

# Samaj Patra

**This Issue:** Spring festival flyer, Membership form with **new lower rates!!**

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## **Message from the President**

New Hampshire Association of Asian Indians (NHAAI) has been serving the Indian community in New Hampshire for the last ten years. The Association is a non-profit organization and organizes educational, social, cultural, and community service activities of interest to its members.

Last year, the Association organized a spring festival at the Catholic Student Center, Durham; a picnic at Elm Brook State Park, Contacook; and Diwali festival at Notre Dame College, Manchester. The tentative schedule for the activities this year is as follows:

1. Spring Festival at the Lions Club, Londonderry - Sunday March 28
2. Independence Day Picnic on Saturday August 14
3. Diwali on Saturday October 16.

In order to encourage children, we are planning to give gifts to the children (high school and under) who would perform in the spring festival. We are also planning to recognize the children of members who will graduate from high school this year by presenting them with gift certificates at the picnic.

Besides, these activities, the Association publishes a newsletter called Samaj Patra and maintains a web site at [pubpages.unh.edu/~ptv/nhaai.html](http://pubpages.unh.edu/~ptv/nhaai.html). The web site contains information about the Association, all the past issues of Samaj Patra, and links to other useful sites.

With effect from this year, we are reducing family membership dues to \$15 and the life membership dues to \$150. The one time payment of life membership dues would exempt you from the payment of any further membership dues. Please return the enclosed renewal form with your dues as soon as possible.

We appreciate your membership in the Association and look forward to your continued participation in the activities of the Association. If you have any suggestions, please feel free to communicate those to any of the members of the Executive Committee.

Thank you very much and have a great year.

Tej Dhakar

## **Association calendar of events**

- **3.28.99 Spring Festival. See Flyer**
- 8. 14. 99 Picnic and General Body Meeting -Place to be announced
- 10.16. 99 Diwali - Manchester (Place and Date Tentative) Future issue of Samaj Patra will carry more details.

## **NHAAI Address**

**We request you to address all your future correspondence to, NHAAI, P.O. Box 3132, Manchester NH 03105.**

## **Contributors to The Dream: The Indian American Story**

by S. Jayasankar, MD

*The following has been adapted from the Keynote Address by S. Jayasankar, MD at the Seventh Annual Asian / Pacific Island Heritage Month celebration in Boston on May 28, 1998. Dr Jayasankar, an orthopaedic surgeon in Boston, is the current AAPI Secretary.*

*Why is the Indian immigration story important?*

Immigration is our nation and India is home to one sixth of the world. Distinct from other parts of Asia, its people have bonds in race, culture and colonial history.

*Where do we come from?*

The largest democracy in the world, secular India is made up of a little under a billion people which is close to four times our population, over 30 languages, 1,600 dialects and multitudes of customs and subcultures. From ancient times, every religion and race has been represented. While Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were born in India, Jews were early settlers. St. Thomas brought Christianity in 52 A.D. Zoroastrians from Persia made India their home. India's Muslim population is the second largest in the world. The ancient to modern synagogues, churches, mosques and temples, often side by side, and the, distinctive practices of each religion yet with an Indian uniqueness, bear witness to the history and vibrancy of this assimilative and brotherly people. With all this diversity, and yes, with a due share of quarrels, there is still an Indianness.

A much emulated peaceful exercise ended British colonialism 50 years ago. Over two centuries of British dominance stifled economic progress but little else. The legacies are the English language and the bureaucracy par excellence. The French invented the term, the British perfected the art and India is the epitome!

*When and why did we start migrating?*

Over the millennia, Indians have, gone across the seas as traders, artisans, laborers and conquerors. More often, traders, explorers and conquerors

came to India. Indians now reside in nearly every part of the world.

The first settlers came to the U.S. with the Indian shipping trade to Salem, Massachusetts in the late 1700s. Some Indians were brought as indentured laborers to the East Coast and Pennsylvania in the 19th century and the freed survivors, as the Salem settlers, assimilated into the local African American community. In 1900, there were 2,050 Asian Indians in the U.S. of whom 500 were traders. This constituted the first phase of immigration.

The second phase of immigration lasted approximately the first 45 years of this century. Let me tell you Jaspal Singh's story. The characters are fictional but the events are based on facts. The British Land Law and the famine of 1899 to 1902 had been harsh on his family's small farm in Jullundur. His uncle Surinder Singh and others served the British India Army. After attending Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, they went to California through Canada. In 1910, at age 16, Jaspal left his teary-eyed bride of six months with the joint family and sailed to Hong Kong where he stayed at the Sikh temple (gurudwara) and sailed on to California. He planned to return in seven years with enough money to redeem the mortgaged family land.

He was lucky not to be among the over 3,400 Indians denied entry at Angel Island, an ironic name for the immigration facility in San Francisco, more aptly known as "the bowl of tears" in contrast to Ellis Island then in New York, now in New Jersey. The anti-Indian riots of Bellingham and Everett 4 years earlier drove Indian lumber workers across the border into an only slightly less hostile Canada. The lumberyards were afraid to hire Indians. Mobs prevented Indians from landing in Alaska. Many Indians had moved on to railroad construction jobs in California. The construction was completed in 1909. Jaspal learned of agricultural jobs in vegetable fields and orchards unwanted by Euro-Americans. As a field hand the work was backbreaking, from 4am - 9pm, all for the daily wage of \$1.20. He lived with other men from Punjab in a tent, with common cooking

and limited facilities. This was his new family.

Twenty Indians managed to enter the U.S. in 1903, 258 in 1904 and 600 in 1906, mostly Sikhs (from the state of Punjab). The discrimination was extreme and the "Great White Wall" impenetrable: violent expulsion and riots, executive and judicial exclusion, defacto exclusion based on the thesis that there is prejudice against them and hence they cannot get jobs while the prejudice was because they got jobs, then legislative exclusion by the "Zone Law" in 1917, deportation for alleged sedition and under neutrality laws, prevention of rooting by "denaturalization" of "white" American wives, loss of land ownership and lease under the 1920 California Alien Land Law (while Americans had special land privileges in India), "denaturalizations" and denial of quotas by the 1924 Immigration Act. Indians were referred to as "the indispensable enemy." Their curtailment increased Mexican migrant labor.

Boston was a far away and different world. Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and others had a keen interest in India. There were performances of plays such as "The Rajah's Daughter." Boston Brahmins were just being born.

Six-thousand four hundred Indians had been admitted during this entire period while 430,000 Chinese, 380,000 Japanese and 150,000 Filipinos had entered the U.S. The Chinese and Japanese immigrant groups faced severe hardship, but many scholars believe that the Indians received by far the most urgent and severe curtailment. When the Asiatic Exclusion League pressed for a federal Indian Exclusion bill as an emergency in 1913 and relented some on the other Asians, a mere 153 Indians had entered the U.S. in the first half of the year. The lack of British India's support for Indian Americans and the lack of Indian American militancy made them the least powerful national group. Three thousand returned to India; 2,405 remained in 1940 and dwindled to 1,500 by 1946. So much of rioting, expulsion, exclusion, derooting, denaturalization and land loss reduced the so few admitted to near extinction!

Jaspal had not saved enough nor could he bring his wife to America. His friend Mool Singh, who became a U.S. citizen along with Jaspal, went home to bring his wife and both of them were barred entry by the 1917 law. Steamships were refusing to take on Indian passengers. Soon his wife died. He saved and bought land with his friends only to lose it under the 1920 California Alien Land Law. In time, Jaspal met an Italian American brunette, Andrea, who looked Indian and they wished to marry. He soon realized that if he married her she would lose her citizenship. He learned of less fortunate Indians who were stripped of citizenship because of being Indian, and at least one of them, Bagai, committed suicide. Later, perhaps, Jaspal married a Mexican woman (as many Indian Americans did) who raised their family as Spanish speaking Catholics leaving little trace.

America needed a trusted population in India to buttress our efforts against Japan in World War II. A small quota for immigration from India was created in 1946 permitting, in the next 18 years, 12,000 Indians into the U.S., constituting a transition phase. Dalip Saund became the first Asian U.S. Congressman in 1956 and served until he had a stroke in 1962.

The Immigration Law PL 89-236 of 1965 allowed Indians to immigrate in numbers equal to other countries starting the Third Phase.

Venkat, a young engineer from Madras came to Boston in 1970 with a dream, leaving behind his wife and one-year-old daughter. He walked the streets looking for a job. He was over-educated and over-qualified, they told him. He then got a job as a foreman by not disclosing that he was an engineer. His wife, with a masters degree, joined him a year later and was willing to take on a clerical job. Their second daughter was born soon. They struggled. Finally, he started work in engineering and she in computer systems. They are a close and loving family. His parents lived with them. The children did their masters in specialized fields and one married a Euro-American. They are involved in Indian cultural activities and do much

for their community. Something attempted something gained, a dream fulfilled!

This Indian immigration in phase three, estimated at 500,000 (half of whom have post graduate degrees while 15% of white Americans have college degrees), is peerless in the history of the U.S. and the world. Indian Americans have demonstrated their propensity for hard work, perseverance, entrepreneurship, high savings, family cohesion, eclecticism in culture and free interplay with other groups. Unparalleled is the brain gain, the cultural gain, the people gain. It is not without sweat and blood, trials and tribulations, achievements and failures. It is a small group, yet an important group. This unprecedented immigration defies history and predictions. No people have brought so much and no country has given them so much.

This diaspora of nearly 1 million includes 26,000 physicians (1 in 20 of all physicians in the U.S.) and dentists excelling in patient care, research and teaching, including many of world-renown right in our backyard in Boston; 40,000 engineers of various kinds, including in Boston, Bose of the Bose speaker fame; 20,000 scientists with Ph.D.s, including Dr. Khorana and the late Dr. Chandrasekhar both Nobel laureates; 2,000 professionals in law and finance; and countless that have dedicated themselves to teaching and research. Nearly half of the group are managers and professionals.

Their willingness to work hard for long hours using all family resources for small margins and to assume risk has let them survive and succeed in the very demanding business of hotels and motels. They own construction, communications, engineering, software, insurance, travel, grocery, restaurant and clothing businesses. The estimated contribution to the GDP is several billion dollars. And during all this they try and give back a little to the community - helping, advising many, role modeling for others; many physicians treating the less fortunate in the institutions - for the retarded, for the mentally ill, the prisons, the center cities and in the rural areas that lack physicians; as-

sisting those that don't speak English; organizing free clinics in Detroit, Chicago and elsewhere; and through medical societies to improve the health and well being of our citizens.

It is natural, at times, for previous immigrants, now the natives, to believe that this group is taking opportunities away from them. Education is crucial to dispel the misgivings. Their high rate of saving and investment creates capital growth, business expansion and increased employment. It is a reasonable estimate that the 1 million diaspora creates direct and spin-off employment for several millions making the national pie ever larger. I just learned that in order to keep the economy humming, we need 65,000 information technology (IT) experts and India is supplying half of that!

Immigrant physicians were much wanted, and today their patients continue to need them and underserved areas depend on them; some in the profession blame the immigrant physician for a perceived surplus. There has been spotty violence from bigotry or perceived threat - e.g. the "dot busters" of New Jersey. On reaching higher levels, many face glass ceilings. The different sounding names and appearances evoke discrimination: e.g. a second generation Indian American born and educated in the U.S. is asked to send in his foreign educational credential verification to supplement his college application! Many second generation Indian Americans face reverse discrimination in college and medical school admission.

The second generation has, by and large, more than met the high expectations of the immigrants. Our offspring have, mostly successfully, overcome the pressures from dual culture, high expectations, feeling and looking different and discrimination. They seek advanced education and skills in a wide variety of fields.

The group's aspirations and prayers are simple: Do your very best and pray that opportunities will be blind to who you are and merit only what you are; cherish your family and the community you live in,

The beauty and strength of our country is in its dreams. Dreams that

we have and dreams that our brothers and sisters bring from distant shores. And the bigger and better dreams that all this makes! And those that came today join hands with those that came yesterday and the day before to make the dreams come true. It is an awesome thought for me as I stand here today that I am a part of this great amalgam and yet somehow distinct!

### ***Diwali Celebrations:***

The NHAAI celebrated the 1998 Annual Diwali festival at Notre Dame College in Manchester, NH on October 10, 1998. The celebrations got off to a grand start with a welcome address by Dr. Tej Dhakar, President of the association. This was followed by scintillating dance performances by students of the Triveni School of Dance in Kuchupudi and Odissi style (choreographed by Nina Gulati) and folk dances by students of the Aangikam Dance Academy of Nashua (choreographed by Jasmine Shah). The highlight of the evening was a spectacular light music performance by Rama Karedla and Friends. Following the entertainment program, a lovely dinner, catered by Gurnam Singh, was served. The program was well attended and all in all, the function was a huge success. We appreciate all those who volunteered to help out. Our sincere thanks to the volunteers, and to the artists who presented a very superior performance. Our special thanks to Master Matta for keeping the audience entertained with his wonderful rendition of the Ramayana.

### ***Humor***

Contributed by Tej Dhakar

A college professor, who was previously a sailor, was very aware that ships are addressed as "she" and "her." He often wondered what gender computers should be addressed. To answer that question, he set up two groups of computer experts. The first was comprised of women, and the second of men. Each group was asked to recommend whether computers should be referred to in the feminine gender, or the masculine gen-

der. They were asked to give 4 reasons for their recommendation.

The group of women reported that the computers should be referred to in the masculine gender because:

In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.

They have a lot of data but are still clueless.

They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they are the problem.

As soon as you commit to one, you realize that, if you had waited a little longer you could have had a better model.

The men, on the other hand concluded that computers should be referred to in the feminine gender because:

No one but the Creator understands their internal logic.

The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.

Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.

As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.

### ***Membership Renewal:***

It's time to renew your membership! For your convenience, a membership renewal form is attached.

The Editor or the Officers of the New Hampshire Association of Asian Indians are not responsible for the views or the authenticity of any of the information in the Samaj Patra. The information is only provided as a service to NHAAI members, and readers are advised to use their discretion and verify all information.



**Annual Picnic Photos from 1998  
Contocook State Park**

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