

Remembering Milind Makwana: A Resilient Warrior



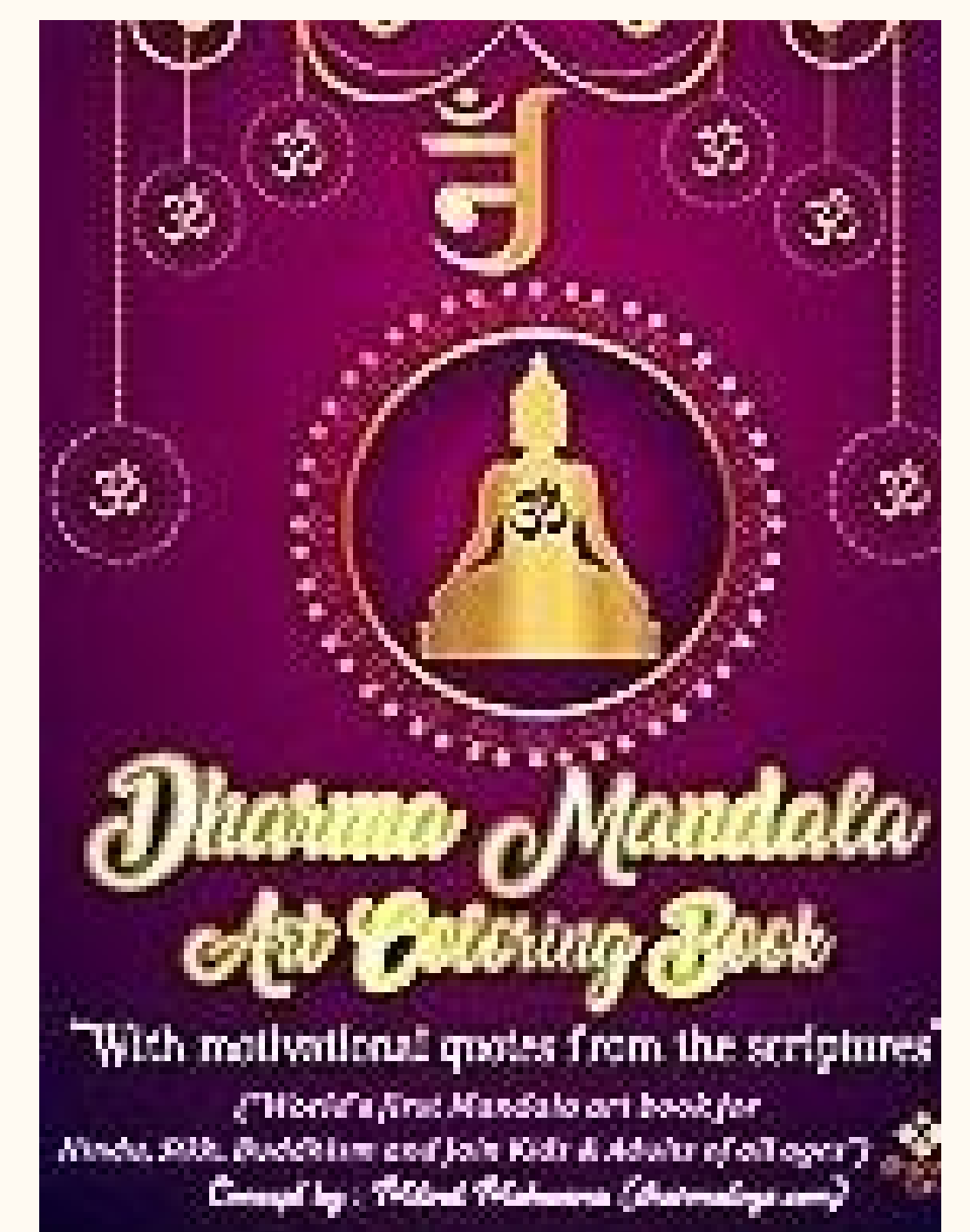
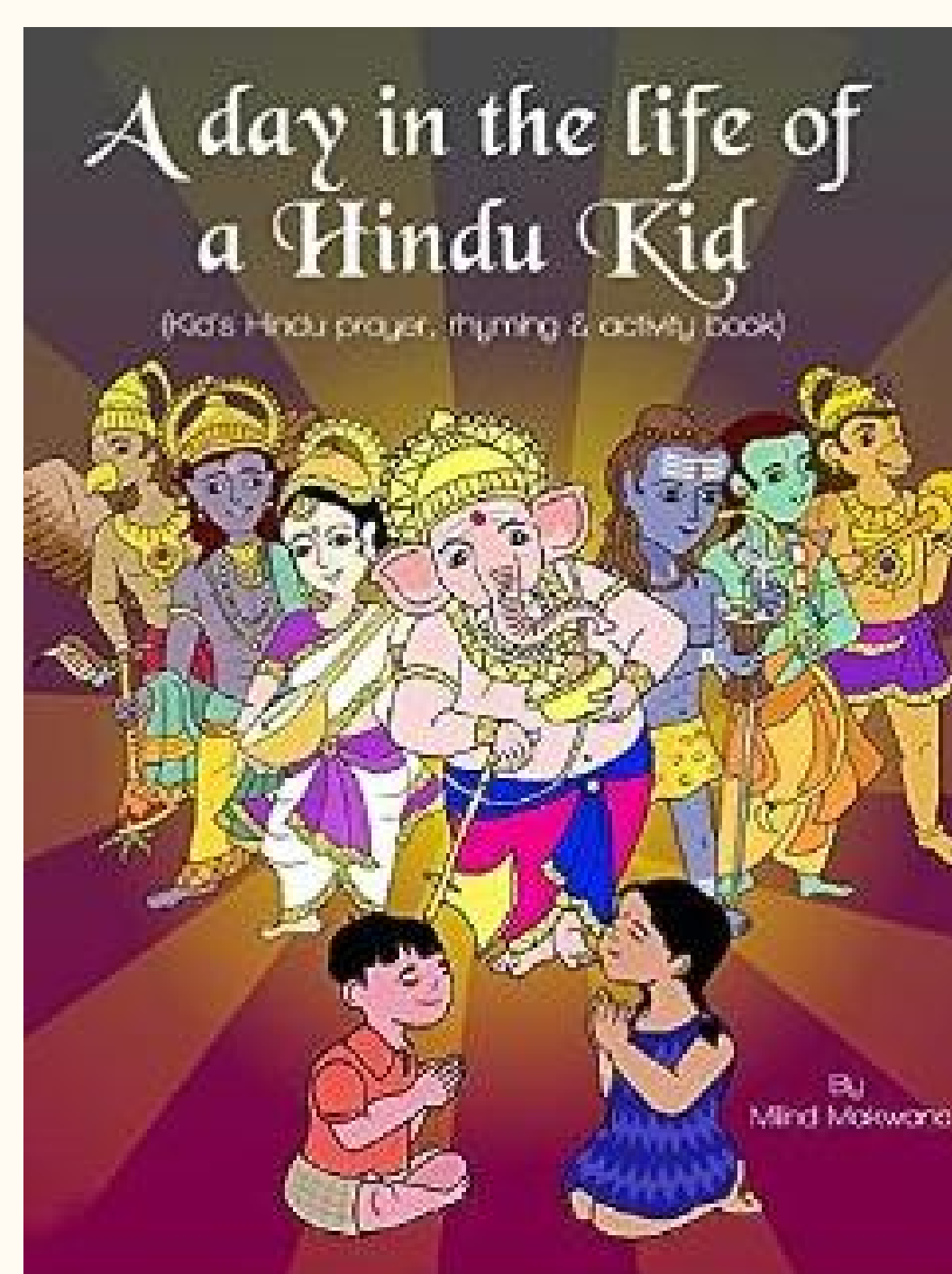
Milind Makwana with a Sewa beneficiary in India

Sewa International's leaders and volunteers expressed deep sadness at the sudden demise of Milind Makwana, a Bay Area Sewa volunteer, a real "karma yogi," and a top Dalit activist. Milind suffered a massive heart attack around 11:30 pm on July 18 after attending the Cupertino, CA, meeting to discuss the controversial and provocative SB403 Caste Bill. Doctors' best efforts and fellow volunteers' presence could not save him.

Milind arrived in Cupertino, CA on July 18 to speak at the City Council meeting against SB403, sponsored by the Afghan American legislator Aisha Wahab of the Democrat Party and supported by anti-Hindu groups. Throughout the day, he participated in various meetings and at the City Council hearing, displaying the true spirit of a warrior.

He fought passionately for his cause, showing us all the strength of his character and dedication. Tragically, he collapsed moments after the hearing, and after braving the shrill arguments of the anti-Hindu activists, leaving us all in shock and disbelief.

Milind's journey began in Mumbai. He later pursued his dreams in the US, where he made significant contributions to the high-tech sector as a Technical Program Manager at a Fortune 500 company in Silicon Valley. Beyond his professional achievements, he was an active community member, passionate about learning and teaching Hindu precepts and principles to children.



Two books on Hinduism for children authored by Milind Makwana

Milind also wrote for children. In his unique short poem book, "A Day in the Life of a Hindu Kid," he introduced Hindu mantras to children through the daily lives of two American-born Hindus. He donated all profits from the book sales to Sewa International to support local community projects.

Milind was just 44 years old. He had so much more to give to the world. Milind was a proud member of the Ambedkar-Phule Network of American Dalits and Bahujans (APNADB). He was a loving father, survived by his wife, Purvi Makwana, and two children, a 14-year-old daughter and an 8-year-old son.

Remembering Milind Makwana: A Warrior Dedicated to Dharma



Milind with a young volunteer (left) and working with other volunteers to help students in Tamil Nadu during his visit to India

Milind Makwana is no more, but we are left with a profound and lasting message. His life's mission was to protect dharma, uphold righteousness, and fight for and seek justice. He showed us that even in the face of personal challenges, one can stand strong and fight for what they believe in.

Arun Kankani, President, Sewa International, in his message said, "Milind's loss is a great shock to all, and a much sadder part of it is that God has taken away such a gem of a karyakarta so early. As we remember his life, we also reflect on the importance of taking care of our own well-being. Many of us are middle-aged, and this tragic incident serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of life. I urge everyone to prioritize their health and stay up to date on regular physical exams. Let us make a conscious effort to take necessary care and adopt a healthy lifestyle. As we grieve, let us keep Milind's noble soul in our thoughts and prayers, hoping that he attains moksha, finding eternal peace."

Saumitra Gokhale, Global Coordinator for Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, said, "Milind was a person full of life. He came across as a pleasant and genuinely caring person. He was full of ideas too. Well, later I realized that the first impression was the true character of Milind Makwana. Every time you met him, he would have original and creative ideas. He would take any responsibility given to him to heart and try to do full justice to it. Apart from the formal responsibility, he worked on many projects, all in line with the Hindu/Dharmic living and done in the spirit of a swayamsevak."

Dr. Romesh Japra, Cardiologist and Founder of Festival of Globe, in his condolence message, said, "Beyond his activism, Milind was a humble, simple, and kind-hearted individual. His warm presence and infectious smile brightened the lives of those around him. His dedication and passion for keeping Dalits and Bahujans as integral parts of Hinduism will remain in our hearts forever. We will forever remember his selflessness and the impact he made."

Kailash Tulsi Gajara, an HSS volunteer, said, "Milind was a very positive person, always talking about the greatness of Hindutva. As a mentor and a friend, he has always been super supportive. His stories of Shivaji Maharaj and many more proved his storytelling skill. He was down-to-earth, polite, always smiling, and a cheerful and powerful person... a real karmayogi. He was a dedicated volunteer who made invaluable contributions to various HSS initiatives. He led efforts such as children's podcasts and the establishment of the Dharma Toys Store. His vision extended to animation and creating content about Dharma. Milind also spearheaded technology initiatives for HSS. He advocated for honoring the women who built the runway for the Indian Army in Bhuj."

Milind's legacy as a resilient warrior will forever inspire us to work for the greater good and to protect dharma to the best of our abilities. His dedication and courage will serve as a guiding light in our pursuit of justice and service to the community.



Milind with a Sewa volunteer in Tamil Nadu

Dharmatoys: Igniting a Spark for Learning Hindu Culture Joyfully



Dharmatoys, a dream passionately nurtured by Milind Makwana, became a reality, offering unique Dharma-based toys, games, books, and puzzles to introduce kids to Hindu dharma. Milind firmly believed that instilling dharma (the right path) in children was crucial, lest they fall prey to adharma (the wrong/immoral path) from external influences.

The NavDurga Puzzle, with twenty wooden pieces and a tray, emerged as a favorite among Hindu children. It offered both entertainment and education. Additionally, each NavDurga Puzzle set included a free educational handout detailing the nine forms of Goddess Durga and an engaging word search activity sheet.

Milind's vision extended to producing toys for Sikh, Jain, and Buddhist children, further enriching the cultural experiences of children from diverse backgrounds.

Sewa's Global Coordinator, Shyam Parande, at the NIRD Event



Shyam Parande delivers the inaugural address at the India Habitat Center in New Delhi

Sewa International's Global Coordinator, Shyam Parande, delivered the inaugural address at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, on July 5, focusing on collaboration between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and government agencies for sustainable rural development. His talk titled, "Unleashing the Potential: Leveraging CSR for Rural Development Initiatives," addressed the growing interest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and finding credible implementation and evaluation agencies for such corporate initiatives. The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj organized the sessions, which took place in New Delhi from July 5 to 7. Participants from diverse CSOs and governmental agencies across more than fifteen states came together for the event.

Shyam Parande emphasized the need to harness the collective potential of both sectors to create impactful solutions that uplift the lives of millions in rural areas.

The event highlighted the need for impactful and socially relevant project proposals to entice potential funders. With a primary focus on rural development, participants learned to strategically plan initiatives that complement existing projects and maximize resources for optimal outcomes.

Parande emphasized sustainable project implementation and navigating challenges, as well as empowering participants to execute projects successfully. The session encouraged collaborations and partnerships with prominent donor bodies, enhancing the chances of securing financial support for rural development projects. Practitioners gained the tools to craft compelling proposals showcasing their organizations' credibility and ability to drive meaningful change.



Shyam Parande (3rd from left in the first row), with representatives from Civil Society organizations and governmental agencies at the India Habitat Center in New Delhi

AmeriCorps Bids Farewell to the Class of 2022-23



AmeriCorps leaders with the Class of 2023

After their year-long commitment to service, AmeriCorps members of the Class of 2022-23 completed their mission, making a major impact on the communities they served. The Class of 2022-23 embraced their roles, facing challenges head-on and contributing significantly to disaster preparedness and education initiatives.

AmeriCorps leaders extended their gratitude to these individuals and the supportive communities that welcomed and embraced them during their service. AmeriCorps wished them a future filled with success and continued growth. Some of the class may, however, return to serve again, reaffirming their dedication to society. AmeriCorps leaders said that they look forward to welcoming new members, each ready to participate in the organization's legacy of service and compassion.

Sponsor a Child Team Supports Mumbai's Dabbawala Children

Sewa International's Sponsor a Child (SAC) team provided essential support to over eighty children of Mumbai's Dabbawalas (transporters of daily food boxes from home to the office for thousands of officegoers) during a two-day initiative held on July 8 and 9, 2023. The team's commitment to empowering these children led to constructive discussions with the Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Charity Trust office bearers to secure ongoing sponsorship for the children present at the event and explore possibilities of extending assistance to more deserving children in the community.

Mona Joshi, a dedicated volunteer from the Chicago Chapter, was at the heart of this transformative partnership. The "Dabbawala" office bearers felicitated Mona Joshi for her selfless contributions to the cause. Embracing her role as a catalyst for positive change, she also took the opportunity to engage directly with the sponsored children and their families, lending a personal touch to the support provided.



Mona Joshi addressing Dabbawala office bearers in Mumbai

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Sandesh Kamath, from Mangaluru, Karnataka, was a founding member of the Central New Jersey Chapter in 2018. Currently, he is the chapter's joint coordinator, LEAD coordinator, and a member of the National LEAD Team. Sandesh lives with his wife and two children, all active volunteers in both Sewa International and the Hindu Swayam Sewak Sangh (HSS).



Sandesh Kamath

Growing up with the values of selfless service throughout his childhood, Sandesh made it a point to help, whether volunteering at a temple or bringing groceries for his elderly neighbors.

After he moved to the United States, Sewa International served as a launch pad for Sandesh to pursue his passion for helping others and has allowed him to get personally involved in many initiatives. What started as a Sewa Diwali Food Drive with seventeen participants has now blossomed into a thriving chapter comprising over six hundred families collaborating to benefit their communities. The Central New Jersey Chapter currently collaborates with more than ninety partner organizations, showcasing the expanding influence of Sewa International.

Sandesh and his wife Akhila continue to spread the values of community service to their children. Akhila was a member of the team that led the "Mission Mask" initiative during the pandemic, donating over ten thousand handmade masks to thirty hospitals in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. Daughter Sanjana and son Sanketh have spent hundreds of hours as part of the Sewa LEAD program. Sandesh and his family are grateful to Sewa International for providing an opportunity to better their communities and make a difference.

Sewa International and Houston Kannada Vrinda organize Millet Man's Seminar



Dr. Khadar Valli Dudekula addressing the audience in Sugarland, TX

Sewa International's Houston Chapter collaborated with Houston Kannada Vrinda and hosted a transformative conference -- Complete Health with Millets -- on July 9, 2023.

Dr. Khadar Valli Dudekula, labeled the "Millet Man," and a Padma Shri awardee delivered the keynote address at the seminar held at Shri Krishna Vrundavana Temple Hall in Sugarland, captivating an enthusiastic audience.

The acting Consul General at the Indian Consulate, Sandeep Chaudhary, emphasized the seminar's importance in promoting a plant-based diet with fruits, vegetables, and millet while reducing red and processed meat consumption. During his keynote address, Dr. Khadar Valli highlighted the incredible health benefits of millet, addressing lifestyle ailments and environmental challenges and establishing millet as a game-changer. The event inspired attendees to consider integrating millet into their diets, who gained valuable insights into millet's nutritional value, eco-sustainability, and diverse culinary uses. To offer attendees a firsthand experience, Sewa volunteers served meals made from millet.

Upcoming Events

- Aug 12, 2023: HSS, MMNA SW and Sewa - 5k Walk/Run | 17122 W Bell fort St, Richmond, TX
- August 18, 19 & 20, 2023: Sewa Serve @ NSF National Contest | 2023 Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/DqngUmkmcbVTZpEC9>
- Aug 19, 2023: Sewa Serve @ Tri-Valley Haven Food Pantry Registration | Link: <https://forms.gle/XHukDpsnyATVPZmi6>
- August 26, 2023: Annual dance competition event "Sewa Dancing Stars 2023" | Durga Bari Society, Houston TX
- August 26, 2023: Sewa Serve @ Second Harvest of the Greater Valley Registration | Link: <https://forms.gle/i9y9CB6Xe6QJpznM8>

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