It’s that dreaded time of the year again. No, you don’t have to get started on your taxes just yet because we’re sure you’re too busy digesting the tall claims you made on New Year’s Eve. Yes, it’s resolutions time! Wise men say that one should not create mountains for oneself but truth be told, most of us do make new year resolutions. You should have just raised a glass instead of dunking the whole bottle and of course the bad mojo starts when you wake up two days later with a hangover and a sinking feeling that it’s too late to go back in time and undo the damage.

Not surprisingly, most of the resolutions this year are related to health. “Gotta start going to the gym”, “Gotta clear my credit card bills this year” are the mantras this year. “I think I can make it this year. After all I wouldn’t have made a resolution if I didn’t have the ability to do it”, said a brave soul.

711 attendant says that their salad sales have gone up and cigarette sales have reduced drastically. “They will come back to normal by March,” he said with a wink. Unfortunately it is true. What’s good for you is not good for the economy. But seriously, hardly any of us can keep our resolutions beyond March.

So if simmering rage and intense guilt describe your springtime months, don’t worry, for The Drexel Desi is here to help you get through your promises. After the initial enthusiasm dies down, it’s only planning and goal setting that’ll keep you motivated and committed to accomplishing your tasks. Kalyan Kalava has resolved to be more organized and says he plans to last at least two more months by keeping things in perspective. He plans to set a half hour timer every day to clean his desk as much as he can. It’s after all only a small part in the grander scheme of his life. As someone has said, “Write it down. Written goals have a way of transforming wishes into wants; cant’s into cans; dreams into plans; and plans into reality. Don’t just think it – ink it!”

The key is to realize that it takes time and not expect miracles. You could also strike a deal with a friend. Help them help you hold onto your dreams. As Milton Berle said, “I’d rather be a could-be if I cannot be an are; because a could-be is a may-be who is reaching for a star. I’d rather be a has-been than a might-have-been, by far; for a might-have-been has never been, but a has was once an are.”

And if your new year resolutions are not holding up, remember this – You never fail, you just find new ways that don’t work! Once you believe this, New Year resolutions will become a perennial source of joy.

Jan 6th: Tsunami About Turn: After shunning all offers of foreign aid for tsunami victims, India made amends and said it would accept contributions from multi-national financial agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Even direct contributions from the tsunami-affected areas will now be welcome.

Jan 11th: Kanchi conspiracy: Kanchi Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati was on Tuesday released from Vellore Jail, a day after the Supreme Court granted him bail in the Sankararaman murder case. The seer had spent two months in custody. He had inbetween made several pleas for bail, in various courts.

Jan 16th: RIL empire to be split: The process of valuation of the Ambani business empire is likely to be completed within the next three weeks which could lay the basis for a blueprint to end the family feud that has hurt the Reliance group, sources familiar with the exercise said today. ICICI Bank chairman and a friend of the Ambanis, K. V. Kamath is doing the valuation following a family conclave in Mumbai at which the feuding brothers were present.

Jan 17th: Godhra - Mishap or terrorist act: A month before the third anniversary of Godhra carnage a investigating committee appointed by Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav suggests that the fire was an accident, and not a diabolic act. On the other hand, an officer investigating the Godhra case says terrorists set the Sabarmati Express compartment on fire.
From the Editor’ s Desk: Deconstructing American Beauty - Part 1

Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud’s youngest daughter, followed her illustrious father’s footsteps into the annals of psychoanalysis by formulating theories of the ego defenses. Her model of defense mechanisms of the ego have become very popular and established her as a researcher and analyst in her own right. The function of the ego defense mechanisms follows Anna Freud’s model of neurotic conflict. In this model, an external stimulus gives birth to an unconscious desire causing a flow of libidinous energy. The superego then kicks in and decides if this desire is morally acceptable (socially and personally) to act on. If the desire is deemed acceptable then it becomes conscious and can be acted upon. If this desire is socially or morally unacceptable then it is repressed giving rise to guilt and thus a neurotic conflict is born. This unacceptable desire daisy chains into anxiety thus disrupting the normal functioning of the ego. The purpose of ego defense mechanisms is to handle these anxieties in a way so as to protect the ego. This conflict is resolved when this libidinous energy is vented in some way that is socially acceptable i.e. in a way that the superego approves of and the method employed for such a socially acceptable discharge of libidinous energy is determined by the ego defense mechanisms. The ego remains oblivious to conflicts of this nature arising in the unconscious mind and in a case of a defense mechanism calling attention to itself, the normal functioning of the ego is disrupted causing dysfunction in normal working relationships or in general, life. Let us analyze American Beauty and its characters in terms of the various mechanisms of ego defense.

Denial: Carolyn (Annette Bening) and Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) are an ordinary suburban couple with a teenage daughter, Jane (Thora Birch). American Beauty begins by giving us a peek into their world of denial. The Burnhams both believe that they have a perfectly normal happy daughter and simply choose to deny ominous signs to the contrary – her constant grimace, her black clothes and perpetual negativity. They also choose to completely deny that their once happy marriage now totally lacks love and is joyless. Let us take a look at their neighbors – the Fitts – Frank (Chris Cooper), Barbara (Allison Janney) and Ricky (Wes Bentley). Barbara is so detached from her reality that we are left to assume that some traumatic incident in her past has caused her to withdraw into herself completely. Frank on the other hand is capable of only two emotions – anger and silence. Ricky lives in a world of isolation amidst his father’s abusive-ness and his mother’s obtuseness. He looks to drugs for solace and for equipping his private world with expensive stereo and video equipment.

Repression is the unconscious withdrawal from conscious awareness of an unwanted idea, desire or feeling. This unwanted emotion is pushed deep into the unconscious and hidden. But the libidinous energy associated with this id impulse does not just disappear and one usually has to spend a greater amount of energy to keep them repressed. This is akin to building a dam of repressive energy to contain all ‘unacceptable’ emotions and to keep them from surging. Repression is a psychological function aimed at controlling and inhibiting any impulsive release. Both mothers in American Beauty suffer from a severe case of repressed id impulses. Barbara Fitts directs all her energy into keeping a perfectly ordered house and this sort of control on tidiness is exercised on her emotions as well. Towards the end of the movie, we see a severely beaten Ricky announcing that he intends to leave the house and in response, all Barbara can come up with concerns his raincoat. Her inability to relate to inner emotions leaves her only external appearances to fixate upon. (to be concluded)...

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The Drexl Desi
The newsletter without the burden of history behind it.
For comments/suggestions , Email: pragathi@drexel.edu with the subject Newsletter Woes.
**Philosophy - 101 with Pandava Sena**

The universal question that begs to be answered now more than ever is why did Tsunami happen. People have raised questions on divine retribution and even the very existence of God. How could a kind and forgiving God let this happen? Or has He lost control. Does belief and prayer mean nothing. We’ve seen the pictures and the videos but there seems to be a verbosity switch when it comes to this. We asked Pandava Sena to help us make sense of this tragedy.

The Vedic scriptures urge us to not dream in vain for a happy life in this world, where death may overcome us at any moment. None of us wants to die; yet every one of us will be forced to die. This existential incompatibility indicates that we belong, not to this world of death, but to a world of eternal life. We belong to an eternal spiritual world, the kingdom of God, where we live forever in a joyous harmony with God as His beloved children. When we rebel against God’s authority, however, we are placed in the material world to experience the imagined joys and the real sorrows of living independent of Him. Equipped with material bodies – human or subhuman – we try to play God, competing and fighting to control and enjoy as much as we can. But no matter how great we become or imagine ourselves to be, nature ultimately crushes our egos through adversity and death.

The Vedic scriptures assert that the sufferings of this world are not due to God’s malevolence, but due to His benevolence. A fever impels us to take medicine to cure ourselves. The heat of the fire causes us to instantly withdraw our finger and thus save it from being burnt. Similarly, the sufferings of this world remind us that our hopes of becoming happy in this world are intrinsically impossible fantasies. The intelligent course of action therefore is to prepare to return to our home, the spiritual world, where happiness far greater than our greatest fantasies is awaiting us. Are we ready to wake up from the dream of safety and enjoyment in this world of danger and death? Or will we sleep on until our dream turns into a nightmare, from which it may be too late to wake up? This is the ultimate question raised by the tsunami disaster, which each one of us will have to answer individually.

*Interested in spirituality? Join monthly discussions in Philadelphia: psenaphilly@yahoo.com.*

**Makar Sankranti** by Nikhil Gogote

I woke up with a start when my grandmother (“Aaji”, as they call her in Marathi) shouted, “Ooth ata lavkar, aaj apla motha san aae!” (Get up now, its our big festival today!). Of course! How could I have forgotten that it was Makar Sankranti, preparations for which, had begun in the kitchen the day before. Growing up in a sophisticated Army Officer’s house, out of Maharashtra, I was never exposed to the intricate aspects of the festival. “Aaji, why do we celebrate Makar Sankranti?”, I asked her, popping a “Til-gul” (sesame seeds and jaggery) laddoo in my mouth? She told me that the festival signifies the movement of the Sun into the northern hemisphere called “uttarayan” and that the duration of day and night are equal on this day. Wow, that was a pretty scientific reason for such a religious event.

The house was all decked up for the “Haldi Kumkum” ceremony, and all the ladies had begun to arrive. My uncle stuffed another laddoo in my mouth and said “Til gul gya ani god bola” (Take Til Gul and speak sweetly). It is a custom to say so while exchanging sesame sweets on this day. After a wonderful traditional lunch of “Gul Polis” and “Tup” (Jaggery Rotis and ghee), it was time to get into kite flying now, an important aspect of the festival. I was on the terrace with cousins learning the art for nearly 3 hours. Surely my rendezvous with “Sankrant” was quite adventurous.

**Deep Blue**

Smitha Chunduri

Engulfing 70% of the planet with its vastness, beauty and power, the ocean continues to hold its spell on me. The freshness of the green forests, beauty of the deep blue-green water, the tides on a crescent beach from the mystic ocean fascinates me. Go beyond the beach and below the waves, and you will discover some of the most rich and diverse forms of life on Earth. It is more than power that the ocean hides from us. It conceals much of its beauty. Seldom seen are the wonderful denizens of the deep blue sea. Colorful corals, sea cucumbers, sea anemones, star fish - inconspicuous and delicate. Oh! The beauty that it holds makes the wonders of this planet insignificant.

The forces that drive the ocean are invisible. These are the great currents whirling in constant motion all over the globe moving water, creatures, controlling and impacting our lives to an extent that few appreciate and none can fully comprehend. The ocean's tranquility is a mask of concealing tremendous strength; it has a way of internalizing all that it holds - its terrain, its creatures. Every now and then it erupts angrily, reminding us that despite human perceptions - NATURE RULES!

Its power and fury were on display this December 26th. A thunderous tsunami - the mountain-size waves that race invisibly across the ocean smashing man’s symbols of might with impunity. Clear water, bustling strip of sand on a weekend or holiday has as many people packed per square foot as any piece of waterfront on earth. Happy tourists basking in the sun, gazing at the still translucent warm water during the Christmas weekend were oblivious to the impending danger. In a span of few minutes, deadly waves washed away the beaches ripping our paradise apart, engulfing everything into a watery grave. All that is left are corpses in the sand. This disaster befell more than 10 countries and accounted for more than 130,000 lives as one of the largest disasters in the recent past of a single event affecting so many countries and so many people at the same time.

Innumerable and eminently beautiful beaches across the ocean will no longer be the same so will the lives of the people.
I n a classic Aesop fable, the Ant diligently stores food for the upcoming winter, while the Grasshopper lounges in the summer sun oblivious to the impending change of season. Like the characters in this tale, people are often torn between impulsively choosing immediate rewards or more deliberatively planning for the future. And now new research supported in part by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), a part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), suggests why: human decision-making is influenced by the interactions of two distinct systems in the brain which--like the Ant and Grasshopper--are often at odds.

"This landmark study has the potential to reshape what we should look at as we try to understand how people make both health and economic decisions," Dr. Suzman says. "Since many health and economic decisions involve choosing between short term gratification and long term delays of rewards, this approach and its finding are likely to have a significant impact on our ability to influence health and economic behaviors such as diet, exercise, and saving for retirement."

For the study, a research team which included NIA grantee David Laibson, Ph.D., of Harvard University and the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, MA, asked 14 participants to choose between receiving money at an earlier or later date. For instance, a participant might be asked to choose between receiving $27.10 today versus $31.25 in a month; or $27.10 in two weeks versus $31.25 in six weeks. As the participants made these choices, their brains were scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). This imaging tool enables researchers to measure second-by-second brain function in thousands of specific brain regions. When participants chose between incentives that included an immediate reward, fMRI scans indicated heightened activity in parts of the brain, such as the limbic system, that are associated with emotional decision making. In contrast, deliberative and analytic regions of the brain, such as the prefrontal and parietal cortex, were activated by all decisions, even those that did not involve an immediate reward. However, when participants resisted immediate rewards and instead chose delayed rewards, activity was particularly strong in these deliberative areas of the brain. "Our research suggests that consumers have competing economic value systems. Our emotional brain has a hard time imaging the future, even though our logical brain clearly sees the future consequences of our current actions," Dr. Laibson says. "Our emotion brain wants to max out the credit card, even though our logical brain knows we should save for retirement." Or, as the authors conclude, "The idiosyncrasies of human preferences seem to reflect a competition between the impetuous limbic grasshopper and the provident ant within each of us." EDS: Richard Suzman, Ph.D., Associate Director of the NIA's Behavioral and Social Research Program, is available to comment on this study.

Valentines Day

Snarky people often scoff at the idea of Valentine’s Day for all they hear is the ringing of the cash register. But the celebration of this holiday tells us that romance is still alive as people buy rows of cards and beds of roses. So, if you wake up on the 14th wishing it were the next day, it’s time for a reality check.

Legend has it that the Saint Valentine, who was executed on February 14th had left a note for the jailer’s daughter saying, “From your Valentine”, for all the help he had received from her while in prison. Millions today sign off their cards with the same words. And if you have a message in mind you’ll need a card that says exactly what you feel. Contrary to popular belief, teachers receive the most Valentine’s Day cards with children exchanging the maximum number. Red stands for strong feelings and the red rose was supposedly the favorite flower of the Roman Goddess of Love, Venus which is why Valentine’s Day is the day of the ubiquitous red rose. They connote romantic love and enduring passion.

But all said and done, it is a day to enjoy with that special someone whose voice makes your heart beat faster and turns your legs to jelly. It’s a day that will help you open doors that’ll take you far and wide. What you choose to do is up to you, be it a dinner date, a romantic picnic, going dancing, catching a movie, going window shopping, going on a skiing or hiking trip or just sitting back to relax, it’s the one day to just laugh and have fun with your loved ones. And since cable has invaded the planet you could always get away from everyone and everything to watch TV. It isn’t as much fun alone.

And life being life, remember it’s not very easy to please. So watch out for the pitfalls - how well you do is entirely up to you.
**The Drexel Desi Cravings**

**Sankranti Sweets Recipe**

* Til Ladoo * by Kalyan Kalava

**Ingredients:**
- 2 cups white sesame seeds
- 1/4 cup peanuts
- 2 cups grated jaggery
- 1/4 tsp ginger powder
- 1 1/2 tsp cardamom powder
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg powder
- 1 1/2 cups maida
- Oil as required

**Method:**
- Roast sesame seeds and peanuts separately
- Let it cool
- Crush the peanuts
- Mash jaggery till soft.
- Put in a large heavy pan.
- Add ghee and heat, till it melts and starts bubbling.
- Add peanuts and sesame seeds, take off fire.
- Mix well till well blended.
- While still hot, shape into ping-pong ball size ladoos, with moist hands (apply ghee on your hands).
- Allow to cool completely, before storing in airtight container

**Cooking Time:** 30 mins

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**JAVA: Flaming Spanish Fly**

1 oz Jose Cuervo Especial Gold Tequila
1 oz Kahlua Coffee Liqueur
1 oz Bacardi 151 Proof Rum
rich black Coffee
1 1/2 oz Whipped Cream
coarse Sugar
1 Cherry

Moisten rim of an Irish coffee cup with cherry juice or water.
Dip rim into coarse sugar to coat heavily. Pour tequila and coffee liqueur into the cup. Gently float 151 proof rum on top. Carefully ignite rum and swirl glass to lightly melt sugar with flame. Immediately pour in coffee to extinguish flames and fill cup. Top with whipped cream and cherry.

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**UDUPPI: MORE THAN CANARA GRUB**

If you are yearning for hot and spicy food and you’re missing your regular tiffin, you should definitely head out to the inconspicuous Uduppi Dosa House in Ben Salem. Not a place for business lunches but a quaint casual atmosphere that welcomes you at this hash house. The ambience is very South Indian perhaps a reflection of their forte for the restaurant offers traditional South Indian food like Idlis, Dosas, Vadas, Uttapams and onion and coconut based curries. If you are expecting Karnataka cuisine, you might be a little surprised to find that they also serve North Indian fare, if you want Kazar-ka-Halwa (their spelling not ours) and their recently introduced Indo-Chinese food. The weekdays Lunch Buffet will set you back by $6.99 only and includes appetizers, a variety of rice specialties, the regular snack dishes and desserts. The dosas are perfect - be it the Paper Dosa or the Mysore Masala Dosa, they’re thin and crisp just like your mom would make them and the sambar, though a little too mild for the hard core palate is aromatic enough to remind you of Sunday mornings at home. The Mango Lassi is a huge draw and so is their Mushroom Manchurian. A trip to Uduppi will definitely help you cope with any kind of food craving. However, make sure you save some space for dessert, for the halwa and payassam are not to be missed. Uduppi has started a Wednesday Chat Special which is also really drawing in the crowds. As the weather gets colder and you hanker for oily food, save yourself those hours in the gym by opting for healthy vegetarian fare at Uduppi Dosa House.

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**Nasha is Pragathi’s first ever Annual Cultural show.**

It is our biggest event and is a colorful celebration of diversity in India showcased through dances and music from all over India and the world. We hope to make this event a great success. Looking forward to an enthusiastic response. For more information contact,

**Shubham Bhat** *(skb25@drexel.edu)*
**Bhakti Tawde** *(bst24@drexel.edu)*

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Visit us at [www.pragathi.net/nasha/intro](http://www.pragathi.net/nasha/intro)

**Rock the Vote**

Would you like to see the newsletter, The Drexel Desi continue?

Please send in your response to pragathi@drexel.edu with the Subject: ‘Vote: Answer’, i.e. ‘Vote: Yes’ or ‘Vote: No’.
Shenoy Soliloquy
Surendra Shenoy

Tsunami is the new catch word. Every country worth any international presence wants to be associated with the relief of this immense tragedy. But is all this display of altruism and philanthropy really genuine or is it just a photo-op. The world has “pledged” around 4 billion dollars as aid for the affected people. How much of this will reach the affected people and be distributed uniformly is a different story.

Looking at the statistics of countries that have gone out of the way to help, names that crop up are Japan, Germany and Australia. Also, India despite the devastation within its own boundaries has gone out of its way to support Thailand and other countries with naval ships, food aid, medicine and other relief efforts. Three of these four countries (Germany, Japan and India) are making a serious bid to get a permanent seat in an expanded UN security council. They are out to prove that like the other members of the council, they are major powers and can play a major role in international issues. Such actions will help them push their case when it comes up in a few months time.

The US in a “me too” policy realized a little later in the day that this was an awesome public relations op for the battered image of its troops from the unhealthy coverage it has been getting from Iraq. They started with a measly 15 million dollars in aid on the day after the tsunami but hiked it to 350 million by the end of that week. What’s more, in the days that followed, the media coverage of the fighting in Iraq took a backseat and we saw pictures of US troops rescuing children out of the muddle in Indonesia to safety. Indonesia being an Islamic country did no harm to help the image building.

The only hope is that these efforts will go a significant way to helping the locals for whom life will never be the same. Not only that, it’s a wish that this serves as a great opportunity to better their lives with a fresh start.

EID MUBARAK is another way of saying may Allah grant you and may Allah grant us. Like any other festival it’s an occasion to tell your loved ones and your brotherhood how you care for them. We have three such days in a year, but two (Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha) among them are more known than the Eid-Milad. Eid has always been marked as a day of celebration, socializing, and reminding ourselves of the equality among the mankind.

Eid is a Day of Thanksgiving, where Muslims gather in a joyful aura to offer their gratitude to the Creator of the world. This thanksgiving is far beyond the spiritual devotion and verbal expression to manifest itself in a shape of social and humanitarian spirit. Alms reach the poor during Ramadan for Eid-ul-Fitr and sacrifices are offered by slaughtering oblations to be distributed among the needy on Eid-ul-Azha.

Eid is a Day of Remembrance. We remember the deceased by praying for their souls, the needy by extending a hand of help, the grievied by showing sympathy and consolation, the sick by cheerful visits and utterances of good wishes, the absentees by cordial greetings and sincere considerateness.

Eid signifies a Day of Victory. An individual who gains success in securing his spiritual rights and growth receives the Eid with a victorious spirit. He develops a strong command over his desires, exercises a sound self-control and enjoys the taste of disciplinary life.

A Day of Harvest, when all the men reap the fruit of their good deeds as on this day Allah showers His blessings abundantly. The haves and have-nots enjoy His providence in the most plural way.

Eid is awaited for as a Day of Forgiveness. Believers assemble in the congregation of the day, pray whole-heartedly for forgiveness and strength in faith, approach Allah sincerely for His mercy and forgiveness. A true believer would forgive those who might have wronged him; because he himself would be praying for Allah’s forgiveness, and would do his best to acquire it. He acknowledges and believes in the fact that if he forgives, he will be forgiven. And when he forgives, the virtue of forgiveness will be mercifully exercised by Allah, and widely exchanged between the brethren. And that marks the Day as a Day of Forgiveness.

Each Eid is a Day of peace. When a person establishes peace within his heart; he does it with the whole universe.

With all the virtues this day inherits, I consider Eid as a day off, to freshen up and an opportunity to straighten out. May this festival shower you with love, peace, goodness, warmth and togetherness. EID MUBARAK to all.

President’s Day : February 21

“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right; let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.” Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address Washington D.C. March 4, 1865
A 9.0 earthquake unleashed devastating tsunamis on coastal areas throughout Asia, causing dreadful and shocking destruction of human life and potential. After watching pictures and videos, we mourn for the dead and pray for the ones recovering. The task to help rebuild is up to us. In order to help and make a special contribution for the victims and their families we are getting together with other organizations based in Drexel and Philadelphia to help raise up to 25,000 USD. V.O.I.C.E, Sigma Beta Rho and Pragathi along with others are hosting a Charity Event aptly named Hope, featuring Russell Peters, the famous Canadian of Indian origin and the Hip-Hop and R&B duo, Santalina and Elijah. Anu Kalra of NiteLife radio (89.3 FM) will compere the show and the opening act is a surprise. We suggest you head out on 29th January, 2005 to the impressive Irvine Auditorium, University of Pennsylvania Campus at 4:30 pm to make a difference to the lives of the children and other victims of the Tsunami Disaster. We promise you a subdued but nonetheless entertaining affair. All proceeds from the show will go to Red Cross, the non-profit charity organization.

The regular tickets cost $25 and the best seats in the house are for $45. You can email HopeCharityEvent@hotmail.com or call any of the numbers listed on the website www.princed.com/hope
We hope to see you there!
**Free Trivia:**
The first champagne "coupe" was said to be molded from the bosom of Helen of Troy. The Greeks believed that wine drinking was a sensual experience, and it was only fitting that the most beautiful woman take part in shaping the chalice.

**COMMUNITY PROFILE**
Akhila Venkatachalam has been exposed to dance in various forms in brief stints since childhood. An engineering graduate from BITS, Pilani, one of India's premier institutions, she decided to train in Bharathanatyam intensively after graduation. She did her Arangetram in February 2004 under the guidance of her Guru, Smt Gayatri Subramaniam of the Takshashila Dance Academy in Navi Mumbai. She has been a part of various productions of this dance academy and also assists her Guru in teaching. Trained in Nattuvangam under the great stalwart, Guru Smt. Rajee Narayan she is also interested in modern dance and has been an active member at the Shiamak Dhavar Institute of Performing Arts, India.

She is currently pursuing a Graduate Degree in Dance/Movement Therapy at Drexel University, the essence of which is to use movement analysis and dance in psychotherapy. She intends to take this new approach to psychotherapy back to India and serve in the field of mental health and social work.

"Dance in itself has a therapeutic effect on me. It is the ultimate means of self expression and raises both the dancer and the beholder to a higher level of spiritual consciousness", she says. Extremely driven to make dance a way of life, Akhila wishes to explore the field of Dance Therapy and help people help themselves through dance. She also wishes to continue to grow as a teacher and performer of Bharathanatyam and increase the awareness of this Indian Classical dance form globally.

She can be reached at akhilav@yahoo.com

**Of Supermarkets and Superservice**
Meera Rajappalan is a free-lance reporter with India New England News in Boston.

I went to the Supermarket yesterday. Usually is a dull affair- veggies, milk, juice, then check-out, cart, load, unload, store... that kind of thing. Yesterday though, I decided to be all mod, and asked for paper bags and I got the "What's-wrong-with-plastic-stare". My friend had warned me that they don't like parting with paper bags coz they're more expensive, and so I stared right back. All was going on well, till the woman who was packing my groceries just left mid way, as I was waiting, wondering if she had run out of paper bags or something. She then returned, and asked the cashier to leave for lunch, and took over the register. Leaving my groceries lying there.

Now, I'm the sort of person who rants and raves in private, and swears at my friends, but who hates to make a scene. So I meekly packed my groceries, wondering why this felt so insulting. The girl finally helped me put the last item in my bag, and gave the usual grocery-store-young-cashier "Have a nice day" that sounds more like,"I couldn't care less, you creep." I saw that it was probably time for the cashier girl to go to lunch, but in a country that boasts of such customer service, and consumerism, why could the employees not be trained to be more polite? Even if it meant just informing the customer where she was going, or even that she would be right back. I understand that for young people, this is not their dream job, it is something they are probably taking up out of necessity. That does not justify their avoiding eye contact in the aisles, turning their back when they see a confused shopper, that goes against the very grain of the nature of their job.

Now my friend always goes to the same store, in fact, she has her regular cashiers and all of them are older. And the service she gets is exceptional. They always smile, and she "likes" her grocery store, she said. I thought then, "What does she mean, she likes the store? Just have to get the stuff for the cheapest, right?"

I know better now. Wrong.

Epilogue: Of course, these paper bags had no handles, and so half of them tore on the way to the car trunk, and other half on the way up to the apartment...