



RAYS OF OUR LIVES

[August 2015]



Letter from Exec

Hello RAYS- nation! We
hope you all are making
the most

of the last few weeks of summer. When the weather's gotten crisp and you're curled up by the fire drinking your apple cider and reminiscing about those warm summer days, we hope that those of you who joined us in San Francisco think of the fun we had at MYR2015: RAYS the Flag. For those of you that missed out, well... you really missed out! The Marwari Youth Reunion in San Francisco over July 4th weekend was our biggest ever, with over 70 attendees from around the country. What did we do there? A lot! The weekend kicked off Thursday evening with icebreakers and other mixers allowing experienced and

first-time attendees alike to mingle with other attendees. Friday morning is when events began in earnest, starting with our Seva event, where we did projects for a variety of organizations both in and outside San Francisco. Later that day, the group participated in a society simulation event that transitioned nicely into a talk from Krishna Maheshwari on Caste, Varna, and Jaati. The day ended with speed networking, where the attendees were able to meet each other in a slightly more formal setting, focusing on professional and personal networking. Saturday included a fun scavenger hunt around San Francisco, a picnic in Golden Gate Park, some fun Marwari Themed "Minute to Win It" type challenges, and a group cultural discussion. It was hard to say goodbye to everyone on Sunday, but nonetheless we did it over brunch as we reminisced about the weekend and made sure to keep in touch. We'd like to thank MMNA as a whole and the MMNA West Coast Chapter specifically for all of their support in making this event possible.

To those of you that joined us in SF and provided us with feedback, thank you! While the feedback was overwhelmingly positive looking at the weekend as a whole, we know there are small things throughout the weekend that we can do to improve the experience, and we hope you know that we take all your suggestions to heart. We look forward to implementing them leading up to and during the next MYR. RAYS is here for you, and making sure it's flexible enough to remain relevant to its members is our primary goal.

Speaking of leading up to the next MYR, there's a lot you can do to stay involved! You'll find out more in the rest of this newsletter, which we hope you enjoy! Happy Teej!

**“RAYS is here for
you”**

RAYS Exec

rays@mmna.org



IMRC 2016

Save the date for the next International Maheshwari-Rajasthani Convention [July 1-4, 2016 in Stamford, CT!](#) There will be plenty of RAYS-specific programming to ensure that you have a great time at this convention. We will be sending out committee applications so keep an eye out if you're interested in helping plan these events.

Local RAYS Events

Do you have RAYSdrawal? This is a medical condition caused by missing your favorite RAYS friends. Trust me, this is not a condition you want to have for more than four hours. The cure? Local RAYS meetups! From happy hours to dinners to weekend getaways, RAYS exec will help you make it happen. If you're interested in becoming a local coordinator for your region, shoot us an email at rays@mmna.org.



Seva Spotlight:

Ankur
Sisodia

One of the most special things about RAYS is finding

a community that appreciates Seva as a mindset as much as an activity, and we've really enjoyed both using Seva as a means to bond at our reunions, and watching what all of you do throughout the year. At MYR 2015 we had the opportunity, among other things like creating journals for a Women's shelter and assembling lunch bags for a food kitchen, to write letters to the victims of the recent earthquakes in Nepal. Luckily for us, the stars aligned in such a way that one of our own was able to not only deliver our letters, but to also to show us a response to one of them. We're proud to shine the Seva Spotlight on Ankur Sisodia and his recent trip to Nepal.

Ankur recently had the opportunity, through a Google volunteer initiative, to travel to Nepal for 3 weeks to support the Nepali earthquake relief efforts. Ankur and six other Google employees drove a new cross-NGO initiative

through the UN, Save the Children, and Mercy Corps to improve the data management system used to collect and analyze field surveys. These field surveys are used to monitor & assess the impact of disaster relief programs in Nepal and elsewhere. The NGOs estimated the scaled efficiency opportunity from this project to be about \$20 million per year. "I realized that while I could volunteer to build homes, I am likely very lousy at building homes! Instead, I could make a larger impact by volunteering in a way that leverages the skills I've developed through educational & work experiences. It's empowering to know that Seva extends beyond donating money and serving soup" explained Ankur.

Ankur has a long history of using his special skill set to find ways to give back to the community. While he was at Northwestern, he co-founded [NUSCNO - Northwestern University Students Consulting for Non-Profit Organizations](#), where students worked in groups to work with local NGOs to optimize their work. "That's my biggest piece of advice for anyone looking to give back-

realize that there's a multitude of ways to give back, including using your technical skills".

"One of my biggest takeaways from the trip is how important communication is in serving other people. It's important to ASK the community what their needs are before going in to serve (or you'll end up with 10 thousand unused tarps in the middle of rural Nepal). It's also important to LEARN from the community you serve by opening your mind and heart. The Nepalis had so much to offer us – the stories of resilience and hope, the "help with dignity" mindset, and of course the momo dumplings." When asked what motivates him to do Seva, he spoke eloquently about community. "I think what inspires me is the sense of community I feel. I have this belief that investing into your communities (e.g. family, RAYS, college, the world) will always reward you with dividends later. Although, I'm still holding out for my DC sports teams to reward me for over 20 years of my support!

"At [MYR 2015], I realized that our community has very special skill sets (tech, medicine, arts) that we can use to help make a long standing difference. Aligning volunteering along your own skill sets can help you find a new way to give back. And it doesn't have to be big, it just has to be now. Don't push it off – it should be a piece of your life that can continually grow and evolve in parallel to your other personal and professional pursuits."

If you'd like to share your service project or nominate someone else who is doing great things, please send us an e-mail! Don't be shy, we just want to create awareness about the plethora of ways there are to get

**"... it just has to
be now."**



Badi Teej

The festival of Badi Teej will be celebrated this year on Tuesday September 1st. During this festival, also known as Sattu Teej and Kajli Teej, Marwari women fast and pray for the health of their husbands.

In the evening of Badi Teej, women start their puja by praying to the Neem plant. A legend about two sisters explains why Marwari women pray to the Neem plant. The two sisters were both devoted to God and would regularly pray to the Neem plant. The older one asked the Neem to keep her personality sweet. However, the younger one asked the Neem to keep her just like the Neem because even though a Neem plant tastes bitter, the plant has many hidden Ayurvedic properties. The older sister, being a sweet-talker, married into a wealthy family, but was unable to help the family when they faced hardships and they were all miserable. The younger one, on the other hand, married into an average family. Since she was practical and up front, she was able to get the family through difficult times and they lived happily.



Following this puja, women perform a ritual unique to Badi Teej. They look at the reflection of 7 things in water: Neem, pearls, Chunari, Sattu, fruit, and the light from a diya. This is done to learn to be satisfied by looking at things without possessing them, and to have the patience and faith that they will eventually be blessed with these things.

Women then make offerings to the Moon and break their fast. The rising of the Moon indicated the end of the day so the women waited all day with no food and water to show their strength and patience. As the women make an offering of Sattu to the Moon, they ask the Moon to protect their husbands.

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



RAJASTHANIS ABROAD
YOUTH SAMAJ

हम राजस्थान के भविष्य हैं

We are the future of Rajasthan