

October 2006

Volume 4

Issue 3



# Sandesh

**The Message : A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley**

## ***From Editors' Desk***

Dear Readers,

Each year the October issue of *Sandesh* is dedicated to the theme of upcoming annual IndUS banquet. The theme of IndUS-2006 is *Next Destination: Incredible India* and we hope that the articles in this issue will intrigue and perhaps inspire you to make the journey to India yourself. The lack of space prevents us to cover many other interesting and important aspects of tourism, but we are sure that at the event you will find the exhibits and the presentations informative and the banquet and the cultural program enriching.

We are very interested in your feedback and would love to hear from you on this issue of *Sandesh* and its articles.

*Sandesh*

**An IndUS of Fox Valley**

**Publication**

**Editors**

Dr. Badri Varma

Ms. Manjari Chatterji

Mr. Dnyanesh Patkar

Mr. C. Shekar Rao

Dr. Sandhya Sridhar

**Advisor**

Dr. B. S. Sridhar

*The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Editors and IndUS of Fox Valley*

## **Kerala: Anomalous State?**

*By Dr. Mohan Vishwanathan*

The taste and aroma of the fresh lime juice with a hint of cardamom linger in your mouth. The sumptuous and unusually tasty airline food served by one of the youngest airline crew that you would ever see almost lulls you into a nap. But by then the plane would have started its descent into one of the two major airports in Kerala. Look out the window and you will be mesmerized by the green canopy of coconut trees and the unending strip of white sandy shoreline that Columbus had originally intended to reach. If it is between November and February, apart from a few businessmen and government ministers in the executive class, the plane would be filled with vacationing Indian families and foreigners wanting to experience the cleverly named "God's Own Country." You get off the plane into the blazing sun and the moist breeze makes it pleasant. Your bags arrive by the time you get accustomed to the air-conditioned surroundings. You step out into the midst of taxi drivers, hotel agents, and anxious relatives greeting their loved ones on a visit from the Middle East, Europe, or the US.

From the insulated, air-conditioned SUV, taking you to the hotel close to the city, you watch the roads getting increasingly crowded. There is a good chance that the tame elephant being led to work in a lumber yard strolling along the road would steal your attention. At first, you may not notice the swirling dust, the smoking three-wheeled autorikshaws, the stray dogs, or the occasional lazy cow that blend in with the throngs waiting for buses, the pedestrians who seem to restrain the slow moving small automobiles around them just with a tiny flick of their wrists without any eye-contact with the drivers. A Toyota Corolla would seem enormous in the midst

of the tiny Marutis, Tata Indicas, and Hyundai Santros that crowd the streets. The small State of Kerala, that has about a tenth of the US population, is one of the biggest markets for automobiles in India. It is mainly a consumer society. Food, as well as most of the manual labor, comes to Kerala from elsewhere in India. Kerala's largest global export is the educated masses it produces in the myriad of institutions.

By now the friendly driver would have started-up a conversation with you. Don't be surprised if he knows the American President's latest Gallup poll rating, or the name of the newly elected Democratic governor of Virginia, or that Tony Blair has decided to step down next year. Keralites have a voracious appetite for information from the developed regions around the globe. This is partly due to the high number of Keralites working outside the country and partly driven by comparisons made by authors such as Bill McKibben: "Kerala is a bizarre anomaly among developing nations, a place that offers real hope for the future of the Third World. Consider: This small state in India, though not much larger than Maryland, has a population as big as California's and a per capita annual income of less than \$300. But its infant mortality rate is low, its literacy rate among the highest on Earth, and its birthrate below America's and falling faster. Kerala's citizens live nearly as long as Americans or Europeans. Though mostly a land of paddy-covered plains, statistically Kerala stands out as the Mount Everest of social development; there's truly no place like it." Tour guides will tell you that this is the region with the oldest Jewish settlement in the world outside Israel, and about its long history of trade with the Chinese, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Spaniards, and

the English. Perhaps this is the reason why Keralites make comparisons about their living standard to that in the rest of the world rather than to other parts of India. During your stay in Kerala, you will be told that this is the land of the world renowned film director, Adoor Gopalakrishnan. Repeated references would be made to Al Gore and his book that pointed to Kerala as a model of environment-friendly development, and to National Geographic Traveler magazine that named Kerala along with Hawaiian Islands and Greek Islands as one of the “50 places of a lifetime” to visit.

Tourism has definitely taken a strong economic hold on Kerala. The whole State seems to embrace tourism as the salvation to a better economic future. If you can afford it, try to stick to hotel chains such as the Taj or the Leela Kempinski in Kovalam beach near Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city. You can take idyllic tours through the many waterways that crisscross the middle of the State on house boats that resemble floating hotel rooms, accompanied by your own cook and a “captain” and his assistant. From your floating balcony you could watch the laid back village life. Don’t be surprised if you are not a floating spectacle anymore. Along the river bank the women will be busy washing their clothes with Tide or bathing their kids with Dove soap.

Almost all the hotels catering to the tourists would have an Ayurvedic treatment center. What follows is an excerpt from Patricia Leigh Brown’s fun to read article on this latest trend (In the Land of

Four-Star Asceticism; New York Times, August 13, 2006). “Ayurvedic doctors like Dr. Sreelatha diagnose illnesses and imbalances through darsana, observing the way a person moves, walks and behaves; sparsana, touching; and prasna, interrogating. The big idea of ayurveda, said to have divine origin, is that health is a state of balance between body, mind and consciousness. Its sister discipline is yoga, which, before it became an industry, was also a science dating back to the Vedic period. One’s constitution is said to be composed of three doshas — vata (air), pitta (fire) and kapha (water) — encoded in every cell. Initial treatment includes a prescribed diet (supplemented with herbs both ingested and applied), yoga, meditation and massages to prepare the body for elimination of agni, or waste. Pancha karma, a specialty of Kerala and no stroll through the park, includes a stamina-challenging sequence of enemas. “We are not treating part by part and organ by organ,” Dr. Sreelatha explained kindly. “We consider the body and soul.”

If you want to experience Kerala from the common man’s perspective, take a bus ride on one of the buses operated by Kerala State Road Transport Corporation. You would notice that roads are getting widened at many strategic places to accommodate the growing number of automobiles. The sights and smells from such a trip would be worth it. Women still sit secluded in seats meant for them in these buses. You will be surprised that some temples in the State do not allow women devotees. You may not be told that women do not feel safe enough to

travel alone after dark anymore in this part of the world, which had women doctors and judges much before women gained the right to vote in the United States. You also may not be told that ministers in three of the most recent successive ministries in the State had to resign as a result of allegations of sexual harassment.

If you have not yet read Arundhati Roy’s Booker Prize-winning novel “God of Small Things,” read it before your visit. Even if you have read it once, read it again on your way as it would help you to understand the psyche of the Kerala society. Stay long enough in Kerala and you will come to realize that exaltations of religious harmony in the State are merely superficial. The society and its major institutions are still structured mostly along caste and religion. It might come as a shock that rather than resisting such a trend, the present generation seems to accept it. According to M.G. Radhakrishnan, the Special Correspondent for a major national news magazine, India Today, in college campuses youngsters these days check the caste and religion even before falling in love!

Kerala is indeed a “bizarre anomaly.”

*Mohan is a Scientist working for the National Institutes of Health. He lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland with his wife, Mary. Both of them have been away from their native Kerala for more than 30 years. Along with their two grown children, Smitha and Anand, they visit Kerala as often as they can. Mohan's interests include South Asian fiction, serious films and photography. He can be contacted at mohan.viswanathan@yahoo.com*

## Is this your country, uncle?

*By Scott Peeples*

During my five weeks in India, as soon as I concluded that I knew something about the people or the workings of society, a new situation would present itself that changed my perceptions. In one city, we were greeted by Rotarians who spoke little English and served us fresh coconut milk, straight from the coconut. In another city, we were greeted with bottles of beer, loud rock ‘n roll music and obnoxious hugs from the

semi-drunken revelers. In a third, we were given flower garlands and a Hindu blessing of red *kumkum* powder on our foreheads.

To understand India, I’ve been told, you must be able to hold on to completely contradictory images and realize that both represent the true India.

India has been called one of the poorest nations in the world, but a couple homes

I stayed in rival the most opulent of homes of the United States. India has been lauded for its higher education, which has produced young adults on the cutting edge of the information and technology industry, yet these same young intellectuals hire construction crews who carry bricks on their heads and wear sandals or go barefoot.

To understand India, you need to deal

with the image of piles of garbage on the street next to a jewelry store selling \$25,000 crowns and necklaces; cars sharing space with cows, mini-taxis (auto rickshaws) and motorcycles carrying families of five. A devout Hindu man may begin his day with a solemn puja ritual to Ganesh, the remover of all obstacles, then drive to work with his hand on the horn, honking whenever a vehicle, cow or pedestrian comes anywhere in his path.

India, with a population of 1.08 billion people, is the largest democracy in the world, enchanting and mystic, colorful and musical, overflowing with goodwill and hospitality to strangers, brimming with optimism and alive with new opportunities on the world stage. But, in many households, women are second class citizens who don't come to the table to eat until after they have cleared their husband's plates.

Real India is *deep* and *rich* as the Arabian Sea or the miles upon miles of tea fields that cover the Nilgiris Hills in south India. It is also as *shallow* and *poor* as the 800 million people who earn less than \$2 a day. India is as strong as a thundering elephant and as meek as the thousands of hunched female street sweepers, who lack even the benefit of a full size broom.

###

As a tourist, one can travel all over the world without gaining a real affinity for the people. Rotary International's Group Study Exchange Program, which brought me to India for five weeks earlier this year, is a deeply profound effort to go beyond superficial understanding and create lasting ties that change the lives of both the visitors and the hosts.

My trip was a celebration of dozens of life-affirming moments. We climbed mountains, swam in the Arabian Sea, experienced Aryurvedic massage, visited a factory that made mattresses stuffed with coconut husks, ate paan and mango pickles, visited a leprosy clinic, held infants at an orphanage and, at every turn, witnessed extreme poverty that engulfs India today, often right alongside the opulence.

But more than anything else, I looked forward to visiting schools in India and ended up having wonderful interactions at a half dozen schools in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. I learned that children love to learn, but the curriculum is rigid and they feel pressure because of the impact of each exam on their future in an overcrowded, highly competitive society. Students rose to their feet to greet me and asked insightful questions. On several occasions, it was exciting to see their good humor shine through their extremely polite and formal exteriors. One boy gave me his pen as a token of appreciation for me reading to his class. At another school, two young girls sang me "The Lullaby for Lord Krishna."

My fondest visual memory of India is seeing thousands of students, every day, walking to and from school in their bright, matching uniforms. And so I set a goal of reaching out to young people whenever possible. But I wasn't prepared for my very first school visit eight days into our trip.

On the way to a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, our hosts decided to make a quick stop at a large school in the city of Avinasi. It was a Muslim holiday, so many schools were not in session at all. Other schools, like this one, were having a "sports day" – their label for a more relaxed day apart from the rigidity of book and blackboard learning and recitation. Squeezing out of a small van and shaking off the effects of another long stretch of bumpy road, the five of us walked onto an outdoor stage flanked by 1,000 male students on one side and 1,000 female students on the other.

The mere sight of so many students watching us approach was daunting and inspiring at the same time. As we were treated to a few dance performances by students, Dennis Rader, our Rotary GSE team leader, whispered to me asking if I would say a few words to the students.

Simply saying, "hello, we're glad to be here," wasn't good enough, I thought. I gathered some thoughts in my head and walked to the microphone.

Maybe I was emboldened by the shirt I

was wearing: a funky Indian shirt I had just purchased with the sacred word "Om" stitched on it.

For the next several minutes, I sang and taught them the song (with accompanying sign language) - "Love Grows," made popular by children's singer Tom Pease. I messed it up a couple times, but two thousand Tamil speaking children still thought I was some sort of rock star. As we left shortly after the song concluded, I was ecstatic to have hundreds of students come over and shake my hand. Over and over, they politely asked me my name. I was tempted to say "Bono" but I simply answered "Scott". Their beaming smiles followed me all the way back to the van.

I walked away newly inspired to do what I could to bring happiness to the children I met. But clearly it was the children in India who brought me joy, whether they knew it or not

###

"*Is This Your Country, Uncle?*" Soft words, steeped in innocent admiration from a seven year old girl, shook me from the haze of another busy day in the southern city of Erode, Tamil Nadu. We were walking the streets of a quiet, middle class neighborhood to look at elaborate chalk drawings that women and their older daughters had drawn on their front walks and driveways. The brilliant, circular drawings -- called Kollam -- combined reds, browns, yellows, blues and greens -- all on a base of cow dung. Meticulously painted, the drawings would wash away when the monsoon came, but on this day, they were a source of pride for women not accustomed to the presence of curious Americans.

"*Is this Your Country, Uncle?*" -- the young girl held up a small, United States flag pin I had given her without much thought a few minutes earlier. Uncle, she called me. A title of respect that Indian children use for adults. I had heard this before, but somehow it pulled at my heart strings this time. I felt like I was really part of her family. In 30 minutes, we would be off to another destination and I'd never see her again, but as we

walked side by side, it was as if I walked in my own neighborhood.

We stopped to offer our praises, to take pictures, to share greetings of “Namaste” and “Happy Pongal” with families who emerged from their homes; our new friends.

The art show was finished now. Still wearing the flower garlands we were greeted with when we started the day, we prepared for another group picture – one of many “snaps” we would take every day in India. Still moved by the soft words of my young friend, I lifted my



Pongal festival Photo by Scott Peeples

flower garland from my own neck and placed it around hers, just in time for the snap of the camera.

“Is this your country, uncle?” she asked. Yes, the United States is my country, but, on that day in India, we were neighbors walking the streets together and that what mattered.

*Scott Peeples lives in Appleton with his wife, Mary, and their daughters Jenna and Maria. While he holds a degree in journalism, he is coordinator of the YMCA Afterschool Learning Center at Horizons School in Appleton. A founding member of Toward Community: Unity In Diversity, his passion for diversity led him to apply for a Rotary International sponsored trip to India, January 2 to Feb. 4 of this year.*

## Reflections on India:

### Impressions of the Culture, Cuisine and Customs of My Father's Homeland

By Rachel Manek

After 20 years, I wasn't sure what to expect on my latest trip to India. This was my fourth visit to my father's native country. The first time I went was inside my mother's womb. I don't remember that one. I went again at 7. I remember mosquito netting around the beds, cows walking down the middle of the road and getting dressed in a beautiful silk sari. The next time was in high school. I have more vivid memories of that trip, and I wondered how much had changed in 20-some years. What I found out is that a lot has changed, and a lot has not.

The cows are still there in the middle of a busy intersection in Bombay, which is now officially known as Mumbai. But you also notice cell phones and satellite dishes and women wearing western-style clothing. There are more high-rise buildings now, but the poor still live in shacks right next door.

I don't remember television from earlier trips, but the channels are now full of Indian TV shows and movies. Hello Bollywood! (Check out “Bride and Prejudice,” one of my favorites, at your local video store.) You can also get your fill of “Seinfeld,” “Friends,” “Oprah” and just about every American reality show.

The food is still fabulous. And this time, I actually ate it. I guess I just had to develop a taste for the cuisine, and I cer-

tainly got my fill. There's nothing like a fresh mango smoothie first thing in the morning! Except maybe my aunt's chai tea in the afternoon.

Here at home, my wonderful husband does all the cooking. In India, at least at my aunt's house, the women do the cooking, cleaning and serving. I remember being very disturbed by that when I was a teenager. I couldn't believe the women had to wait to eat until the men and guests were finished. That's still happening, but it is part of their culture and traditions.

I traveled to India with my brother, sister and her infant daughter. We went for my youngest cousin's wedding. Yes, it was an arranged marriage, and the two were engaged three weeks after meeting. Well, the arrangement seems to be a great one because the two acted like newlyweds in love the whole time we were there.



Rachel with her sister, dressed for her cousin's wedding

The bride wore red and blue. Other than that, the wedding was

quite similar to an American service. There was music, food and a receiving line. However, when you invite a thousand people, that receiving line can go on forever! Did I mention it was hot? Especially in our beautifully sequined saris. But getting ready for the reception was nothing compared to what my new cousin Jalpa went through to get ready for the wedding ceremony a week earlier. It took nine hours and four people to create the elaborate henna tattoos on her body known as Mendhi.

I am so glad I made this trip. It helped me appreciate and understand my Indian heritage, and it gave me a connection to my Indian family. It was beautiful, inspiring and delicious and something I can't wait to share with my husband and daughter.

[Reproduced with permission from “Women” - A magazine for and about women of North East Wisconsin]

*Rachel Manek is news anchor of morning news program, Good Day Wisconsin at FOX11. In her spare time, she likes to travel and she has been all over the world, including Sweden, Italy and India where she has family. She also enjoys books, movies, and a lot of TV! Rachel is married to John, a videographer at Fox 11. They are the proud parents of a daughter, Isabella.*

## Medical Tourism in India - Are you ready for it?

By Dr. Radhika Raj

Medical tourism is providing a cost effective private medical care option in collaboration with the tourism industry for patients needing surgery and other special care. In the past, many people from developed countries have come to India for the rejuvenation promised by yoga and ayurvedic massage, but few would have considered it a destination for heart surgery or hip replacement. Increasing number of patients are adversely impacted by the skyrocketing health care costs in the US. There are growing waiting lists for elective procedures in UK and Canada. As a result, they seek out cost effective options in India, Thailand, Singapore and several other destinations around the world. Lured by cheaper care overseas, payers are increasingly offering patients the option to go outside the United States for certain procedures and have overseas hospitals and physicians in their preferred provider organization<sup>1</sup>. Some employers like Blue Ridge Paper Products based in North Carolina are paying for the travel expenses and employee bonus of up to \$10,000 for going to India<sup>1,2</sup>.



Medical tourists usually get a package deal that includes flights, hotels, treatment and often a post-operative

vacation at a total cost of a quarter or sometimes a tenth of the cost in the US. For example, a coronary artery bypass surgery costs roughly \$6,500 at Apollo Hospital in India, while surveys show the average cost in California is \$60,400<sup>1</sup>. Cosmetic surgery, dental services and joint replacements savings are even greater. The range of services provided compare with the Western health systems. Cost conscious and

overburdened health systems in the Western world and Middle East are also directly contracting with organizations in India to provide services in a timely manner at a fraction of the cost.

Several Indian corporate hospitals are on par with Western hospitals in view of the high level of expertise of medical professionals, being staffed by physicians trained at major medical centers in the US and Europe. They are backed by the fast improving equipment and nursing, and have accreditation to the Joint Commission International<sup>1</sup> (which mirrors the US hospital accreditation process) and affiliation to the National Health Services in UK and Canada and to prestigious organizations like Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic and John Hopkins University in the US. They are out to achieve a reputation for excellence and sell the idea that they do not have to scrimp on medical quality to get a lower price<sup>1</sup>.

Leading centers are the Apollo Hospital Group, Hinduja Hospitals, B.M. Birla Heart Research Center, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Taj Hospitals, Wockhardt Hospitals, just to name a few.

Apollo Hospitals has 37 hospitals with about 7000 beds besides working as a subcontractor for Britain's National Health Services<sup>3</sup> and provides overnight computer and Radiology services for US insurance companies and hospitals and participates in drug studies for major pharmaceutical companies.

In 2005 alone 150,000 medical tourists received care in India and this is growing by 30% this year and is forecast to become a \$2.3 billion business for India by 2012<sup>3</sup>. However this is still a very small percentage of the total health expenditure in the US and is predicted not to make a dent into the US health industry since it is forcing the major public and private payers in the US to create a better health care delivery system to avoid falling short in

international value benchmarking. In the last two years, international news coverage of India's major private hospitals program has been upbeat and confidence-inspiring<sup>5</sup>.

For the medical value-travelers who are looking for services that insurance companies won't pay for and for employers and third-party payers who are looking for a magic bullet to reduce costs by 80%<sup>1</sup>, the medical tourism industry in India is opening its doors. India is promoting the "high-tech healing" of its private healthcare sector as a tourist attraction<sup>4</sup>. India is becoming "a global health destination"<sup>4</sup> and it is high time we are ready for it!

### References:

1. *American Medical News*; September 18, 2006, Volume 49, Number 35, Page 16-17
2. *TIME*; May 29, 2006, Page 44-47
3. *CBC News Online*; June 18, 2004
4. *The Financial Times*; July 2, 2003
5. *CBC News -60 Minutes*; September 4, 2005.

*Dr. Radhika Raj is a Board Certified Internal Medicine specialist practising in Neenah, Wisconsin. Prior to that, she practised as a Cardiac Anesthesiologist in a major referral hospital in India. She has a passion for medicine and all forms of art.*

- Over 1,50,000 medical tourists came to India last year.
- According to top hospitals 10% of all patients are foreigners.
- Most sought treatments: cardiac care, spinal surgery, joint replacement, cosmetic surgery, dental work.
- Ayurvedic tourism earned Kerala \$1.33 billion last year. 1,45,000 foreigners tried out ayurvedic treatment.

- From Outlook: The weekly Newsmagazine, Feb. 13, 2006

## Pilgrimage & Spiritual Centers in India

By Kumar Rau

### The Journey

The concept of pilgrimage has a long history in India and can be traced back more than 6,000 years. Throughout the millennia, people have sought solace by visiting specific places known for their spiritual qualities. The spiritual qualities of these places were sometimes attributed to legends or actual instances of prayers and meditations performed by saints or divine beings living in these places. In other instances, they were memorials for saints or places considered sacred due to natural formations that resembled sacred objects. In some cases it was due to uniqueness of a location, one example of a sacred location is the confluence of rivers, long considered holy by Hindus.

India's 6000 year old history, its diversity of faiths and its unique land formations have resulted in a wide variety of centers of pilgrimage. All major faiths in India have their own pilgrimages and the faithful strive to visit them all. Their journey may take them to north to the heights of Himalayas or to the central plains or the southern coasts of India. Pilgrims often face an arduous journey mixed with a sense of excitement, and ultimately it is their faith that carries them to their revered destinations.

Interestingly, some sites of pilgrimage do not restrict access to their own specific faiths. As a secular country, one can see followers of diverse faiths amicably undertaking pilgrimage, all the while respecting observances of other religions. In some shrines with reputation for healing powers people of different faiths come together to offer their prayers.

The religions of India are many and there are countless places of pilgrimage considered holy by each faith. Any attempt to describe these treasures and capture their spirit is bound to fall short. However, following is an admittedly modest attempt to provide a few glimpses of popular sites of pilgrimage.

### Hinduism

*Varanasi* - Also known as Kashi, is the oldest living city in the world. Kashi, located on the banks of the sacred river Ganga (Ganges), is the ultimate destination of all Hindu pilgrims. The word 'Kashi' originated from the word 'Kas' which means to shine and is mentioned in scriptures over 5,000 years old.

Kashi Vishwanath Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and has been a living embodiment of timeless Indian cultural traditions and their highest spiritual values. The temple has been a place of pilgrimage for India's great saints, including Adi Shankaracharya, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Goswami Tulsidas, Gurunanak and many other great luminaries.

*Vaishno Devi* - The shrine of Vaishno Devi is one of the most visited pilgrim sites in India and requires an 8 mile hike in order to reach it. Situated at a height of 5,300 ft., the site is located inside a cave in a hill in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In the cave there are images of three goddesses namely, the Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati.

*Badrinath/Kedarnath*- Considered two of the holiest of the four important shrines in Garhwal. Located in the Himalayas, Badrinath is at an altitude of 10,000 feet situated on the bank of Alaknanda River and between the two mountains Nara and Narayan. The shrine is dedicated to Vishnu, the preserver and is considered an essential pilgrimage site for many Hindus. Kedarnath is situated in the Uttar Kashi district of the northern state of Uttaranchal at an elevation of more than 10,000 feet. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, famous for its exquisite architecture, the temple is said to be more than a 1,000 years old and is built of extremely large, heavy and evenly cut gray slabs of stones.

*Tirupati Balaji* - The ancient and sacred temple of Sri Venkateswara is located on the seventh peak, Venkatachala (Venkata

Hill) of the Tirupati Hills, and lies on the southern banks of Sri Swami Pushkarini, in state of Andhra Pradesh. The temple of Sri Venkateswara has acquired unique sanctity in Indian religious lore and the benefits acquired by a pilgrimage to Venkatachala are mentioned in the Rig Veda and Asthadasa Puranas, Indian scriptures that date back thousands of years.

### Buddhism

*Bodh Gaya* - This is where Prince Gautama attained enlightenment under the sacred Asvatta tree (Bodhi tree) and became known as Lord Budha. This is one of the four most sacred pilgrimage places for the Buddhists. Bodh Gaya is located about 280 miles west of Calcutta.

*Sarnath* - Gautama Buddha gave his first sermon to five disciples in Sarnath. Only 6 miles from Varanasi, a visitor will first see Chaukhandi was built to mark the place. In Sarnath you will find the Dharmek Stupa, which is considered to be the sacred place where the voice of Buddhism was first heard. Many dignitaries of Buddhist countries visit this place for circumambulation of this sacred stupa and to worship the Buddha.

*Kushinagar*- Near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, is the place where Lord Buddha stayed last and entered into Nirvana. In Kushinagar, you will find the Mahaparinirvana Temple which contains a reclining Buddha statue lying on its right side with the head to the north. The statue is 20 feet long and rests on a stone couch.

### Jainism

*Palitana* - Amongst all the Jain temples, Palitana temples are considered to be the most sacred. Located in the Shetrunjaya Hills in the State of Gujarat, there are over 800 temples, exquisitely carved in marble.

*Mount Abu* - Although Mount Abu was an important Vaishnava and Shaivite pilgrim center up to the 11th century, today it is recognized the world over for its magnificent Jain temples. The Dilwara temples were built between the

**The Board of Directors:**

Mr. Tim Higgins  
*Chairman*

Mr. Mahendra Doshi  
Dr. H. S. Dugal  
Dr. Muriel Hawkins  
Dr. Laxman Kailas  
Ms. Ruth Mansukhani  
Dr. Marie Martin  
Mr. Shekar Rao  
Ms. Kavita Shet  
Ms. Hema Udipi  
Mr. Michael Van Asten  
Mr. Kurt Wanless

Dr. B. S. Sridhar (*ex officio*)  
Dr. Badri Varma (*ex officio*)  
Mr. Vivek Kulkarni  
(*ex officio*)  
Mr. Prateek Mehrotra  
(*ex Officio*)  
Ms. Meenakshi Agarwal  
(India Association: *ex-officio*)

**The Executive Team**

Dr. B. S. Sridhar  
*President*

Dr. Badri Varma  
*Vice President*

Mr. Vivek Kulkarni  
*Secretary*

Mr. Prateek Mehrotra  
*Treasurer*

Mr. Ashok Tannan  
*Member-at-Large*

Dr. Ritu Subramony  
*Member-at-Large*

Please visit our website at  
[www.indusfoxvalley.org](http://www.indusfoxvalley.org)

IndUS of Fox Valley  
3600 N. Shawnee Ave  
Appleton WI 54914  
(920) 749-4911

[indusfoxvalley@yahoo.com](mailto:indusfoxvalley@yahoo.com)

11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century and enshrine various Jain Tirthankaras, saints. Vimal Vasahi is the oldest temple and was built by Vimal Shah, Minister of Solanki ruler of Gujarat in 1031 A.D. It is dedicated to Adinath, the first of the Jain Tirthankaras. The central shrine has an image of Rishabhdev and a large courtyard with 52 small shrines.

*Shravanabelagola* - Located in the Hassan district of Karnataka State, Shravanabelagola is one of the most famous pilgrimage spots for the Jain community in South India. A statue of Lord Gomateswara, also known as Bahubali rises to a height of 56 feet and is built from a single stone of smooth fine grey granite.

**Islam**

*Ajmer Sharif* - The final resting place for 'Gharib-Nawaz' Moinuddin Chishti is located in Ajmer. People of all religions visit the tomb of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. The Khwaja passed away in 1256 A.D. after a six-day prayer in seclusion. These six days are celebrated every year as the annual Urs, which is attended by innumerable pilgrims irrespective of their faith.

*Jama Masjid* - Located in New Delhi, Jama Masjid is India's largest mosque and has a courtyard capable of holding 25,000 devotees. It was built by Muhammad Ali Shah in the typical Mughal style with two minarets and three domes.

**Sikhism**

*Golden Temple* - The Golden Temple or Darbar Sahib, located in Amritsar, Punjab, is

the most sacred temple for Sikhs. It is a symbol of the magnificence and strength of the Sikh people all over the world. The evolution of the Golden Temple is entwined with the history and ideology of Sikhism. In its architecture are included symbols associated with other places of worship. This is an example of the spirit of tolerance and acceptance that the Sikh philosophy propounds.

**Christianity**

*Santhome, Chennai* - According to legend, St. Thomas sailed to India from Central Asia in AD 52. He spent 12 years in India, the last eight of his life in Mylapore in Chennai. Besides, Santhome Cathedral at Little Mount there is a spring on the rock behind the church, called perpetual spring of St. Thomas. It is traditionally held that St. Thomas struck the rock with his stick and instantly water gushed forth and thus the crowds that came to hear him quenched their thirst.

*Basilica of Bom Jesus* - Found in the town of Old Goa, visitors from India and overseas flock to the Basilica of Bom Jesus situated along the Mandovi River. Built in 1605, this cathedral holds the sacred remains of St. Francis Xavier, who died while on a sea voyage to China on December 2, 1552. In accordance with his wishes, St. Francis's body was brought to Goa almost 150 years after his death. It was a gift from Medici, Cosimo III, the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

**News ...****IndUS & Rotary Build Computer Lab in Killai, India**

The construction and operation of the Computer Lab at Killai forms the third and the final phase of the tsunami relief and reconstruction effort. A traditional *Bhoomi Pooja* (groundbreaking



ceremony) was performed on August 20, 2006

marking yet another milestone. IndUS in collaboration with Rotary Club of Appleton, Rotary District 6220 and Rotary International, is establishing this lab for the benefit of students enrolled in Higher Secondary School, Killai, Tamil Nadu, India. The school is located in the tsunami ravaged region.

A combined contribution of \$16,900 from Rotary, together with an additional \$8000 contribution from IndUS will now be available for the construction of the lab and for purchasing hardware and software. The government of Tamil Nadu has signed an agreement to provide the needed land and to bear the staffing and operating costs. The project to be executed under the supervision of Rotary Club of Aurocity, Pondicherry, India.

The project has been conceptualized and shepherded by Mr. Tom Berkedal (Rotary

Club of Appleton), Dr. Ram Shet and Dr. B. S. Sridhar (IndUS) and Dr. Karoon Agarwal and Dr. Nachiappan (Rotary Club of Aurocity, India).

### **Foods of All Nations**

On September 23, 2006, Fox Cities Rotary Multicultural Center (FCRMC) organized the 9<sup>th</sup> Foods of All Nations at the City Center Plaza, Appleton. At this highly successful gala event more than 800 people relished authentic foods from over twenty countries and enjoyed music and dances from around the world. Since IndUS of Fox Valley is a member organization of



FCRMC, its presence was highly visible. Several IndUS members were involved in setting up the place, food serving, tickets sales, and in cleaning up the place. Also, Arishna Agarwal and Julia Shariff performed a dance and B.S. Sridhar, like in previous years took control of the sound system. Moreover, Nancy Heykes, Jeff Kuepper, Ram Shet, Sandhya Sridhar, Ashok Tannan, Kamal Varma, and Badri Varma were members of the Steering Committee and were involved in organizing this event.

**IndUS Of Fox Valley**  
3600 N. Shawnee Avenue  
Appleton WI 54914

IndUS is proud to be a part of this diversity celebration, which makes the Valley bloom.

### **Musical Ecstasy That Was!**

The visit of Ustad Shahid Parvez and Ramdassji Palsule on Friday, October 6, 2006, was an unqualified success.

The evening concert saw a scintillating performance by Ustad Parvez matched by the brilliant virtuosity of Ramdass Palsule on tabla. The mesmerized audience had come from all over Fox Valley and from Madison, Milwaukee and elsewhere. Earlier that



day, the artists participated in a convocation held at University of Wisconsin

Oshkosh. Over 200 students including 140 orchestral students from Oshkosh North and West High schools attended the masters' class.

IndUS thanks Professor Mihoko Watanabe, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, and Ms. Geri Grine of Oshkosh Area Schools, and its ever so dedicated team of volunteers for their unstinted support and productive collaboration.

**IndUS of Fox Valley**  
*Presents*  
*A Celebration of Indo American*  
*Friendship and Goodwill*

**IndUS-2006**

***Next Destination:***  
***Incredible India!***

**Saturday, October 28, 2006**  
**5:00 to 9:00 p.m.**  
**Liberty Hall, Kimberly**

***Exhibition***  
***Social Hour***  
***Authentic Indian Cuisine***  
***Cultural Program***