

namaste austin

www.iccaustin.org

India Community Center of Austin

Message from the 2011 ICC Board

Namaste, Austin!

Welcome to the first edition of our updated newsletter, **Namaste Austin**. Over the past few months, many of you have asked us about the ICC newsletters that we used to distribute through snail mail. We have decided to re-launch them electronically, and we are launching this first newsletter to coincide with India's Republic Day.

Austin has come a long way from a few Indians to now 15000+ Indians, over 40 Indian regional, religious, cultural, political, professional, and other organizations and dozens of Indian restaurants and stores in Austin. Many of you contribute to or participate in the community, enriching it with your presence.

As Aristotle said, "The whole is different from the sum of all parts." ICC has evolved to be the umbrella organization for Indians in Austin. We do our best to establish the linkage that binds the many organizations together.

We want this newsletter to echo your voice in the community—your stories, fun and not-so-fun experiences, successes, proud moments, inspirational stories, memorable pictures, and your community celebrations. We welcome your contributions, comments, and suggestions to make this an effective way to communicate. We wish you and your families a very happy and prosperous 2011!

- Abdul, Harshita, Mary, Radhika, Raga, Ruhi, Salil, Sohail, and Sridhar

from the Editorial Board

Share with us your news items for the following sections:

- *Community news*
- *Youth Newsmakers*
- *Cultural news*
- *Children's' column*

Please submit your articles and photos to iccaustin@gmail.com

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India's Republic Day

January 26, 2011

Celebrating the 62nd Year of the World's Largest Democracy



The date of 26th January, 1950, is one of the most important in Indian history. On this day, the Constitution of India came into force and India became a truly sovereign state. The country finally realized the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the numerous freedom fighters who fought for and sacrificed their lives for the independence of their country.

It was at the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress at the midnight stroke when December 31, 1929, turned into January 1, 1930, that the Tri-Color Flag was unfurled by the nationalists and a pledge was taken that, on January 26 every year thereafter, "Republic Day" would be celebrated and that the people would unceasingly strive toward the establishment of a Sovereign Democratic Republic India. This professed pledge was successfully redeemed twenty years later on January 26, 1950, when the Constitution of India framed by the Constituent Assembly of India came into force, although the independence from the British rule had already been achieved on August 15, 1947. As a result, August 15 is celebrated as Independence Day, while January 26 is commemorated as Republic Day.

The Republic Day celebrations in India have rightfully become world famous as one of the greatest shows on earth, drawing thousands of eager sight-seers from all over the country and many parts of the world. No other country can draw on such a wealth of tribal traditions and cultures, with so many regional forms of dances and dress. And no other country in the world can parade so many ethnically different people in splendid uniforms, all united in their proven loyalty to the government elected by the people and in their proud traditions and legendary gallantry.

This Republic Day, when Dr. Manmohan Singh lays a wreath at the Amar Jawan Jyoti (at India Gate), the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Indian Army stage a 28-aircraft flypast, chief guest Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono witnesses the glory, India's national flag unfurls, and her national anthem is played to a 21-gun salute, we must say a silent prayer to thank all the brave citizens who have laid down their lives for our independence and freedom. Today the most prestigious bravery awards for saving their motherland, Param Veer Chakra, Maha Veer Chakra, and Veer Chakra, will be awarded to the worthy. But there were countless unsung heroes in the war and we have our hearts full of gratitude towards them.

Together, as a fast-developing prominent nation stepping into another year of democracy, India seeks and strives towards the establishment of a peaceful co-existence, mutually beneficial economic development, and stability that embodies all the universal welfare and goodness for one and all. This is the greatness of India—where we have been taught so many wonderful principles based on moral values, for which we are truly grateful.

"We must remember that this is more a day of dedication than of rejoicing—dedication to the glorious task of making the peasants and workers, the toilers and the thinkers fully free, happy, and cultured."

Dr. Rajendra Prasad

Please share your views and articles at iccaustin@gmail.com .

PARICHAY

INTRODUCTION

Each month, *Parichay* turns the spotlight on an Indian community, organization, or non-profit that enriches Austin with its presence.

IACT Indian American Coalition of Texas

Indian American Coalition of Texas was formed to facilitate greater political participation and awareness among Indian Americans in Central Texas and to give a public voice to our diverse collective.

Nationwide, the articulate Indian community has become a greater participant in this endeavor—and our Austin community is no exception.

In the broader demographic matrix, we wear identities of being Asians and Americans. It is within this context that IACT has striven to create a public voice and cater to the interests of the community by working on voter registration and the U.S. Census to ensure that every Indian is counted. We have connected with public and elected officials, participated in some public commissions, voiced our opinions on national, state, and local issues, organized candidate forums, and partnered closely with organizations such as ICC, Network of Asian American Organizations (NAAO), and more.

The combined Asian identity and strength has helped the city of Austin recognize the Indian community's special place and has provided fifteen acres of land and five million dollars to start a community center, the Asian American Resource Center (AARC). IACT as an organization is actively involved in this project to ensure meeting our obligations.

Highly successful—educationally, economically and professionally—the Indian community in America owes a great deal to this nation both for the opportunities and the interest in the community.

IACT works to ensure our community interests are catered to and also create a positive image of the community at large.

Please join us in driving towards a more united and enlightened Indian community working towards our goals and missions in America.

Please visit our web site www.iactaustin.org to learn more about us and to join us for membership and activities.

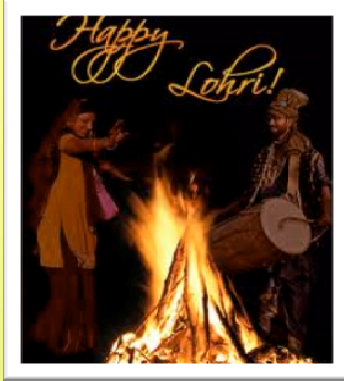
Ashwin Ghatalia (President) - ashwin_ghatalia@yahoo.com - 512-327-4373

Debasree Dasgupta (Secretary) - sdasgupta@austin.rr.com - 512-349-0403

*Would you like Parichay to feature your organization in the next edition?
Please contact us at iccaustin@gmail.com .*

UTSAV

FESTIVALS and CELEBRATIONS

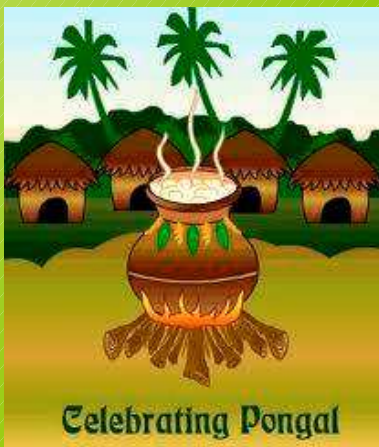


Lohri

Lohri is a cultural celebration on the eve of winter solstice. At this time, Earth starts moving towards the sun, marking the auspicious period of "Uttarayan." Lohri is also traditionally associated with the harvest of the Rabi crops. At night, people gather around a bonfire and offer peanuts, rewri, flour, butter, and various other food items as part of religious worship to thank God for a good harvest and pray seeking abundance and prosperity. The highlights of the celebrations are dancing and singing traditional folk songs.

Makar Sankranti

Sankranti, or Sankranthi, marks the transition of the Sun into *Makara Rashi* (Capricorn) on its celestial path. It also marks the end of an inauspicious phase, which according to the Hindu calendar begins around mid-December. It is believed that any auspicious and sacred ritual can be sanctified in any Hindu family from this day onwards. Traditionally, this has been one of many harvest days in India. Scientifically, this day marks the beginning of warmer and longer days compared to the nights. Laddu of *til* made with jaggery and a sky full of kites mark the celebration of this festival.



Pongal

A three-day version of harvest celebration in the southern parts of India, Thai Pongal is celebrated at harvest time and is traditionally intended to thank the Sun God and farmstead livestock that helped create the material abundance. Pongal is traditionally dedicated to the Sun God. The day preceding Pongal is called Bhogi, when people discard old things and focus on new belongings. Thai Pongal marks the first day of the Tamil New Year. Mattu Pongal, the day after Thai Pongal, is intended to honor the cattle that worked hard throughout the year. It is celebrated by boiling rice with fresh milk and jaggery in new pots.

Share your festivities with us at iccaustin@gmail.com .