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Bal Sandesh Coordinator: Hema Srinivasan

Four Bal Sandesh editors, Arthi, Indu, Anand and Adithya are graduating this year, and this will leave Bal Sandesh severely short-handed! Anyone who wishes to be an editor should speak with Hema Srinivasan. We look forward to many new recruits.

In this issue we have a tribute to the graduates in Bal Sabha, articles on pongal and Indian Wildlife as well as a top ten list, movie review and the continued poets section with several poems.

Please enjoy this issue of Bal Sandesh!

Ashok Cutkosky

Six Bal Sabha members graduated this month from High School with great honors and are on their way to colleges all over the country.

Arthi Vellore heads west to be freshman at the University of Southern California.
Indu Chandrasekhar is heading to Washington University in Saint Louis.
Rajni Chandrasekhar will be in Northwestern University in Chicago.
Sunny Kantha is taking off to Duke University.
Anand Palaniappan will head east to Yale University.
Adithya Srinath will be going up north to the University of Minnesota.

The pictorial representation to the left is by Maya Cutkosky.
Pongal
by
Ashwath Kumar
3rd grade Ridgeway Elementary

Pongal is a festival celebrated mostly in Southern India. I am going to tell you about what happens during the Pongal and how people celebrate it. In the middle of December, people get ready for Pongal. Pongal is celebrated for four days. The men of the house have to get their farmland ready for harvest time. They clean their farmland by cleaning and moving hay, checking cow ropes and sharpen farm equipment. The women of the house clean the storeroom and also get ready for the harvest season. They also white wash [paint] their house. The women put cow dung water in the front of the house that acts as insecticide. The girls draw kolams [designs made out of rice flour] as a welcome gesture. The girls will also make an odd number of Pillayars [Ganapathy] every day for the well being of their brothers. At the end of the day they put these Pillayars upon the roof to dry. While the men and women are working they sing songs and in the evening they practice kollattam and kummi (a form of folk dance). All these things happen in the month of Markazhi.

BHOGI

The first day of Pongal is called Bhogi. It is celebrated around January 13. The women give away old things like clothes to the needy. The girls draw kolam [a design] around the house. People keep kappu, which is made out of mango, and neem leaves. In the farm, farmers take old things made out of wood or rubber and burn them in a fire. They also keep kappu. They tan leather in the born-fire. In the house they make dinner and keep some food for Goddess Shankaranthi. They do that because of a myth that the goddess Shankaranti will come and see how much food is left to give away. In the evening boys and girls dance traditional dances called kollattam and kummi.

Thai pongal

Thai pongal is celebrated on the first day of the Tamil month Thai [about January 14]. Thai day is dedicated to the sun god. It is celebrated at home. Immediately after sunrise the pongal is made outside the house, normally in the backyard. The pongal pot is decorated with kolam. The sweet pongal [sugar pongal] that is made on that day is given to the people who are at the house. This is also called Manai [house] pongal. Women and men plant new crops and make pachai mavu other wise called as maa villakkku [mixer of rice flour and jagrey]. Children and teenagers enjoy the day by doing to traditional dances.

Maatu pongal

Maatu pongal is the third day of pongal. It is a special day for the farmworkers, farmers and cattle. They decorate the farmland. They paint the cattle horns and decorate them with colorful ropes and belt. Farmworkers get new clothes on this day. Before sunset, the farm workers’ and farmers’ families make pongal. The first and biggest pongal is called pattiyar [cow] pongal. There are always an odd number of pongal pots. They make a rectangular puddle called thepakullam. They decorate it with a banana plant, turmeric plant, neem leaves, mango leaves, sugar cane and some flowers. Nine rocks that are picked from the farm also represent the nine planets. All the special foods cooked are served first before the farmers. They end the ceremony by the boiling of milk in pongal.

This last day of Pongal is also called Kannum pongal. The married women go to visit their brothers and make pongal in their brother’s house and pray for their brother’s well being. The brothers give gifts to their sisters. The teenage boys take part in sports like jallikattu [basic modern rodeo] and a bullock cart race. Children will take snacks like murruku [a crunchy swirl], ladoo [a round yellow sweet], puffed rice and some candies and go and play. They also take the Pillayars made during the first day of pongal and throw them into the river. They feed fishes and exchange snacks with their friends. This day women and children get new clothes. That evening pongal celebrations are rapped up and pongal will come again the next year.

Thus the relaxing time for the farmer during pongal is over. The very next day they will be busy working in their farm.

Moon

By Suryanshi Rawat
3rd grade, Mill Creek

Moon, Moon...
Where do you go?
When the Sun Lights up
In the beautiful Sky

I go to the other side
of the world
to light up
other people’s quite nights...
Music

By Maya Cutkosky,
5th grade Fairview elementary

I listen to a song,
Tears fill my eyes,
I feel so very sad.
As I listen to the next,
I feel so happy,
I run around the room in joy.
How can something,
Not anything but a sound,
Create such emotion.
How does music,
Reach us so,
I just don’t understand.

*** *** ***

Rishav Choudhury
Age: 6 years

A Lucky Little Shark

There was a happy little shark.
One day the bigger shark ate the happy little shark.
The bigger shark sneezed,
the happy little shark came out.
Another day, the bigger shark ate the happy little shark.
And the bigger shark sneezed,
the happy little shark came out.
Sometimes went BOOM!
It was a happy little man jumped into the sea.
The happy little man never got by the bigger shark.
Cause, the happy little shark protected the happy little man.
The happy little shark, was a lucky little shark.

Shells...

Suryanshi Rawat, 3rd grade
Mill Creek Elementary

Shell in the deep reef
On the ocean floor...
The shell had sunk down so quietly quietly quietly.
The giant ocean waves
Took the shell far away
Washing it up on the beach shore...
gently gently gently.
The shell felt a touch
A lucky kids hand...
picking it up and bringing it home
far far away from the ocean floor....

*** *** ***

One beautiful morning ....
Suryanshi Rawat, 3rd grade
Mill Creek Elementary

The Sun is shining
the Flowers are blooming
and the Grass is growing

The Birds are flying
the Bees are buzzing
and the Crickets are chirping

The Wind is blowing
the Trees are swaying
and the Leaves are falling

The Kids are playing
Soccer, Kickball, Basketball
Or catch all.

All in one beautiful shining morning...
Indian Americans are any of the following:
American-born citizens of Indian origin (second
 generation Indians)
Naturalized U.S. citizens (originally born in India)
Indian-born citizens permanently residing in the
 U.S.

I chose my favorite top ten Indian Americans, keeping in mind that there are many other well-qualified people who could also make this list.

#10: Norah Jones
Norah Jones is the daughter of the acclaimed sitar maestro, Ravi Shankar. She is a famous modern jazz/pop singer who won 5 Grammys in March 2003, including Best New Artist. Her newest album, “Feels Like Home”, is very popular with teens today.

#9: Jhumpa Lahiri
Jhumpa Lahiri is a famous Indian American author. Her book, Interpreter of Maladies, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2000 and the Pen/Hemingway Award. The book also received the O. Henry Award, Best American Short Stories award, and the New Yorker Debut of the Year award. Her most recent book, The Namesake, is on the New York Times Bestseller List.

#8: Sabeer Bhatia
Sabeer Bhatia founded Hotmail in 1996, when he was 27 years old. He has a Masters degree in electrical engineering from Stanford. He sold Hotmail to Microsoft in 1999. He has also won many awards and accolades including “Entrepreneur of the Year” in 1997, and MIT’s TR100 Award - presented to 100 young innovators expected to have the greatest impact on technology in the future.

#7: Amar Bose
Amar Bose founded the Bose Corporation in 1964. His speaker system was one of the first to make use of sound reflecting off walls and the ceiling. He also published a book called “Nonlinear Problems in Random Theory”. He currently teaches electrical engineering and computer science at MIT.

#6: Amartya Sen
Amartya Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1988 for his contributions to welfare economics. He was also awarded the Senator Giovanni Agnelli International Prize in Ethics in 1990 and the Rank E. Seidman Distinguished Award in Political Economy in 1986. He has lived for several years in the U.S. in California. He is currently teaching at Trinity College in Cambridge, England.

#5: Har Gobind Khorana
Har Gobind Khorana became a naturalized citizen of the U.S. in 1960. He won the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1968 along with Robert Holley and Marshall Nirenberg, for their interpretation of the genetic code and its function in protein synthesis. Khorana’s role was to devise the methods that led to the synthesis of well-defined nucleic acids, ultimately leading to the solution of the genetic code. In 1970, Khorana and his research team were able to synthesize the first artificial copy of a yeast gene. He got his Ph.D. from University of Liverpool, England.

#4: Zubin Mehta
Zubin Mehta was the Music Director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra for 13 years, starting in 1978. Conducting more than 1,000 concerts with this orchestra only, Mehta became the first music director in the orchestra’s history to hold the position for so long. He currently conducts the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

#3 M. Night Shyamalan
M. Night Shyamalan was the director of the movie “Sixth Sense”, which was nominated for five Oscars, including Best Director and Best Picture. He was the screenwriter for “Stuart Little” and also directed “Signs” and “Unbreakable”. He turned down offers to direct the third Harry Potter movie and another Indiana Jones movie. His most recent movie, “The Village”, has earned an Oscar nomination for Best Musical Score.
#2. Subramanyan Chandrasekhar

Subramanyan Chandrasekhar was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1983 for his work on the structure and evolution of the stars. He was also awarded the Royal Medal of the Royal Society in 1962 in recognition of his distinguished research in mathematical physics. In 1984, he was awarded the Copley Medal of the Royal Society... in recognition of his distinguished work on theoretical physics, including stellar structure, theory of radiation, hydrodynamic stability and relativity. He got his Ph.D. from Cambridge and was the nephew of Nobel laureate Sir C.V. Raman. He died in 1995 and was recently honored by having the most powerful observatory in space named after him: Chandra.

#1: Kalpana Chawla

Kalpana Chawla was the first Indian American woman to fly into space. She got her B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering from Punjab Engineering College in 1982, M.S. from University of Texas in 1984, and Ph.D. from University of Colorado in 1988. Chawla worked with the simulation of complex air flows encountered around an aircraft, how weightlessness in space affects physical processes, and made observations of the Sun’s atmospheric layers. She flew on the STS-87 (1997). She died on Feb.1, 2003 on the STS-107 Space Shuttle Columbia, during the shuttle’s reentry into the Earth’s atmosphere.

In conclusion all of the Indian Americans I chose came from different backgrounds but excelled in their chosen fields. There were some common characteristics that all of them shared - talent, best use of available resources, and persistence and willingness to explore new areas. I think these top ten Indian Americans are great trendsetters and role models for future generations.

DARE

by Nidhi Khurana 4th grade

Ridgeway Elementary

Children of Columbia, children of Missouri, Children of every state in America, Listen to my DARE message, For it is simple and not complex, And it may help you make healthy and wise choices.

DARE is an acronym for a decision-making model D stands for defining your problem, A stands for assessing your choices, R stands for responding to information you gather, And E stands for evaluating your decision.

Sooner or later the day will come When you will use the DARE decision-making model To get out of risky situations, To resist peer pressure, And to be free of drugs.

If you want to live to your fullest, Don’t you use or abuse drugs. They may put you on the high, And they may put you on the low. But what good would they be, If they make you lose your self control, Or damage every organ in your body.

Alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco are not cool, Reading, writing, typing, painting, playing, Swimming, bird watching, star gazing, To name a few, Are cool things to do.

Children of Columbia, children of Missouri, Children of every state in America, Now that you know what DARE is all about, I suggest that you take pledge, That you will spread my tidings all around, of never to use or abuse drugs.

And if you do, there may come a day, When no one will demand drugs, And no one will produce them, And that day would set us free, To live life to the fullest.
India has hundreds of species of animals, and thousands of birds species. There is a wide range of climate and landscape throughout India. And there are 411 wild life sanctuaries in India! In India, not only there are 2000 species of birds, 500 species of mammals and 500 species of animals, there are also 30,000 species of insects.

Do you know that the rhinoceros became extinct in America a long time ago? Don’t worry. There are still some in India.

How can you tell if it is an Indian Rhino? You count the number of horns. If it is one, it is an Indian Rhino! The Indian Rhino is Endangered. There are only 3000 left. It’s back is covered with horny plates which look like natural armor! Next to elephants, they are the largest mammals on earth. Like elephants, they are also herbivores. They don’t eat other animals. They eat the leaves from trees and bushes. They are solitary creatures and mark out their own territory.

Lion – Simha

The Asiatic lions live only in the Gir Forest in India

Story of Asiatic Lion: They nearly became extinct in the late 19th century everywhere except for in the Gir forest. The Nawab of Junaganyj decided to protect the 12 or 15 lions that still survived in his kingdom. He stopped the people from killing the lions. Slowly, the lions increased to hundreds. After he died, people started shooting lions. Then the British also banned the shooting of the lions in Gir Forest. Slowly it came back to a hundred again. Finally, in 1965, the Indian government established the Gir National Park which is a sanctuary for the lions. Now there are about 300 lions there. The area is about 2000 sq km. But the lions now want more territory. So, they move in to the surrounding villages and forests to increase their territory. Some lions want to see the world outside the reserve. So they wander off. Last year, they found a lion, lioness and two cubs way out in Diu, and brought them back to this protected habitat. Their population has now increased to about 300 from 13 in 1884 when the Nawab of Junagadh started trying to save them.

Elephants are the largest mammals in the world; They are about 8 ft tall and weigh about 6 tons. Male elephants have tusks. They use the tusk for eating, drinking and breathing. They have become endangered because of habitat loss - there are only 40000 in all of south asia and over half of these in India. In 1991, project elephant was started in India to protect these endangered elephants. Elephants are herbivores. They are used as majestic symbols in royal processions and in temples. They are also used in logging because of their strength. Elephants communicate by trumpeting, purring and listen to this, by silence! When the elephants stops purring and become suddenly silent, it tells the other elephants that there is some danger and they all fall silent.

Mountain Goats:

Nilgiri Thar is a mountain goat. They are found in Nilgiri mountains in Southern India. They also live in Anamudi hills – the tallest peak in south India. They can climb inaccessible heights and usually prefer heights over 6000 feet. They, like other goats, are herbivores. They eat grass and leaves.
Gaur are not the only wild cow but most of the others are extinct or domesticated.

Everyone knows that cows are sacred and important animals in India. It’s probably because of Krishna. Do you know that there are some cattle that are wild? A Gaur is one of them. It is endangered too! But luckily since the tigers are almost extinct, they hardly have any predators now except you know who!

Bengal Tigers!

They are more in number than any other species of tiger in India. The tiger is the national animal of India. They can run 60km per hour, it is 37.5 miles per hour. They can also swim quite fast. They have sharp eye sight and sharp hearing too. It is amazing they are endangered with all this! There are only 3000 or so today. They some times sleep 16-18 hours a day! Tigresses are good mothers – very protective of their babies. till they are grown.

There are 3000-7000 Snow leopards in the world. Snow leopards play an important role as the top predators in the mountains. They mainly eat sheep, or Asiatic Ibex (a wild mountain goat). They are most active at dawn and dusk. They are active during the day where there are no people around. When they are disturbed, they become nocturnal. They have about 2-3 cubs each liter. The cubs become independent of their mothers when they are just two years old!

Now we come to the most famous animal of India: Peacock!

Mayil in Tamil, Mayuram in Sanskrit and More in Hindi all mean Peacock.

The peacock is the National Bird of India. The peacock is known for its beautiful feathers. The peacock is often mentioned in many of the ancient literature of India. It is the vehicle of choice for Muruga or Subrahmania, the second son of Shiva. Did you know that peacocks eats insects, lizards, snakes, and grains?

A Flying Squirrel

By

Maya Cutkosky,

5th grade Fairview Elementary

Quietly she tip-toe past, like a small shadow.
The black of night disturbs her none, for she is nocturnal.
Such a small tree Squirrel She is, about as big as your hand.
Oh love those little flying Squirrels so much oh so much!
Bal Sandesh
Tri-Yearly Newsletter of the Bal Sabha of Columbia, MO

At the April meeting of the Balsabha, members elected new officers for the 2005-2006. Congratulations to the new officers!

President:
Bharath Srinivasan
Vice President:
Uma Srinath
Secretary/Treasurer:
Kalai Kumar
Cultural Secretary:
Surya Mantrala
Bal Sandesh Coordinator
Hema Srinivasan

Upcoming Festivals, Local Celebrations and Cultural Events

Bal puja: Sunday, June 12, Grindstone house.

THANK YOU
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Summer Issue – May
Diwali or India Nite Issue - October

8 Bal Sandesh

Bal Sandesh needs your help!
We welcome submissions of all types (reports, poetry, short stories, artwork, puzzles, jokes etc.). Work can be submitted to the Editor or the Parent Advisors. We prefer electronic version of the submission (e-mail or diskette). Artwork can be submitted on paper. Older kids interested in volunteering to serve on the editorial/production team should contact the Editorial Staff or the Parent Advisors.

Movie Review
Star Wars III
By Ashok Cutkosky,
8th grade, West Junior High School

This movie has been long expected by many star wars fans around the world. The previous installment proved to be something of a flop, eliciting very few favorable opinions. This one has been much better received.

One of the main problems with the newer star wars movies is an over obsession with special effects. Although the last movie was almost entirely camera magic and light saber battles, this movie has steered away from that problem by adding much more content and making the first two light saber scenes remarkably short. There is a fairly intelligent plot, but unlike episode 1, this appears to be targeted at a slightly older audience as there are no amusing amphibians and few funny moments.

There is a rather large element of surrealism in this movie, however. Although one can understand not wishing to show much blood and gore so that the movie is not too sickening, there is such a thing as too much softening. The viewer is continually expected to accept various people emerging from battles or situations that should have subjected them to numerous cuts and/or broken bones with perfect hair, no sweat, and barely dusty robes. On the ads for this film, there is a quote saying that it is better than the original three star wars movies. While this movie is very good and arguably the best of the newer three, I don't believe many people agree with this quote. If you are ever in the position of buying this movie or one of the original trilogy, pick the trilogy. All in all, however, Star Wars episode three is a very good movie and definitely a good ending to the saga.

On a scale of one to ten, this movie would rate an 8.5

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