

<http://www.iamn.org>

IAM is a non-profit organization whose aim is to build a strong and cohesive community of Asian Indians in the state of Minnesota, USA. IAM also seeks to represent the Asian Indian population to the society at large.

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Remaining Events for 2004

Festival of Nations, April 30th-May 2nd at the River Center in downtown St. Paul. IAM operates a food booth that sells Indian Food and also organizes cultural programs and a bazaar featuring Indian artifacts.

Independence Day, August 21st at Snail Lake Park, 12:00pm to 5:00pm. Held in mid-summer to celebrate the Indian Independence Day followed by picnic with food and games.

Festival of India, September 26th at the Landmark Center. This is an annual event held in Fall at the Landmark Center in St. Paul, showcasing music, dances, cultural entertainment programs and food stalls from India.

**** If you are interested in volunteering for any of these events, please contact any of our board members (see Page 8).**

From the President

I would like to thank the volunteers and all of you who attended the IAM Annual Dinner for making it such a successful event. There was much food for thought, generating many discussions in the community. I really appreciated the fact that Rep. Betty McCollum kept her commitment to us despite an invitation to attend an important meeting in Paris. It obviously shows the importance she attaches to our community. She has expressed an interest in working with us when she plans a visit to India. I would further like to thank our keynote speakers: Dipankar Mukerjee and Meena Nataraajan, and Senator Satveer Chaudhary for participating in our program.

Festival of Nations, an event where we have the opportunity to showcase our heritage to the larger Minnesota community, is rapidly approaching. The success of this event depends on your support; over a hundred volunteers are needed to make our participation possible. I hope you'll take this

opportunity to join us at the Festival of Nations either as a helper or an attendee, see details inside. We are also inviting you to join our boat crew at the Dragon Festival in July, where IAM is sponsoring a boat. Please contact Dilip Mallick for details.

Despite the relatively small size of the Indian community in the Twin Cities, we are richly endowed with artistic talent. As many of you may already have heard Ragamala Dance Theater and the Walker Art Center are collaborating on a production of Sethu, based on the Hindu Mythology of Ramayana. The goal of this program is to demonstrate the possibility of building bridges between different cultures, by using art forms from different parts of the world. This theme is very much at the heart of IAM's mission. We are planning to work closely with the producers of this program to ensure the support of our community for this event. More information inside.

One of our main goals this

year is to increase IAM membership. Again, you can help. We would encourage all of you to renew your membership if it has expired or is about to expire. Also, please become the ambassadors for the organization, by telling your friends about IAM, especially those new to the Twin Cities. We are always looking for input from our members to improve on what we do. Could you please take a few minutes to complete and return the survey on the IAM website.

- Rabinder Bains

Join our Book Club!

IAM is starting a book club for interested individuals. Please indicate your interest by emailing book-club@iamn.org with your name, phone number and email address to be included in updates about the book club activity. Check www.iamn.org for more details.

Policy Roundtable History & Highlights

In 1999 a small group of Asian Americans in Minnesota met and decided they would start a policy-oriented alliance to bring more visibility to issues important to the community. That meeting gave birth to The Policy Roundtable, now in its fifth year. From the start, IAM members have been involved in this important Pan Asian alliance: Bruce Corrie and Bhupat Desai were among the Roundtable's co-founders, and its current Executive Council (which is comprised of representatives from various Asian ethnic associations and organizations) includes Dilip Mallick, Ananth Shankar and Sarjit Bains, in addition to Corrie, who serves as its Chair.

In its short life, the Roundtable has played a key role in elevating the profile of Asians in Minnesota, giving them a cohesive and strong community voice. The monthly policy forums it hosts are geared to promote discussions within the Asian community about important issues, as well as to allow the community to share its perspectives with the larger Minnesota community. Past topics include the Asian community's unique health care needs, the voting power of youth, culturally competent housing, the need for more Asian American judges, per-

spectives on the Leave No Child Behind Act, and discussions with major political party leaders to encourage Asian American political involvement.

The Roundtable also has mobilized community responses to and involvement in the current events of the day. During the post 9/11 backlash against immigrants and minorities, the Roundtable partnered with other interested parties to host a forum broadcast on public television calling for more responsible anti terrorist policies that go beyond ethnic profiling. Earlier in its history, the Roundtable went to Governor Ventura and sought his support on legislation that would provide special consideration for citizenship to Hmong Veterans. The governor championed this legislation in a special meeting with Congressional leaders that was featured in national media, and with the ardent support of the late Congressman Bruce Vento and the late Senator Paul Wellstone, it was enacted.

The Roundtable also was one of the few Asian American organizations around the country to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minnesota district office

of the United States Small Business Administration to increase loan and technical assistance outreach to Asian American entrepreneurs.

Additionally, throughout its history, the Roundtable has increased Asian community access to and influence on state government by hosting meetings with various political leaders and candidates.

Currently, the Roundtable is pioneering a survey of the political participation of Asian Americans in Minnesota found at www.policyroundtable.org.

These are just a few ways in which the Roundtable, simply by bringing together the energy and involvement of Asian Minnesotans, has helped to elevate the role and influence of the entire Asian American community in Minnesota. Its continued ability to do so depends on you. For more information about the Roundtable's activities and how you can get involved, visit its website (www.policyroundtable.org) or contact Bruce Corrie at corrie@policyroundtable.org.

Ragamala Music and Dance Theater and the Walker Art Center announce *Sethu (Bridge)*

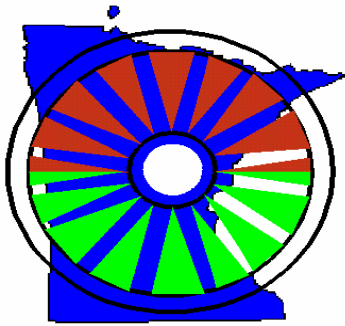
A groundbreaking global collaborative work,
to be performed in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden,
September 11th and 12th, 2004,
as part of the *Walker Without Walls* series

Sethu combines South Indian Bharatanatyam dance and Kecak, the strikingly powerful vocal tradition of Bali, to create a stunning new telling of the Indian epic *Ramayana*. This spectacular collaboration between Raneer Ramaswamy and Bali-based Kecak artist I Dewa Putu Berata, working in partnership with choreographer/dancer Aparna Ramaswamy, Carnatic (South Indian classical) composer/vocalist Nirmala Rajasekar, and Javanese Gamelan musician Joko Sutrisno, will feature ten Ragamala dancers accompanied by a Carnatic orchestra, the 25-member Schubert Club Gamelan ensemble, and a locally-recruited 70-member Kecak chorus.

The Walker and Ragamala are looking for male vocalists and/or musicians to participate in the Kecak chorus. For more information, please contact Ragamala at 612-824-1968 or emily@ragamala.net, or visit Ragamala's website at www.ragamala.net

Ragamala Music and Dance Theater is a non-profit organization, which relies on community support in order to present exciting, innovative works like *Sethu*. **Ragamala seeks tax deductible contributions and corporate sponsorships for this project.**

To make a contribution, or to place an advertisement in the program, please contact Aparna Ramaswamy at 612-824-1968 or aparna@ragamala.net



Travel the World without a Passport at the

2004 Festival of Nations

April 29 - May 2

RiverCenter Downtown St. Paul

Tickets

Advance Tickets will be available in March 2004 at all Byerly's locations and International Institute of Minnesota (located on Como Ave. across from State Fairgrounds)

Adults \$8.00 Youth \$6.00

During the Festival (at Byerly's and RiverCentre)

Adults \$10.00 Youth \$6.00

Children under age five admitted free when accompanied by parent or guardian.



Dear Community Members,

Festival of Nations begins on Thursday, 29 April 2004 and runs thru Sunday, 2 May 2004. As mentioned in our previous Newsletter, IAM is representing India at this event. We need your support and active participation to present ourselves in a very professional and successful way.

We are sponsoring a bazaar selling Indian Jewelry, clothing and artifacts, and a café serving Indian food catered from an outside vendor. IAM is also presenting a total of four cultural programs, two each by adults and children and setting up an exhibit booth displaying various celebrations in India, to coordinate with this year's theme – 'Ethnic Celebrations'. A lot of effort is already being put into organizing these activities.

We need at least about one hundred volunteers to work on various shifts with these different programs, during the FON. All volunteers will be provided a free entry pass and a complimentary food coupon in appreciation of their voluntary services, redeemable at the India café. You can choose to volunteer at any of our locations and time convenient to suit your tastes and time. For more details on available time and location opportunities please contact any one of the board members, whose phone numbers are available either on this newsletter or on the IAM web site at www.iamn.org.

If you have any specific questions regarding the Festival of Nations and/or volunteer opportunities please contact Ramesh Muniswamy at (651) 994-8015. If you would like to use email for your communication please send your emails to secretary@iamn.org. Those of you, who are not able to volunteer, please try to at least visit the FON and stop by the Indian stalls as a token of your support.

Thank you all for your continued support of IAM and look forward to seeing many more of you at the Festival of Nations.

Thank you,

Ramesh Muniswamy

The India Association of Minnesota (IAM) held its Annual Dinner at the Radisson Hotel, Roseville, on February 15th, with over 100 people in attendance. The Chief Guest was Minnesota 4th District Congresswoman Betty McCollum, who spoke on "US and International Relations in the 21st Century". The Special Invitee for the evening, State Senator Satveer Chaudhary, presented a report on the 'Parvasi Bhartiya Divas Celebrations' held in New Delhi in January. The evening was rounded out with a Keynote Speech from Pangea World Theater (www.pangeaworldtheater.org) founders, Dipankar Mukherjee & Meena Natarajan, speaking about 'Art as a Reflection of Life.' Mr. Mukherjee also received the 2004 IAM Individual Achievement Award. Current IAM Board Member, Ramona Advani, served as MC for the event.

To begin the program, 2004 IAM President Rabinder Bains addressed the attendees, outlining how IAM's role and its opportunities for serving the Indian community have grown and evolved in its thirty plus years of existence. Previewing the evening's agenda, Ms. Bains remarked, "Social change can be created in a number of ways—through the political process; through the arts; and through community involvement".

Chief Guest, Rep. McCollum, who sits on the House International Relations Committee, then spoke about current U.S. international policies. "We live in an interconnected and interdependent world – we need the rest of the world and the world needs us...Foreign policy is not a distraction from our domestic agenda, it must be an extension of our policies, beliefs and values here at home," she said. She was critical of the war in Iraq and the lack of administration planning for its aftermath, sharing the comments of a young U.S. soldier in Iraq who told her, 'Ma'am, I want to do my best,



Photo: Chief Guest Congresswoman Betty McCollum and IAM President Rabinder Bains at dinner

here but I don't know if I'm a soldier, a policeman or a humanitarian worker."

Rep. McCollum also spoke on the importance of the U.S. response to the AIDS pandemic: "Our global strategy and significant investments in this battle to save lives are not only the right thing to do for humanity, [they are] in our nation's best interest, and if we meet our commitments and fulfill our promises, it is an opportunity for America to reclaim our mantle of trusted leader in the eyes of the world." She noted that India has the second-largest population of people infected by the AIDS virus (nearly five and a half million), and that scientists point to India, China and Russia as the countries next in line for an AIDS catastrophe unless something is done.

Following McCollum, State Senator Satveer Chaudhary provided his impressions of India after his recent participation in a gathering of Indian expatriates in New Delhi. With the exception of the political sphere, Chaudhary had praise for the pace of change taking place in India, reflected by cell phones and internet access becoming parts of everyday life. Chaudhary also commented on outsourcing, criticising state political leaders who he felt were using inflammatory and prejudicial language in addressing the issue, thereby raising anti-immigrant sentiments, particularly against



Photo: Special Invitee State Sen. Satveer Chowdhary enjoying dinner with his wife Dee

Indians. Chaudhary expressed that the issue of jobs for Minnesotans should be addressed through policies for job creation in the state, and he encouraged those present to share concerns about the issue with their own elected representatives.

The evening then swung from reflections upon policy to insights into the human spirit with Keynote Speakers, Dipankar Mukherjee and Meena Natarajan. Illustrating that the strength of human spirit prevails in real life as much as it does in mythology, Natarajan recounted a recent experience of hearing the first-hand

accounts of Korean 'comfort women', kept as sex slaves by Japanese troops in World War II. The now-elderly women had survived the atrocities committed against them by tapping into deep wells of inner strength, often found through art—music, stories, song—and had gone on to live lives of dignity, fighting to rectify the injustices they had suffered. Natarajan left the audience with the thought that the stage, and art generally, can serve to reconstruct unity from the fragments of human experience.



Photo: Keynote Speaker Meena Natarajan of Pangea World Theater

Dipankar Mukherjee's portion of the keynote address began with different individuals reading short poems on the themes of hope and optimism in their native tongues—Tamil, Malayalam, Urdu and Hindi—providing a



Photo: Keynote Speaker Dipankar Mukherjee of Pangea World Theater

glimpse of both the universality and diversity that is India. Mukherjee offered that art should not be just a reflection of life as it is, but should also strive to represent what life could be, that essential to art is the freedom to dream and to allow space for the unplanned and the spontaneous. On an individual level, Mukherjee challenged everyone to retain the idealism that we often leave behind in childhood for fear of being labeled naïve – an idealism that he felt was in short supply, and yet so needed in current times.

Madras on Rainy Days — Book Review

A Novel by Samina Ali

In her debut novel, Madras on Rainy Days, Samina Ali joins a new genre of authors giving voice to the experiences and perspectives of second generation Indian Americans. Through the story of Layla, a young Muslim woman brought up both in Hyderabad and Minnesota, Ali breathes life into the complex questions familiar to anyone straddling the worlds of India and America:

How do I reconcile the conflicting values with which I have been raised? Where do I belong? Must I choose between my duty to family, to heritage and my personal happiness?

Layla's confusion over who she is and what should determine her life comes to a head when her family arranges her marriage to Samir, a young Muslim man raised in Hyderabad. Feeling that any other decision will mean the sacrifice of family and a betrayal of all the cultural and religious values that define her, Layla opts to accept the marriage and with it, the life of a traditional Muslim wife. But her life in America has left her with a secret that haunts her in ways she cannot escape, and even as she finds surprising comfort and promise in her new life, her desperation to hide the truths that threaten it grows.

As the tale unravels, Ali reveals that Layla is not the only one tempted to tread the path of deception when truth proves painful. Masterfully weaving together the secrets and lies of all the characters, Ali's novel ultimately tells a tale that transcends any particular religion, culture, or gender—she tells of how the human yearning for acceptance can lead any of us to give up truly living life in favor of playing a role.

Madras on Rainy Days is an impressive first novel. Ali demonstrates the sensibilities of a poet in her writing. Setting the story against the backdrop of monsoon season, Ali artfully uses the weather to set the cadence of Layla's story. From the suffocating stillness of the pre-rain air through the steady rains that build to a crescendo of darkness and torrential downpours, and finally, to their gradual retreat, we go with

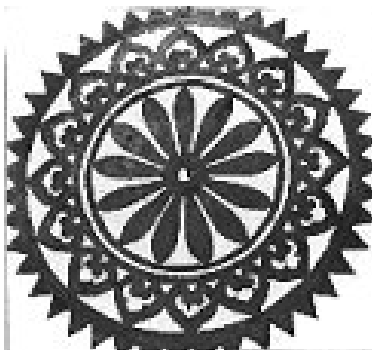
Layla to the places where truth and lies swirl about, and some lives are ultimately washed away, while others are washed clean. Although Ali's character development lacks the depth and intricacy of the issues she brings out or the stories she weaves, her lyrical writing brings the tale to life, and by the end of the book, we feel we have weathered the monsoon of Layla's journey with her.

While its context makes this a particularly appealing book for second generation Indian American women, Madras on Rainy Days is an enjoyable read for anyone who appreciates good writing and a skillful story.

- Ramona Advani

Author Biography

Samina Ali was born in Hyderabad, India, and raised both in India and the US. She received her MFA from the University of Oregon. Madras on Rainy Days is her debut novel.



Mayo Clinic Diabetes Study

People of Indian origin in the United States have extremely high prevalence of Type 2 diabetes. The complications associated with Type 2 diabetes include heart, eye and kidney diseases and the mortality rate is high. Recently the Mayo Clinic has received funding from CDC to understand the genetic basis for this. They are conducting a study and need the following people:

Asian Indian men and women with adult onset diabetes (Ages 40-75 years) are needed for a study on diabetes. One overnight stay at the General Clinical Research Center at Saint Mary's Hospital will be required. The study will involve blood sampling and one needle muscle biopsy. Remuneration is offered.

Healthy Asian Indian men and women ages 40-75 are also needed for a study on diabetes. Participants cannot have any grandparents, brothers, sisters or children with Type 2 diabetes. One overnight stay at the General Clinical Research Center at Saint Mary's Hospital will be required. The study will involve blood sampling and one needle muscle biopsy. Remuneration is offered.

Please contact Dr. Raghavakaimal (507-255-0898) if interested.

Quotations

Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress - Mahatma Gandhi

To enjoy the things we ought and to hate the things we ought has the greatest bearing on excellence of character - Aristotle

Everything that I understand, I understand only because I love - Leo Tolstoy

IAM Survey Form

Dear Friend of IAM,

Your feedback is important to us. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey to help us make the IAM Newsletter of more interest to you. You may keep your response anonymous, if you prefer.

Please mark the boxes in each category that best describe you:

My gender is: Male Female

My age group is: <21 21 - 30 31 - 50 51 - 65 >65

I was born in: India USA Other _____
Specify

I have lived in the U.S. for: less than 5 yrs 5 to 10 yrs 10 to 15 yrs more than 15 yrs

I have lived in Minnesota for: less than 5 yrs 5 to 10 yrs 10 to 15 yrs more than 15 yrs

I am: of Indian origin Other _____
Specify

I currently am: married single (including never married, divorced, widowed)

I have children: yes no

I have: current IAM membership past IAM membership never been an IAM member

Please give us some feedback on the IAM Newsletter and what you would like to see:

Do you currently receive the newsletter in the mail? Yes No

Do you have access to e-mail? Yes No

If yes, would you be willing to receive the newsletter via e-mail? Yes No

If yes, please provide your e-mail address _____

Please mark the top four types of pieces you would like to see in the newsletter (or write them in) below:

- Information about IAM activities
- Information about Indian community events
- Youth contributions (essays, poetry, news, etc.)
- Profiles of individuals in the community
- Book reviews
- Informative pieces about issues of general interest written by knowledgeable community members
- Other _____

More Comments?

Please share with us any other ideas or feedback you have about the newsletter.

Please mail your form to: India Association of Minnesota
P.O. Box 130158
St. Paul, MN 55113

IAM Membership Application/Renewal Form

1. NEW RENEWAL

2. Today's Date: _____

3. Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

4. Last Name of Spouse _____ First Name _____

5. Street Address _____ City _____

_____ State _____ Zip _____

6. Phone : _____ Fax : _____

7. E-Mail Address : _____

8 Profession/Business : _____ (Optional)

9. Children living with you :

Name _____ DOB _____ Name _____ DOB _____

Name _____ DOB _____ Name _____ DOB _____

10. Membership Type : Check One

Individual (\$15.00- 1 Year)

Family (\$20.00 - 1 Year, \$40.00 - 3 Years, \$200.00 - Life)

11. Yes ! I want to be an active member. Please contact me for the following activities

Community Service Festival of India Newsletter Speaker's Bureau Host Family Program

Festival of Nations Youth Activities Web Page History Project 55+ Club

Asian Indian Women's Association

Please mail your form to: India Association of Minnesota

P.O. Box 130158

St. Paul, MN 55113

Volunteer at the Soup Kitchen

As part of the community outreach program, IAM volunteers serve a meal at the House of Charity's Food Center, the last Sunday of every month. The dates for this year are: May 30, June 27, July 25, August 29, Sept 26, Oct 31, Nov 28, and Dec 26.

The soup kitchen has a "no questions asked" philosophy—they serve anyone who walks in and is in need of food. The food center is located in Minneapolis downtown, at 714 Park Avenue S. If you like to know more about this organization, please check out their website at: www.houseofcharity.org.

Due to cutbacks, they are serving only one meal--a brunch. We need an average of four members each month from 9:00 am to 11:30 a.m. The job involves the simple act of serving food with a cheerful disposition—no food preparation or clean up work is needed!

If you like to volunteer, please call Preeti Mathur at 651-483-0793 or send her an email at p_mathur@att.net.

INDIA ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA
P.O. BOX 130158
ST. PAUL, MN 55113

Phone: 651-735-4322
e-mail: president@iamn.org
<http://www.iamn.org>

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Hatim Carim	(651)-736-1638
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Newsletter Committee for 2004

*Ramona Advani, Shalini Thadani
and Sanghamitra Sahu*

Indian and Other Businesses

If you are interested in advertising in the upcoming Issues of the Newsletter for '2004, please contact any of the following on the Newsletter sub-committee members by July 15, 2004:

Ramona Advani (612)-825-6632
Shalini Thadani (651)-734-0645
Sanghamitra Sahu (763)-593-1403

Cost of advertising are as follows:

Business Card Size: \$50/issue
Half Page: \$150/issue
Full Page: \$300/issue

Note: Our next two issues get published in July and October.

2004 Dragon Festival and Boat Race CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

<http://www.dragonfestival.org>

Venue: Lake Phalen and Phalen Park, St. Paul.
Date: July 17th- July 18th 2004

For more information, please contact
Dilip Mallick: (763)-546-9393

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