



India Association of Minnesota:
Association Records

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JAGADISH R. DESAI, JD, CLU

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Beginning of the India Association of Minnesota (formerly known as the India Club)

The early Indians came to Minnesota in late 1950s as students at the University of Minnesota and were joined later on in the 1960s by more students and other professionals who came here for work but had studied elsewhere in the United States. The prevailing sense among the Indians at that time was that after a certain work experience they would return to India and that their stay here was indefinitely temporary. The only social and cultural life revolved around the University of Minnesota through the Indo-American Club which celebrated all the important Indian holidays and brought Indian movies that were big hits. In early 1970s a few Indians had already decided that they were going to settle down in the U. S. and they wanted an organization that would help them integrate into the American society as U. S. residents and not as students. They wanted an organization that would relate to the larger non-student world in Minnesota; an organization that would pass on the best of the Indian culture to the Minnesotans and vice a versa. There were many regional groups such as the Gujarati Samaj, etc., but there never was anything where Indians of all backgrounds felt at home. People were looking for a non religious and non sectarian organization. The International Institute of Minnesota had considerable experience in helping Minnesotans of various nationality backgrounds to organize and they offered their assistance to help this new group of immigrants. Thus the India Club of Minnesota was born and incorporated in late 1973.

The declared purpose of the India Club was "to promote the welfare of our India-born population and their families; to preserve and stimulate nationality and cultural values; to provide services to our India-born population, our newer citizenry, their families, and in the way of general education for citizenship; and specifically to carry on immigrant welfare work in co-operation with the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, and to assist such India-born population, our newer citizenry, their families, in their relationship with welfare and health facilities afforded by the community." The founding officers were:

Jagadish Desai, President
K. Suresh Nayak, Vice President
F. F. Zdenek, Secretary
Madhukar Gupta, Treasurer

The members of the first Board of Directors were:

Dr. V. Premanand, Mr. Robert Hoyle, Mrs. Bash Singh, Mr. Sy Mody, Prof. V. C. Varadachari, Dr. Shyamla Rajender, Dr. Raj Dutt, and Mr. Anil Bhatnagar.

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Some of the early activities of the India Club included:

- Established an India booth at the Festivals of Nations in St. Paul, and participated in the Minneapolis Aquatennial.
- Organized welcome functions for visiting Indian Ambassadors and coordinated their visits with various local businesses with actual or potential interests in India; 3M, Cargill, International Multifoods, etc.
- Worked with the local Director of Immigration to help resolve immigration problems pertaining to Indians. (I got a call once from the local Immigration Office that some 50 or more Indians were stranded at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport and were going to be sent back because they were on their way, illegally, to Winnipeg, Canada and Canada had refused entry. On a short notice I rounded up a few local Indians, we visited them at the airport and consoled them before they left for India.)
- Worked with the foreign student advisors of many local colleges (U of M, Hamline, Macalester, etc.) and provided financial help to the needy Indian students. Even arranged for the funeral of a couple who unfortunately died here.
- Arranged speakers on India for many educational, cultural, and social organizations throughout the Twin Cities.
- Established very good connections with the local radio, TV, and newspapers to promote news or events of Indian interests.
- Provided assistance to Indians who were stranded here and did not know English. We had a call from a Christian minister in Duluth that an Indian sailor had been abandoned in the Duluth hospital by his employer, an Indian Steam Navigation Company. The sailor was from Western India, spoke no English and nobody knew just exactly what was wrong with him. Two of us, Ramesh Mehta and myself, drove to St. Mary's Hospital in Duluth and helped the sailor and the hospital staff to communicate with one another. We read the mail from his family, the mail that had followed him from India. Unfortunately he died shortly thereafter and we helped arrange for his funeral and repatriation of his remains to his family.
- Promoted many cultural programs, including one by the famous Kathak Dancer Briju Maharaj and Company.
- Conducted classes to teach Indian heritage to the children of both Indians and non Indians.

JULY 10, 1997

- Helped the Kerlan Collection Library of the University of Minnesota with books on India.

I am enclosing the first letter head of the India Club with its original logo.

I am very proud of the present leaders of the India Association; they have carried out not only the original purpose but have also expanded it to include the U. S. born children of the India-born people. Wish you all a continued success in your effort to improve the quality of the life of the India-born Minnesotans, their friends and their families.

Jagadish Desai

July 10, 1997

INDIA ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA

India Association of Minnesota (IAM) formerly India Club Inc. was incorporated in 1973 by seven (7) incorporators led by Mr. Jagdish Desai.

We do not have any written records of its activities, its membership roster, its financial accounts or its activities or newsletter since its inception in 1973 to 1982.

In a historical meeting at International Institute of Minnesota during 1982, approximately 30 Indian community members decided to revitalize the India Club organization, rather than its dissolution or its merger with the School of India for Languages and Culture (SILC) which has similar cultural and educational goals. It was felt that India Club and SILC can work together in many areas of their activities with broader mission of India Club to interface with all Indian community groups and local communities at large.

First two (2) years (1983-1984), serving as Vice President with President Mr. Zednec of the revived organization were challenging in establishing procedures, programs, membership, committees, funds, etc. However with everyone's enthusiasm and hard dedicated work, we accomplished a lot. Some highlights, as I recall are:

- Participation at Festival Of Nations with more than 150 volunteers in various events like Café, Bazaar, Exhibits, and Cultural Programs.
- Developed partnership with SILC for preparing Exhibits and Cultural Programs.
- Organized first "India Day" at St. Anthony High School in 1983.
- Worked with City of Minneapolis and St. Paul to declare October 2, 1984 as "Mahatma Gandhi Day".
- Developed relationship with congressman Bruce Vento and Twin Cities Mayors.
- Arrange Mira Nayer's reception on her first visit to the Twin Cities.
- Sponsored Indira Gandhi memorial meeting at International Institute.
- Revised By-laws of India Club to streamline functioning of India Club.
- Held annual election meetings and worked with an independent Nominating Committee to bring talented/devoted members of the diverse community to the Board every year.

Reflecting back 20 years (1983-2003), IAM has done excellent job in achieving its main goal of interfacing Indian Community with community at large for Indian values, culture, tradition, customs and history. Many hearty congratulations and thanks to all the individuals and organizations who have contributed their time, talent and resources for IAM's progress.

I am sure and hope that IAM would reach to the highest excellence in future years fulfilling its mission. I am so honored to serve IAM, Indian community and broader community at large.

Thank you
Neena Gada

Zke Steneh →

Jagdish Desai^o
(wrote a history)

(Ramnili Shah
Treasurer)

Zelke

(Ram + Neera Gada)

F. F. Steneh
~~ZeleneK~~

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1-513-489-1223

Gandhi's - b'day Centennial

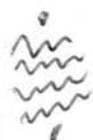
- India Day - 1st - Salem School

- Moved into Landmark Center

- Festival of Nations

952-220-2908

Paddu Arimilli
P-mathur.



Vipin Gopal

Satya Kumar

• Ramnili Shah. 636-9833

• Stephan Shah ✓

• Premnand - 952-884-1310

• Jacob Chemichil - 763? - 767-9357 (1993)

• Nayana Ramakrishna 631-8622

• Rajani Patankar.