

"It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way." *Dr Arnold Toynbee, British Historian.*



The India Link

Monthly Newsletter



Issue 5: March & April 2010

<http://www.india-link.org>

Grand Rapids, Michigan

From the Editor's Desk

The India Link Holi Baisakhi function came to a successful conclusion on March 27th. There is much to be said about the quality of entertainment and the cultural fulfillment that the program provided. Unquestionably, a large fleet of motivated organizers and talented artists, with Smita Chandra at the helm, dedicated countless hours of their lives to make the function as lively and as enjoyable as it was. Program details are covered at some length elsewhere in this newsletter. My focus in this piece would be to map out how far India Link has traversed along the strategic path it opted for itself when President Makkar took the reins last year.

As a starter, let's begin with genuine, cordial congratulations to the India Link Board headed by Mr. Makkar, that swung in action with remarkable panache and energy, overcoming the year-long inertia, and returning the pink health slip to India Link. Mr. Makkar has indicated that he will work for reinstatement of the celebrations of Diwali - our signature annual program - in October. Should that happen, this Board can justly claim to be the most active - ever!

Second, hefty accolades are due to the India Link Board members who recognized the apathy and lukewarm nature of participation from many of the key constituencies of Indian subcontinent, and worked actively to bring them into India Link fold. Not only was the 450+ audience unprecedented in size, it hailed in good part from many communities which were actively courted to re-join in the India Link activities. On a gratifying note, the inclusivity efforts extended successfully beyond Asian-Indians; the audience included Americans, Hispanics, Chinese, Koreans, Indonesians, Filipinos, and Japanese! The relish of this will linger long in minds of those who sought to expand India Link's scope and philosophy to global levels.

Third, Mr. Makkar's yeoman service that added significant funds from new patrons deserves a special mention. He was on a mission - it would seem - to bring home the treasure that India Link will badly need as it evolves into a fuller role of a social-cultural organization.

Much is done - both strategically and financially - and sure deserves commendation. However, this momentum, if not capitalized timely, will wither rapidly, given India Link's history. In my next editorial, I will articulate my vision of where we go from here - after due consultations with Mr. Makkar and Prasadji - whose visions and actions have brought great success to India Link's outreach efforts. Stay Tuned! ashok.ak.kumar@gmail.com

HOLI-BAISAKHI FUNCTION ATTRACTS DIVERSE CROWD IN RECORD NUMBERS ...

Phew!!! Into the wee hours of Sunday morning, many of the India Link Board members, program organizers, participants, and members of audience at large were still chatting animatedly, analyzing ardously, and heaving sighs of relief as they congratulated each other for a job well done!

Indeed, the program was a success on many fronts, and the lion's share of the credit goes to the vision, diligence and industriousness of the person at the helm: Smita Chandra. When asked for comments, she was characteristically polite to pass on the credit to the team that worked with her to shape the event into an entertainment bonanza.

The all-volunteer program was a huge undertaking. It consisted of 20 artistically and creatively crafted dance and music items and involved some 120 participants and organizers. Whereas the artistic acumen lurked in abundance in each and every item of the program, the unscientific exit poll of sorts indicated, not surprisingly, that some items were liked more than others.

At the top rung of the entertainment value ladder was *Aaja Nach Le* - a Giddha dance that is the cultural hallmark of the state of Punjab. Fourteen homey ladies and dedicated moms, representing a great range of age-demographics, displayed tremendous talent and electric footwork as they moved, one by one, in graceful rhythmic steps to the fore of the stage while lip-singing their piece that conveyed a pithy message. The word of Giddha songs are written with great flair to engage the audience; often satirizing the excesses committed by husbands and in-laws, loneliness of a young bride, injustice of society, or just an innocent pure love for a handsome country lad. The program kept audience enthralled till the very end, constantly provoking screams and whistles of delight.

The *Resham Ka Rumal* dance set to the mischievous lyrics "*Resham Ka Rumal Gale Mein Daal Tu Aa Jaana*," was another entertainment feast that thrilled the audience enormously and excited them enough to sing along and tap their feet on the beat. The credit goes to the seasoned performers who are well known in Indian circles for their graceful and elegant performances over the years.

The fusion dance - *Prem Ki Naiyya* - put together by a group of highly talented kids required special skills to bring together and merge seamlessly the eastern and western dance steps while still maintaining integrity, continuity and



elegance. The item reflected, beyond the expertise of the performers and choreographer, a willingness to bring diverse cultures and arts into a seamless merger. Great job, guys, need to see more of those!!

The Grand Valley State University students - Divya and Ramya - created a niche in audience's hearts through a superbly choreographed dance number *Jiya se Jiya* (Heart to Heart) that beautifully blended several Bollywood popular songs and enthralled the audience for its rhythmic appeal and graceful movements. *Rang Laayi Holi*, a group dance from Uttar Pradesh, befitting the occasion snugly, showcased the colorful "Holi" atmosphere - people greeting friends and families and strangers by throwing colors at each other - and delighted the spectators profoundly.

Enjoyed perhaps by precious few but an item of enormous stature, was the classical music *Jugalbandi* - an arch *de triumph* of Indian music - set in raga Marwa. The uniquely talented Mithlesh Mishra on Sitar was accompanied on Tabla by Pita ji (father of Bhai Bajit Singh ji, deferentially called so by everyone). Marwa is characterized by absence of Panchnam (and has intense ma), which makes it difficult to maintain high tempo. Those who know and enjoy Indian classical music, this item will be etched in minds for long. It was divine!

Other items that were source of much pleasure to the audience included: *Tarana*, displaying remarkable limb movements in classical Kathak dance style (set to raga Hameer); "Fusion" of instrumental music that merged eastern, western and other genres of music without impairing the continuity of sur or taal; *Bharatadaa Jana* a song reflecting the message of Indian unity; and dance items Barso Re Megha, Hum to Hain Aandhi, and Dhan Te Nan, each with its own different theme.

As with all huge projects, the program was not without flaws. Time control and smooth flow of presentations were commonly cited as "lessons" for the future. Also, notably, the food was started while the program was only half way ... causing a mild exodus from the auditorium. But, in the end these flaws dwarfed against the overall impact of the program that was enormously positive.

The ultimate highlight of the program was the size and the mix of the audience. There were an unprecedented 450 plus people who hailed from various cultures and countries. The audience of American, Hispanic, and Asian origin complemented the audience from Indian sub-continent. Kudos, Organizers!!



LOCAL NEWS

Bing Goei, Launches Campaign for Michigan State Representative in the First Asian Gala ...

Bing Goei, owner of Eastern Floral, a well-known business- and community-leader of Indonesian origin and winner of Amazing Asian Award conferred by Asian Center, commenced his campaign in earnest to seek the office of the State of Michigan Representative from 75th district. While the exploratory efforts were afoot for a while, his intent to seek the office became official during the first Asian Gala organized collaboratively by Asian Health Outreach Foundation (AHOF) and Asian Pacific Organization (APO) on March 11th, 2010. The gala was attended by numerous political, social and community leaders and luminaries; including Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Korean, Indonesian, Japanese, as well as Americans and Hispanics. Key note address was given by Doug DeVos, CEO of Amway, who praised Asian businesses for their innovation, cost-effectiveness and responsiveness traits.

Nisha and Chad Get Blissfully Engaged ...

Nisha, the daughter of Kamlesh and Kalpana Shastri and Chad, son of Anthony and Susan Bertucci got engaged on April 3rd amidst a lot of hustle and bustle, and a torrent of best wishes and blessings from near and dear ones. The newsletter wishes the young couple a happy and joyous married life that lasts till eternity!



India Link Courting Progressively Greater Visibility in Grand Rapids...

In his brief comments to WZZM 13 news, Mr. Suresh Bhargava, exhorted more and more Americans to join India Link celebrations and enjoy the richness of Indian cultural fabric as well as her culinary delicacies. The program was also notable for the presence of non-Indian gentry that included Hispanics and Americans as well as people from China, S. Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and Philippines. Indeed, the Filipino Cultural Group attendance underscored the growing intrigue and popularity of Indian culture. (www.wzzm13.com/video/default.aspx?bctid=74300675001)

In other significant developments, Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Center is soliciting a display of a special "Diwali-Exhibit" as part of their esteemed "Christmas and Holiday Traditions Around the World Exhibition" for 2010. Also, South Haven Center for the Arts have requested India Link to help them with their Colors of India project that aims at teaching the school children about Indian cultural high points: dances, sitar (a string instrument), and Henna (a

Cheesee Time!

Leaving Montreal for Quebec, I decided to make a stop at one of those rest areas on the side of the road. As I entered the washroom, the first stall was taken so I went into the second stall. I had barely sat down, that I heard a voice from the next stall...

"Hi there! How is it going?"
I'm not the type to strike up conversations with strangers in washrooms on the side of the road. I didn't know what to do so finally I say: "Not bad..."

The voice says: "So, what are you doing?"
Talk about your dumb questions. I am starting to find this a bit weird, but I say: "Well, as soon as I finish here in the bathroom, I'm going back east..."

Then I hear the person say, all flustered: "Look honey, I'll call you back, every time I ask you a question - this idiot in the next stall answers me!"

COMMUNITY SERVICE CALLS, AND TRIVIA

"GRACE" WALK FOR A NOBLE CAUSE ...

33rd GRACE HUNGER WALK

- Saturday, May 1st
- Registration Opens: 8 a.m.
- Venue: 1st Methodist Church, 207 E. Fulton
- Walk begins at 8:30 a.m.
- Free refreshments & Staff
- Call 616-301-3987 for info.
- E-mail: Centera@gvsu.edu

With the singular exception of "Vidya Daan (Donation of Knowledge)", there is no donation nobler than "Anna Daan (donation of food)", so say the wise ones in India. This year the global hunger is more severe than ever. According to a September 2009 U.N. report, over a billion people will go hungry this year - a record of dubious distinction - which marks the worst starvation level in 20 years.

We are therefore urging you, your friends and families to participate in the Grace Hunger Walk.

Asian Center is collaborating with 16 other organizations in organizing this walk. In addition to contacting Asian Center, you are welcome to e-mail Douglas Chung, chungd@gvsu.edu or me (ashok.ak.kumar@gmail.com) for further information. Once at the Church, please go directly to Asian Center desk. All participants will be served free refreshments and given reusable grocery bag. In addition, T-shirts will be available for \$5. Please visit www.graceoffice.org/hw/ for scenic routes of 5K and 12K.



- Saturday, April 24th
- Registration Begins: 8 a.m.
- Venue: Rosa Parks Circle
- Walk begins at 9 a.m.

Making Strides is not a race; it is a celebration of survivorship, an occasion to express hope, and a shared goal to end a disease that threatens the lives of so many people we love.

Please Join us for a few hours of exercise, inspiration, camaraderie, entertainment, and most importantly, to honor someone you know who has been affected by breast cancer especially if that person is you! No amount of donation is too small ... please consider! Contact: Kanvinder@yahoo.com

Editor's Puzzle

Five men (say, A, B, C, D, and E) and a monkey are stranded on Coconut Island. All go to sleep and decide to divide a huge lot of coconuts among them in the morning. The first man (A) gets up in the middle of the night, gives a coconut to monkey who is not asleep and watching, takes his share of 1/5th coconuts, leaves the remaining coconuts and goes back to sleep. This process is exactly repeated by the remaining four men, B, C, D, and E in succession. Finally, all five men get up and divide the remaining coconuts evenly with nothing left. At the minimum, how many coconuts were there to begin with (Award: \$5 + certificate). Can you develop the series that gives all solutions to this problem (Award \$15+ certificate). Email your solutions to ashok.ak.kumar@gmail.com. First three correct solutions will be awarded and names published in next newsletter. Last date to enter: April 30, 2009

SOLUTION TO LAST MONTH'S Editor's Trivia: Logical Puzzle

1	1	36
1	2	18
1	3	12
1	4	9
1	6	6
2	2	9
2	3	6
3	3	4

Hearty congratulations to: Urbano Da Gama and Rajesh Nagpal for sending perfect solutions. Answer: Ages of children are 9, 2, and 2 years. Solution: Possible combinations of 3 numbers whose product is 36 are shown on the left. In each case the sum of 3 numbers is different except for 2, 2, 9 and 1, 6, 6. (Sum is 13 in both cases, which triggers the statement: "I still cannot figure out!") Once wife tells that the eldest daughter is sleeping upstairs, 9, 2, 2 is the only possibility.

