



# Konkani Express

March 2014

**Samsar Padvo:  
Time of New Beginnings**

# KONKANI EXPRESS



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*Message from the HAAS President:*

Hi Everyone

Time has flown and we have completed one year of our term and two events for this next year. I am impressed how our community has rallied together both during Satyanarayan Puja to bless our graduating seniors as they head towards embarking on their future endeavors and during the luncheon for Upaya to champion the cause of the ultra-poor. As the saying goes; "A community is judged not by the riches they possess but by how well they help the less fortunate ones".

It was nice to be able to host the Puja in the new Sri Satyanarayan Temple of Greater Houston started by our Houston Konkani Mr. Krishna Bhat.

I take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for all the help you have extended to our committee. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do to make our community bonds stronger.

My committee and I wish everyone a very happy Yugadi and Ram Navami.

Sincerely

Maya Prabhu

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## HAAS Hands out it's First Plaque!!



On February 8<sup>th</sup> 2014, HAAS handed out its first plaque of honor ---to recognize the service done by Mrs. Sachita Shenoy to aid the poorest of the poor – The “Ultra Poor”.

The function was well attended and was extensively covered by the press of local Indo American newspapers including The India Herald, Voice of Asia and IndoAmerican News.

Mrs. and Mr. Naren Patel graciously offered The Techniplex Conference Center in Stafford as the venue. Seema Bhat and Jyoti Nayak added artistic decorative touches and creative centerpieces to enhance the ambience. Junior volunteers: Charani

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Kamath, Meghan Mcfadden Kiran Bhat and Pranav Rao assisted in various aspects of the program.

The program was kicked off by a beautiful and intricate Ganesh Vandana by Sneha Shenoy followed by a complex Bollywood dance medley expertly executed by Samhita Bhat. The audience was then entertained with rendition of popular Hindi songs by Sudhakar Shenoy, Sujata Desai and Maya Prabhu.

Sachita Shenoy presented the mission and activities of Upaya Social ventures and its role in providing skillful means to the ultra-poor. In the past two years, Upaya has supported the development of five enterprises, which are collectively employing 1100 people. For most, this is the first formal job they ever had and all are on the path of emerging from poverty.

The audience had an opportunity to see the eco-friendly arecanut leaf plates and the beautiful silk scarves made by beneficiaries of Upaya's involvement in job creation for the poorest of the poor.

The event was co-sponsored by Dr. Vasudev and Shobha Shenoy and the scrumptious meal was catered by Udipi Café.

For further information about Upaya's work and how to get involved, kindly visit [www.upayasv.org](http://www.upayasv.org).



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## Ugadi – The Kannada New Year

MARCH 31, 2014 BY RAGGI MUDDE

The people of Karnataka consider Ugadi to be an auspicious time for commencing new ventures. This is the time when New Year's Day is also celebrated in the states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Punjab, West Bengal and Assam.

While it is called Ugadi in A.P. and Karnataka, in Maharashtra it is known as Gudipadawa.

### Origin of Ugadi

The term "Ugadi" has its origin in the Sanskrit word "Yugadi", that means 'starting of a new Yuga or period'. This traditional festival is usually celebrated in the second half of March or in early April. People from all over Karnataka celebrate this festival with much enthusiasm and gaiety.

### Legend Associated with Ugadi:

The popular legend associated with the festival is that the Lord Brahma started creation of the vast universe on the auspicious day of Ugadi or Chaitra suddha padhyami. Lord Brahma created the days, weeks, months and years in order to count time and then created all other elements present in the universe.

### Significance of Ugadi

Ugadi marks a change in the lunar orbit as well as the beginning of the new Hindu lunar calendar. It also heralds the advent of spring. Mother Nature awakes from her deep slumber to give birth to new plants and cover earth in a blanket of green. As spring accompanies new life on earth, this festival of New Year accompanies a feeling of joy, growth and prosperity. The nine day long spring festival of Vasanta Navratri begins on this day and concludes on Ramnavami.

Ugadi marks the beginning of a new Hindu lunar calendar. It is a day when mantras are chanted and predictions made for the New Year. The most important thing in the festival is Panchanga Shravanam – hearing of the Panchanga.

The Panchanga Shravanam is done at the temples by the priests. Before reading out the annual forecasts as predicted in the Panchanga, the officiating priest reminds the participants of the creator – Brahma, and the span of creation of the universe.

The reading of the Panchanga then involves reading of other Tidhis (wealth and prosperity) during the

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year and ends with a forecast for various sectors of the social life and the strengths and effects of various constellations and their transitions.

The scriptures state that the benefits reaped by the listener as well as the reader, are equivalent to having a dip in the holy river Ganges. The individuals hearing the Panchanga should respectfully 'thank' the reader and offer him new clothes and seek his blessings.

## Preparations for Ugadi

Preparations for the festival start a week in advance. Houses are thoroughly cleaned and washed. People buy new clothes for themselves and their family members to enjoy the spirit of Ugadi. They also purchase several other things needed for the festival.

On Ugadi day, people wake up before the break of dawn and take a head bath. The bath is supposedly to be taken after massaging the entire using sesame oil.

## Celebrations of Ugadi

Ugadi is celebrated by decorating the temples with fresh flowers and fresh mango leaves. Among the flowers mainly the sweet smelling jasmine is used for the decorations. Most people also decorate their homes and puja rooms with flowers and mango leaves. There is an interesting legend behind the practice of decorating with mango leaves.

The legend goes that Subramanya and Ganesha, the sons of Lord Shiva and Parvati loved eating mangoes. Kartik urged people to tie fresh leaves of mango tree to the doorway in order to indicate a good yields.

All the members of the family gather and pray together and seek blessings from the Almighty during Ugadi celebrations. Food, as is the normal trend in all festivals, occupies an important place in this festival too. Special dishes are prepared and enjoyed by the people to mark the festival.

The next step is offer prayers to Sun, before accepting Vepapoota Pachadi (Neem Flower Pickle) on an empty stomach. Entrance of the houses are decorated with fresh mango leaves. It is noteworthy that we use mango leaves and coconuts (as in a Kalasam, to initiate any puja) only on auspicious occasions to propitiate gods.

People also splash fresh cow dung water on the ground in front of their house and draw colorful floral designs. This is a common sight in every household. People perform the ritualistic worship to God invoking his blessings before they start off with the New Year.

## Rituals Followed On Ugadi

The festival is wrapped in traditions. The ceremonial day starts early, with the elderly ladies of the family getting up at around 4.30 a.m. while chanting mantras. Several rituals are followed during the day to mark the celebration. The common rituals are:

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- **Reflection in Ghee:** Watching one's reflection in a bowl of molten ghee.
- **Enne (Oil) Shastra:** Elderly women of the family applying kumkum to the younger members and performing arathi.
- **Abhyang:** Taking of oil bath by all members of the family.
- **New Dresses:** Wearing of new clothes by all family members.
- **Abhyang for Gods:** Giving oil bath to the idols of Gods.
- **Offering flowers:** Offering flowers of neem, mango and tamarind to the Gods.
- **Offering Puja:** Puja is offered following the steps of Abhisheka, Alankara, Naivedya and Mangalarathi.
- **Panchanga Pooje:** After worshipping God, Panchanga for the new Samvathsara or Year is worshipped.
- **Gudi or Indra Dhwaja Pooje:** Indra Dhwaja Pooje is done next.
- **Front door decoration:** Decorating the front door with Kemmannu (red earth), Rangoli and Mango leaves. Sometimes neem leaves are also used.
- **Bevu Bella:** Eating of jaggery and neem together in this festival to mark the presence of sweet and sour events in life's journey.
- **Oota:** Offering meals to God and then eating Oota or meals as Prasada.
- **Visiting temples:** Visiting temples and seeking blessings of the Almighty.

---- Thanks to Jyothi Nayalkar for her help in submission of this article.



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Keeping Up with the Konkanis  
Krishna Bhat

## The First Konkani Temple In North America



The HAAS Satyanarayan Puja 2014 was held on March 2, 2014 at The Sri Satyanarayan Temple of Greater Houston - brainchild of Houston Konkani, Mr. Krishna Bhat.

The temple which is shaping to be the first Konkani Temple in North America had its beginnings in 2012 when Mr. Krishna Bhat generously donated two acres of land for the temple in North West Houston. The temple was incorporated in 2013 and now is being used for service to the community.

This year the Houston Konkanis who celebrate Sri Satyanarayan Puja yearly were happy to use the premises for their annual event. The country atmosphere and park like setting provided a new kind of ambience for the occasion. Graduating seniors – Charani Kamath, Samir Nileshwar and Vishruth Rao participated and the Konkani community turned out in record numbers to bless them as they get ready to graduate and pursue their future endeavors.

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The following are excerpts of a candid interview held with Mr. Krishna Bhat.

1. What inspired you to start a temple?  
I felt grateful to God for having helped me through rough times and helping me come up in life. I wanted to express my gratitude to the Lord by starting a temple.
2. How did you choose Lord Satyanarayana as the principal deity?  
We received several other suggestions for deities and were having a hard time choosing. One day the idea of Satyanarayan temple suddenly appeared in my mind. I shared it with the committee and it was unanimously approved.
3. With so many temples in Houston, why was another one started?  
There are no temples within 30 mile radius of this temple. People living in this area spend a lot of time travelling to a temple and travel time has increased with increasing congestion in various parts of Houston.
4. How does having this temple help Konkans living in Greater Houston Area?  
This is a temple where Konkans can worship in their own Konkani Style.

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- 5. What are your priorities in regards to this temple?  
We should be known for helping people and providing spiritual solace rather than being known for the splendor of our buildings.
  
- 6. What is the motto of the temple?  
Helping people is helping God.

For further information about Sri Satyanarayan Temple Of Greater Houston and how to get involved kindly visit [www.sstgh.org](http://www.sstgh.org).

--Ramkrishna Prabhu  
Houston, Texas



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## Giving Back:

- 1. \$2000/- Matching contribution received with thanks from Chevron Company. This will be used to further the cause of education in India.
- 2. \$300/- worth of chairs donated by HAAS to Sri Satyanarayan temple of greater Houston.



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**Hear Ye! Hear Ye!**  
**The HAAS Committee announces:**



1. Get ready to display your talents this summer. The Talent Show evening will be held in June .Watch for further details in regards to date and venue.
  2. Reserve August 17<sup>th</sup> for our annual Janmashtami Celebrations.
  3. Thanks to Sadanand Pai, Ramkrishna Prabhu, Surendra Bhat, Varadraj Rao, Krishna Bhat and Maya Prabhu for conducting Satya Narayan Puja Activities
  4. Thanks to Shobha Shenoy for the Sapad Prasad, Padmini Bijoor for the delicious Lemon Pickle, Yogurt by Jyoti Nayalkar
  5. Thanks to all who attended, participated or volunteered at our functions.
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## Underwater Universe



Come along, come with me,  
Take a dive in the deep blue sea.  
Put on your gear, let's explore  
All the way to the ocean floor



See that snail wrapped in curls?  
Look! An oyster wearing pearls  
Watch the octopus oh so dark  
But don't you dare to pet the shark!



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Beneath the waters  
Green and cool  
We mermaids keep  
A swimming school



The oysters trot  
The lobsters prance  
The dolphins come  
To join the dance

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Can you see our blue and green tails?  
 You might see a pod of whales  
 A human! Some mermaids might say  
 It's okay she's with me it's her b-day

I admire the large, small, and colorful fish  
 I loved them they were pretty I want one I wish  
 As the day ends the mermaid gives something to me  
 From down below in the deep blue sea



As I got out the water I was filled with glee  
 because someone had kindly thought of me  
 I hold my present very carefully and whispered,  
 "Hello pretty little fishy"!

---- Mallika Nagarkatti,  
 Sugarland, Texas

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## Goan Fish Curry

Fish has been an excellent source of protein in the Konkani diet since their time on the banks of the Saraswati River. The recipes became more delectable and varied later when they settled in Goa. Mrs.Didi Baliga presents the nuance of Goan Cuisine with the following recipe.

*Konkani Creativity & Cooking  
Corner*



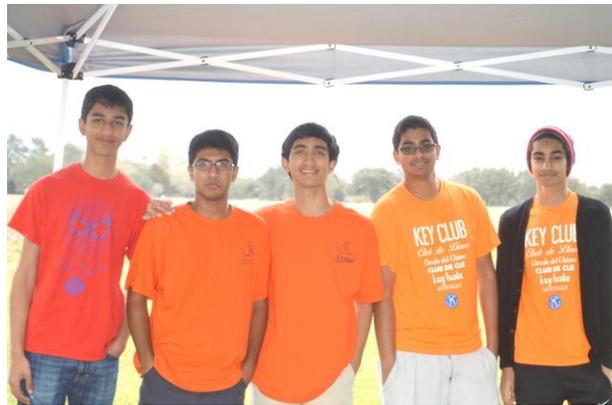
### Goan Fish Curry:

- 1 Pomfret or any medium fish
  - 1 coconut grated
  - ¼ tsp of cumin seed
  - 3 flakes garlic
  - 6 dry chilies
  - ¼ inch piece turmeric
  - 1 onion chopped
  - Tamarind for taste
  - Salt for taste
1. Clean, wash and cut the pomfret into pieces.
  2. Sprinkle salt and marinate for about 30 minutes
  3. Grind coconut, chilies, cumin seeds, garlic and turmeric.
  4. Mix onion, ground masala and tamarind in sufficient water and add salt to taste.
  5. Allow to cook on low heat till the curry begins to boil.
  6. Simmer slowly and cook for another 10 minutes without covering the pot
  7. Serve hot with rice!!

■ Didi Baliga , Sugarland,  
Texas

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## SATYANARAYAN PUJA 2014



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We welcome Advertisements!  
Rates are:  
Quarter page \$20.00  
Half page \$40.00  
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HAAS members-10% off above rates

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AAS has been formed to provide a common meeting ground for the Amchigeles residing in and around the Greater Houston area.

Our mission is to

- Preserve and promote our culture, tradition and deep rooted heritage.
- Confer the values and spirit of our culture to generations after us, and
- Provide an opportunity to network socially and professionally with other Amchigeles.

Have you checked  
out our website?  
[www.ourhaas.com](http://www.ourhaas.com)

## Houston Area Amchigele Samaj

[www.ourhaas.com](http://www.ourhaas.com)

HAAS has been created to preserve and promote our culture so that we can pass it on to future generations.

We would like to hear from you on how we can help our organization have greater impact.

If you have any new ideas to encourage youth involvement or any service opportunities for our organization— we would love to hear from you.

Also, if you have any specific concerns or goals you would like addresses, we hope to hear from you as well!

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