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(Year 2000-2001)

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EDITOR’S NOTE

Dear Readers,

All members of the Bal Sandesh greet you (below) while singing the National Anthem and performing at the Republic Day celebration. In this issue of Bal Sandesh, we have traditional favorite stories, experiences of Bal Sabha members on a visit to India, and the experience of living in the United States. We also have tasty recipes from our Bawarchi that you can try out tonight.

As always, we hope our articles are of interest to people of all age groups. We hope that as you enjoy the summer months—preparing for college, or a new school, or just a new school year, you will take a few minutes every now and then to jot down an incident or story or poem for your very next issue of Bal Sandesh! We will keep them in our database of articles and contributions, and publish them in the earliest possible issue. Interesting resumes begin here!!

SELECTED PICTURES FROM THE REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION
There was once a boy named Raghu who lived with his mother and was very poor. One day, Raghu was accepted to go to a school in the next town. In order to get to the school, Raghu had to walk through a thick forest. And that too, while it was still dark if he wanted to get to school on time. He might get scared, after all, he was only seven.

When he told his mother this, she said, "Oh, don't worry dear Raghu. If you get scared, just call your brother Govind. He lives in the forest". Raghu was surprised. "I didn’t know I had a brother" said Raghu. His mother said, "Oh! But you do. He is so strong that once when a five headed snake (called Kalian) living in a pond was bothering the people and the animals, he just jumped on the snake’s heads and began dancing! After that, he convinced the snake and its family to go away."

"I have a lot of friends who have big brothers, and some of them are very mean to their younger brothers. How can I be sure Govind won't bully me?" Asked Raghu. "Oh, don’t worry. Your brother is kind and a whole lot of fun. Let me tell you how he played with all the kids in the neighborhood. When he was little, he would make human pyramids with his friends to get the butter that was hung high up from ceiling. He used to go with others to the forest taking the cows grazing and even entertain his friends when they got tired. He will not beat you up at all."

So, the next day Raghu set out to school. But when he reached the forest he got scared. He called "Govind! Govind! My elder brother Govind", and Govind came. Raghu was very pleased to see his brother. Govind told him not to be scared and walked with Raghu to the edge of the forest and told him to pay attention at school and if he got scared again, he could always call on him. This became a daily routine. Govind would walk Raghu to the edge of the forest every day that Raghu had school and walk him back again. At school, the other kids who were very rich talk about their houses, gardens and other things. Raghu would also tell them about his exciting brother Govind. He would tell them how his brother Govind plays the flute so beautifully that all the wild animals, even snakes, lions, deer, cows and peacocks would come to listen in peace. To this all the kids would think, "Yeah right". He would say that his brother lived in the forest at the edge of town all by himself, and wore yellow garments and a peacock feather on his head. Some kids thought he was just making it all up.

When the Vijaya Dasami day came, it was traditional to bring gifts and the school fees to the teacher. Raghu asked his mother what they were going to give and his mother told him to ask his brother Govind for help. She said, "Only he can help us!" When Raghu asked him, Govind gave Raghu a small bowl and said to their mother to put something in the bowl. He told Raghu to be sure to bring the empty bowl back. Raghu thanked Govind and agreed. Raghu’s mother filled up the bowl with yogurt and sent Rabhu off to school. Raghu showed this to Govind when he saw him as usual on the way to school. Govind took the bowl and said, "That looks yummy. Let me have a little." Raghu said, "No! Govind, this is a present for my teacher!" Govind laughed and said, "Not to worry. Half this bowl is just as good as full. Just remember to bring back the empty bowl. That is all!" He went away merrily. At school, Raghu brought his old and used bowl of yogurt and kept it alongside the other gifts. One student had brought a bag of gold coins, another fine clothes for the teacher’s family and still others bag of rice and so on. When it was his time to present his offering, he gave the teacher the bowl of yogurt and said he needed to have the empty bowl empty bowl back. Some of the kids laughed. The teacher smiled and told him to go and give it to his wife in the kitchen.

Raghu went to the kitchen, gave the bowl to the teacher’s wife. He then went to the schoolroom after reminding the teacher’s wife that he needed the bowl back. After a while, the teacher’s wife came and said, "Excuse me, will you please come here?" So, everybody came to the kitchen. "Watch this", said the teacher’s wife. She poured the yogurt out of the bowl only to see it fill up again before their own eyes.

"Who gave you this bowl?", The teacher asked Raghu. "My brother Govind", replied Raghu with pleasure. "Is Govind some master of magic?" exclaimed the teacher. Raghu replied excitedly. "Yes, yes he is. My mother says that magic is his middle name!" He then went on telling all kinds of stories about Govind. He talked about how Govind could show the world in his mouth or lift a mountain by a little finger and so on. Then the teacher (and some kids too) who had begun to guess who Govind really was, said", Let’s see Govind. Will you take us to him?"

"Yes, I will. He lives in the forest at the edge of town", said Raghu. "This I want to see!" thought some of his friends. Raghu took them all to the forest and called as usual, "Govind! Govind!" But no one came! So Raghu called again, "Govind! Govind!" but nobody came. Raghu wondered whether his brother was a bit shy. Just then they heard the voice of Govind saying, "I came when you called all these days because you had complete faith that I would come to answer to your call. These other people are here merely testing to see if I will come." The teacher understood and explained it to the class. Raghu remembered Govind’s advice. “Always listen to your teacher. Think about it hard. You will understand!”
I turned the brass knob, and pulled the broad door open. A sharp wind bit my face, and my body was swept by the feeling of the cold air enveloping me. I scurried down the path, with my hands shoved in the pockets of my denim jeans. My ears were bare in the cold and I could hardly feel them. My dark hair was blowing in every direction, and sometimes it would block the cold from my face when it blew over my eyes. It was hard to get used to this weather here in Columbia. Yesterday, I was half way across the world. But now I have returned home. I reached the mailbox, yanked the door open, and grabbed the mail. My hands seemed to scream as they were exposed to the chilly air. I ran back to the house, and went in quickly. Dropping the mail, I tramped down the hall to my room. Once there, I pulled off my coat and dropped it on a chair. I kicked off my shoes, not bothering to undo the laces. They were now lying on the floor, among many other pairs. I plopped onto my bed, my head flattening the pillow. My thoughts drifted halfway across the world; yes, I was recently there. In India, to be precise, where it is warm all year long. Where cows roam freely through the streets of large cities. Where no item has a set price, and you can bargain for beautiful things that are worth a dime in U.S. dollars. A land of a billion people. But now I am back, in Columbia, Missouri. Where we have sweltering summers and icy winters. A place where cows can graze in green pastures, and the only thing you can buy for a dime is a stick of bubble gum. A town of 100,000 people. But India is not a single town like Columbia, it is very different from that. When I landed in India, I didn’t know what to expect. My parents gave me a few pointers, but I never really knew until I was there. One thing I learned was to appreciate what we have. In Columbia, we don’t think twice about clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. Now I know I am lucky to have those things. My first stop in India was the capital, New Delhi. When I got there, a family friend offered to take my sisters and me on a drive around the city. We got in the car and drove for a bit, my friend described what we were seeing. These were a few things that still boggle my mind. Little children wearing tattered, filthy clothes, knocking on the windows of the car, begging for money. The crowded marketplace, with sweet fruits piled high on carts and brightly colored dresses hanging in the windows of shops. The sounds of people singing and laughing to Indian music. Roasted peanut vendors sitting on the side of the road, with peanuts piled in huge brown-colored mounds. Across the marketplace was barren land, covered with little tents, pitched by the homeless. My friend explained to me that the police drive these people away from parking themselves on public land, but they end up coming back the next day. You never see that in Columbia, at least not to this extent. I am almost lost in thought about India. I return to reality, and realize that I am lying on my bed. Just imagine what this bed would be worth to someone sleeping on the lane dividers of the streets of New Delhi. I am sure there are situations everywhere in the world, even the United States, we just do not see them everyday, or any day for that matter. After coming back to Columbia, I look at everything in a different way, and think about every word said to me and how it should affect me. I think about what is really important in each situation. I think going to India was a phenomenal experience for me. I learned so much about the world that I didn’t even know about previously. I believe that everyone should have a chance to go somewhere they never thought of going to, because one really learns about what else is out there. Travel does not mean merely going somewhere and seeing every possible site there is to see and then come back home and resume one’s daily routine. Travel is also meant to learn about the culture of a place, and to learn how others live their lives. Now I think that puts your own life into a different perspective. I slowly sit up on my bed. My reflection for the day is over, and tomorrow I will resume my daily routine. But India will forever be in my thoughts, and I will never forget what I have learned.
Pulikaachal (Tamarind Seasoning Paste)
Ingredients: 4 tbsp. Tamarind paste
1 ½ c. Water
2 tsp. Salt
5 oz. Oil
1 tsp. Mustard seeds
1 tsp. Asafetida powder
½ tsp. Turmeric powder
10-12 Red chilies
10 Curry leaves
2 tsp. Coriander seeds
2 tsp. Sesame seeds
1 tsp. Fenugreek seeds
Directions: Heat oil, then add mustard seeds, turmeric, asafetida, red chilies and curry leaves. When the mustard seeds begin to sputter, add tamarind paste and water and mix well. Boil well, until it is a thick paste and the oil rises to the top. Add salt, simmer on low and set aside. Dry roast coriander seeds, sesame seeds, and fenugreek in a pan and grind to a fine powder. Add to pulikaachal mixture and immediately remove from any heat. Mix well. Keep in an airtight jar in the fridge.

Puliyogare (Tamarind Rice)
Ingredients: 16 oz. Rice
3 tbsp. Oil
1 ½ tsp. Udad dal
1 tsp. Chana dal
1 ½ tsp. Mustard seeds
1 tbsp. Cashew, raw and unsalted
2 tbsp. Peanuts, unsalted and raw
10 Curry leaves
Salt to taste
2 tbsp. Pulikaachal
Directions: Cook the rice. Heat oil and in it fry mustard seeds, udad dal and chana dal. Fry well. When the mustard seeds sputter, add cashews and peanuts. Add curry leaves and do not let the nuts get too brown. Fry for 2 minutes, maximum. Mix with the cooked rice, adding salt. Add pulikaachal paste and mix evenly until it is evenly spread and mixed.

Abbreviations used:
Cup: c.
Teaspoon: tsp.
Tablespoon: tbsp.

Beginning the January 2000 issue this column has become a regular feature in Bal Sandesh. If you have recipes to share with our readers, please send them to our editorial staff.

Why I’m Proud to be an American
By Indu Chandrasekhar, 8th grade, West Junior High School
To many, being an “American” means living in a nice country with good water and plumbing. But to me, it means much more.

Having parents from another nation makes me think about how fortunate they were to have had the chance to live in the most powerful country in the world, a place where they would have more choices than in any other place. And by living here, they’ve helped their children’s lives enormously, compared to lives elsewhere. And that applies to everyone here: there are opportunities for everyone, no matter what their nationality or race is. And we’ve made it our priority to eliminate discrimination, unlike some countries, and we’ve really benefited from our actions.

I believe that when the colonists declared their independence, they had an idea of what America might be like, and I know the one we live in now has exceeded all of their expectations.