



RAYS OF OUR LIVES

[March 2015]



Letter from Exec

It has only been a few months since our last reunion at IMRC 2014 in

Grand Rapids, but planning for the next reunion is already in full swing! We heard from several of you how much you enjoyed (or maybe hated...) the riddle that we sent out to reveal the location for Marwari Youth Reunion 2015. In the past, we've held our reunions in the South and in the Midwest, and now we're really excited to be like Fievel and go West! Get ready for MYR2015 in San Francisco during July 4th weekend!

We're looking forward to exploring the city, delving into our heritage, doing some seva, sampling the best of SF

cuisine, and of course, partying all night! Expect some of the same things you've loved at previous MYRs, like creating opportunities to meet new people and network, but we have some fun surprises in store as well. We've assembled a great planning team and they're all as excited as we are to create a great experience for you in July. Registration for MYR2015 will open up soon, so be sure to keep your eyes peeled for the registration packet, and don't mistake the announcement for a prank!

For those of you in the Northeast and Midwest, you don't have to wait until July to be reunited with your favorite Marwaris! Both chapters are hosting local reunions in the coming months before the big one this summer. If you want to join the Northeast chapter in Princeton, NJ, on April 10-12, please contact Sarish Kasat (sarishk@gmail.com). And if you can be in Lake Geneva, WI, on May 22-25, please contact Mona Bidasaria (mbidasaria@gmail.com).

**“Opportunities to
meet new people”**

We can't wait to see you at one of the reunions happening this spring and summer!

RAYS Exec
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MYR2015 Planning Committee

Pooja Deopura	Sachin Jhawar	Anup Lohiya
Saumil Maheshvari	Sweta Maheshwari	Vivek Maheshwari
Mohit Moondra	Rishi Palriwala	Saloni Somani

MYR 2015 Riddle Contest Winner

We gave you a puzzle and played Dr. Seuss
You landed in Alaska, crying boo-hoo
One amongst you however, knew exactly where to steer
To no one's surprise, she's a nuclear engineer
She's a clever one you know, that Sarika Malani
Her cousins are proud, just like her Nanaji
She used all the hints, and landed in the Bay
San Francisco she proclaimed, that's where we'll par-tay!
We'll celebrate our forefathers fighting for Independence
With bandhini and baati, you'll join if you have sense!
Together we'll come to #RAYStheFlag
You know you love our official hashtag!

Seva Spotlight

As you may have noticed, we believe that seva, or service,

is one of the pillars of a strong Marwari identity, and we're proud to have the opportunity to shout out the incredible things you're all doing to make the world a better place. What we're particularly excited by is how unique and personal each of your seva initiatives are.

Last newsletter, we highlighted Sarika Malani's drive to do seva through her sorority, Delta Kappa Delta, and her campus organization, Asha for Education, to spread the light of literacy. This spring, we're excited to highlight the work of Pooja Deopura. Pooja is on the national Executive Council for the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), and also serves as a Lead Coordinator

for their largest chapter in Northern California. She is also the Chair of the Youth Council for the City of San Francisco's Office of Economic and Workforce Development. These volunteer responsibilities are on top of her full-time career; Pooja works at Salesforce as a project manager where one of her key areas of focus is to manage an internship program exclusively for inner city youth where she mentors them throughout their six-month internship, guiding them toward success. She clearly embodies seva in both her professional and personal life!

HAF is an advocacy organization that aims to provide a voice to Hindu Americans. Pooja joined in 2009 as a summer intern, and decided to stay and take on more responsibility because she found the work to be so powerful: "What I really love about the Hindu American Foundation is that it's run



by incredibly knowledgeable second generation professionals, who are making a difference by providing a Hindu perspective in various arenas - public policy, education, human and civil rights, interfaith relations... The work we do may not be as obvious as say fighting poverty, where the results are more tangible and easily understood. What we're doing requires patience and perseverance, with a focus on long-term goals. By working closely with the government on public policy issues, and addressing misrepresentations about Hinduism across the country, we're laying the foundation for future generations to live in a world where they'll have a seat at the table."

The Youth Council of San Francisco is responsible for ensuring that San Francisco youth are employed and successful. The Council is part of a larger board that works on growing the economy of the city. Pooja was appointed Chair of the Council in November 2014, and since then, she has worked to facilitate meetings and provide direction on what initiatives the Council takes on. "I'm new to the position, and I'm honored to have been considered. In my short time, I can definitely say it's been a great learning experience. Especially working closely with the inner city youth in a professional setting, it's been pleasantly eye-opening to hear about the different initiatives the city takes on for youth development."

When asked if she had any advice to those looking to find their own way to do seva, Pooja emphasized keeping it simple. "You don't have to think too much! If you want to do something, do it, it doesn't have to be something big. Whether you open a door for a stranger, or donate to a cause, or even take public transportation once a week to spare the air, it all counts. Do whatever you can in your capacity. At the end of the day, I do it because I'm fortunate to have what I have, and if I can do anything to help bring that luxury to someone else, I can't not try."

"If you want to do something, do it."

"I'm not sure how I would differentiate being Marwari from being Hindu, or from being Indian, but I know my identity and my upbringing is at the root of my philosophy. My family has always been a great example of embodying the spirit of seva -- be happy, be good, and don't harm anyone -- and I'd like to continue being that example as long as I can."

Holi and Gangaur

The arrival of Spring is marked by two major festivals for Marwaris

Holi and Gangaur. As we come up on the last day of Gangaur this Sunday, we wanted to take some time to explain the significance of those festivals in Marwari culture, so you can all celebrate in the most authentic way possible!

Holi, popularly known as the festival of colors, celebrates the victory of good over evil. A long time ago, there was a powerful and arrogant demon king, Hiranyakashyap. He declared that no one could worship any god other than him. Prahlad, his son, was adamant on the worship of Vishnu. The king, feeling betrayed and furious, ordered his attendants to kill Prahlad. Despite attacking Prahlad in every way he knew - with weapons, force, snakes and poison -

Hiranyakashyap could not hurt Prahlad who was under Vishnu's protection. Hiranyakashyap's sister Holika had a divine gift that no fire could burn or harm her. She carried Prahlad into a fire with the plan that he would burn to death and she would remain unharmed. However, due to Vishnu's protection, Prahlad survived and instead, Holika burned to death. As part of the festival of Holi, prayers are said to Vishnu and huge bonfires are lit the night before Holi to symbolize the end of the evil Holika. The festival announces the end of cold and

hardship and is celebrated with color, music, and dance! In Rajasthan Holi was notable as a time when Rajput warriors would come celebrate with commoners and show off their equestrian skills. It is also a great time to play Marwari Holi songs by the great Ila Arun!

Gangaur is a Marwari celebration of Spring, harvest and marital fidelity. This 16-day festival begins on Holi and is predominantly celebrated by women. The term 'Gangaur' is derived from 'Gan', another name for Lord Shiva, and 'Gauri' for Goddess Parvati, as they symbolize marital bliss. Unmarried women worship Parvati so that they are blessed with a good husband, while married women worship for a happy and healthy married life. For the pujas, murtis (idols) of Parvati, Shiva and their family are made out of mud. During the festival the murtis are taken care of daily by making offerings to them at mealtime. On the last day of Gangaur, the murtis are taken out to a well in a procession to symbolize sending Shiva and Parvati home.

For more details on how to do the puja, check out the [MMNA Sakhi page on Gangaur!](#)



Share pictures of your Mini-Marwari Reunions with us at:

rays@mmna.org or on the official RAYS GroupMe!



RAJASTHANIS ABROAD
YOUTH SAMAJ

हम राजस्थान के भविष्य हैं

We are the future of Rajasthan