



American Telugu Association

Non Profit Organization Tax I.D. 36-3723725
P.O. Box 4496, Naperville, IL 60567
Phone: (630) 783-2250, Fax: (630) 783-2251
Email: info@ataworld.org; website: http://www.ataworld.org



President's Message

Executive Committee President

Chandra Reddy Gavva
president@ataworld.org

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Anantha Reddy

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Dear ATA Friends,

It's been a great run! It has been almost 9 months since our ATA tenure began and it is only natural to want to look back at what has happened since January 2007. I would like to look back at the progress we have made and the changes we have instituted for the betterment of ATA.

We have given a complete face lift to our ATA website, online membership is now active, a new youth web site has been launched, by-laws are available online and finally conference website has been designed and will be on-line by November 2007. In addition, our second issue of America Bharathi is available online at the ATA website. The readership of America Bharathi is rapidly increasing and many readers in India and USA are checking the website every quarter for the online version and sharing the web link with their family and friends. I would like to thank entire Web and America Bharathi team for their hard work and dedication.

We are working hard to secure land from Government of Andhra Pradesh for ATA Bhavan in Hyderabad and a special Ad hoc committee is working on plans to have own office building for ATA in Chicago as a center point for ATA related activities.

Preparations for the 10th ATA Conference and Youth Convention at Nassau Coliseum, Long Island, NY have started. All convention committee Chairs, Co-chairs have been selected and I am pleased with the quality of leadership and enthusiasm shown by each Chair and Co-chair. I would like to thank conference core team Mr. Balaram Pammi, Dr. Stanley Reddy, Dr. Vijayapal Reddy, Mr. Arjun Dyapa and Mr. Pradeep Samala, ATA Tri-Sate Trustees and regional co-coordinators for their help in selecting conference committee chairs and co-chairs. In addition, with the help of Dr. Rajender Jinna, we are in the process of completing contracts with convention hotels, and Nassau Coliseum.

On September 22, 2007, we had our second Board meeting at Marriott hotel, Long Island, NY, and approximately 150 people attended this historic meeting. I would like to thank Dr. Pailla Malla Reddy, Mr. Vikram Reddy Jangam and Dr. Stanley Reddy for hosting dinners on September 21-23. Also, I would like to thank Mr. Chinnababu Reddy, Mr. Pradeep Samala and other volunteers from New York and New Jersey for their help and providing transportation for all attendees. This was a historic meeting because a record number of people attended this board meeting. In addition, it is ATA's tradition to have a fundraising event kick off, and we have set a record in fundraising by collecting approximately \$500, 000 in only 15 minutes. On behalf of ATA leadership, I would like to thank each and everyone who pledged donation and also who have attended this meeting. This is just a beginning of our long journey to our 10th Conference and we have a long way to go and we still need more donations to meet our expenses. We hope everyone will consider donating and we would like to stress that no donation is too little and every single cent goes towards the convention or other ATA program.

I thank you again for the support you have given me and to our executive committee over the past 9 months, and I wish you happiness and God's blessings.

Sincerely,

Chandra Reddy Gavva

President

Regional Coordinators: Vishweshwar Reddy Kalwala (U. New York), Chinnababu Reddy (L. New York), Naveen Diviti (Connecticut), Mahender Musuku (New Jersey), Ram Mohan Reddy Konda (Maryland), Shravan Morishetty (Virginia), Srinivas Reddy (Washington), Bhasker Venepalli (Carolina), Manmohan Reddy (Orlando), Ram Reddy Krishna Reddy (Miami), Venugopal Reddy (Ohio), Shekhar Krishnamaneni (Indiana), Narender Reddy Chemarla (Chicago), Ram Reddy Toomukuntla (Detroit), Rajagopal Rangineni (Kansas City), Raju Pakanati (Houston), Srinivas Reddy Gurram (Dallas), Raja Reddy (Oklahoma), Sridhar Talanki (Colorado), Gajula Buchanna (N. California), Natarajan Madireddy (S. California), Jayachandra Reddy (Louisiana), Ramkrishna Reddy Sudireddy (Boston), Raghava Reddy (Pennsylvania), Karunakara Reddy Asireddy (Atlanta), Harish Pinnapureddy (St. Louis).





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Chief Editor

Siva Prasad Kumpatla

E-mail: spkumpatla@hotmail.com

Phone: 317.529.5836

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 68754

Indianapolis, IN 46268

America Bharathi Committee

Siva Prasad Kumpatla (Chair)

Mohan Devaraju

Email: dvmohan@msn.com

317.873.8777

Ramu Chinthala

Email: chinthala@gmail.com

317.816.1293

Abhilash Reddy

E-mail: reddy@purdue.edu

Phone: 317.258.9763

America Bharathi Trust Fund

Buchi G. Reddy (Chair)

E-mail: hanamkonda@aol.com

Phone: 949.457.9966

Membership Committee

Jayaprada Konijeti (Chair)

Email: jayapradamd@hotmail.com

Media Committee

Suresh Jilla (Chair)

Email: jillasnap@yahoo.com

ATA Website

www.ataworld.org

Editorial

Happy Vinayaka Chavithi! Happy Independence Day!



“A retiree who expends her energy in twenty different social service projects, a teenager who sells tea on board the trains to support his family and a busy lawyer who drives a campaign towards minimizing vehicular pollution” – I came across these three people during my recent trip to India. What’s common to these three? They instantly became my Heroes! Why? Their determination to help others, their unselfishness, their sacrifice of their personal time for good causes fascinated me and made me their fan.

Let me recount my experience on the train. I was a few hours away from my destination. A boy who is barely 14 years old entered the compartment and started selling tea. I had my first cup... then second.. Having gained some familiarity with him and impressed by his pleasant mannerisms, and noticing the few minutes break in sales, I started talking to him. He is the first born in his family, his father passed away when he was ten. From then on he and his mother have been working here and there to support the family. “Sir, I know that there are projects to eradicate child labor but they never reached me. But, I am happy, Sir. My goal is to see that my family is not hungry”. His eyes corroborated his contentment. It seems he works at a shop in town and the tea vending is his extra hours work ...to support the education of his younger brother. “My brother is very clever, Sir, he is always first in the class. He goes to English medium school - we have to pay a little more fee but my extra work takes care of it. I will do whatever it takes to see that he gets good education and settles well in life.” His ambition and willingness to sacrifice his life for his family touched me. I experienced a strange feeling of familiarity with such determination. I realized his self-respect does not permit him to accept unearned money, so I chose the only way to help him a little – I drank two more cups of tea before my destination and bought a few cups for my co-travelers. He thanked me and left by informing me his name, “Mohan”. His name coupled with his ambition, for some reason, stirred an inexplicable emotion in me. Is it some sort of *déjà vu*? He got down at the next station ...slowly started walking towards the gate, carrying the heavy tea container...to me it looked not like a container but his heavy responsibility at such a tender age! Then it suddenly struck me, “Mohan!” – then I realized why I experienced that strange feeling on learning about his determination and his name – yes, he made me remember “Mohan” das Karamchand Gandhi – the simple man and an epitome of human service, who earned us freedom.

The recent blasts in Hyderabad made us all sad. Whenever we see or hear about such incidents, they make us question the existence of freedom and humanity. But Gandhiji said, “You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.” There are many people like the tea vendor Mohan, the retiree who goes to great lengths to help fellow humans and the lawyer who devoutly made a difference and earned the personal appreciation of former President of India. They reaffirm our faith in humanity and inspire us to do our bit for good causes. While people like them do their thing, let us help and support them for the realization of true freedom for ALL! I felt very happy when I heard about ATA’s contribution to the families of Hyderabad blast victims. Let us take a moment to observe silence for the innocent people who lost their lives in the blasts and pray that humanity pervades all and prevents such acts in the future.

The preparations for the 10th ATA Conference and Youth Convention have already started. We invite you all to be a part of this exciting event. Once again, a very happy independence day to you all and best wishes for a happy Dasara!!!

- Siva Prasad Kumpatla



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Cover: The front cover is designed by Sri Balaram Pammi, Convenor of 10th ATA Conference and Youth Convention. “There is something in the air! The migrating birds, the traveling wind, the congregating clouds, the frolic in the forest, the waves of the cyberspace, the trickling of water down the hillocks – they have all started spreading the news! Even the Sun who went to sleep in the West yesterday evening brought the news to the East when he got up this morning” - Yes, it is true - The 10th ATA Conference and Youth Convention, the mega event to celebrate our Telugu culture on American soil, is around the corner and the preparations are off to a great start. The news reached everywhere – as portrayed on the cover picture even the ladies with pitchers in the suburbia of our Telugu Land heard about it and started “gusagusalu” - whispering about this event that is near and dear to Telugu people everywhere.

సంపాదకుని మాట

సమయం: ఉదయం 8 గం|| 30ని||

అది జూలై నెల రెండవ వారం. ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ లోని మా ఊరి శివార్లలో ఉన్న ఒక రహదారిలో వెళ్తున్నాను. ఆ రోజే అమెరికాకు నా తిరుగు ప్రయాణం. చల్లగా వీచేగాలి. ఎక్కడి నుంచో లీలగా వినిపిస్తున్న నాకు తెలుసనిపిస్తున్న ఒక గీతం.... ఆ గీతానికి పరవశిస్తూ తలలాడిస్తున్నట్లుగా ఊగుతున్న చెట్లు. మరికొద్ది క్షణాల్లో ఆ గీతం స్పష్టంగా వినిపించింది. “ అవును, ఇది నాకు తెలిసిన గీతమే ! ” పక్కనే ఉన్న ప్రాథమిక పాఠశాల ఆవరణలోంచి వస్తోంది. నేను కూడా చిన్నప్పడు పాఠశాలలో పాడినదే ఆ గీతం. అప్రయత్నంగా వాహనాన్ని ఆపి పాఠశాల గోడ దగ్గరకు వెళ్లి చూశాను. సుమారు 100 మంది బాల బాలికలు తెలుపు-ఆకుపచ్చ దుస్తులు వేసుకొని, చేతిలో త్రివర్ణ పతాకాలను పట్టుకొని ముక్తకంఠంతో, ఒక నెలలో రాబోయే స్వాతంత్ర్యదినోత్సవం కోసం ఆ పాటని సాధన చేస్తున్నారు. “ సారే జహాసే అచ్చా, హిందుస్థాన్ హమారా ” ఏదో తెలియని ఆనందం, బాధ, భావోద్వేగం ఒక్కసారే నన్నలముకున్నాయి.

ఆ పాట అయింది. రెండు నిమిషాలు నిశ్శబ్దం. తెలుపు - ఆకుపచ్చ చీర కట్టుకున్న ఓ టీచర్ నెమ్మదిగా పిల్లల ముందుకు వచ్చి నిలబడి తెలుగు వారికి సుపరిచితమైన ఒక పాట పాడటం ప్రారంభించారు.

“ గాంధీపుట్టిన దేశం రఘురాముడు ఏలిన రాజ్యం
ఇది సమతకు మమతకు సంకేతం ”

“ సంకేతం ” అని వినపడగానే. ఆ పదాన్నే సంకేతంగా తీసుకుని టీచర్ తో గొంతు కలిపారు ఆ పిల్లలు

“ రఘుపతి రాఘవ రాజారాం పతితపావన సీతారాం
ఈశ్వర్ అల్లాతేరేనామ్ సబ్కోసన్నతిదేభగవాన్ ! ”

ఏదో అలికిడి అయి పక్కకు చూశాను. నాలాగే మరో పదిహేను మంది అక్కడికి చేరి మంత్రముగ్ధులై నట్లుగా చూస్తున్నారు..... వింటున్నారు..... చెమర్చిన కళ్ళతో. ఆ పాట గుండెను పిండితే దేశభక్తి కళ్ళల్లోంచి నీరుగా బయటికి వచ్చినట్లనిపించింది. ఆ సమయంలో ఆ వంద మంది పిల్లలు వందకోట్ల భారతీయులుగాను, ఆ టీచర్ భారతమాతగాను కనిపించారు.



“ అరవై సంవత్సరాల స్వాతంత్ర్యం పూర్తి చేసుకున్న మాకన్న తల్లులనే కన్న భారతమాతా నీకు శుభాకాంక్షలు, నివాళులు, జోహార్లు !” అని గట్టిగా అరవాలనిపించింది నాకు. కాని నా కంటే ముందే ఖద్దరు చొక్కావేసుకున్న ఒక పెద్దాయన ఆ ఛాన్సుకొట్టేశాడు.... జెండా వైపు చూస్తూ భారత మాతకు సెల్యూట్ కొట్టేశాడు.

“ ప్రపంచమంతా గౌరవించే గాంధీ మహాత్ముడు పుట్టిన నేలలో పుట్టిన మనం ఎంతో అదృష్టవంతులం. వేదాల నాదాలు, పవిత్ర నదీనదాలు, సంగీత సాహిత్యాల వెల్లువలు నలుదిశలా వ్యాపించిన భారతదేశంలో పెరిగిన మనజన్మ ధన్యం.....” ఇలా గర్వపడే ఆలోచనలలోకి జారుకుంటున్న నాకు ఆ ఆనందం ఎక్కవ కాలం నిలవలేదు. కారణం, “ వాస్తవికత ” ఎదురుగా నిలబడివుంది, ప్రశ్నార్థక వదనంతో “60 సంవత్సరాల స్వాతంత్ర్యాన్ని సద్వినియోగం చేసుకున్నారా ? ” అని. అవునని అందామంటే గొంతులోని మాట బయటకు రాలేదు. ఏదో బాధదాన్నడగించింది. ఈ 60 ఏళ్లలో ఎన్నో సాధించాం. గాంధీ బాట నుండి మొదలై ఇన్ఫర్మేషన్ హైవేలో అడుగుపెట్టాం. ప్రపంచంలో అందరి కళ్ళూ మన దేశం పైనే. కాని, పేదరికం, పెరుగుతున్న జనాభా, ఆహార సమస్య, అందరికీ అందుబాటులో లేని వైద్య సౌకర్యం మంచినిరే అందుబాటులో లేని ప్రదేశాలు - ఇలా ఎన్నో సమస్యలు ఇంకా ఉన్నాయి. ఇవన్నీ సమూలంగా నిర్మూలించ గలిగినప్పడే గాంధీ తెచ్చిన స్వాతంత్ర్యాన్ని సద్వినియోగం చేసుకున్నట్టు. అప్పడే మనకు సంపూర్ణ స్వాతంత్ర్యం. మరదెలా సాధ్యం? అందరూ పూనుకుంటే సాధ్యం కాదా మరి? “ స్టాలిన్ ” సినిమాలో చెప్పినట్లుగా ముగ్గురికి కాకపోయినా, ప్రతీ మనిషి కనీసం మరొక్క మనిషికి సాయంచేయగలిగితే మనం సంపూర్ణ స్వాతంత్ర్యం వైపు అడుగులు వేస్తున్నట్లే. ప్రవాసం లో వున్న మనం చేతనయిన సాయం చేసి మరి మన మాతృ భూమిని ఆ బాట లో అడుగులు వేయిద్దామా? “ స్వంత లాభం కొంత మానుక పొరుగు వానికి తోడుపడవోయి ” అన్న గురజాడ అష్టాశ్వాసాని సందేశాన్ని అందరూ పాటిస్తే రామరాజ్యం నాటి జీవన శైలి మరలా సాధ్యమేమో ! ఇంటికి తిరుగు ముఖం పట్టిన నన్ను రోడ్డు పక్కనుంచి వస్తున్న ‘శంకర్ దాదా జిందాబాద్’ లోని పాట ఆకర్షించింది :

“ ఓ బాపూ నువ్వే రావాలి... నీ సాయం మళ్ళీ కావాలి !”

ప్రస్తుత పరిస్థితుల్లో ఈ ప్రార్థన ఎంతో సబబనిపించింది. అప్రయత్నంగా “ ఓ బాపూ... నీ ఆశయాలను, పట్టుదలను మాలోన ప్రవేశ పెట్టు. పరిపూర్ణ స్వాతంత్ర్యాన్ని మాకు ఆర్జించి పెట్టు “ అన్న మాటలు నాలో చోటు చేసుకున్నాయి. అందరికీ స్వాతంత్ర్య దినోత్సవ శుభాకాంక్షలు !

“ జననీ జన్మభూమిక్ష్మ స్మర్యాదపీ గరియసి ! ”

.....మీ శివప్రసాద్ కుంపట్ల





10th ATA TELUGU CONFERENCE & YOUTH CONVENTION

Long Island, New York
July 3rd – July 5th, 2008



CONVENER'S MESSAGE

I wish you and your family a Happy Dasara.

On behalf of ATA, The tri-state area Telugu community and the Conference Organizing Committee, I extend my invitation to you, your family and friends for the upcoming 10th ATA Telugu Conference & Youth Convention to be held at Nassau Coliseum in Long Island, New York on July 3rd, 4th and 5th, 2008.

As you know, New York City is the greatest city in the World with the largest Telugu community living around in the tri-state of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Further, on behalf of our Telugu community I am pleased to offer my thanks to ATA Board and the President for bringing this conference to New York.

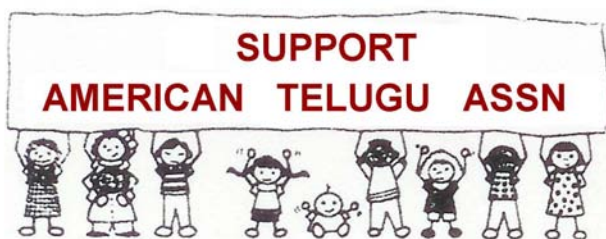
As a founding member of ATA, I have been associated with ATA since its inception in several capacities. ATA as an ethnic organization in America has grown rapidly and established itself as a household name in North America.

Our Telugu community in the tri-state area is gearing up to the task and has formed committees already. With their dedication and conventional wisdom of core committee behind their efforts, the convention will certainly become a mega event and truly will be “one of a kind”.

This convention will give all of us a great opportunity to celebrate our Telugu language, culture, heritage and values in its many splendid forms and propagate these values to our “next generation” of Telugus in America.

This convention will provide great opportunity for the youth to participate and interact with their peers and to showcase their own.

I humbly request the Telugu community all across America and abroad to make plans ahead of time to come and participate in the celebrations and make this 10th ATA Conference & Youth Convention a grand success. Make New York City, the city that never sleeps, your next vacation destination during conference time.



**BALARAM PAMMI
CONVENER**





10th ATA TELUGU CONFERENCE & YOUTH CONVENTION

Long Island, New York
July 3rd – July 5th, 2008



NATIONAL COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

Dear ATA family and Friends

As many of you already know, we are quickly approaching our 10th American Telugu Association Conference. This conference is more than just a gathering of Telugu people, it is a celebration of our arts, heritage and history, an occasion to come together in the spirit of kinship and fun, and, perhaps most importantly, a means of sharing the values that we hold in our hearts with our children, so they can better understand who they are, where they come from, and in the process, acquire a greater awareness and appreciation of our culture and create friendships, memories and connections that they will not only cherish throughout their own lives, but will to their children. ATA is truly an organization of the people, for the people, and by the people, and as long as we remain committed to ATA and to each other, we can continue to not only preserve our culture and history, but add to it, and bring a little piece of our home to this far off land.

As you know, our ATA family has grown, not only in numbers but in members who wish to volunteer their time and effort to support the organization and specially our upcoming conference. As our Telugu community continues to grow, the ATA organization must change with it. We must continue to offer relevant high-end programs at our conference and find ways for the members to learn from one another. I am pleased to say that we have a dedicated and experienced convention core team to serve you and also will make every attempt to steer the ATA convention in the right direction to a new level and create an event that is both traditional and modern, a convention that manages to assimilate the best of India with the best of America. It is my hope that the 2008 convention will be the best convention yet and I look forward to seeing as many members as possible in Long Island, New York, in July 2008. Thank you again for allowing me the privilege of being your National Coordinator.

Sincerely,

Vijayapal Reddy
National Coordinator

**“Be part of our
10th ATA Conference
& Youth Convention”**



VIJAYAPAL REDDY
National Coordinator



Akshaya Patra: A Ray of Hope for Underprivileged Children in India

Ramesh Appareddy

“The day that hunger is eradicated from the earth, there will be the greatest spiritual explosion the world has ever known. Humanity cannot imagine the joy that will burst into the world on the day of that great revolution.”
- Federico Garcia Lorca, Spanish poet and dramatist

There is a deep-seated desire in all of us to see a world free of hunger pangs - a world where people do not have to struggle for fulfilling even their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. It is particularly heartrending to hear and read about children caught in the vice-like grip of hunger and poverty. Notwithstanding the tremendous progress India has made in recent years on all fronts, there are more than 45 million hungry children. At a time when they should be in schools, they are mostly on the streets begging or doing menial jobs to eke out a living. Either they have enrolled in schools but dropped out midway or never been to one. Hunger is the culprit that prevents these children from enjoying the joys of a carefree life in childhood. This is not the kind of hunger that makes headlines, as in a famine, but a silent holocaust that continues day after day, month after month for these children.

A UNICEF 2005 report on the state of the world's children under the title “Childhood Under Threat” says that over one billion children, half of the world's population of children, have been denied their childhood. It is reported that some 640 million children lack adequate shelter; 400 million have no access to safe drinking water; 270 million lack health care amenities and 140 million - mostly girls - have never been to school. It was earlier reported that more than 150 million children are malnourished worldwide.

The UNICEF 2005 report also says that millions of Indian children are equally deprived of their rights to survival, health, nutrition, education and safe drinking water. It is reported that 63 per cent of them go to bed hungry and 53 per cent suffer from chronic malnutrition. Malnutrition in early childhood has serious, long-term consequences because it impedes motor, sensory, cognitive, social and emotional development. Malnourished children are less likely to perform well in school and more likely to grow into

malnourished adults, at the greater risk of disease and early death. Medical science has proven that most of the cognitive developments occur between the ages of 6 and 12 years. Hunger and malnutrition during these years impairs cognitive development, thus permanently crippling an individual for life.

Given this bleak scenario, the future of these children, who are the citizens of tomorrow, can change for the better, only if there is a systematic approach to eradicate their hunger by providing them wholesome meals—food that will nourish, and enable them to develop their full potential.

The **Akshaya Patra Foundation** is one such philanthropic endeavor, striving to eradicate hunger among the underprivileged children in India. By providing unlimited, wholesome food in schools, The Akshaya Patra Foundation addresses the challenges of hunger and education, as mid-day meals served in school is known to be the most powerful incentive to attract children to schools. The Foundation has been conducting the mid-day meals program since the year 2000.

With a clear vision “No child in India should be hungry and hunger should not be an obstacle to education,” the Foundation has been offering nutrition-rich food everyday to **797,872** underprivileged school children everyday across six states in India. They are Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

The Akshaya Patra food is a balanced diet as recommended by dieticians. It is a three-item menu with the right combination of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. While in the South, the program offers rice, sambhar with lentils, added pulses and vegetables along with yogurt; in the North it is roti,



with vegetable curry, dhal and khichdi. Sumptuous food is provided to deprived children, day after day, six days of the week.

This program is unique in magnitude, complexity, method of delivery and approach and uses technology extensively for minimizing cost, time and labor. It is a secular charitable organization, managed by the Trust with the help of committed professionals and volunteers. The entire program is managed in the most cost effective manner by spending only Rs 1,200 per annum (approx. US\$ 28) per child, to provide nutritious & hygienic food, cooked in automated centralized kitchens in each city and distributed through custom built vehicles.

Unlike other mid-day meals preceding it, food is cooked in centralized kitchens and not in schools. This professional approach ensures a high level of hygiene and minimum human intervention during the cooking process.

There is more to Akshaya Patra than food...

Going beyond physical needs of children, the program incorporates education incentives and medical assistance to these children. Under the umbrella of Vidya Akshaya Patra, it offers scholarships for the meritorious, after-school coaching classes and teacher training activities to improve the quality of education.

Akshaya Arogya: Good health is an integral part of the all-round development of children. During a survey, doctors found that typically, more than 85 per cent of the children from slums suffered from worm infestations because of unhygienic living conditions. Added to it, they were deficient in vitamins, particularly vitamin-A. To counteract these problems, Akshaya Patra offers medical assistance in the form of de-worming and vitamin supplements to the children in these schools, in partnership with other charitable organizations.

In collaboration with the Bangalore based Divakars Service Trust, the medical intervention program was started in mid-2002 with the administration of de-worming & vitamin-A tablets. This was extended this year to all the target group children with requisite dosage of folic acid in addition to de-worming and vitamin-A administration.

Continuing its efforts, the Foundation recently provided multi-vitamin Becozinc tablets to about 150,000 children covered under the Akshaya Patra program in Bangalore and Hubli-Dharwad districts. According to the doctors, 10 tablets will have to be administered on alternate days, spread over 20 days. These multi-vitamin tablets will act as nutritional supplements to bring the children to optimal nutritional status.

In the north, Akshaya Patra has partnered with the Durlabji Hospital, Jaipur and Government Hospital, Mathura for medical assistance.

The program is also participating actively in community services in identified backward and rural areas such as Baran in Rajasthan.

Yardstick for Measuring Program Success

The program has proven effective for hundreds of impoverished children in these regions. Several studies conducted by independent, third-party organizations reiterate the effectiveness of wholesome mid-day meals in enhancing school participation, particularly of girl children, increasing attendance, eliminating classroom hunger, fostering social equity and improving children's general health.

A study conducted by M S Ramiah Medical College Hospital, Bangalore in one of the rural schools receiving the benefits of Akshaya Patra program reports:

- Skin infections in the children decreased from 80% to almost nil.
- Anemia reduced from 40% to less than 5% of the children.
- Children below optimal nutrition level reduced from 60% to almost nil.
- Children developed better resistance to diseases.
- Children showed significant improvement in height and weight.

The above report is just one indication of how the program has made a significant difference to children from economically weaker sections of the society. Even children themselves acknowledge the benefits succinctly. "Due to hunger I used to often faint. Now I feel like I have received a new life," says Harshia Banu, Standard VII, Government Urdu Higher Primary School, Bangalore.



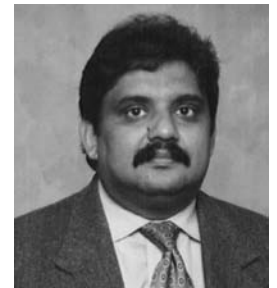
Almost all children in this school come from very poor background. So the odd jobs in the wholesale markets around the school easily tempt them. The volunteers literally go after these kids and bring them back to school. After the introduction of the Akshaya Patra mid-day meals, these incidents have reduced.

The Foundation has involved KPMG an international accounting firm to audit the program for funds utilization, thereby ensuring transparency and high degree of accountability. The program is secular, inclusive and non-discriminating as it is provided only in Government schools that already have a secular policy for admission.

All donations made to Akshaya Patra are exempt from Income Tax in India and under section 501(c) (3) in the USA. Additional information can be found by visiting www.akshayapatra.org

The Foundation aims to scale up the program to serve one million children by 2010. They believe success on that scale will offer a model for replication by other developmental organizations and state governments across India. Eventually, their dream is to ensure that no child in India is left out and every child has equitable access to food, education and health.

Mr. Ramesh C. Appareddy left India in 1977 after obtaining a degree in Engineering for higher studies at the University of Iowa. He worked for IBM for a number of years and is currently the President of Inacom Computer Centers in Chattanooga, TN. Mr. Appareddy has been working with our lawmakers in fostering Indo-US relationship for over 2 decades. He is a graduate of the Campaign Management School of the American Medical Association. He has been consistently advising the AAPI leaders and has participated in their Congressional reception on Capitol Hill for over a decade. In recent years Mr. Appareddy has volunteered as the Governmental Affairs Coordinator for the Vedic Foundation. He has been very actively involved in correcting the inaccurate representation of Hinduism and Indian culture in the U.S. one of which is the school textbooks. Mr. Appareddy is the Chairman of Spiritual Committee of ATA.



Place your Birth & Wedding Announcements in America Bharathi



We are very pleased to announce a new feature in America Bharathi – “Birth and Wedding Announcements”. This is a great way to share your happy news with fellow Telugu people across USA and worldwide (since America Bharathi is also available “worldwide” on the web at www.ataworld.org). We have incorporated two sample formats below that you could use in preparing your announcements. For wedding announcements, you can report both on weddings that have already occurred or about to take place in the near future. Creative announcements of same length as the samples given below (about 50 - 60 words) are also encouraged. Please note that these announcements are **FREE** however, they will be limited to 1 page in the magazine (about 20 announcements) and those that could not be fit in an issue will be inserted in the subsequent issue of the magazine. While the announcements are **FREE**, those who would like to make (optional) contributions to ATA can do so by sending a check made payable to ATA. We re-emphasize that the donations are optional, please don't let this stop you from sending the announcements.

You can send your announcements by email to spkumpatla@hotmail.com with the subject line: Birth/Wedding announcement for AB or you can mail them to: Dr. Siva Prasad Kumpatla, P.O. Box 68754, Indianapolis, IN 46268

Sample announcement formats:

Srinivas and Padmavathi (Family Name) of San Francisco, CA are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter “**Sahithi**” on October 5, 2007 at 5:45 p.m. Sahithi is 21 inches tall and weighed 8 pounds, 10 ounces. Sahithi's siblings Nishant and Sravanthi are enjoying this adorable addition to their family.

Sucharita (Family Name), daughter of Lakshmi and Ananda Rao (Family Name) of Chicago, IL and Vinay (Family Name), son of Janaki and Mitravardhan (Family Name) of San Diego, CA entered wedlock on August 29, 2007 at (xxx) Auditorium, Chicago. Sucharita works as a financial analyst at (company) and Vinay works as a staff engineer at (company) in Chicago.



Consoling Friend

Padma Shri, Dr. S.V. Rama Rao

We are very pleased to publish this thought-provoking poem written by Dr. S.V. Rama Rao, an artist, poet and author of international reputation. Dr. S.V. Rama Rao is well known in the art world for contributing a new style that he has created in the abstract school of painting style. He is honored with innumerable awards in India and abroad. Former President of India, Dr. Narayanan, honored him with the prestigious national award Padma Shri. His paintings were exhibited along with those of Picasso, Dali, Kandinsky, Miro and Jackson Pollack and other legends of art world in the famous "International Alphabet of Modern Art Exhibition" in London. Dr. Rama Rao wanted all Telugu youth to read this poem about our Mother Earth and the ordeals she has gone through and is going through but never complains about them – the heart of a Mother never does. Parents: please make sure your children read this poem. We have provided a quick refresher on Hindu Gods at the end in case they want to refresh their memories. - Editor

Slowly dripping tear drops
suddenly turned
into torrential rains;
with waves of hiccups.
Sky is weeping
unceasingly
filling up the oceans,
making them overflow.
How could you bear,
my dear,
that much of earth-shaking
pain and suffering?

From the crying eyes of the sky,
ever gushing extra-terrestrial cold winds
down pouring freezing rains solidified
as Himalayan ranges, mighty Alps
and rows and rows of Andy mountains
squatting flat on earth
with their wide, bodies.

These glassy white mammoth beehives
are not mere, featherweight giants,
but miles-high boulders of solid ice
unbreakable even with a
Thunderbolt of God Indra.

The dancing damsels of rain,
singing in ecstasy,
touching and kissing
the rocky rugged mountains,
sliding smooth and running fast
down the valleys and
settling down in comfort

on the bed of my body.
How much of these
overgrown mountains and
unfathomable oceans are
putting unbearable
burden on her!
Not knowing how to console
this self-centered
cold hearted sky
who never enquired the welfare of the earth
even for courtesy sake
in the past eons of years.
But the moment
any insignificant something bothers
the sky rushes out
crying like a baby
expecting that everyone
should show concern, console and
lend a sympathetic ear.

As it is the nature of a mother
not being able to see anyone suffering
the earth assuming the role of a psychiatrist
to give comfort to the crying sky,
started narrating events of
injustices and abuses faced
all through the life in the past and
the present trauma
she is going through,
still presenting a smiling face
for the outside world.



The supreme Lords of gods
Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara,
along with their whole retinue of minor ones and
Rahu, Ketu kings with their supporting demons
joined together and
pulled out forcefully and cruelly
from my body
the sky high golden Mandara mountain
as big as the largest of the planets.
Gods and demons
putting aside their born enmity and hatred
for their own selfish reasons
joined together as one amicable group, and
using the thousand headed
mighty serpent god Vasuki
as a rope,
to wrap around Mandara mountain
so that they,
with all of their collective strength,
could easily churn the ocean body of mine.

As my body was breaking itself
into thousands of tiny pieces,
holding the breath firm,
I picked and stitched back
the falling pieces of my body
as fast as I could
with my bare hands.
Wearing my disjointed body
standing firm, and
smiling in cool dignity
while shaking and bleeding inside.
No one sympathized with me then
and none shed a single tear-drop
for my forlorn state even now.

Never uttered a single word
about my eternal pain to any other soul.
With insatiable desire
plundered and robbed me,
having no respect or shame
for the ruthless acts of cruelty,
these packs of gods and demons
stole everything
belonging to me-
Kamadhenu, Kalpavruksham

Uchchaisrava and
Goddess Lakshmi, and
so many more
dearest to my heart.

When the very Gods
whom I worship everyday and
whose divine grace I seek always
cheated me unashamedly and
devastated me beyond comprehension, and
then,
my dear friend,
whom do I complain to?

Crying over the tragedy I faced
holding my courage intact,
flashing a joyous smile on my face,
moving ahead with my normal life.
As if it were not enough
the ever multiplying
billions of human beings on earth
constantly ripping open my body
either for food, or
plundering the riches hidden inside of me,
without caring that
I am gasping for breath.
How could I get angry
over my innocent children?
In the burning summer heat
even the hidden moisture
evaporated from my soul.
Did anyone console me?

You for me and I for you -
we are two forlorn souls left
to console each other.
When my heart breaks into
unaccountable bits and pieces,
oh! my dearest friend,
please console me
with showers of summer rains.
Whenever I see the
sunlit shining sky of your
beautiful face,
I am reminded of

my darling children
the scented jasmine flowers,
delicate white lilies and
paper-thin hibiscus flowers.

When your beautiful radiant face
starts emitting flames of heat, and
the boiling emotions
shaking your whole body-
my dear friend-
believe me,
I too hear
the roaring rage of your heart, and
feel the pain myself.

Oh! The most beautiful
and magnificent sky,
hats off to your
encompassing compassion.
Trillions of stars find more space
than they need in your
canopy of an umbrella.
You graciously host
countless number of Suns and Moons,
galaxies and vistas of billions of miles-wide

gushing and gulping
awesome and fearful black holes and
other celestial clusters of cosmoses.
I know that I am a tiny planet and
comparable to none of your great friends.

Irrespective of
our size differences
we share and bear
pain equally.
I would not be alive
as long as you are?
After the end of Kaliyug
this earth planet of mine
would disappear forever.
You are the only eternal
visible guardian giant, and
there is no end to your pain.
My pain ends
with my demise.

But as long as I am alive
I would remain as a
consoling friend
to you.

Quick refresher on Hindu Gods and mythological characters mentioned in the poem:

Indra is the king of Gods and the ruler of heavens

Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara comprise the trinity responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe

Rahu & Ketu: Rahu is a snake in Hindu mythology that swallows the sun or the moon resulting in the eclipses. As per the legend, during the churning of the ocean (described in this poem), Rahu drank some of the *amrutam* (ambrosia or divine nectar) but before the nectar could pass his throat, Mohini (Lord Vishnu in female form) cut off his head. Thus, the head is immortal while his body is not. Therefore, when he swallows the sun or the moon during eclipses, we can not see them as long as they are in Rahu's head (eclipse period). Once they emerge through the opening of the neck, we see them again (remember, there is no body – only the head!). **Ketu** is whatever remained of the body of Rahu – a headless half-planet. Rahu and Ketu are called shadow planets. Rahu and Ketu are considered the North and South nodes of the moon.

Mandara mountain: When Gods (Devas) and Demons (Asuras) churned the ocean for ambrosia, they used Vasuki (king of snakes) as rope wound around "Mandara" mountain.

Kamadhenu & Kalpavruksham: Kamadhenu (wish-cow) is a divine cow in Hindu mythology. It is a cow of plenty that could give whatever her owner desired. Kalpavruksham is a tree that is believed to grant boons and fulfill devotees' wishes just like Kamadhenu. While there are no exact equivalents of Kamadhenu or Kalpavruksham in western mythologies, one that comes close is Cornucopia – the horn of plenty (As per Greek mythology, Amalthea raised Zeus on Goat's milk and in return Zeus gave her the horn of goat that has the power of giving the owner whatever they wish for).

Uchchaisrava: The (white) horse of God Indra. It is one of the products of the churning of ocean by Gods and Demons.

Goddess Lakshmi: She is the female counterpart of Lord Vishnu and is the Goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Padma Shri Dr. Rama Rao is equally famous for his analytical articles on art and insightful poetry as his paintings. He writes both in Telugu and English languages. Central Sahitya Academy (New Delhi), British Council Journal (London) and countless news papers, literary and art journals published his poems, writings and paintings. He has been associated with ATA since its beginning. Dr. Rama Rao lives in Chicago with his physician wife Dr. Suguna.



Telugu Community's Q & A with Dr. DHR Sarma



Ask the Guru is intended for the discussion of items of special interest to Telugu Diaspora from a unique perspective. Focus will be on issues facing us, our children, our work and family lives to the extent they are peculiar to us, being from a different heritage than the mainstream USA. Please submit your questions directly to Dr. Sarma at dhrsarma@aol.com --Editor)

I have observed that in many temple events the organizers enlist sponsors who donate money for the celebration of the event (kalyanam, abhishekam etc.). The donors are given the privilege of special seating close to the "god" and participation in the proceedings. Does this mean they get more "punyam"? Does god smile on them more than on others? What does all this mean?

This is a difficult question to answer since any attempt at it carries the danger of committing a political faux pa. So, one treads carefully. What you observe may seem like box seating at a theater or a reserved suite at a sports arena. The answer is very simple: God does not make his love, affection and blessings conditional on the basis of earthly monetary offerings to Him. The donations are symbolic of the commitment of the donor for the society. The granting of proximity in return is symbolic of the respect and gratitude of the organizers. "Punyam" and "papam" are determined by one's actions (*karma*), and propriety (*dharma*). Non-donors are not denied *punyam* for the reason of not donating, nor donors granted *punyam* automatically. The scriptures assert that those who possess in abundance, i.e. the rich, are merely custodians or stewards appointed by God and are to dispense their riches to the society (For example, The Bible says: "... For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." Luke 12:48). Seen in this light, the donors for these and other social and cultural enrichment events are discharging a noble responsibility entrusted to, nay, bestowed on them by Almighty Himself. The privileges granted are simply tokens of appreciation from the society for the benefits accruing to all. So I suggest we join in thanking and congratulating these chosen "custodians" for making these events possible. Please also note that those donors who recognize this and act humbly and gracefully in response to the privileges granted to them

by the organizers are truly winners of God's grace. If the donors are overemphasizing their role in the proximity, do please forgive them for the human frailty. Please be assured that not being in the "box seat" should not detract anyone from being an integral part in the spirituality of the event. Further, it has no, I repeat no, effect on your ability to be devoted, serene and be blessed.

Some Telugu people call their mother "mom" and some others call her "amma" (similarly, "dad" and "nanna"). Is one better than the other? Why do some think the Telugu address is superior? Why would one think the English versions are any less affectionate or respectful? Sorry to ask you to deal with such difficult and volatile topic.

Please do not be apologetic. In this venture, one is prepared to err and also receive brickbats along with bouquets. It is the ratio that is important. Anyhow, this indeed is a sensitive topic and one offers an insight or interpretation since there is no right or wrong here. As Shakespeare said, "rose by any other name...". Now both "mom" and "amma" are equally affectionate words and express a million feelings. It is said in a fable that when you are in pain you speak your true mother tongue. For the Telugu Diaspora the mother tongue is sometimes nebulous - and hence this dichotomy. Since addressing the mother or father is the most affectionate calling we practice since childhood, doing it in the native tongue of the parents is most symbolic. However, in some cases the parents themselves may prefer the English versions. Many feel that "amma" and "nanna" express a feeling of closeness and tie back to the original culture and language. These words bring back memories of the very same affections your parents have for their own parents. On the other hand, to belittle the words *mom* and *dad* in comparison shows immature thinking, in the light of the immense cultural transformations we are

experiencing. I personally and wholeheartedly prefer “amma” and “nanna” for the reasons mentioned above. The choice is yours and that of your parents. I resent some of the poems and songs from some Telugu poets and artistes decrying the use of the words “mom” and “dad”. That is being too parochial sans a global perspective and understanding.

Question: My wife and I are from Andhra Pradesh settled in US. Should we encourage our US-born daughter to marry a Telugu boy?

(Please note: the answer to this question should be read in conjunction with the answer to a similar question in the last issue of America Bharathi. Otherwise, it will fall short of covering the major points)

After discussing this from the perspective of prospective groom in the last issue, I received many requests to address this topic from the parents’ perspective in this issue. Your question is hence timely. The language issue in matrimony is surfing up to the top of the list. The answer is not too different from that given to the pondering prospective groom: balance the matrimonial equation. In the case of the parents, there are, the history, culture and proficiency of Telugu which they may have carried here from India. Those may or

may not be present with your daughter in the same measure. Whether the language is important in a particular matrimonial instance has been determined, rather unwittingly, years ago in bringing up the children, the family atmosphere, the peer environment etc. It will be difficult to inculcate new values contrary to what were espoused as the children were growing up. Other things being equal, language compatibility will enhance the harmony between the families. That may suggest you should encourage her to marry a Telugu boy. However, other things are rarely equal, and hence balancing the equation (see previous issue’s *Ask the Guru*) is still the way to go. We, the parents, are left with the option and obligation of guiding them through the matrimonial maze stressing the importance and desirability of various compatibility factors and helping them with the choice. The overarching factor of “love” does not recognize the details of everyday living. Thus this answer is limited to those marriages which happen through a selection process by the boy and girl themselves or with the involvement of others. A majority of the marriages are resulting from a selection process (though the word “love” is used rather loosely for the connection) and hence the principles mentioned here and in the previous answer can be implemented.



(Dr. D.H.R. Sarma resides in Kokomo, Indiana, and is a noted Telugu scholar, poet and entertaining speaker. By profession he is an engineering manager and received high honors for his technical achievements)

అమెరికా భారతీయ కథిత నాటికలు
America Bharathi short Story Contest

We are very pleased to announce the winners of 2007 America Bharathi short story contest. The first and second prize winning stories are published in this issue while the third prize winning story will be published in the next issue. Please join us in congratulating these creative and talented writers!!!

First Prize: Dr. Machiraju Venkataratnam, Pittsburgh, PA
Second Prize: Dr. Surendra Dara, Bakersfield, CA
Third Prize: Mr. Ramakrishna Podila, Clemson, SC

Bravo!

Congratulations!



Education – Empowerment of Women

Narasamma Salagala

Dear Editor: I am a regular reader of America Bharathi magazine. Impressed and inspired by the cover page of April-June 2007 issue of America Bharathi, especially the image of a woman carrying lunch to her working husband and also carrying her child, I started thinking about the status of women in India and the role education can play in their lives and started penning my thoughts – and the result is this brief article. I wanted to share my views with fellow Telugu people living in USA and elsewhere and thought America Bharathi would be a great medium to do so. I would appreciate very much if you could pass on these thoughts to America Bharathi readers. - Narasamma Salagala, New Delhi

Education system, which is taught in schools of instruction and thought, is an outdated British Legacy and it has successfully failed to impart advanced educational knowledge to women. If we look at the curriculum of education, we can easily observe that the contents are skewed and lopsided and mostly cater to the empowerment of men in each area and topic. See how visual and heavily loaded the content on patriarchal than matriarchal. Traditional knowledge dominates the curriculum and failed to cater to the needs of the girl students.

Women constitute 50% of the population in India. A country whether it is rich or poor is judged by its contribution to its population without discrimination. The general education is not relevant or may not serve its purpose if it can not empower women educationally. I strongly feel, like many who have evaluated the existing curriculum, that today's education needs to be restructured to provide exclusive knowledge to women. Keeping the biological, psychological and cultural aspects as the backdrop, experts should redesign the educational infrastructure to ensure that right knowledge is delivered to right people.

The government should engage expertise to reorient the content of curriculum with deliberate attempt to gender-sensitization. Most of the educational curriculum needs to have a second look owing to the fact that basic knowledge at school level also predominantly speaks about success stories of men and the women are not presented in right canvas.

Women attained 54.16% of literacy, but can this literacy in anyway empower women? It doesn't seem to be so based on the observations so far. This is not going to help women to liberate themselves from the intellectual shackles. Women need to be educated – just making them literate is not going to help. Every where there is a loophole in the name of educational empowerment of women and this should be plugged only with the exclusive mechanism of separate, dedicated, designated budget and physical auditing in every educational program. Free education supported by residential educational arrangement is a sure fire method to empower women.

It is pathetic and rather painful to know that women are the greater victims of HIV and the AIDS. We see hoardings and publicities asking people to talk about sex, but how honest are we to part such knowledge to our children? The educational curriculum should explicitly speak about sex knowledge and the society should shed inhibitions of speaking on sexual education. When procreation is the law of Mother Nature, should we remain silent about killer diseases emanating from lack of sex education?

Education has the power to empower women and a well thought-out and well designed educational system with a proper focus on both genders has a tremendous potential for the development of people of the country – remember people encompasses both Men and Women! Developing people is developing the country!!

Narasamma Salagala belongs to Indian Revenue Service. She received her MS in Agriculture from Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University and was selected to the service through UPSC exam in 1988. She has been working in Income Tax department of the Ministry of Finance, Government of India since then. At present she is working as Additional Director (Investigation), Income Tax settlement Commission, New Delhi. She has given several interviews and contributed several articles to Indian Express and Women Power. She is currently working on gathering information and working on improving the awareness of women regarding Breast Cancer, being a patient herself.

