EDITOR’S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to yet another issue of Bal Sandesh, the Bal Sabha Newsletter. This issue includes many articles by the Bal Sabha youth, including intriguing exploration of the space program in India, the traditions of Indian marriages, yoga postures, and delicious new recipes for you to try.

We would like to introduce the new officers of Bal Sabha for the year 2002-2003. We also have a talented bunch of kids in Bal Sabha, and included is a list of their accomplishments (we apologize if anyone’s name or accomplishment was left out).

We would like to invite articles, puzzles, or artwork for submission into Bal Sandesh. We hope this issue is a fun and interesting conclusion to an exciting and eventful year!

SELECTED PICTURES FROM THE REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION
When doing Yoga, the person should concentrate on the stretching and more importantly on the breathing. One hour of Yoga is equal to 3 days of normal breathing (if you’re doing the yoga correctly). One common set is the Surya Namaskar (prayer to the Sun God). Here is an example of how to do it (Caution: before starting, warm-up, otherwise the body will not be flexible enough):

**Step 1:** Exhale. Stand very straight with your hands by your side. This is called *Tadasana*.

**Step 2:** Inhale, and lift your arms straight up. This is called *Urdva-Hastasana*.

**Step 3:** Exhale. Bend over and reach as far down as possible. This is called *Pada-Hastasana*.

**Step 4:** Inhale. Keep your right leg back without letting the knee touch the ground, and curl your left leg against your chest, rest your hands on the ground, and look up. This is called *Ashwa Sanchalansana*.

**Step 5:** Exhale. Keep your feet together and straight and put your hands in front to look kind of like a mountain. This is called *Parvatasana*.

**Step 6:** Inhale. Rest everything on the ground like preparing for a push up, but raise your waist in the air. This is called *Ashtanga namaskara*.

**Step 7:** Exhale. Do the same as step 6, but raise your back in the air. This is called *Bhujangasana*.

**Step 8:** Inhale. This is the same as step 5.

**Step 9:** This is the same as step 4.

**Step 10:** This is the same as step 3.

**Step 11:** This is the same as step 2.

**Step 12:** This is the same as step 1.

Now do the whole cycle over but put the left leg back in steps 4 and 9. Stay in each posture as long as you can manage.

Thanks to my teachers and sources, my mom-for doing yoga with me in the mornings, Dr. Vikram Pattarkine, Dr. D.H. Parsons-at Columbia College.
Bharatanatyam
By Meghna Srinath, 7th grade, Smithton Middle School

Bharatanatyam is believed to be the oldest form of South Indian classical dance. It dates back to the Natya Shastra of 4000 B.C. It is the dance that Sage Bharata taught mankind. He in turn had been educated in this art by Lord Brahma. A simple way to understand Bharatanatyam is:

BHAva+RAaga+TAala+NATYAM = Bharatanatyam.

Bhava means expression with feeling, Raaga means melody, Taala means rhythm, and Natyam means dance. In historic times, Bharatanatyam was performed by Devadasis in temples. It was also performed by court dancers in kings’ courts. Bharatanatyam originated in Tamil Nadu. Some of the famous temples built during the 10th-17th centuries AD in South India that illustrate Bharatanatyam dance poses in sculpture are:
- Brihadeeshwara temple – Tanjore, Tamil Nadu
- Temples in Chidambaram, Madurai, and Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu
- Belur and Halebid temples, Karnataka

Some of the techniques used in Bharatanatyam include:
- Samapadha - first position
- Ardhamandali/aramandi – second position – feet are sideways and knees are also bent sideways
- Stiff hand and feet movements
- Rigid posture including proper elbow positioning
- Eye movement and expression (they are integral part of the story telling in the dance)
- Most importantly, smiling

The dancer uses many mudras/hastas (hand gestures) to communicate her story. Adavus are rhythmic footwork patterns of which dances are made of. Adavus were first invented by the Tanjore Quartet and are carved in the Chidambaram temple, in Tamil Nadu.

Some of the dances a Bharatanatyam dancer may perform include, Pushpanjali, Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Shabda, Varna, Padam, Ashtapadi, Devara Nama, Tillana, and Mangala.

An arangetram is a graduation performance by the dancer, in which he/she performs some of the dances from the collection above. This graduation also means that the dancer may start offering lessons.

There are nine emotions that the dancer may portray during the dance. They are known as “Abhinayas,” or expressions. The dancer can express Love (Shringara), Mirth (Hasya), Heroism (Veera), Anger (Roudra), Terror (Bhayanaka), Disgust (Bheebatsa), Wonder (Adbhuta), Compassion (Karuna), and Tranquility (Shanta).

The dancer wears a very elaborate costume. The costume is usually very colorful and has intricate designs. These costumes are sewn by special tailors, using an entire silk sari. There are four parts to the costume – pants (including 1, 2, or 3 fans), blouse, sash, and seat cover.

In addition to the costume, the dancer also wears exquisite jewelry. The various ornaments include:
- Hair ornaments – chitti bottu, sun, moon, bun piece, braid pieces, flowers
- Ear ornaments – jhumki, maatal
- Choker, long coin/pearl necklace
- Bangles
- Belt
- Bells
- Red marker is used to make designs on the hands and feet.

The whole process of getting ready for the performance, takes two to three hours! Lord Shiva in the form of Nataraja is the cosmic dancer. Bharatanatyam was performed by Lord Shiva and his wife, Goddess Parvathi. The dance performed by Lord Shiva is known as Tandava. The dance performed by Goddess Parvathi is known as Lasya.

I have been learning Bharatanatyam for 4 ½ years. I feel that Bharatanatyam is not only a mode of exercise, but also a key that unlocks the ancient history of this dance form. I enjoy dancing, and especially performing, Bharatanatyam. Within each dance I learn, I discover new and intriguing footwork patterns, hand movements, expressions, and body positions. Each one has its own grace and beauty. I will continue to follow my interest in dance in pursuit of a greater knowledge of this beautiful dance form.
Last summer we attended our uncle’s wedding in India. It was a unique experience, full of color, fun, and interesting that we became curious about all the different rituals and their significance. Our research into the meaning of the various rituals led to this article. Hindu weddings are made up of Vedic rituals and social customs. Social customs vary from area to area and from community to community, but Vedic rituals stay more or less the same in any Hindu wedding. What we will describe in this article are the customs, rituals and traditions followed in a typical South Indian Brahmin wedding.

There are many different ways in which a couple can meet: through relatives and friends, matrimonial advertisements, and nowadays on the Internet as well. Typically in India, the marriage is not just between the two individuals but is also a marriage of the two families.

Once the families make contact, they exchange horoscopes. Horoscopes for the boy and girl are drawn up based on their date and time of birth and birth stars. The horoscopes are matched to ensure the compatibility of the couple. Some families dispense with this custom. Family details and personal particulars are also exchanged. The girl and the boy will get to know each other through phone calls and e-mail, etc.

Some families allow the boy and the girl to “go out” together. After having gotten to know each other, they decide in consultation with their families whether or not to get married. The families then pick an auspicious day for the wedding.

The wedding preparations begin with Nelangu, which is a ceremony performed in the homes of the bride and the groom. Prayers are offered for the bride and the groom for the successful completion of the wedding ceremony. Family members apply turmeric paste and kum-kum on the feet of the bride and groom; this is done before a customary oil bath.

Nichiyathaartham means engagement in Tamil. It is a formal engagement between the boy and the girl. The bride’s family gifts new clothes to the groom and in return the groom’s family gifts a sari to the bride. This ceremony may be performed many days before the wedding or is sometimes performed a day before the wedding. When the Nichiyathaartham is performed many days before the wedding, the Lagna Patrika or the wedding invitation is drawn up. This is done after an auspicious day is chosen for the wedding.

The wedding ceremony usually takes place over a two-day period. The ceremony performed the evening before the wedding is known as the Jaanavaasam, in Tamil Nadu, or Baaraat in North India. It is to welcome the groom’s family to the wedding hall. In olden times the wedding took place in the bride’s house. Both families visit a nearby temple together. The groom is then taken in procession in an open car, which is decorated with colorful flowers, back to the wedding hall. These days many grooms choose not to have this ceremony. In North India the groom used to be taken on horse back to the wedding location.

We will now go to the events of the wedding day. The Vratam is performed early in the morning of the wedding. These rites relate to the groom changing his status from that of a bachelor to that of a family man. Bramacharayasramam means bachelorhood and Grihasthaasramam means the status of a family man.

The Kaasi Yaatra has mostly social significance. It is a playful aspect of the wedding where the groom threatens to remain a bachelor forever and leave for Kaasi or Varanasi to become a sanyasi (a hermit). That is why the groom takes an umbrella to provide him shelter, a book for learning and meager belongings including a cane, slippers and a bundle of food. The bride’s father then requests the groom to stay back and offers his daughter in marriage.

Maalai Maatral means exchange of garlands. Relatives of the couple use this event to have some fun by pulling back the groom or the bride just as they are about to be garlanded. It is an occasion for various members of the family to be introduced to each other.

Oonjal means swing in Tamil and it is called Jhoola in Hindi. This event gives an opportunity for friends and relatives to sing songs and have fun. Older women at the wedding make balls of colored cooked rice, which they use to ward off evil spirits by throwing the balls in the four cardinal directions around the couple.

This now begins a description of the Vedic aspects of the wedding ceremony. The Kanyadaanam is
Tying the Knot (Continues) …..

when the girl officially becomes a part of the boy’s family. (Kanyadanaam means “gifting the girl.”) The bride’s father washes the feet of the groom. This is a tradition from the days when the groom and his family would travel by foot from afar. This demonstrates that the bride’s family are good hosts. This ceremony is done to purify and protect the bride.

In the yoke ceremony, the bride sits on her father’s lap as the groom places a small wooden replica of a yoke on her head. On top of the yoke, the groom places a dharba pil, or sacred grass, as well as holy water and gold coins. The gold coins symbolize prosperity, while the yoke symbolizes the hard work ahead. The ceremony is traditionally watched by all female relatives of both the bride and the groom.

In the Mangala Snaanam, the bride is given a symbolic bath in holy water. Five mantras are recited, giving the bride prosperity, purity, happiness, etc. The bride’s father holds a kalasam, or pot full of holy water. It is topped by mango leaves and a coconut.

Maangalya Dhaaranam means the giving of the sacred Tirumangalyam. The Tirumangalyam, or sacred marriage necklace, is passed around to all the elders in attendance so that they may bless the new couple. Mantras are recited for longevity. The groom puts the Tirumangalyam around the bride’s neck. He ties two knots. His sister then ties the third knot. This is an instance in which it shows that the family is always there to back the couple up.

During the Panigrahanam ceremony, the groom takes the hand of the bride, with all her fingers together, and recites four mantras. Through these mantras they ask to be protected and to be united in thoughts and actions.

Sapthapathi means seven steps. The groom leads the bride around the fire, signifying their walk through life together.

The bride takes 7 steps and at each step prays for:

- Unlimited food
- Health and energy
- Go through rituals as per the Vedas
- Happiness
- All possessions to remain safe
- All seasons to be beneficial
- All homams to be performed successfully

The Ashmarohanam, or ammi medi ceremony is when the couple goes around the fire three times, each time the bride steps on a small grinding stone to the right of the sacred fire. The bride’s maternal aunt and uncle put a metti, or small silver toe ring on each of her second toes. The groom asks for the bride to be as steadfast as the stone she stands on and to overcome all enemies.

The Lajahomam is done to ensure the groom’s longevity. Puffed rice is poured into the bride’s hand by her brother. This, along with ghee is offered to Agni, the sacred fire. This is another point in the wedding when it is demonstrated that family plays an important role in the lives of the couple and that they will always be there to support the couple.

Later, a child of about three years is placed on the lap of the bride. This ceremony is done to ensure that the bride has many healthy children.

Further on in the evening, there is a ceremony called Arundati Darshanam. An elder relative takes the couple out to see the constellation Arundati. The relative tells the couple to use Arundati and her husband the Rishi Vasishta as the example of the perfect couple. The couple should be loving and devoted to their family and to each other.

In the Grahapravesam ceremony, the groom enters his house carrying fire from the Homa Kundam in the marriage hall in a clay pot. This is placed in the Northeast corner of the room. The bride must enter the house with her right foot first, because the right is considered luckier and more auspicious than the left. This ceremony is done for the couple’s good luck with their new family and the bride’s good luck in her new home.

The wedding is usually followed by a reception. It gives friends and family a chance to chat and congratulate the new couple. It is often accompanied by entertainment, usually in the form of classical vocal or instrumental music. Dinner often follows the reception.

No wedding is complete without lavish spread of different kinds of fruits, nuts and sweets. Utensils, groceries, and household items are gifted to the bride by her family. They are to help the young couple start a new home. In addition, throughout the wedding, there are extravagant meals served to all the guests.

We found out so many things about what goes into a wedding. Most people are unaware of what all the rituals are done for, or do not have details on why they are done. We hope this article was just as informative and interesting to you as it was for us to research and write it.
The Indian Space Research Organization
By: Anand Palaniappan, 9th grade, West Junior High School

What? India’s in Space!!! Yes, as amazing as it sounds, India has actually had a space program since the early 60’s. They are now one of the more competitive nations in the field, with several space launch vehicles, and even some exclusive services.

Under the guidance of its father, Dr Vikram Sarabha, the ISRO commenced in 1962 under the Department of Space. “There are some who question the relevance of space activities in a developing nation. To us, there is no ambiguity of purpose. We do not have the fantasy of competing with the economically advanced nations in the exploration of the moon or the planets or manned space flight. But we are convinced that if we are to play a meaningful role nationally, and in the community of nations, we must second to none in the application of advanced technologies to the real problems of man and society.”

Although, it started only for recognition as an advanced nation, the ISRO has grown to easily exceed its original ambitions. Today, its most celebrated achievement is within remote sensing. Using their four remaining IRS (Indian Remote Sensing) satellites, the Indian Department of Space has been able to merchandise very high-resolution photographs to the public. This technology has never since been available to the public and is turning out to be quite the asset to their program. Along with remote sensing, the ISRO has four other active programs: Indian National Satellite System (INSAT), Stretched Rohini Satellite Series (SROSS), Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV). Of those three, only the fourth is not complete.

The INSAT series were the first of the Indian satellite series to be launched. Beforehand, India had various multipurpose satellites, of the first being the Aryabatha, launched from the Soviet Union. However the INSAT series were programmed in both Meteorology and Communications. These were India’s first satellites with an important purpose, and they brought the country back onto an even playing field with other nations. India now had the technology to produce its own communication services and develop its own meteorological data for the people. With these new assets India became more independent expensive services from the other countries, and was also able to establish its own private information.

The three remaining programs are all based around India’s launch vehicles, two of which are completed. The SROSS satellites were the first of the Indian satellites to be launched from Indian soil. On its two trips the ASLV (Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle) carried up a total of 4 Rohini satellites along with several from other countries. The purpose of the satellites was to examine the earth, and space. With Gamma ray bursts and various other technologies the Rohini Satellites take measurements even today about activities in space. The Second of India’s Launch vehicles is the PSLV. Its main purpose is to deploy the remote sensing satellites. However, with India’s launch vehicles, they have established polar launching capabilities and are still trying to achieve geosynchronous capability. Amazingly enough, only few other countries have achieved this. If India can do so, it will truly have the honor of being considered one of the greatest space programs of our day.

How Do You Interpret Your Shoes?
By: Rajni Chandrasekhar, 9th grade, West Junior High

Shoes can be interpreted in many ways for different people. To some, they may be necessities that determine how they present themselves. To others, they are just objects to put on their feet. They may even be a desired object that is far from their reach. In any case, these seemingly trivial objects tremendously influence our lives.

About a year ago, my family and I took a trip to India. Among many other cities, we made a very memorable trip to Agra, the home of the world renowned Taj Mahal. I must say that with the exception of the Taj Mahal, the city itself is a whirlwind of dirt and filth, in a more physical aspect. The people who live there live in quite appalling conditions, yet it is still an amazing place. After an eventful visit to the Taj Mahal, my family and I took a tour of the city, which is known for its interesting white architecture. My sisters, mother, and I were all wearing tennis shoes, which were indifferent to the dust and filth they were trudging through. My father, however, was wearing nice black shoes. They weren't too fancy by our American standards, but compared to the flimsy sandals of the people around us, they seemed as if they were.

We hardly noticed my father’s shoes (of all things) until a small boy approached us. He had noticed the mud, dirt, and dust caked on my father’s shoes, and asked quietly if he needed them shined. My father took a look at his shoes, and then at the little boy, and figured, why not? The boy was a small guy, maybe four feet tall. He had dirty black hair that was scattered around his face. Wearing simple clothes, he brought out his little kit with his tools for shining shoes. Inside his kit was a long brush, shining polish, and a rag. My father took off one of his shoes, and handed it to the boy. He worked diligently, and scrubbed each shoe for a long time until they looked better than they had when my father bought them. After this, my father inquired how much the boy charged for the shoe shine. The boy said it was three rupees (about a nickel), and my father realized that he didn’t have that little in change, so he just handed the boy a ten rupee note, and thanked him. The little boy was so astonished and grateful that he said a little prayer before returning the money to his box. It was only then that I realized how important this job for him was, and how much that money could pay for, be it food for the table or something else. Living in the moderate sized town of Columbia, Missouri, it may be hard to imagine how important a simple pair of shoes can be. But for some people out there, they can be a way of life, and a way of living. For the majority of our world, life does not come so easily.
Payal Khengar participated in the 6th annual regional tournament, "Only the Strong Dragon Tournament" open to all states sponsored by Sears ATA Black Belt Academy, Blue Springs, MO, on 27th April 2002.

She won the first place trophy for the block one championship for "forms" and third place trophy for "sparring." This was her first competition.

Ronak R. Patel (third grade at Cedar Ridge Elementary) recently received his Black Belt 1st Degree on Feb 27th 2002 and is currently working on his 2nd Degree. He attended an American Taekwondo Championship Tournament competition in Jefferson City on March 23rd 2002 and came home with a Trophy for 1st in a class of 12 for perfect FORM demonstration.

Ashok Cutkosky received a 1 (one) rating in the district audition for piano last year and so gave a Regional honors recital in early Fall. He subsequently went to the state Auditions in Springfield, Missouri in November 8-11 2001 and was awarded a medal with 1 (one) rating. He played pieces by Chopin and Haydn in this competition. Since then he also played at the charity recital in the Columbia Mall.

Ashok Cutkosky, Adithi Vellore and Natasha Vengurlekar (all from Ridgeway Elementary) participated in the math competition held by MCTM (Missouri Council of Teachers of Mathematics) as State level finalists. Ashok Cutkosky won two Ribbons with sixth place in Concepts and Ninth place in Problem Solving.

Adithi Vellore's poem was selected for publication in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Diversity Breakfast 2002 program booklet.

Meghna Srinath placed first in the Literature section of the 2002 Reflections contest from Smithton Middle School. Her submission, a short story, was sent to the State level of this competition. Meghna was one of 11 students selected from Smithton Middle School for the All-State Youth Missouri Honors Choir.

Arthi Vellore's accomplishments in 2001-2002 include 3rd place in the Veterans Day Essay Contest; 1st place in Hispanic Heritage Month Poster Contest; 4th place in the nation (individually) in the Current Events and 5th place in senior high division at state competition at the Reflections Visual Arts Contest; 1st place in region, 3rd place in the nation in the National Spanish Exam; 1st place as part of the Hickman team at the MU Chemistry Day Competition.

Indu Chandrasekhar's accomplishments in 2002 include 3rd place in the state in the National French Exam. Indu's artwork was also selected for the Shelter Insurance Holiday Card Design Contest 2001, for which she received a $100 savings bond.

Rajni Chandrasekhar place 6th in the state in the National French Exam.

Science Olympiad: The West Junior High School team won first place at regionals and tied for eighth place in the state level competition. The team included ninth graders Arthi Vellore, Rajni Chandrasekhar, Indu Chandrasekhar, Aditya Srinath, and Helen Chamberlain and several eighth graders. Students also received individual medals / ribbons for several events. At Regionals they won 1st place for Can't Judge a Powder by its Color (Arthi and Indu); 1st place for Experimental Design (Arthi, Rajni, Helen); 2nd place for Life Science Process Lab (Arthi and Helen); 2nd place for Rocks and Minerals (Arthi and Helen); 2nd place for Science Crime Busters (Indu and Arthi); 3rd place for Mission Possible (Rajni and Indu); 5th place for Water Quality (Aditya). At State they won 1st place for Science Crime Busters (Indu and Arthi); 2nd place for Can't Judge a Powder by its Color (Indu and Arthi); 3rd place for Life Science Process Lab (Arthi and Helen) and 5th place for Compute This (Aditya).

Regional and State Science Fairs (Missouri Academy of Sciences):

The Regional competition was held at Jefferson City, March 22: Indu Chandrasekhar, Rajni Chandrasekhar, Anand Palaniappan, and Kanna Palaniappan were among the students who presented their science projects. All of them won first place ribbons. Kanna and Indu qualified for the State level. At the State competition in Joplin, Missouri.

At the Jefferson City Music Festival they played the Telemann violin quartet and a violin duet by Mozart, and received scores of one plus. At State Music Festival at MU on April 25th, their quartet received a rating of two.

Destination Imagination: The seven -member West Junior High team included Anand Palaniappan and Aditya Srinath. They placed 1st in the regional competition at Rock Bridge High School, and 3rd in the state competition in Joplin, Missouri. In addition, they won the "Da Vinci" award for the most creative plot in the Instant Challenge part of the competition.

Regional Botball Robotics Tournament in Oklahoma City on Feb 23rd: Sagar Vengurlekar was part of a six-member team from Smithton, West Junior, and Jeff Junior schools. Sagar's team won the 2nd place award for their performance in the morning session, and the award for the best design of their robot in the overall performance.

First Lego League Tournament in Arkansas attended by teams from 50 states: Sagar and his team (Columbia Robotics Team) were ranked first after the morning session of three rounds of competition. The team was one of the two Missouri teams competing for the final match, but lost to a team from Rolla. The Columbia Robotics Team won the 2nd place award for overall performance and 1st place award for Creativity.

Arthi Vellore, Anand Palaniappan, and Aditya Srinath won 1st place in the state in both Spring and fall rounds, and 5th place nationally in the spring round as a part of the West Junior high Knowledge Masters team.
BAWARCHI
The Kitchen Corner
Vellore S. Arthi

BEANS PARPARCHA CURRY
Ingredients: ¼ kilo Green beans
4 Red chilies
50 g. Bengal gram
Salt to taste
1 tsp. Mustard Seeds
1 pinch Turmeric Powder
¼ tsp. Asafetida
¼ Cup cooking oil
Directions: Soak gram for thirty minutes. Cut beans. Heat oil in a wok, and add mustard seeds. When the mustard seeds sputter, add turmeric powder. Then add the beans. Grind Bengal Gram and red chilies to a coarse paste, and when beans are half cooked, add the paste and salt. Without stopping, stir slowly. It should not get burnt. Stop after the paste is cooked. It will be stuck to the beans and will be kind of crispy and brown.

MOORE SATHAMDU
Ingredients: ½ Liter thick buttermilk
1 tsp. Black pepper
½ tsp. Fenugreek
1 tsp. Cumin seeds
1 tsp. Mustard seeds
2 Red chilies
2 tsp. Cooking oil
1 tsp. Urad dal
1 Pinch turmeric powder
Salt to taste
Directions: Put oil, cumin, red chilies, black pepper, urad dal and fenugreek in a pot. Fry for a while, then put in mixer and grind to a paste. Put turmeric powder, salt, and the paste into the buttermilk and mix. In a small pan, heat a little oil, along with mustard seeds. After the seeds sputter, put the fried mustard seeds onto the buttermilk mixture. Mix. Serve as soup or as a topping for rice.

UGADI CELEBRATION

Bal Sandesh

Published Tri-Yearly
Republic Day Issue—January
Summer Issue—May
India Nite Issue (Fall, Section of India Nite Booklet)