June 2006

Volume 4

Issue 2

Sandesh

The Message : A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley

From Editors' Desk

Dear Readers,

Mahatma Gandhi once said "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." Also, William Ruckelshaus, the first EPA Administrator wrote in *Business Week* (June 18, 1990) "Nature provides a free lunch, but only if we control our appetites." The drastic changes occurring in the environment all around us suggest that there is a dire need to explore once again how to live in harmony with nature before it gets too late. With this issue Sandesh takes a small step in that direction and we hope that these articles would make us evaluate the way we live.

Sandesh

An IndUS of Fox Valley Publication

Editors

Dr. Badri Varma
Ms. Manjari Chatterji
Mr. Dnyanesh Patkar
Mr. C. Shekar Rao
Dr. Sandhya Sridhar

Advisor

Dr. B. S. Sridhar

To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed."

Theodore Roosevelt, *Seventh Annual Message*, December 3, 1907

Festivals of India – Living in harmony with Nature

By Dnyanesh Patkar

As any other ancient agrarian civilization, India is a land where ties to nature are significant and frequently commemorated. Indian festivals are a medium through which this relationship is honored. It is manifested in the association of Gods and Goddesses with the forces of nature. Festivals welcome the changing of the seasons, and honor animals as symbols of prosperity. This article will focus on a few Indian festivals to illustrative how the harmonious relationship with nature is celebrated.

Vasant Panchami, a festival celebrated in the month of *Magh* of the Hindu calendar, heralds the advent of spring. Yellow, the color of fields as mustard crops ripen, is considered an auspicious color. People in North India cook yellow rice and wear yellow garments to pray for a full monsoon which would mean prosperity and a happy year. The Goddess *Saraswati* is worshipped in Bengal during *Vasant Panchami* and personifies the forces of creation in nature. She represents *Shakti* – creativity, renewal and inspiration. The coming of the spring and the worship of *Saraswati* herald the advent of new hopes and dreams for the upcoming year.

Our forefathers also had the foresight of linking up our physical well being with fruits or vegetables that are naturally grown during a season. During the festival of *Makar Sankrant* which falls on January 14 during the colder months of the year, *sugads* (earthen pots filled with sugarcane, and sweets made from *til*) are exchanged. This festival is celebrated differently in different parts of the country, yet the use of til or sesame is common in all regions. Til or sesame seed has medicinal properties and is often used in India to treat dry skin which is common during colder months. Til or sesame seeds contain a lot of oil and have a quality of softness in them. By aligning seasonal produce to physical well-being via festivals, harmony is achieved.

The celebration of *Holi* is another example to demonstrate harmony with nature and our physical well-being. *Holi* is celebrated in most parts of India during February-March (in the month of Phalguna of the Hindu calendar. The fifth day after the *Holi* is *Rangapanchami*. The summer in India starts around this time and people are looking for ways to get respite from the heat. As you would expect, *Rangapanchami* celebrations align with the season and is thus celebrated with colored water. Also, people are generally prone to viral fever and cold during this time due to sudden weather changes. The playful throwing of colored powders during *Rangpanchami* also has a medicinal significance as the colored powders are made of *Neem*, *Kumkum*, *Haldi*, *Bilva* and other medicinal herbs as prescribed by Ayurvedic doctors.

The vital role that various animals play in our lives is also revered as part of traditional worship. The festival of *Pongol* is celebrated in the Southern state of

Tamil Nadu. The third day is *Mattu Pongal* which is the festival of cattle. The cow, the giver of milk, and the bull, which draws the plough are honored on this day. In the month of *Shravan* (monsoon), the important festival of *Nag-Panchami* is celebrated. At this time of the year, snakes pose a greater danger to humans as they invariably come out of their holes that get inundated with rain-water. Snakes are worshipped to acknowledge their natural behaviors and solicit peaceful co-existence as humans go about their daily business.

Indians have thus always acknowledged, respected, and celebrated the interdependency between human well-being and prosperity and nature. The inter-twining of these various aspects come alive in Indian festivals and has become integral to Indian culture and practices.

Dnyanesh and his family moved to the Fox Valley area three years ago. He works with the Corporate Development group at Schneider National. He has been long involved with organizations such as The World WildLife Fund, India and the Sierra Club.

Embracing the Environment – The Chipko Movement

By Anu Varma

Long before Al Gore began sharing the inconvenient truth about the environment, villagers in India understood it and were performing their own form of environmental activism. About 276 years ago, a group of villagers in India were protecting their forests from felling.

The story begins with Amrita Devi, a woman with three daughters who belonged to the Bishnoi sect of Hinduism and lived within a forest in the desert state of Rajasthan. The Bishnois believe in living as one with nature and understand the importance of the forests around them. When the Maharajah (king) of Jodhpur needed lumber to burn lime for the construction of his new castle, he sent his men to the forest. Amrita Devi and her daughters gave up their lives to the cause of protecting the trees in that forest. They literally lay their lives in between the axes of the men and the trees.

The news of the mother and daughters' sacrifice reached other Bishnoi. Bishnoi from over 83 villages gathered to continue the fight begun by Amrita Devi. The protests continued until 363 Bishnoi were dead. On the news of this ultimate sacrifice, the Maharajah ordered the tree felling to halt and passed a decree to protect the forests and animals around the Bishnoi villages.

Fast-forward to April 1973 where the successful protest of the Bishnoi people inspired the name and work of another conservation effort in India, the Chipko (embrace) Movement.

In the 1970s the villagers of Tehri and Chamoli, now in the state of Uttaranchal protested against the felling of their forests for the purpose of commerce and industry. The forests in the foothills of the Himalayas were critical to the villagers for food, fodder, fuel and soil stabilization. The villagers embraced the trees and put themselves between the trees and the axe-men just as the Bishnoi had done years before. The modern villagers didn't have to sacrifice their lives, as did their Bishnoi counterparts, to achieve success.

The movement experienced a major victory in 1980 when the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, responded to the peaceful protests and approved a 15-year ban on felling trees in the forests of Uttar Pradesh. The Chipko movement spread throughout India in the 80s. In Uttara Kannada in the southern state of Karnatka, Chipko movement, locally known as *Appiko Chaluvali*, was successful in saving trees from felling. In 1983 in the Kalase-Kudergod forest, 150 women and 30 men stopped the axmen by hugging trees. Similar successes were achieved in the forests of Bengaon, Husre, and Nidgod. All these grass-root efforts to stop felling led to a policy change within the Indian government that was more focused on the requirements of people and ecological impact.

The Chipko Movement is also an excellent example of extraordinary leadership by ordinary village women in India. The Movement, dominated by women, spread the message to others at markets, village paths and wells thus inspiring others to join and let their voices be heard. Their approach was often to create slogans or songs. Some of the slogans were:

'Ecology is permanent economy' and *'What do the forests bear? Soil, water and pure air'.*

An example of their songs includes:

"You foolish village women, do you know what these forest bear?
Resin, timber, and therefore foreign exchange!"

The women answer:

"Yes, we know. What do the forests bear?
Soil, water, and pure air,
Soil, water, and pure air."

The movement began to be associated with 'eco-feminism' and from it emerged some remarkable women leaders. One of these women, Gaura Devi (1925 – 1991), an uneducated widow became a central character in the fight to save the forests of the Uttarkand region in 1974. She mobilized a group of women and girls against a crew of men with guns and axes. In a 3-day stand off, the women stood between the men and the trees. They didn't budge, even in the face of abuse and threats. Ultimately, the men had to leave without accomplishing their task. Gaura Devi said after the fact, "We have no quarrel with anybody, but only wanted to make the people understand that our existence is tied with the forests". Since the philosophy of Chipko movement was so close to the Gandhian thought of passive resistance, the local veteran Gandhites such as Sundar Lal Bahuguna, Chandi

Prasad Bhatt, Dhoom Singh Negi and others got actively involved and made significant contributions to the movement.

The Chipko Movement, with its decentralized and mostly autonomous membership, continues to protest against deforestation in India today. The movement illustrates the effectiveness of grassroots efforts by the villagers. These villagers considered themselves powerless but their success has proven otherwise and thus very rightly they have won universal recognition. In 1987 the group won the international Right to Livelihood Award, an alternate to the Nobel Prize honoring 'outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people.' In 2004 Bali Devi Rana, one of the early pioneers of the movement was invited to the Global Women's Conference on Environment, organized by UNEP at Nairobi, Kenya where she shared the inaugural stage with Nobel peace laureate Wangari Maathai. Moreover, because of its unique strategies and success stories the Chipko movement has drawn attention of environmentalists both nationally and globally. Three undergraduate and three graduate students of Appalachian State University, North Carolina visited the Lata village, birth place of Chipko this June and University of Saskatchewan, Canada has offered two different study abroad opportunities in the same region this spring and summer. Also, Scholastic, a global children's media company, has rolled out a new Environment Watch series this June. The first book in the series 'Saving Grandma's Tree' by Jey Manokaran is based on Chipko movement.

The Chipko Movement has seen pockets of success but the fight against deforestation continues today as the livelihood of the villagers is still being threatened and women continue to lead the fight.

Anu Varma lives in Appleton with her daughter Shanti, a beautiful, fun and inspiring 11 year old. Her passions include writing, reading, learning and the plight of the unfortunate people around the world whose voices aren't heard as often as they should be. Issues related to women are of especial concern for her.

The Slow Food Movement

By Sandhya Rao

"The destiny of humankind in the twenty-first century will depend most of all on how people choose to nourish themselves. And if we can educate the senses, and break down the wall of ignorance between farmers and eaters, we are convinced that people will inevitably choose the sustainable way, which is always the most delicious alternative."

-Legendary chef Alice Waters, founder of the Edible Schoolyard and Slow Food International Vice President

Have you ever wondered where your food really comes from? Or how far each ingredient in your dinner has traveled to reach your plate? Do you think about how the foods you eat affect our natural environment? Do you wonder about genetically modified foods? These questions are increasingly receiving attention in the mainstream media, fueled by debates regarding 'mad cow' disease, the loss of biodiversity and the rapid growth of the fast food industry. Knowing what you eat, and how your choices affect the world around you, is critical to eating and living well, while simultaneously protecting the earth's resources for future generations. In this country, there are major changes happening in the way we eat and the choices we make when we purchase and cook food. There are farmers' markets in almost every city and the availability of organic food is ever increasing. People are asking more questions about 'food miles', the distance that their food has traveled to reach the market (and the amount of fuel needed to transport it). In short, more and more Americans want to be better connected to the small-scale local farmers and food artisans who produce what they eat. As Wendell Berry so aptly stated, 'eating is an agricultural act'.

Despite this increasing trend, local food production does not dominate food production in our society. The dominant system is still that of industrial agriculture, which is promoted by global agribusiness and generates enormous costs that are not borne by those who profit from it. While multinational companies benefit now from their short-term approach to resource management, future generations will be burdened with the ultimate costs to public health and the environment. In addition, corporate political influence in the U.S. food system has direct consequences for the public, as industry groups shape environmental laws, farm policy, nutrition guidelines, food safety regulations, rules for labeling and content disclosure. Meanwhile, farmers and retail workers are forced to accept wages and prices set by food conglomerates that are substantially below levels that would ensure a decent standard of living. §

The alternate food system developed over the last 35 years by organic farmers and the natural foods industry has provided many elements of a new paradigm. A tipping point is approaching – now, more than ever, is the moment for the public to support the efforts of those who seek to expand and replicate sustainable models of agriculture, food production and distribution throughout the country. Communities can seize the opportunity to change the future of food and its relationship to society, culture, health and the environment-- if they make the right choices. In 1986, Carlo Petrini, a journalist and gastronome, organized a protest against the building of a McDonald's near the Spanish Steps in Rome. The protesters, whom Carlo had armed with bowls of Italian pasta, defiantly and deliciously stated their case against the global standardization of the world's food. With this symbolic act, Carlo inspired a following and sparked

the Slow Food movement. Three years later, delegates from fifteen countries came together in Paris to pledge and preserve the diversity of the world's foods. Since then, Slow Food has grown into a global organization that supports and celebrates food traditions in over 100 countries. Slow Food has flourished in the United States as well, with a national office in New York and over 150 convivia (chapters) across the country. Slow Food membership around the world numbers over 70,000, with the US membership nearing 13,000. The convivia build relationships with producers, campaign to protect traditional foods, organize tastings and seminars, encourage chefs to use local and sustainable foods, nominate producers to participate in national and international events, and work to bring taste education and sustainable, fresh meals into schools. The diversity of Slow Food members is one of its greatest strengths. Slow Food members are activists, scholars, researchers, farmers, restaurant and food industry buyers, retailers, chefs and consumers. By focusing on the relationship between food and community, and between producers and consumers, Slow Food convivia have become potent engines for change and an improvement in quality of life at the local level. Convivia directly support the development of economic and social ties among producers, retailers, chefs, schools, civic organizations and government officials. Many convivia have actively engaged policy organizations, foundations, agricultural organizations and NGOs, to foster visible and sustainable changes in local food systems.

Slow Food has become a standard bearer against the fast food values that threaten to homogenize and industrialize our food heritage. Slow Food reminds us that our natural resources are limited, and the we must resist the ethic of disposability that is reflected everywhere in our culture. Slow Food reminds us that food is more than fuel to be consumed as quickly as possible and that, like anything worth doing, eating takes *time*. The organization's activities and programs remind us of the importance of knowing where our food comes from; when we understand the connection between the food on our table and the fields where it grows, our everyday meals anchor us to nature and the places where we live. Slow Food's 'taste education' programs remind us that cooking a meal at home can feed our imaginations and nurture our senses. The ritual of cooking and eating together constitutes a basic element of family and community life.

Slow Food believes that an informed and active populace can generate sustainable change at the grassroots level. Individuals, through their relationship with others in their food communities, have the power to change the course of events – to choose a more sustainable, healthy way of living and eating. Although laws and regulatory mechanisms are critical, they are not effective in isolation. Slow Food empowers individuals and institutions to influence consumer demand and economic markets in sustainable ways that challenge corporate concentration by supporting small-scale producers and spawning new local processing, distribution and marketing enterprises.

Eating well is fundamental to living well. Thus, elevating the quality of our food and taking the time to enjoy it is a simple way to infuse our daily lives with joy. This is the philosophy of the Slow Food movement. With food so central to daily life, it naturally follows that what we eat has a profound effect on our surroundings as well. For someone who truly appreciates food, it is impossible to ignore the strong connections between the plate and the planet. Through its understanding of gastronomy, and its relation to politics, agriculture and the environment, Slow Food has become an active player in agriculture and ecology by increasing awareness and creating demand for sustainably produced, native and endangered food. Slow Food links the enjoyment of food with awareness and responsibility. The association's activities seek to defend biodiversity, protect culinary traditions, and link producers of artisan foods to consumers through events and initiatives. The Slow Food in Schools program oversees more than 30 projects across the country that teach children the importance of healthy eating by creating schoolyard gardens and culinary programs where they can learn the entire food production process, from seed to table.

Slow Food has many initiatives, including the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity and the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy. Founded in 2003, the Slow Food Foundation envisions a new agricultural system that respects local cultural identities, the earth's resources, sustainable food production and the health of consumers. The Foundation has two primary programs:

The *Ark of Taste*, created in 1996 and continually updated every year, is a catalogue of endangered food products from around the world. The Ark raises public consciousness of these products' historical, cultural, agricultural and environmental significance. It is a catalogue of endangered tastes that ranges from animal breeds, fruits and vegetables to cured meats, cheese and other kinds of preserved foods. The Ark seeks, first and foremost, to save an economic, social and cultural heritage that is at risk of extinction within the context of our industrial food supply. Slow Food creates demand for these foods by introducing them to the membership and then to the world, through media, public relations, and Slow Food events.

While the Ark of Taste has catalogued hundreds of extraordinary products from around the world, documenting alone does not guarantee survival. For this reason, the organization created *Presidia* projects (from the Latin *praesidium*, for garrison or fort) based on the reasoning that if Ark products have an economic impact, they could be saved from extinction. Presidia are projects that guarantee a viable future for traditional foods by stabilizing production standards and promoting local food systems. Through presidia, Slow Food works with small-scale traditional producers to expand the market and create demand for

a particular food product. Today, there are more than 300 Presidia around the world, including vanilla producers in Madagascar, raw milk cheese makers from the United States, cacao producers in Ecuador and basmati rice producers in India.

In India, Slow Food has partnered with Navdanya, a participatory research initiative founded by world-renowned scientist and environmentalist Dr. Vandana Shiva, to provide direction and support to environmental activism. Dr. Shiva has been a long-standing opponent of genetic engineering and has led numerous activist campaigns against companies that produce genetically modified seeds whose plants bear seeds that cannot be used for future harvests. She also defends traditional agricultural knowledge and opposes 'biopiracy', the patenting of natural genetic material, such as that found in seeds. Navdanya was born of the search for nonviolent farming, which protects biodiversity, our environment and small-scale farmers. Navdanya is protecting agricultural riches by maintaining its own seed bank and an organic farm spread over 20 acres in Uttaranchal, India. Together with Slow Food, Navdanya is actively involved the fight to protect and rejuvenate indigenous knowledge and culture.

For more information on Slow Food or to become a member of Slow Food USA, please visit www.slowfoodusa.org.

§ Adapted from foreword from Alice Waters in *Slow Food: The Case for Taste* by Carlo Petrini

Sandhya Rao after working for more than a decade evaluating international public health programs in more than fifteen countries including Bolivia, Guatemala, India, and Guyana decided to take a break from her public health career. In 2005 she attended culinary school in Italy and subsequently began working for Slow Food International at their headquarters in Piemonte (NW Italy). Since last December she has been working for Slow Food on partnership development, strategic planning, evaluation and fundraising in Washington DC

The Sound of Silence

By Sachi Mukerji

Imagine yourself in a helicopter flying across the plains of India. You have taken off at New Delhi and are following the Yamuna as it finds its eventual rendezvous with the Ganges at Allahabad. It is unlikely that you would ask the pilot to hover anywhere to get a closer look at something that has caught your eye, unless the flight path happened to fly over the Taj Mahal in Agra.

Other than that world famous marble dome, there isn't much else to see on the route. The land is as flat as a pool table. It is dusty in the summer, flooded mostly during the monsoon and green in the winter months. There are no ridges, hills or lakes. There are, however, thousands of villages and towns and cities that are growing at a phenomenal pace causing havoc to India's ecological balance. The urban sprawl isn't confined to the big cities any more. A village has its own version of the sprawl. Survival isn't just about food. It's also about illegal logging and the rapid disappearance of forests and wildlife.

But there is something else that is disappearing rapidly in India. It is called Silence. This, in fact, could be India's most precious commodity today and sadly its true value may be grossly underestimated.

Back to that imaginary helicopter ride again.

Once you reach the outskirts of Varanasi, ask the pilot to head south and suddenly the terrain will begin to change. In less than an hour, the Vindhya Ranges will come into view. This hill range, said to be one of the oldest in the subcontinent, cuts the country into half and sits along the waistline of India like an old leather belt. Anything to the north of this range is loosely referred to as the Hindi-speaking region. Anything to the south is known as the Deccan. The Vindhyas are more than a geographical feature on the map of India. It is also a dividing line between cultures, languages, food, politics and regional power play at the federal capital, New Delhi.

As your flight gradually begins to lose altitude and gets ready for landing at Khajuraho, the dusty villages will disappear and the color of the soil will change from a sandy brown to red. Your introduction to the jungles of India has begun and at least for the next couple of days you will begin to discover that silence can be eternal even though it is surrounded on all sides by the deafening sounds of urban India.

You are now less than 45 minutes away by jeep from the Panna Tiger Reserve. It is situated in the heart of the Vindhyas, spreading across undisturbed habitat for over 80 square miles of spectacular teak forests broken up by pockets of dry grassland. For close to 180 years, the forests were private hunting grounds shared by four princely states: Rewa, Panna, Bijawar and Chhatarpur. It was declared a Project Tiger Reserve in 1981 – 22nd in the country and 5th if the state of Madhya Pradesh. Larger but less famous than Kanha and Bandhavgarh national wildlife sanctuaries, the Panna Tiger Reserve is arguably the closest you will ever get to a genuine central Indian forest that has luckily remained true to its original form for hundreds of years.

Panna's low profile has worked to its benefit. Travel managers seldom mention it. It's hardly visible on the map. The nearest big city, Varanasi, is at least 8 hours away by car and in another state (Uttar Pradesh). Yet, for all its inaccessible location, Panna is easy to reach once you have made it Khajuraho. To most travelers, the erotic temples dating back to the 11th century are all they want to see. But if you want to see India's wildlife including the tiger and some

breathtaking gorges, rivers and lush forests, then a side trip to Panna is highly recommended.

The jeep ride to the gates of the Panna Tiger Reserve is an adventure in itself. Grandly called a National Highway, the road is quite literally "single lane" and endorses the belief amongst locals that to survive the roads of India, you will need three things: a good horn, good brakes and good luck.

The road from Khajuraho to Panna crosses the Ken River, a superb location for trout and *mahaseer* fishing as well as two common species of the Indian crocodile – *the gharial and the maghar.* Chances are, you will see them sunbathing on the banks of the Ken as you cross the bridge and enter the boundary line of the Reserve. A small office will provide you with a tracker/ guide. These guides are extremely knowledgeable about the terrain, animal migration as well as daily sightings of resident tigers. Records say there are now 38 tigers in Panna and keeping the poachers away is a constant challenge to the Reserve's meager resources. (50 years ago there were over 1,600 tigers in this region.)

The jeep tracks inside the Reserve take you deep inside the jungles, from the lowest altitudes in the valleys and up to higher elevations of nearly 2000 feet above sea level – all in a matter of minutes. On the way, you will see a spectacular range of wildlife – nilgai and sambhar, chital and chinkara, black faced baboons, jackals, hyenna, wild dogs, four horned antelopes, Indian gazelle, and tigers and leopards if you are lucky.

These vast jungles spread for miles full of Indian ebony, teak and flame-of-the-forest trees that alternate with dry, short grassy plains and make animal viewing easy at any time of the day.

We were allowed to stop almost anywhere and we often did, to wander around the jeep but not stray too far from our guide. The sense of peace and stillness of the forest that embraced us took me back to my youth when we trekked through Garhwal and Kumaon for weeks and wished those summers would never end. It was reassuring to know that some of that magic remains untouched and the jungles jealously guard their silence - despite the changes taking place so rapidly in a country we have left behind us. But for how long is anyone's guess.

How to get there: direct daily flights from New Delhi via Varanasi to Khajuraho. Stay overnight at Khajuraho and hire a jeep to Panna Tiger Reserve. Distance 17 miles. Bookings through Forest Office at park entrance. Best time – October to April.

Where to stay overnight: Taj Chandela Hotel in Khajuraho. Excellent rooms, dining and bar, outdoor swimming pool and beautifully maintained garden. For the more adventurous, stay at the Ken River Lodge situated on the north-west boundary of the Tiger Reserve. An ideal hideaway in a forest setting; popular with fishing enthusiasts hoping to catch India's famous fighting fish, the mahaseer.

*Sachi Mukerji spent his early years in Allahabad, India. He has lived in four continents and runs his own communications firm from Toronto. He and his wife Susan travel extensively; he with his notebook and she with her camera. Together, they hope to publish a book on their experiences."India remains one of our favorite destinations although the place where I grew up no longer exists. For over 30 years, I've carried my nostalgia with me", he a*dds

Gardening in Temperate Zones

By Manjari Chatterji

Gardening, as everyone knows, is a "lovesome thing, God wot" and good for your health into the bargain. But there are as many styles and tastes in gardening as there are people. Many of us who have settled in America, remember fondly the familiar landscape of India, with gracious gulmohors, jacarandas, laburnums, radhachuras, oleanders, and frangipanis, the heady scents of jasmine or rose, and the night-time whiff of the 'hasnahana'— all unmistakably part of being Indian, as unconsciously registered by the olfactory sense, and often intensely deprived in our foreign home, despite the considerable charms of lilac or peonies or honeysuckle. Like the British poet Robert Browning, we may long for the sights and smells of home, however enticing the exotics of our domicile. To this end, many of us create gardens that will conjure up that magical past, with nostalgia and hope playing a strong part in equal proportion. This is a recipe for disaster; I should know.

There are two factors, in particular that this optimist should keep in mind: most of us do not have a fleet of "malis" who produced those herbaceous borders, or mango groves, and worked tirelessly behind the scenes. And second, the midwest is not friendly to well-loved favorites like the bougainvillea, or rangoon creeper, or the damask rose. Let's face it, our characteristic soil is clay. Anyone who has plunged a spade into a garden plot, and felt a sharp pain climb up the left sciatic nerve will not dispute this. We have a growing season that begins technically after Memorial Day, and ends abruptly with an overnight frost in September—or thanks to global warming, may be October. Trees, however lovely, and according to another poet proof positive of God's existence, do shed their leaves in no uncertain terms all through Fall, and in suburban America, one is obliged to gather them up into curbside bags every week. Finally, most of us take to this delightful hobby after our children are grown, and no longer have to be driven four times each week to various activities, which also means we ourselves are older, and therefore urges to hoist massive boulders onto stone walls, or plant a half ton tree, or fell an unwisely planted one in the days of our early inexperience.

The wise choice is, as in gastronomy, *to do in Rome as* etc. that is, plant native species that grew here long before we

IndUS of Fox Valley
3600 N. Shawnee Ave
Appleton WI 54914
(920) 749-4911

indusfoxvalley@yahoo.com

came, and will outlast us all. "Behold" Christ said, "the lilies in the field"—indeed a wise gardening choice in the midwest. So also prairie flowers like echinacea, milkweed, purple phlox, golden rod, fleabane (in your garden?) aster, cardinal flower, tall thistle—I see you raising an eyebrow, but consider its elevated lineage in British royal Orders and insignia—and for the daring, daffodils and a few hardy bulbs that rabbits, deer and other garden guests leave severely alone. These will thrive no matter what. No inverted plastic cones for them in winter, no fancy feast of NPK ratios, not even a sprinkler. Good design, good "bones" as they say, generous mulch, and a realistic assessment of available sunlight are the key. This way you can avoid the chemical stew of fertilizers and pesticides many opt for to preserve the picture perfect lawn and other accoutrements of status. And you can satisfy your immigrant itch by growing *karhi patta* indoors!

Manjari Chatterji teaches English at UW Oshkosh, and ranks grandchildren and gardening and books as her chief joys. She remembers the many avid gardeners and horticulturists in her family with respect and humility, but believes "to every circumstance, a garden to match" and sallies forth with confidence and pleasure, and urges her friends to do the same.

News …

Fun with Cultures: A Day Camp for Children

On March 4th, thirty children spent a day filled with cultural activities. The idea behind organizing the day camp was to expose children to various cultures around the world and engage them in creative endeavor to create a culture of their own.

After registration, a hot cocoa and an ice-breaker at Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center, the campers moved to Appleton Public Library to participate in simultaneous presentations on various cultures. In the morning they visited Italy (Susan Stachowiak), Guatemala (Juan Valdez), Columbia (Anna Marie Valdez), Sierra Leone (Antonia Taylor) Nigeria (Titi Olutola) and India (Ruth Mansukhani, Radhika Raj, Radhika Ravel and Shakti Shukla (India). The presenters shared pictures, story books, maps, even got them working on crafts. Children printed their own names on banners using wooden printing blocks from India. They danced to lively beat of music from South America, Africa and India. They had special treats to taste from many countries. It certainly was a fun-filled morning. Divya Ravel, Sabeena Cheema and Sameer Sridhar, the teen leaders, helped in transitions from one room to the next.

The highlight of the afternoon was creative presentations by children. Anu Varma with help of her daughter Shanti led them in this exciting venture. They worked in three teams to create their own cultures in the afternoon session. After experiencing taste of several cultures earlier in the day, they worked and came up with unique and entertaining ideas for their own cultures with names, flags, coins, customs, language, dances and posters. Were they creative! Two of the three teams went beyond the Earth's orbit. One culture group called themselves Saturn Rings, and colonized one of the moons of Saturn. Another went to a very cold planet of Pluto and developed their dances, clothes and customs around the theme of living on a frozen planet. Third team stayed rooted in the home planet. At the end of the day, the parents enjoyed delightful presentations by their children. Aarati Uberoi, Shakti Shukla, Radhika and Raj Wallajapet, Radhika Ravel, Marian Murzello, Ashi Tannan and B.S. and Sandhya Sridhar helped throughout the day to ensure that the camp ran smoothly and the children had fun.

IndUS Annual General Body Meeting

The annual general body meeting was held on Saturday, March 18, 2006. In addition to presentation and acceptance of annual reports and accounts biennial election were held for both IndUS Board and the Executive Team. Following were elected to the IndUS Board: Mr. Mahendra Doshi, Dr. Muriel Hawkins, Ms. Kavita Shet, Ms. Hema Udupi Acharya, Mr. Michael Van Asten, and Mr. Kurt Wanless. Mrs. Meenakshi Agarwal, President of India Association (NEW) will serve as an ex-officio member of the Board. The following were elected to the new executive committee: Dr. B. S. Sridhar (President), Dr. Badri Varma (Vice President), Mr. Vivek Kulkarni (Secretary), Mr. Prateek Mehrotra (Treasurer), Mr. Ashok Tannan and Dr. Ritu Subramony (Members-At-Large). IndUS would like to thank Ms. Irma Burgos, Mr. Chuck Lauter, Dr. Sangita Patel, Dr. Kirti Ringwala, Dr. Ram Shet,, Ms. Ritu Tannan, Ms. Nila Vaishnav, Mr. Hanif Jiwani and Ms. Kamal Varma for their invaluable

services to IndUS and looks forward to receiving their continued support and goodwill.

Asia Awareness Month

IndUS collaborated with Asian students Association of University of Wisconsin Oshkosh to celebrate the Asian Heritage Month. The Kick Off event held on Monday, April 3, was attended by 600 people. IndUS volunteers set up a stall and featured Kathak and Bollywood dances by Maya Murzello, Vidushree Mehrotra, Trishna Mohite, Julia Shariff, Arishna Agarwal and Abhipsa Kar. Gita Shah and Kirti Ringwala led the participants to dance to Dandiya tunes. As in the past, Indian delicacies were a great hit.

On Saturday, April 15, 2006, IndUS together with Kalaanjali School of Music, Madison and Kanopy Dance Theater, Madison presented "Transposed Heads" a dance drama. Ms. Meenakshi Ganesan, Ms. Lisa Andrea Thurell, Mr. Robert Cleary and Dr. B. S. Sridhar produced the program. "Bunty Aur Babli" an entertaining film from Bollywood was screened on Monday, April 17, 2006 to an appreciative audience. Overall, IndUS participation in the month long celebrations were widely acclaimed.

Chuarsia-Pohankar Concert

On Friday, April 22, 2006, IndUS played hosts to three very talented, world-renowned Indian classical and fusion musicians: Rakesh Chaurasia (flute), Abhijit Pohankar (Indian Classical Keyboard) and Vijay Ghate (tabla). In the morning, the artists conducted a master's class for music students at Neenah High School. Students were introduced to the fundamentals of Indian classical music and were treated to a sampling of classical and fusion music. At a well-attended public performance that evening at Madison Middle School, Appleton, the artist enthralled the audience with their command performance. The performance was made possible by generous support from Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Georgia-Pacific, and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and Appleton Area School District.

"Lunch and Learn" about the Indian Culture

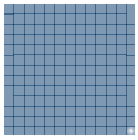
In the months of April and May, Ruth Mansukhani with the help of several IndUS members organized lunch and presentations for elementary and middle schools in Neenah. Ahead of time, the schools ran a quiz about facts of India. Teachers who signed up were served lunch during their regular lunchtime. To set the mood some typical Indian decorations were displayed and Indian music was played. The presentation included geography, social customs, and schools and their relationship with the family in Indian society. The presenters joined the teachers for lunch, which made it possible for teachers to interact and ask questions.

Interested in helping in the IndUS 2006 banquet?

Mark your calendar for Saturday, October 28 th for IndUS 2006 celebration. This year's theme is '*Next Destination: Incredible India!*'. If interested in volunteering, please contact Sandhya Sridhar (Phone: 920.749.4911), who co-chairs the event with Vivek Kulkarni this year. Volunteers make it happen!

Every IndUS banquet has been a sold out event. To avoid disappointment please contact Ms. Kamal Varma (920.731.0834) for tickets at the earliest opportunity.

IndUS
Of
Fox Valley
3600 N. Shawnee Avenue
Appleton WI 54914



IndUS 2006

Next Destination: Incredible India!

Saturday
October 28, 2006

At
Liberty Hall
Kimberly/Appleton