



October 2010 Newsletter

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About Us

The Indo-American Heritage Museum promotes understanding of the diversity, history, and culture of Indians living in America. We are dedicated to increasing awareness and appreciation of our rich cultural heritage and showcasing our outstanding contributions to the building of America.

[Click here to learn more...](#)

Help Support IAHM

As the holiday season approaches, please consider IAHM in your thoughts during this time of giving. We are committed to continuing our legacy of hosting quality events, offering innovative programs and forging crucial alliances which will benefit our community for generations to come. Your support can help make this long-term vision a reality.

Best of all, giving a gift is easy, quick and safe. [Please click here to donate.](#) Your contribution is

Dear Friends,

IAHM is proud of its achievements in the year 2010. The spring of this year saw our first fundraising event 'Spring into Comedy' that brought us the recognition needed to further inspire our mission. Our summer was filled with programs and activities in association with the Chicago Cultural Alliance and the Field Museum. We had the opportunity to participate along with other ethnic museums in various meaningful programs that defined 'Climate Change' in our community. We also launched the first special exhibit in our virtual gallery, 'The Right to Liberty,' on India's Independence movement in the US. In the autumn of 2010, we presented a play 'Salaam India' that traveled from New Delhi, India to Chicago, Illinois.

Today, IAHM has made good progress and is a healthy and vibrant organization. For this we thank our dedicated Board members and the community. Your support has led us to new and exciting ventures. We received our first corporate grant and are in the process of gradually building our funding resources, so that we achieve financial stability. This funding is essential for us to launch new galleries, set up programs, and improve our infrastructure. The Chicago Cultural Alliance has provided invaluable support with grant writing, education and funding assistance. We are thankful for their partnership and look forward to continuing our role as a core member of the Alliance.

While we are on a great start, we realize that our

greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Introducing IAHM's New Feature:

SPOTLIGHT ON



Photo Courtesy of the MacArthur Foundation

Nergis Mavalvala, MIT Professor of Physics, who won a MacArthur Fellowship award for 2010. Commonly known as the "genius grant," the fellowship awards recipients with a \$500,000 grant to use as they wish.

Professor Mavalvala's research focuses on detecting gravitational waves created by collisions of stars. "Everything we know about the universe, both nearby and distant, comes from measuring light," said Mavalvala. "Gravitational waves are another messenger. Being able to look into the universe with that completely new tool, we should learn new and enormously interesting things."

Members of the Parsi community across America celebrated news of the recognition. Nergis Mavalvala, 42, was born and raised in Karachi

success is dependent on our community's support, time and talent. We urge all of you to join us in our efforts, to get involved in our work and take an active role in telling our story. It will help us to showcase the outstanding contribution this community is making to the building of America. As the season of giving approaches, we also request that you keep us in mind for your year-end charitable donations. Your support is crucial. It will ensure that this infant organization will thrive and preserve our legacy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Jagriti Ruparel

IAHM President

IAHM Launches "The Right to Liberty"



Did you know Indians living in the United States were actively involved in India's freedom struggle?

To celebrate the 63rd anniversary of India's independence, the Indo-American Heritage Museum proudly presented the first special exhibit in our virtual galleries - a salute to our forerunners living in the United States in the early years of the 20th century who shared the dream of an independent India.

IAHM was honored when former Consul General of India, Mr. Ashok Kumar Attri, formally launched our new exhibit on August 14, 2010, expressing his interest in IAHM's projects and offering abiding support for the museum's mission and long-term development. Visit the "[The Right to Liberty](#)" and meet student activists on the run

and is believed to be the first American of Parsi origin to receive the award. The long list of "genius grant" recipients with ties to the South Asian American community includes Ved Mehta, A.K. Ramanujan, Ayesha Jalal, Vamsi Mootha, Atul Gawande, L. Mahadevan and many more in a variety of fields in the arts and sciences.

Quick Links

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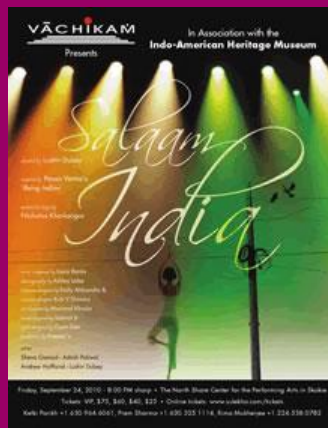


from the British, revolutionaries who set sail from California to liberate India, and moderates who successfully mobilized public opinion in the quest for India's freedom. Informative supplements and additional resources encourage gallery visitors to further explore one of the lesser known chapters about India's freedom struggle in the United States.

Do you know anyone or any place with connections to the Indian freedom struggle? [Send us their story](#). Add a photo with a detailed caption if you can. We may post it on our website for everyone to share!

Also visit our website at www.iahmuseum.org and explore facets of Indian immigration and history through selected photographs and artifacts donated by community members.

IAHM Presents "Salaam India!"



In association with *Vachikam*, IAHM was thrilled to present the play "Salaam India" at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts on September 24, 2010. Inspired by Pavan Varma's book "Being Indian," the production delighted audience members, who were

treated to an exclusive presentation of a show which has received rave reviews and filled many theaters across India.

Directed by veteran actress *Lushin Dubey*, and with music composed by *Louiz Banks*, the play infused theatrical drama with comedy and enrapturing dance performances as four actors and eight dancers collaborated to portray sixteen different characters. Arranged in four-part vignettes, the play presents several compelling stories about contemporary life in India, exploring

various pressing subjects from regional strife and dowry disputes to the progress of technology in a traditional society. In one humorous anecdote, characters in the play hotly debated what the national dish of India should be, only to agree that no one dish can represent India's vast diversity! The outcome was a charming, smartly crafted story which took a lighthearted approach to the contradictions, joy, humor, hope and aspirations in the lives of these unique characters.

While the play was widely advertised as an "English language" production, the Hindi portions of the dialogue made some content inaccessible to our audience. We apologize for this unintended discrepancy and express sincere thanks to all of those who attended the evening's performance. Please be assured that a significant portion of these proceeds were donated to benefit IAHM's mission.

"Talking About....Identity"

As a core member of the Chicago Cultural Alliance (CCA) IAHM was proud to participate this summer in the "Talking About...Identity" program. In this two-part public discussion series, members of Chicago's ethnic communities discussed contemporary issues through the lens of their cultural heritage and experiences. For the first event on July 10, 2010, IAHM collaborated with the Cambodian American Heritage (CAHM) and the Field Museum to bring together nearly 60 volunteers from diverse backgrounds in a vivid discussion about ethnic, cultural and personal identity inspired by the Field Museum's recent exhibit *Kip Fulbeck: Part Asian, 100% Hapa*, which prompts visitors to explore the question "*How do you identify yourself?*"

This innovative session was followed on August 1, 2010 by an internal community dialogue at the Levy Senior Center in Evanston. IAHM assembled an inter-generational group of

participants to share their experiences on immigration and discuss its impact on their lives, in particular their decision to remain in the United States and the implications of this choice for the South Asian community at large.

"Environmentally Friendly Communities..."

As eco-friendly awareness develops, it is important for individual communities to remain sensitive to the threats that excessive waste can pose to our environment. This was the focus of the "Environmentally Friendly Communities" program, a joint initiative developed by the Chicago Cultural Alliance (CCA) and the Division of Environment, Culture and Conservation (ECCo) at the Field Museum. The program engaged core ethnic museums 'to elicit community narratives about heritage-related values and practices that can be revived, reinvented, validated, and encouraged to help communities become more sustainable.'

This summer, IAHM was proud to contribute to the project by developing an agenda to support eco-friendly action and long-term change in the local community. Through the dedicated efforts of board members and volunteers, IAHM organized a series of storytelling workshops to develop a portrait of their ethnic community's unique approach to sustainable activity, which included brainstorming original suggestions to promote 'greener' business practices on Devon Avenue. As part of this objective, IAHM is designing and distributing cloth tote bags to local area vendors this fall to encourage consumers to avoid plastic shopping bags and actively conserve the environment in the process.

IAHM's fascinating collection of eco-friendly stories and those of other museums is currently available on the ECCo Project website, "Telling Our Stories: Creating Green Communities." You can also view several of our storytelling workshops captured on video at

<http://chicagostories.wordpress.com/>.

IAHM Hosts Workshop for CPS Teachers



This June, IAHM hosted a special Ethnic Dialogue and neighborhood tour of Devon Avenue for twenty-four Chicago Public School educators to raise awareness about the Asian Indian community and its rich cultural heritage. From

questions about the significance of wearing a *bindi* (red dot) in the middle of one's forehead, to observing similarities between traditional ethnic clothing across diverse societies, participants had an opportunity to cultivate inter-cultural understanding through first-hand encounters with the immigrant community.

IAHM volunteers Lakshmi Menon and Dorothea Shah

co-hosted the workshop at the Indo-American Center, greeting guests with a traditional "Namaste" and organizing a guided discussion in which they answered teachers' enthusiastic questions about Indian cultural traditions. As part of the activities, participants had the opportunity to receive beautiful, complimentary henna tattoos by a professional artist as well as an interactive demonstration of yoga, which concluded the session. This was followed by a tour of the commercial district on Devon Avenue and lunch at the India Garden restaurant, during which the educators expressed immense gratitude at being offered such a unique opportunity to meaningfully engage with the local community. This landmark event was recently featured on National Public Radio in an exclusive report by Lynette Kalsnes; please visit the following link to listen to the broadcast:

<http://www.wbez.org/Content.aspx?audioID=42943>.

On behalf of IAHM, we would like to wish the community a wonderful holiday season ahead, and to thank you once again for your kind support and commitment. We hope to complement this year's achievements with more exciting events, projects and programs in 2011. You can stay posted on the latest information by visiting www.iahmuseum.org or become a fan and find us on [Facebook](#). Come join us!