our hearts.

1. Yogamaya - the Other Child Born on Janmashtami

Long ago it had been prophesied that the 8th child of Vasudeva and Devaki would be the destroyer of Kamsa, ruler and terrorizer of Mathura. So by and by Vasudeva and Devaki handed their children

over to Kamsa to be killed until shortly before the birth of their 8th child, Lord Vishnu himself came down to Earth and told Vasudeva that he must make the journey to the village of Nanda and Yashoda, take their baby girl and bring her back to the prison, and leave their 8th child in her place.

The biological daughter of Nanda and Yashoda was an incarnation of Goddess Yogamaya - considered to be the sister of Lord Krishna. Just as Kamsa tried to kill her, she slipped out of his hands and rose to the sky. Goddess Yogamaya came down again as Subhadra, the sister of Lord Krishna, and it is said that she and her partial expansion Mahamaya, the material energy of illusion, keep helping Lord Krishna throughout his life. In Hindu scriptures, Goddess Yogamaya covers Lord Vishnu's eyes in divine sleep during cycles of existence when the Earth is peaceful. It is said that Lord Brahma always needs to lift her illusory hold on Vishnu whenever he needs the help of Lord Vishnu.

2. Lord Krishna's wives

Lord Krishna had 8 wives, but is most popularly associated with his gopi-consort Radha in literature, paintings, and plays. Many consider Radha to be Lord Krishna's true love, and some groups like the Manipuri Vaishnavas worship Lord Krishna not as an individual but together with Radha. However, Radha and Krishna were never actually married. Of his 8 wives, Rukmini and Satyabhama are considered the closest and most important to Lord Krishna. Rukmini is Lord Krishna's chief consort and an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi, while Satyabhama is Lord Krishna's second consort and an incarnation of Bhoomi Devi, the Earth goddess.

3. Lord Krishna's time on Earth

Historians and theologians agree that the birth of Lord Krishna happened between 3200 and 3100 BC. But what is remarkable is that around 3200 BC, the first cities in Mesopotamia were only just beginning to develop and the invention of writing and cuneiform tablets happened around this time as well. Fast forward 2,000 years on Earth after the birth of Lord Krishna, and the period of David and Solomon in Israel is only just beginning. The Mycenaean Civilization was established in 1200 BC as well, meaning that the Greek civilization did not start flourishing until *2,000 years after* the birth of Lord Krishna.

4. Krishna in Greece

Lord Krishna does not just appear in Hindu scriptures. Megasthenes (350 and 290 BC) was a Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya and made a reference to a certain Herakles in his famous work, *Indica*. According to his works, Megasthenes describes an Indian tribe called Sourasenoi who worshipped Herakles in their land. This land had two major cities - Methora and Kleisobora, and was characterized by the river Jobares. In ancient Greece, writers and scholars sometimes described foreign gods by relating them to their own divinities; so most scholars agree that Herakles refers to Hari-Krishna; the Sourasenoi refers to the Shurasenas, the branch of the Yadav dynasty to which Krishna belonged; Methora is Mathura, the birthplace of Lord Krishna; Kleisobara is Krishnapura; and the Jobares is the river Yamuna.

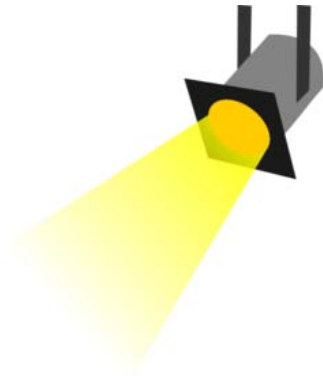
5. Lila and Lord Krishna's influence on Hinduism

Perhaps Lord Krishna's greatest influence on

Hinduism is the introduction and reinforcement of the concept of *lila* - living and playing for fun and enjoyment rather than for sport or gain. In mythology, this is seen through his interactions with the gopikas at *Rasa-lila* dances, through his childish nonchalance when defeating evil, and even when lifting the Govardhana hill; when the rain came, Krishna advised the villagers to worship the hill instead of Indra, which started a spiritual movement that went against the orthodox forms of worshipping Vedic gods such as Indra. The culmination of his influence and teachings came at the battle of Kurukshetra, when Krishna recites to Arjuna what later became the Bhagavad Gita. Unlike Hindu scriptures of the past, the Bhagavad Gita encouraged world acceptance rather than world renunciation. This further reinforced the very embodiment of happiness, joy, and appreciation for life that Lord Krishna stood for.



YOUTH SPOTLIGHT



GANA IS LOOKING FOR YOUTH EDITORS!

Gana is run entirely by a staff of youth editors, with direction and feedback from AHA board members. We are a small group undertaking a big project and are currently looking for people between the ages of 13 and 18 to join our board. Responsibilities include –

- brainstorming themes for each newsletter
- taking photographs at AHA temple events
- writing pieces

If you believe you would be a good fit for the board, please contact head co-editors Meghna and Akshita at gana_editors@ahavtemple.org.

WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN THE GANA EDITORIAL BOARD?

In addition to making lasting friendships and connections with other teens in the Madison Hindu community, being on the editorial board is a great opportunity to contribute to the temple and be a part of something bigger! Gain experience in writing and publishing, as well as leadership and volunteering.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER CONTEST TOPIC

Every two months we will hold an essay and drawing competition. The age groups are 5-8, 9-12, and 13-18, and every month we will select the best essay and piece of artwork from every age group to publish in the next issue of Gana.

The topic for ages 9-12 and 13-18 is **"Celebrating your Hindu Identity in America."**

The topic for ages 5-8 is **"Celebrating Hindu Festivals in America."**

Please ensure that essays are no more than 850 words. Send a copy of your essay/scan your drawing and send it to

gana_editors@svtemple.org by **October 15th** to be considered for publication.