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SIA Committee 2003-04

Vasanta Chivukula, Ph.D.©

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President's Word..

Dear Members!

First of all, on behalf of SIA, I would like to welcome all new students as they try to assimilate into their new environment. USF is a metropolitan research university with more than 35,000 students, and Indian students form a major part of international students at USF.

Few countries in the world have such an ancient and diverse culture as India. This culture was further enriched by successive waves of migration dating back to over 5000 years. It is this variety, diversity and integrity of Indian cultures that we want to convey to the USF community.

Through the dedicated efforts of our members, we have successfully held various sports tournaments over the past few months. With the help of the Tampa Indian community, we also organized musical concerts by eminent personalities from India. For the upcoming fall semester, besides annual traditional activities, we hope to include more events to enhance Indian culture at USF. At the same time we want to interact more with other student organizations at USF.

I take an opportunity to thank all the members of SIA for helping for the airport pickups for the new students and arranging for their initial accommodation. I wish you a



Vasanta Chivukula—SIA President 2003

bright, productive and academically successful semester. I hope your experience at USF is enriched by your association with SIA.

- Vasanta Chivukula is a doctoral student in Biology (environmental microbiology) at USF

ISSS Welcome Note

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) welcomes you to the University of South Florida. ISSS serves over 2,800 international students and scholars at USF. Our services include: immigration and personal advising; workshops; town meetings; and orientations.

2 The Students of India Association has been a close friend of ISSS over the years. This organization is one of our largest student organizations on campus and plays a major role in assisting the 3 Indian population.

4 Adjusting to a new culture can be challenging. ISSS

and SIA work together to make the adjustment process easier for you. Culture Shock is a common occurrence among new students. During your first few months here, you might experience loneliness, sadness, loss of appetite and/or frustration. These are normal reactions. The most important thing to remember is to reach out for help. ISSS Advisors are always available to assist as well as your SIA representatives.

Once again, welcome to USF and please be sure to visit our website at web.usf.edu/iac/iss. Also, sign up for MYUSF international community at (my.usf.edu) for



Catherine Seybold

important announcements and immigration updates.

- Catherine Seybold is assistant director for ISSS, USF.

“I’m American...”

-Balaji Rajan

I have spent roughly one year in this country and have learnt a lot of things (besides how to ‘economically’ use toilet paper, how to drive on the ‘wrong side’ of the road and how to survive on top ramen noodles for breakfast, lunch and dinner!). I have also learnt that though very convenient and tasty taco bell food causes problems the next morning, that clothes can be worn again and again even after a sweaty day spent waiting for the shuttle outside the engineering building in the sun.....Empty half a bottle of deodorant on them! Consequently I also learnt that the mixture of sweat and deodorant causes dogs in the colony to look at you with this strange look in their eye, you know, the confused look where they don’t know whether to bite you or be afraid of getting some deadly disease from you!

I also learnt how to stop the smoke alarm in my house from going off when I’m cooking. I stopped cooking! Seriously though, I don’t think anybody took Indian cooking into account when they designed the smoke alarm. We generate so much noise and smoke that the nearby steel mill complained to the Pollution Control Board!

I also learnt that ‘funding’ and ‘assistantship’ are as elusive as Osama-Bin-Laden! Its easier to get Saddam Hus-

sein to hand over his ‘weapons of mass destruction’ than to get one of the prof’s to give you an assistantship!

Here are some other things I have noticed:

-The sprinklers are always left on, even when there is a thunderstorm in progress!

-Half a liter of water costs as much as 4 liters of gasoline!

-You can buy fruits and vegetables only by the pound and milk only by the gallons! Also notice the size of the vegetables and fruits. Each potato is enough to feed a small family of five. Cut into an onion and you’ll cry like you just lost a best friend.

-All clothes are extra large, extra-extra large or just plain old gigantic! I have to shop in the kid’s section to get clothes my size!

I also learnt that you should never leave cooked food out in the open for too long unless you want to start your own biological experiment in the kitchen. I saw pink fungus for the first time the other day! Who said Biology was boring?

I also learnt the words of wisdom. Two powerful words, innocuous yet omnipotent. Two words that have held me in good stead over the past year. Words capable of bringing people from different races, ages, col-

ors and nations together and unite them as one under its common banner.

“Waz’ up!”

Use these two words to travel the length and breadth of America. Forget the local customs and language. These two words can loosen the most closed-mouthed xenophobic local’s lips!

Above all, I learnt the importance of one’s family. All the small things that you took for granted back home take on a whole new dimension of importance. The way your father coughed, your mother doing her puja early in the morning, your brother waking you early in the morning by bouncing the tennis ball on the wall. Your sister singing along with a popular film song, totally out of tune. The small things over which you fought over seem so trivial now. Brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers left behind at home, 17000 miles away, bring back bitter sweet memories. What you would give to have hot, home cooked food ready on the table. Clean clothes whenever you need them. Somebody to fuss over you. I learnt that every moment you spend on this earth is precious. Cherish it. Don’t worry about tomorrow. Make the most of today.

- Balaji Rajan is a Master’s student in Industrial Engineering at USF

‘Volunteerism’ – as a lifestyle

- Sanjay Kudrmati

If you are coming over to help me, don't bother. But if you are coming because you believe your liberation is tied to mine, then please join me.

- "An Aborigine Woman"

Like most of the folks of my generation who grew up in India before coming here to United States, I thought I had lead a perfect patriotic life back home – Cheering hoarsely for Indian cricket team, applauding and feeling moved by all the patriotic Indian film songs and vehemently expressing anguish over the Indian political scene.

On my trip to US, I realized that besides being blessed by an extraordinary opportunity to further my career interests I also had an opportunity to give something back to my home country. For one year I struggled with this thought but without action. It was one of those accidental run in with a founder member of AID, Portland chapter that I

got introduced to volunteerism.

The purpose of detailing my experience above is to stress on the point that our invaluable volunteering service, which has a potential to affect a change for better, should not be a matter of chance... but it should be a part of lifestyle. Let’s focus on the question of ‘Why Volunteer’? From an economic perspective, volunteering activities preserve state and private capital. In effect we can dare say that, volunteering in our case adds to the overall global economic output. It also helps build ‘social capital’ along with its role in economic regeneration. Finally volunteering is indisputably the best way of ‘giving back’ to the

society, nothing to speak of all the experiences, skills and opportunities that one enriches along with. Time and again it has been observed that in times of calamities such as Orissa Floods, Gujarat Earthquake et al people, especially Indian Americans have come forward with vigor to contribute in every way they can. Working as a volunteer is an extension of this deed, only that helping becomes more of a norm as against flashes of noble deeds in our long materialistic lives. I am in no way encouraging that all of us should turn into full time philanthropists but rather to make philanthropy a part of our life style.

- Sanjay Kudrmati is a doctoral student in Finance

Indian Classical Dance - an expression of life and ecstasy of heart

- Vasanta Chivukula

India has a rich tradition of classical dance. Using the body as a medium of communication, the expression of dance is perhaps the most intricate and developed, yet easily understood art form. The earliest archaeological evidence of this form of art in India is the beautiful statuette of a dancing girl, which dates back to 6000 B.C.

Bharata's Natya Shashtra, believed to be penned about second century B.C., is the earliest available treatise on dramaturgy. All forms of Indian classical dances owe allegiance to Natya Shastra, regarded as the fifth Veda.

Indian classical dance is a blend of nritya – the rhythmic elements, nritya – the combination of rhythm with expression and natya – the dramatic element. Most Indian dances take themes from India's rich mythology and folk leg-

ends. Each dance form also draws inspiration from stories depicting the life, ethics and beliefs of the Indian people.

The acknowledged classical styles are: Bharatanatyam from Tamil



Vasanta Chivukula is Kuchipudi dancer and has performed at many places in US and India.

Nadu, Kathakali from Kerala, Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh, Manipuri from north-east India, Odissi from Orissa and Kathak from north India. Each of these styles has a strong regional connection and none can claim to be representative of the entire Indian sub-

continent.

Kuchipudi, the indigenous style of dance of Andhra Pradesh that took its birth and effloresced in the village of the same name, origi-

nally called Kuchelapuri or Kuchelapuram, a hamlet in Krishna district. The genesis of Kuchipudi art, as of most Indian classical dances, is associated with religion. For a long time, the art was presented only at temples and that too only for annual festivals of certain temples in Andhra.

“ the expression of dance is perhaps the most intricate and developed, yet easily understood form of art.”

Kuchipudi is known for its graceful movements and its strong narrative/dramatic character. This dance-drama still exists today and can most closely be associated with the Sanskrit theatrical tradition. According to tradition, only upper caste men originally could perform Kuchipudi dance. However, today Kuchipudi is being mainly performed by the female dancers.

Once performed as a dance-drama, Kuchipudi has now evolved into a solo dance style.

SIA Summer 2003... a glimpse of activities



SIA—USF Cricket Tournament 2003

SIA-USF Cricket Spring 2003 was held in May 2003. There was an overwhelming response to this event. A record of 24 teams participated for this tournament. This is one of the benchmarks in the history of USF cricket. The finals were played under lights between Company and Match-fixers. It was a long awaited victory for Match-fixers. Bowling first, Match-fixers dismissed the opposition for 38 runs and achieved the target in 8 overs. Narain was declared as the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the tournament and Shiva was the best bowler for the tournament. Sohail from Company won

best batsmen award. It is for the second time that a team batting second has won under lights.

Dosa Party was held on May 4, 2003 at the River Front Park, USF. Nearly 300 people participated and the SIA volunteers with the help of Indian community served Dosas (pancakes) to all who attended the party. Following the party, folks left for canoeing and some played volley ball till late into the evening. Dosa party is the initial point of contact between the Indian students at USF and the Indian Community in the Tampa Bay region. This was the first event conducted by the present SIA committee. Catherine Seybold, the Assistant Director ISSS, and Dr. Rao, the faculty advisor of SIA, visited the occasion.

Volley ball tournament was held on 12-13 July 2003, in the USF recreation center. Nearly 12 men's teams and 4 mixed (includ-



Dosa-Party held at River Front Park

ing men and women) teams participated in the tournament. The men's final was played between Match Fixers and Bobby's team (this included participants from Indian community outside USF). The mixed final was played between Hyderabad Tigers (mixed team) and Bobby's team. In both the games Bobby's team won convincingly. This was the first sporting event conducted by the new SIA committee.



SIA—USF Volley Ball Tournament 2003

Continued on next page.....

A tribute to my friend—Sharath

- Prashanth Chegoor

Every Indian student comes to US with a great dream of pursuing his or her higher studies. So did my friend and roommate Sharath. In the following summary I would like to mention some of the good virtues of Sharath.



Sharath was a person of vibrant character, replete with enthusiasm to achieve tougher goals in life. He always sported a warm smile on his face, which would have pleased even greatest of his enemies. He was outgoing and gregarious and loved the company of his friends. He was always willing to help not only his friends but also people whom he met for the first time. Like all other Indian students Sharath was also concerned about his funding chances in his major i.e., Biomedical Engineering. Even though he left no stone unturned in his efforts to secure an assistantship, he was unfortunately unsuccessful. But his worries did not eclipse the warm smile and positive attitude with which he approached his friends and other people every day. He was always optimistic about finding solutions to whatever problem he came across. He was also an excellent cricketer and an irreplaceable asset to the team 'MAVERICKS'.

A list of all the good virtues of Sharath is endless. It suffices to say that he was a paragon of virtue. In his efforts to achieve his goals Sharath was heading towards the right direction when suddenly..... an unfortunate accident in a swimming pool cost him his dear life. His sudden absence has created a deep void in my life, which can never be filled.

I just wish my words here had wings so that they could fly so high that they would convey to Sharath as to how much I, and his friends at USF miss him.

- Prashanth Chegoor is doing MS in Computer Science at USF



Multicultural Welcome Dinner to the multicultural environment in US and stated that "SIA is the most influential and powerful student organization in USF". Omar Khan (president of Student Government), Nicole West (Chair person of Multicultural Welcome Week), Anita Shembekar (INDUS representative) and Dr. Rao were the other guest attendees. Activities of SIA were introduced to the audience, following this, traditional Indian dinner was served.

SIA hosted a multicultural welcome dinner on August 24, 2003, to welcome incoming students. Dr. Austell, Director of ISSS addressed the group. He appreciated the efforts of SIA in helping new students to acclimatize

Dr. Rao's Note....

The Students of India Association (SIA) came into existence eighteen years ago with just 3 members. Surendar (now Dr. Surendar) was its first President. Currently, it is the second largest organization on campus with more than 600 members and is one of the most active student organization. Its growth both in members and in stature is remarkable.

The SIA was formed with these general objectives in mind –

- To have an on-campus organization that can promote and inform the diverse university community about the rich cultural heritage of India and be an integral part of the native and international student body;
- To have an on-campus organization that can act as a liaison with the outside Indian community and to promote the involvement of the community in the university activities;
- To help the new incoming students especially from India to ensure a smooth transition and to ease the cultural shock.

The SIA has been fortunate to have had a succession of very capable Presidents and office bearers all of whom have made significant contributions. When the new students arrive, SIA receives them at the airport and takes care of them for a few days before they move into their own apartments. They help our local school children (especially of Indian origin) who look up to them as role models. And they arrange cultural events much appreciated by both the on and off campus communities. In short it is fair to say SIA has been a model organization on campus. I join the SIA to thank the University authorities especially, Dr. Austell and his staff for their continuous support and encouragement during all the years.

- Dr. A.V.N. Rao is the Founder and faculty advisor for SIA

SIA 2003— A Glimpse Continued...

An ice-cream social was held on August 31, 2003. This provided an opportunity for new students to interact with the existing Indian students at USF. An open dance floor was also arranged for the students to socialize and interact with each other.



Ice-cream Social

SIA organized a musical night 'Phir wohi Shaam', on September 5, 2003. This was the first of the series of musical programs performed by 'Ninad' the musical group of Indian students at USF.

Upcoming Events of SIA!

September 21, 2003—SIA-INDUS Picnic

October 3,4, & 5, 2003—Fall Cricket Tournament

November 9, 2003—Diwali Celebration

Final Word!

"Out of purity and silence comes the word of power" - Jaideva!

- Please send your suggestions and impressions to Arun Karpur—akarpur@hsc.usf.edu