

ARYA SAMAJ OF NJ

Arya Patrika आर्य पत्रिका



April 2024

Editorial Team: Dr. Manju Gupta, Sonal Dani, Sanjukta Basu, Nandita Dani

SPRING EDITION!





Festivals, Holidays, Commemorations in April 2024

April 10 - Arya Samaj Foundation Day

It was on 10th April in 1875 that Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati founded Arya Samaj in Bombay.



April 17 - Ram Navami

Ram Navami is the celebration of Lord Ram's birth.

April 19 - Mahatma Hansraj Jayanti

He was born in 1864, and grew to be an Indian educationist and a follower of Arya Samaj. He started Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) School in 1886 in Lahore.

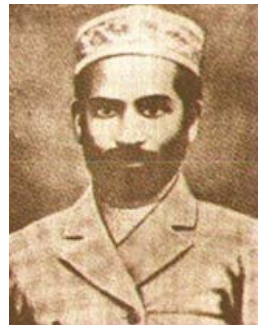


April 23 - Hanuman Jayanti

Hanuman is worshipped with the ability to gain victory over evil and provide protection. On this festival, Hanuman is celebrated and devotees seek his protection and blessings.

April 26 - Pandit Gurudatt Vidyarathi Jayanti

He was born in 1864 in Multan (now in Pakistan). Graduate of Punjab University he was an Arya Samaj leader. While his life was short - 26 years, he took upon his shoulders the promotion of Arya Samaj the Vedic mission after the death of Swami Dayanand. He published the book, The Terminology of the Vedas, and 2 newspapers, Regenerator of Aryavart and Vedic Magazine.





Alumni Meetups - from our Youth

-Nandita Dani

On Sunday, December 24, the Arya Samaj Youth Group had many special visitors. The Youth Alumni came to speak about career, college, and just about life in general after their time in the Youth Group. The alumni ranged from freshmen in college to graduates from the 90s. Many games and competitions were held between the current youth and the alumni, and overall it was an incredible atmosphere; the current youth were able to learn more and the alumni were able to meet each other and form a new alumni network.



We now plan on having more frequent alumni meet ups. If you are a part of ASNJ youth alumni and would like to join us, please email us at contact@aryasamajofnj.org, or call at 551-230-2792.



Cultural Significance of Holi

-Shruti Dhara Mishra, Arya Youth at Greater Atlanta Vedic Center

Note: This article was originally printed in Navrang Times and is reprinted in this Patrika with permission from Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, America.

"Balma pichkari, jo tune mujhe maari, to sidhi sadhi chhori, sharabi ho gayi"... "Rang barse, bheege chunarwali, rang barse"... "Ang se ang lagana, sajan mujhe aise rang lagana" - these are the images that the Bollywood industry has etched into our minds, ALL replete with obscenity, with the real significance forgotten. In the name of "*bura na mano, holi hai*," individuals have allowed themselves to cross moral boundaries and behave in an uncivilized, unethical, and immoral manner; the purpose forgotten, the true meaning behind the celebration gone, leaving only a corrupted form of festivity.

Spring brings relief from the dry and cold winter season. During spring, the soil and the environment undergo a transformative phase, creating a conducive habitat for life. It's a time when everything in the surroundings begins to teem with blossom. Spring symbolizes the very essence of life - rejuvenation, fresh beginnings, and the birth of new existence. Since ancient Vedic times, the spirit of new beginnings has been commemorated through diverse festivities. In the Vedic era, people actively participated in a myriad of festivals, often intricately linked to seasonal shifts. Among these celebrations, the 'Vasant Parv' held a unique significance. When the Creator, Eeshwar fashioned this universe, the natural ambiance was exceptionally enchanting and captivating. Consequently, that season was named 'Vasant' (spring), and in commemoration of this splendid transformation, the Vasant Parv was instituted to celebrate the mark of a new beginning.

Over time, a new festival emerged after Vasant to welcome the harvest of new crops, celebrated in the form of a yajnya—'*Vasanteeya Navasasyeshti Parv*.' This festival took place forty days after *Vasant Parv* and was considered an integral part of the overall Vasant celebrations. The spirited ambiance that filled the air during Vasant Parv extended seamlessly to the Navasasyeshti Parv or Yajnya Parv that essentially represented the primordial form of Holi.

Since its inception, this ritual has been celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Falgun. According to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, those who enjoy their pleasures without sharing with the devatas are like thieves. Before people consume any new produce from nature, it is first dedicated to the devatas. As crops ripen in the fields around the full moon in Falgun, it's crucial to offer them to the devatas for the well-being of the community.



Cultural Significance of Holi cont.

This is the purpose behind the Yajnya. The name 'Navasasyeshti Parv' comes from the practice of performing a yajnya with new grains. 'Nav' stands for new, 'Sasya' means grains, and 'Ishti' refers to yajnya. Essentially, it involves performing yajnya with new grains. This ancient tradition has been followed since the beginning of time. Our ancestors, from early days, conducted collective yajnyas offering to the fire, some of the new grains that ripened during the spring season- wheat, chickpeas, peas, and more. Besides grains, ghee and various herbs were added to the yajnya, and all of this served a purpose. The fragrant vapors from the grains, ghee, and herbs purifies the atmosphere, curb air pollution. The particles released would combine with clouds, enrich rainwater with powerful elements and enhance its nutritional value for crops.

Navasasyeshti and Holi:

Originally named the "*Vasantī Navasasyeshti Parv*," this festival involved collective yajnyas in every village. People contributed grains, ghee, and samidha, and gathered at designated locations. It was a joint effort, and the grains, offered in the sacred fire, became prasad. The partially roasted grains, known as *Holak* in Sanskrit, were not only nutritious but also flavorful.

"Holak" refers to the outer covering or husk of grains, with the inner residue called "Prahālāda" in Sanskrit. Over time, "Holak" transformed into "Holikā," giving rise to the term "Holi." In addition to dedicating the new food to the devatas, people would also partially roast it, consuming a portion themselves. This practice led to the transformation of the Navasasyeshti Yajnya festival into "Holikotsav." Eventually, the term evolved further, and only "Holi" remained as the name for the festival.

Second Day of Holi:

The Navasasyeshti Yajnya was followed by water sports and various entertainment programs the next day. This marked the culmination of the forty-day long Vasant festival. Due to its connection with Vasant, this festivity was commonly known as 'Vasantotsav' or 'Subsantak.' Ancient Indian texts mention lively watersports and celebrations during Vasantotsav or Madan Mahotsav. In this era, people engaged in playful activities using 'shrangak', water-filled vessels shaped like snakes, to joyfully splash colored water on each other. Not only was the water fragrant and visually captivating, but it also held health benefits and served as an effective bacteria/insect repellent.

Chandan (sandalwood), kesar (saffron), kumkum, and rosewater were commonly used during these water festivities. On this day, people from all walks of life would join together to playfully apply colors to each other. The entire atmosphere became vibrant, filled with love, and fragrance. In the 'Raghuvansh,' Kalidasa describes people releasing colorful jets of water from gold pitchers. Drops of red kumkum from their hair would mingle with the water, creating a captivating sight.



Cultural Significance of Holi cont.

In another Sanskrit text, '*Kumar Pal Charit*', it is vividly described how some would use water guns, while others would fill their mouths with water and playfully shower their beloved ones. The atmosphere resonated with excitement and music. Renowned Sanskrit author Someshwar depicted the celebration in his work '*Manasollasa*', stating, "*After the royal feast, the king, princes, and ministers would gather in a pavilion in the afternoon. Guests would also join the festivities. Following this, adorned with white garments and jewelry, female dancers would gracefully enter, their anklets intensifying the rhythmic pace. In the water, a mixture of saffron, camphor, and fragrances awaited. The king would be anointed with this concoction. Subsequently, he would apply kumkum, sandalwood, and turmeric on the attendants, honoring them with scattering flowers on them.*"

As time passed, the true essence of the Vasant festival faded away, leaving only the entertainment aspect behind. The festival lost its significance, giving way to a distorted version that granted people the liberty to indulge in whatever they pleased. This included the consumption of '*Bhang*', inappropriate behavior towards others, and the crossing of boundaries—all justified under the popular adage, "*bura na mano, holi hai*". The celebration, once rich in cultural meaning, became a canvas for unchecked behavior and a far cry from its original purpose.

As Holi draws near, let's seize this opportunity for enlightenment and spread awareness about the true essence of this festive occasion: embrace the arrival of new crops and the season by partaking in yajnya rituals with our families, and indulge in Holi festivities with a sense of moderation, mindful not to overstep our limits. The celebration was never intended to be harmful.

Holi has always been about reaping benefits in various aspects—offering grains to yajnya devata, using herbal water, and reveling in colors crafted from natural ingredients. As we approach Holi, let's express gratitude for God's magnificent creation and commemorate this new beginning with reverence and a keen sense of boundaries.

Happy Holi!



Significance of Colors - Aashi Jesalpura

Historically, Holi marked the arrival of spring and the end of winter, symbolizing renewal and the victory of good over evil. Holi is a joyous celebration where people come together, throwing colored powders and water. Each color of powder carries its own significance symbolizing positive aspects. Today, Holi is celebrated not only in India but also in various parts of the world, transcending cultural and religious boundaries to spread its message of love, joy, and harmony. The next time you pick up colored powders remember the significance behind each color.

Red

The color red is associated with a number of traditions in India. Brides and married women wear red and it's also the color of weddings and life in general. Not just for Hindus, but for Muslims, Buddhists and Jains too.

Orange

Orange is associated with strength and is a sacred color in many Eastern religions, Hinduism included. Hindu monks wear orange robes and bright saffron turbans. Orange also represents the sacral chakra, which is the energy center of one's self.

Yellow

Many of the gods such as Vishnu and Krishna are often depicted wearing yellow and the color itself is actually believed to have healing powers. This is probably due to its association with turmeric, which has been used for medicinal purposes for centuries within India.

Green

Green represents the celebration of nature and happiness and is also the color associated with one of Vishnu's avatars, Prince Rama, who spent the majority of their life in exile in the forest. In certain areas of central India, married women often wear green bangles and saris in Rama's honor.

Blue

So blue is a reminder that evil exists but can be contained, through courage and right actions. Krishna is a manifestation of Vishnu. His name means "dark," and like Vishnu he is portrayed with blue skin. In addition to being associated with the gods, blue—through the indigo dye—is also historically linked with India.

Purple

Purple is a combination of the passion of red and the calmness of blue and is often associated with royalty, power and wealth within India. It's also the color of the crown chakra, which is the seventh chakra that is located at the top of the head.

Pink

This is an innocent and cheerful color that symbolizes youth and playfulness. It's a more recent addition to Holi celebrations and can often be seen in the clouds of color powder that smother the streets of India during the celebration.



Holi - Keya Jesalpura

The Holi Festival, also known as the "Festival of Colors," is a traditional Hindu festival that takes place annually, spanning over two days, marking the arrival of spring. The celebration typically falls in the Hindu month of "Phalguna," which is between the end of February and mid-March. This year, the festival is set to take place on the 25th of March.

The first day of the Holi Festival is called Holika Dahan or Chhoti Holi, where festival-goers gather around a bonfire to burn Holika, the demon king's sister who was killed for her evil deeds. This day represents the victory of good over evil, and people celebrate with music, dance, and sweets.

The second day of the Holi Festival is known as Dhuli, Dhulandi, Dhulheti, or Dhulendi, among other names. This day is marked by people dancing through the streets and throwing colored powder, known as Gulal, at each other. The Gulal is symbolic of the new colors of spring and the love between the Hindu deities, Krishna and Radha. The four main colors of Gulal are red, green, blue, and yellow, each with its unique meaning. Red symbolizes love, green represents spring and fresh starts, blue represents Krishna's blue skin, and yellow is the color of the spice turmeric, representing good health and well-being.

The Holi Festival has a long and rich history in Hindu culture, dating back centuries. It is a time when people come together and enjoy each other's company. The festival's significance goes beyond just a celebration of spring's arrival, as it represents the triumph of good over evil. It is a time to renew and strengthen relationships, forgive and forget.

In conclusion, the Holi Festival is an essential event in Hindu culture that has evolved into a global celebration of diversity and unity. It is an occasion that brings people together regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs, spreading joy and positivity. The Holi Festival's message is simple yet powerful, love, compassion, and unity can overcome all obstacles and triumph over evil.



The Past Few Months with the Youth!



Food drives, fundraising talks with Alka ji, healthy vegan lifestyle lessons from Dr. Kalindi Bakshi, Bhagavad Gita sessions with Dr. Choksi, and so much more!

Ram Mandir Inauguration Celebration

On January 28th, Ram Bhajans were sang at the Park Ridge Vedic temple to celebrate Ram Mandir Inauguration. VSS and Bal Vihar students also sang the national anthem of India.

On Feb 4th, Youth group members continued the celebration by presenting the importance of Ram Mandir inauguration and their views on the temple architecture and controversy around this topic. It was great to hear the youths' perspective.



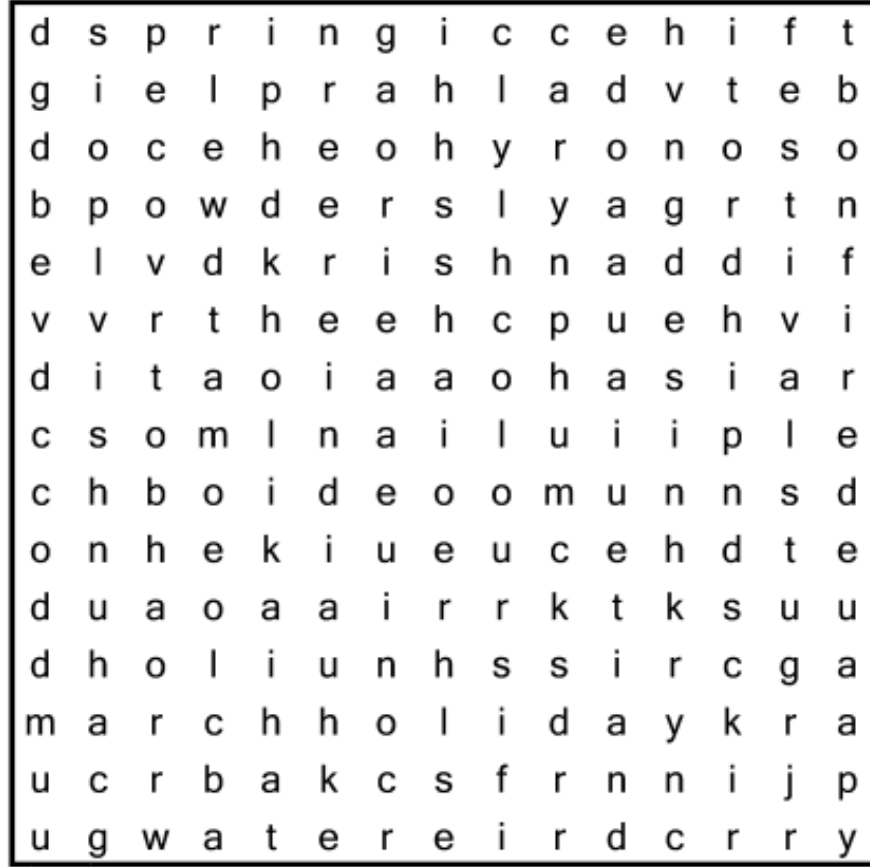
Youth Group Presentation on Ram Mandir



Ready for a brain-teaser?

Holi Word Search

(Print to mark the words)



Holika
India
Colours
Bonfire
Krishna
Powders
Paint
March
Water

Prahlad
Festival
Spring
Vishnu
Radha
Holi
Good
Holiday
Hindu

Exploring India's Musical Heritage

"Echoes of the Past"

"Echoes of the Past" was an immersive musical program presented on Saturday, February 10, 2024 at the Vedic Temple in Park Ridge on the auspicious weekend of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati's 200th birth anniversary. The objective of this program was to encourage the appreciation of traditional Indian music and to make it accessible to a broader audience. To this end, a unique program was curated by Vivek Kaisare, featuring Indian Classical Music performed while providing simultaneous exposure to historical, geographic & cultural context.



Cultural context and authenticity was provided by the careful selection of traditional musical performances, performers, presentations, and exhibits representing a myriad of cultures from India - all supported by information provided real-time as the performances unfolded. The program was hosted by Sumita Singh and performers were Sanjukta Basu, Pavithra Rajeev, Kinnari Pujara, Sehajpreet Singh, & Vivek Kaisare. With Maharishi Dayanand's blessings on his birth anniversary, the outcome was bound to be a smashing success!

More glimpses of “Echoes of the Past”



The Vedic Temple was packed to capacity as the ~100+ strong audience sat riveted while being treated to a heady combination of live classical, folk, devotional, & film music performed by Arya Samaj members & friends of Arya Samaj.



Arya Samaj Participation in Interfaith Group Activities

Ridgewood Ministerial Association Thanksgiving Service on November 21st, 2023:

ASNJ Choir sang at the service. Arya Samaj also offered the Expression of Thanksgiving at the service.



Martin Luther King Day Celebration on January 15th, 2024:

Along with the other faith leaders of Ridgewood, ASNJ participated and offered a message at Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration at United Methodist Church, Ridgewood, at 9:30 AM on Monday, January 15th, along with other religious leaders.



A Gathering for peace held on March 24th, 2024:

A vigil was held to stand together in times of crisis due to the ongoing conflict and strife in the Middle East, listen with empathy, and seek peace in our hearts at the Emmanuel Church in Ridgewood. Arya Samaj participated in the procession along with other faith leaders of Ridgewood to support.

Thandai Recipe

Thandai -

Prep Time: 2 hours, 25 minutes

Yield: Serves 4 to 6

Thandai is a popular North Indian drink made with cooling spices, seeds, nuts, rose petals and milk. The word Thanda translates to cool in Hindi. This beverage is believed to be a coolant as most of the ingredients used have a cooling effect on the body. Hence the name Thandai.

Ingredients

3/4 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
1 teaspoon whole fennel seeds
1 teaspoon cardamom seeds
1 blade of mace
1/2 cup shelled blanched almonds (see note)
1/4 cup shelled pistachios
1/4 cup melon seeds (see note)
1 teaspoon saffron strands
1/2 cup honey
1/4 cup sugar
5 cups of whole milk
1 tablespoon rose water
Rose Petals and Chopped Nuts to garnish.



Instructions

Grind the peppercorns, fennel seeds, cardamom seeds and mace in a spice/coffee grinder until powdered.

Grind the almonds, pistachios, and melon seeds until powdered. Mix well together. If you wish you can make this mixture ahead of time and store and use as needed.

Add this powdered mixture to 1/4 cup of milk and blend until a smooth paste is formed.

Soak the saffron strands in 1/4 cup of the milk. If you wish, you can warm the milk slightly. This helps the color bloom quick, but not completely necessary.

In the meantime add the remaining milk to the blender and blend until smooth.

Remove this mixture and add the saffron steeped milk and the additional milk in a large jug. Pour into glasses or a serving jug and chill.

To serve, place a teaspoon of rose petals at the bottom of the glass. Add in a few ice cubed (if desired) and pour the than

Serve over ice garnished with rose petals and additional chopped nuts.

Enjoy !



असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसावृताः ।
तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ३ ॥

Those births partake of the nature of the Asuras and are enveloped in blind darkness. After leaving the body they who kill their Atman attain them.

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् ।
तद्भावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत्तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥ ४ ॥

It is motionless, one, faster than mind; and the Devas (the senses) could not overtake it which ran before. Sitting, it goes faster than those who run after it. By it, the all-pervading air (Sutratman) supports the activity of all living beings.

The Ten Principles of Arya Samaj

1. God, His Characteristics: The Primordial Root - the Eternal Unseen Sustainer - of all true knowledge and of objects made known by true knowledge - any of all these - is the-Supreme God.
2. His Attributes and Worship: God is Personification of Existence, Intelligence and Bliss. He is Eternal, Formless, Almighty, Just, Benevolent, Unborn, Endless and Infinite, Unchangeable, Incomparable, Support of All, Lord of All, All-pervading, Omniscient and Controller of all from within, Fearless, Holy and Creator of the Universe. To Him alone is worship due.
3. His word, the Vedas: The Vedas are the books of true knowledge. It is the paramount duty of every Arya to learn and teach the Vedas.
4. Truth: We should be ever ready to embrace truth and to forsake untruth.
5. Righteousness: All acts should be done in accordance with Dharma after deliberating what is right and wrong.
6. Benevolence: The prime object of the Arya Samaj is to do good to the world, that is, to promote physical, spiritual and social good of every sentient being.
7. Love and Justice: Our conduct towards all should be guided by love, righteousness and justice.
8. Nescience and Science: We should dispel "avidya" - nescience, and promote "vidya" - science, spiritual and physical.
9. Individualism and Altruism: No one should be content with promoting his good only; on the contrary, he should look for his good in promoting the good of all.
10. Subordination and Liberty: All men should subordinate themselves to the laws of society calculated to promote the well-being of all; they should be free in regard to the laws promoting individual wellbeing

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Contact us

aryasamajofnj.org, contact@aryasamajofnj.org, (201)893-3356