

## **From The Editors**

Samarpan's editorial team is pleased to share this year's first issue of Samarpan with our readers. We have made a few changes not only in the appearance, but also the content of our newsletter.

We hope you, our readers, are happy with what we have done.

We are looking forward to publishing new contributions from our readers . We would welcome short articles, stories or poems as wells as photographs or cartoons. We are starting a new series called "Rochester through my lens" where we would choose pictures you send us of what you see around you, not necessarily family/ friends. With this in mind, we are requesting you to submit 3 pictures of your choice from which we can pick and choose

Thank you!

## **Newsletter Team**

Subhankar Bhattacharya | Abhinga Dutta | Unni Gopinathan | Jyothi Gubili | Ram Kadirvel | Nisha Kurup | Alka Mehra | Anu Nair | Priya Sampathkumar | Ajay Singh

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# **President's Message**

Dear Community members,

Namaste, this is the 1st newsletter from ICAM for this year; so I want to start by wishing you all a happy New Year. All over India, during March/April, we celebrate new year, although each state has their own variations. This is an example of diversity within India. My greetings to all.

We feel that our life is now coming back to normal after a very successful in person 2022 Diwali cultural program. We had more than 350 in attendance, and few more saw the program virtually after the show. It is amazing to see the talent which exists in Rochester, thanks to the Board from ICAM and Hindu Samaj temple and all the volunteers who made this a very successful event. We celebrated the Indian Republic Day as the India day on Jan 28th, 2023, which was well attended by the community as well. This was organized by the Hindi school to appreciate students who completed 1st semester of Hindi classes which we re-started in 2022.

We completed our 1st board election process in 2022 and would like to congratulate all the new board members for the term 2023-2024. Please click on the link Team (icamn.org) to see updates to our team.

Despite the challenges in the last few years due to the pandemic, ICAM is continuing to grow to make great strides towards strengthening our community connections and collaborations with partners. ICAM received another grant of \$4,000 from Rochester Downtown Alliance for hosting ICAM Utsav 2023 - Festival of Color on July 29th, 2023. Please save the date for this event, more details to follow.

2023 is already shaping up to be a busy year. Along with organizing key events, we are planning to think strategically about how we can take ICAM to the next level by providing training to all our board members. This spring, the board members will be going through Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) training which will give us the ability to function effectively across cultures. It will help us to identify our individual or group biases and experiences that will nurture cultural differences and similarities.

Thank you to the board, volunteers, and community members for your continued support. A gentle reminder for existing members that it's time to renew your membership for 2023, and to those who missed it before, please become a member now and avail yourself of the benefits. Please visit our website, **icamn.org** and subscribe to our mailing list for more information and to become an ICAM member.

Best wishes, Ajay Singh, President, ICAM Board

# Since Last Newsletter

### **Editor's Note**

In Rochester MN, Indian community celebrated various events like the Diwali, Saraswathi Puja, Christmas, 2023 New Year, Pongal, Republic Day as private and public gathering. In January, the new priest joined at the Hindu Samaj Temple. ICAM was also invited in a few places to give educational presentations on India. Pictures from some of the events are below. Please send us pictures from your cultural/ethnic/religious celebrations for the months of March, April and May so that we can include some of them in the quarter 2 newsletter.





### Diwali - Festival of Lights Cultural Celebration Vidya lyer

Diwali is India's biggest and one of the most important festivals. It is called the festival of lights that celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil and the human ability to overcome. The word Diwali comes from the Sanskrit word Deepavali, meaning "rows of lighted lamps."

Diwali is celebrated not only in India but by people around the world irrespective of faith, belief or ethnicity. The festival is also associated with Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth, prosperity and good fortune. It is customarily celebrated for five days.

ICAM, in partnership with the Hindu Samaj Temple in Rochester, MN celebrated Diwali by hosting a showcase of cultural performances from various parts of India on November 19th, 2022, at Century High School. During the pandemic, for the past 2 years, the event was held virtually. It was, therefore, a joy to bring back the community together in person.

ICAM board members kicked off the event that evening with the American National Anthem, a motivational song, and an inspirational speech by Minnesota State Representative Tina Liebling. The cultural showcase represented approximately 29 different musical and dance performances. The event also featured various vendors featuring Indian jewelry and clothes that

were available for purchase. Authentic India food was catered by Fresh India, a restaurant from the Twin Cities. The programs were also video graphed and streamed through a virtual platform on a later date. The program is now available to watch on ICAM's YouTube page for members.

The event was a culmination of community effort organized with the help of volunteers, many sponsors and had over 350 participants and attendees. The evening concluded with the Indian National Anthem and was truly an immersive cultural experience for the Rochester community.







Shyamala Bhat receives ICAM Thilak Award for outstanding volunteerism!



Talk on Hinduism at Austin, MN by Unnikrishnan





Saraswathi pooja at the Hindu Samaj Temple



Christmas celebrations by Rochester Bengali Community!



Community celebration at Royal India Restaurant for New Year 2023!





## Pongal Thiruvizha Prasaad Ayyanar

Pongal is a popular harvest festival celebrated in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, as well as in other parts of India and the world. It usually takes place from January 13 to 16, coinciding with the winter solstice and the beginning of the Tamil month of Thai.

The festival is dedicated to the Sun God and marks the end of the winter season and the beginning of the harvest season. It is a time for giving thanks and expressing gratitude for a bountiful harvest. The name "Pongal" refers to the sweet rice dish that is traditionally prepared during the festival.

The celebrations include the cleaning and decoration of homes, the exchange of gifts, the wearing of new clothes, and the decoration of cattle with colorful paint and flowers. On the first day of the festival, known as Bhogi, people discard old belongings and light bonfires to symbolize the destruction of the old and the start of the new.

The second day, known as Surya Pongal, is dedicated to the worship of the Sun God and the preparation of the Pongal dish. On the third day, known as Mattu Pongal, cattle are decorated and honored, as they are essential for the agricultural economy. The final day, known as Kaanum Pongal, is a time for family reunions and outings.

Overall, Pongal is a time for joy, thanksgiving, and celebration, and is a popular and much-loved festival in India.

Thamarai Tamizh Sangam Rochester was formed in 2018 to support various cultural activities and education. Our education arm teaches Tamil to various age groups from 5-17.

This year for Pongal we had many cultural programs and decorated the hall with traditional items like sugarcane, red brick, flowers etc. We served traditional Pongal dishes. Kids participated in singing, dancing and other cultural activities. We had light music, ladies dance followed by open dance floor.

Here are few Pictures of the decoration done in the event.

## Welcome to the New Priest at the Hindu Samaj Temple Santhi Subramaniam



Sri Nagendra Babu Dharani Kota is our new priest at the Hindu Samaj temple replacing Hari Krishna ji. He was selected for the position with the help of Harikrishna ji prior to his leaving for India.

Sri Nagendra Babu is from Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, and received his training at the prestigious Tirumala Vedic University. He is well-versed in both the Shaivite and Vishnavite traditions and can perform Poojas at the temple as well as at private residences. Sri Nagendra Babu was a practicing priest, actively participating in temple events and private poojas in India when he was hired at our Temple. He started at our Temple on January 1, 2023, and began his tenure by conducting the New year's Pooja at the Temple. Since then, he has been performing regular Priest services. Sri Nagendra Babu has already conducted several private Poojas since his arrival. He recently did an outstanding job at the Shivarathri Pooja that our community greatly appreciated.

Please join me in welcoming Sri Nagendra Babu to the Temple and the community.

## India Day Sarika Pandey

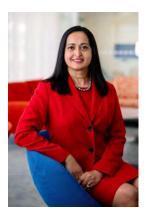


ICAM and Rochester Hindi School (RHS) celebrated the event India day on 28th January 2023. Rochester Hindi school staff and volunteers organized the event to honor the Republic Day, 26th January. RHS staff, students, parents, and community kicked off the event by watching a video of Flag hoisting ceremony at Rajpath, followed by student presentation on various topics of India and younger students participated in fancy dress representing heroes/ famous persons from India. It was an educational event and special for many parents as students presented the topics in Hindi under the guidance of their teacher. Parents and other community members participated in the fun games of Hindi riddles and idioms while enjoying the Chai and Snacks and concluded the afternoon with Indian National Anthem!



## Prathibha Varkey among Modern Healthcare's "Top 25 Women Leaders"

President of Mayo Clinic Health System, Dr. Prathibha Varkey, was recognized as one of the top 25 Women Leaders in healthcare for 2023. She is honored for "her leadership in care delivery improvement, health equity, policy and gender equity in health care as well as health care transformation" CONGRATULATIONS PRATHIBHA!



# Youthscape



Anushka and Isha read their poems at the "We have a dream" annual community event held at the Mayo Civic Center on Jan 16th to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

## She Doesn't Ask, and I Don't Tell Isha Kapoor

They bite their tongues quick, but their questions scream at me nevertheless The air is cloudy thick with angst, but this is no phenomenon I have been a silent observer since the moment she called me milk chocolate An innocent comparison, I know now But the urge to peel my chocolate coating to match her whiteness lingered for an eternity

I see it because it encloses me The deafening gap the elementary substitute teacher took before attempting to pronounce my outlandish name She pauses I watch the fear draw lines on her soft face The trepidation of the syllables falling off her tongue in the most twisted of ways I save her the anguish "Present." She did not learn my name that day But she doesn't ask, and I don't tell.

I see it because it stares me in the chocolate eyes What the smudged glass can't hide The dense tresses of ringlets cascading down my back They're my mother's, and I know to wear them with pride Upon my asking, an acquaintance tugs at the hair tie that clings to her wrist She hands it to me, and I wrap it around my coils Once, twice The twang as it snaps resonates and the world chips away The girl flashes a look of disbelief that morphs into one of pity My thick South Asian locks are nothing if not foreign to her But she doesn't ask, and I don't tell.

I see it because it builds a wall between myself and the lady behind the gleaming counter "No, but where are you really from?" she prods me Her voice riddled with doubt and suspicion Meant to be concealed behind petite femininity, but I notice it anyway I tell the woman what she wants to hear— That I am Indian-American, and my parents immigrated during their youthful sunflower days But still, she does not know where I am really from That I am from the woodsy fragrance of incense, reaching out and tickling my nose From fragmented Hindi and English, a colloquial Hinglish of sorts From Maggi noodles, a simple and flavorful indulgence since the age of 3 But she doesn't ask, and I don't tell.

> So tell me, when will this conversation take its seat at the table? When will we tear down the wall and close in on the fear? A wise man's dream as our compass

> > So that one day she can ask, and I can tell.

#### Love Thy Neighbor Anushka Kollengode

The elephant in the room is that we are same yet different splitting our hair as to why we do not connect and miss the boat that we are part of the problem.

I am trapped under the weight of my imagination What I learned not to trust strangers, morphed to include neighbors Instead of focusing on what we have in common the anxiety hanging over like cloud in my mind Makes me squint to find the differences among us.

Instead of building bridges of trust, the neighbor appears as someone distant, through my distorted lens What should be rosy, becomes very hazy.

We need to learn the leap of faith, where our neighbor is someone we can lean on, and someone we can count on Smash the piniata of doubt and distrust and build a community that becomes our rock, starting with our neighbor That's when we know we hit the nail in the head.

### The Landing Mahadev Krisnan



Shelter, food and clothing are 3 basic things people need in their life. Since I was a little kid I wanted to help people who do not have a home. Homelessness is a state of being unsheltered or not having a house to live in. This year alone in Minnesota, 140 per 100,000 people are unsheltered and 18% of those are children 12 and under. I have been volunteering in various community organizations like the Salvation Army, Channel One and IMAA to learn more about the role these organizations play in our community to support the homeless. I have been part of the Sri Sathya Sai Education (SSE) classes in Rochester since I was 3 years old and have been part of many Seva activities organized by the group. Recently, during the COVID pandemic months, I got interested in baking and I started a website for baked goods with the focus to provide whatever that I can make by baking to support the local shelter "The Landing". I decided that I would donate 30% of the earnings to "The Landing". This place exists to build trust, give hope and support to those who are homeless and unsheltered. https://www.thelandingmn.org/

In January of 2023, post-pandemic, the Rochester's Sri Sathya Sai Education class decided to volunteer at "The Landing" to help to prepare a dinner for the individuals staying there. The basement of "The Landing" is a storage area for donated food and clothing. We also brought perishable and non-perishable products. As a group we decided the menu and got together at 3 pm and started the prep for the meal. We finished cooking around 5 pm and served and cleaned the place afterwards. We were able to serve food to approximately 30 to 40 people and we had extra saved for the next day.

It was the first time doing a group seva after 3 years of pandemic break and we felt very happy and blessed to get this opportunity. We have decided to continue this seva project once a month. If you would like to participate as a volunteer, please contact SSE Seva coordinators Kavita Aunty (kavita108.kp@gmail.com) or Shantal Aunty (shaniem108@gmail.com).

# **Upcoming events**

Bone Marrow Donor Day April 16 2023

Venue: 125 Live

## Bone Marrow Donor Registry Drive Dr. Seema Kumar

ICAM and Sri Sathya Sai Group of Rochester, Minnesota are organizing a bone marrow donor registration drive on Sunday, April 16th between 10 am and 2 pm at 125 Live, 125 Elton Hills Dr NW, Rochester, MN. Individuals between 18 and 40 years of age are eligible to sign up for donation. Registration is simple with a cheek swab and can be completed in 5 minutes.



## UTSAV – An ICAM Annual Event Shyamala Bhat & Nisha Kurup

ICAM launched its' signature event UTSAV in 2021. During the pandemic, it was important to take care of our physical health and usher in hope, joy and mental wellbeing to members in Indian community. By reaching out to dance and music groups in India, ICAM was able compile a beautiful event which was streamlined by the virtual platform On the Stage. By this, we were also able to support the artists in India who were struggling for programs due to the pandemic.

In 2022, when the pandemic was slowly easing out, it was proposed to have an in-person event bringing in folks together at the heart of the Rochester downtown. The proposal was to celebrate the Spring festival Holi, the festival of colors, starting with a 5k run, dance and music with DJ, food and product vendors. This will be an amalgamation of fun, culture, fitness, and education on a single platform. With this goal, ICAM applied for the Start-up event's grant and received the first grant to organize Utsav 2022 - Festival of colors and color run in downtown Rochester at the Peace Plaza. The success of the event and the feedback from the community members encouraged ICAM team to design it as an annual summer event.

In 2023 again, the Grant committee worked on the proposal for Start-up events grant and was selected to attend the pitch night. There were many other organizations and groups who were pitching to be selected to receive the grant.

This year, along with the 5k color run, food and product vendors, dance and music, the grant committee also proposed to include a showcase of various Rangoli art forms from India. This would be a great opportunity for people from other culture to learn about the history, tradition, and technique of Rangoli art.

ICAM received \$4000 through the Start-up events grant from Rochester Downtown Alliance and Destination Medical Center for hosting ICAM Utsav 2023 - Festival of Color on July 29th, 2023, at Peace Plaza. This event will

### Diversity in the Indian New Year Ajay Singh

New Year is celebrated in different dates and with different names in different regions of India. Most of the regions and ethnic groups in South Asia follow the Solar calendar, some follow the Lunar calendar and others follow Solar-Lunar calender to observe New Year. The traditional New Year in some countries like India, SriLanka, Nepal, Bangladesh is observed in March/April based on the Solar Calendar. In Maharashtra, the new year is known as Gudi Pandava and this year it is on March 22nd. In Punjab, the new year is celebrated as Baisakhi on 13th April. According to the Sikh Nanakshahi calendar, March 14th the Hola Mohalla New Year. In Goa, the Hindu community celebrates this day in the name of Konkani. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, this day is celebrated as Ugadi on March 22nd. For Kashmiri Pandits, this day is known as Navreh on March 19th,. In Assam as Bihu, it is celebrated from April 13th to 19th, in Tamil Nadu as Putuhandu on April 14th and in Bengal regions (West Bengal and Bangladesh) the Naba Barsa as Pohela Baisakhi on April 14th. In Kerala, the Malayalam New Year falls in mid-August, but Vishu which falls on April 15th is celebrated as the first day of the astronomical calendar (the Lunar-Solar Calendar). In Gujarat New Year is celebrated a day after Diwali and is based on the Lunar Calendar. Thus, each ethnic group and community has followed their own unique culture and tradition. This cultural and ethnic diversity is what makes India unique and beautiful.

be possible only with the participation of the Rochester community as volunteers and as participants. Please save the date for this event and look out for information.

# Articles



### Holi (The Festival of Colors) Vaishali Joshi

The festival of Holi is celebrated by Hindus around the world on the full moon day of the lunar month of Phalgun which falls in the month of March. The celebration can take place for up to five days in certain regions of India. The highlight of Holi celebration is the throwing of colored powders and colored water on each other. It reflects the victory of good over evil, divine love between Radha and Krishna and marks the end of Winter and beginning of spring.

Holi has been celebrated since ancient times. The legend goes that a demon King named Hiranyakashipu after conquering the three worlds, demanded that he should be worshiped as the only God. His son Prahalad however was a devotee of Lord Vishnu and would not worship his father as God. This made Hiranyakashipu angry, and he decided that Prahalad must die. Hiranyakashipu approached his sister Holika who had a boon that fire would not burn her. Holika convinced Prahalad to sit on her lap on a pyre. The pyre was lit but by the divine grace of Lord Vishnu, the fire did not touch Prahlad; instead, Holika was burnt to ashes. There was joy in the kingdom that the evil Holika had died and good had triumphed over evil. On the evening before Holi, people clean their houses and make a large bonfire outside. They dance and sing the praise of Lord Vishnu around the fire in remembrance of victory over the demoness Holika. It is a time to seek forgiveness to allow love to win over wrong deeds. This event is called Holika dahan after which the next day people dress in white and celebrate all day with colors.

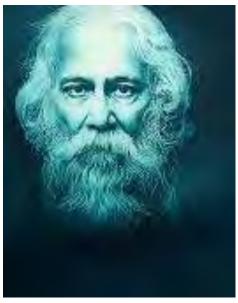
Another legend is related to Lord Krishna and Radha rani. When Krishna was an infant, His uncle Kansa sent the demoness Putana to kill him. Putana feeds Krishna poisoned milk however, instead of killing him, the poison turns Krishna's skin color blue and Putana is found dead. One day Krishna asked his mother Yashoda why his skin was not fair like Radha's, and he felt Radha would not love him because of his complexion. To comfort her son Yashoda told Krishna to color the face of Radha with any color that he wanted. In a playful mood, Krishna threw color on Radha. Krishna realized that Radha's love for him was beyond physical appearances and no matter which color was put on Radha, her beauty was the love she had for Krishna. In the birthplace of Radha and Krishna, Holi is celebrated in remembrance of the divine love of Radha Krishna.

Colors represent our emotions. Applying colors to each other is an opportunity to playfully express affection and love for all our loved ones. It allows people to see each other in different colors and accept each other just the way we are. It is a time to let go of all judgment about each other and have a new perspective about the other through the eyes of love. Holi can be celebrated by simply applying a tilak of gulal on the forehead to drenching each other in colored water with a water gun. At the end of the day, everyone washes the colors off while letting go of any grievances and allowing forgiveness and acceptance. After adorning new and clean clothes, people visit each other, exchange sweets, and go to the temple to pray to embody the qualities of love and acceptance towards all. Whether you celebrate Holi as a festival of colors, festival of love or festival of spring and new beginnings, it is a day to immerse in a playful and joyful mood with one and all.

### The Bard of Bengal Subhankar Bhattacharya

Durga Puja, Rasogolla, Mishti Doi, Sondesh, Fish Curry...imagine yourself in a game of 'Pictionary' and you are shown these pictures to guess the state name! Well, you guessed it right! I am talking about Bengal.

Although known for all the wrong reasons today, Bengal was once the very smelter which churned out the most dynamic of thinkers and leaders who changed the face of Modern India. The first among them to create an international impression was Swami Vivekananda, who came to attend the World Parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893 and created quite a stir even in the western society. The Art Institute of Chicago, to this date, has a picture of the Swami displayed outside the Auditorium. Then there was Subhash Chandra Bose, among many others who was the first to establish a provisional Government of



Free India in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and started its own currency!

However, in terms of sheer popularity among Bengalis, no one could match the legacy of Rabindranath Thakur, known to the world as 'Tagore'. Bengalis have adorned his name with sobriquets as 'Gurudeb', 'Kobiguru', 'Biswokobi'. He became in 1913 the first non-European and the first lyricist to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

He was born on May 7th,1861 which is better known as 'Pnochishey Boishakh' or the twentyfifth day of the first month of the Bengali calendar. The official name given to this occasion is 'Rabindra Jayanti' and is a day of celebration for the Tagorephiles all around the world. His influence on the Bengali mind is so huge, that his birthday is celebrated with the same zeal as any other religious festival in the region.

Annual cultural programs & events are enacted worldwide as a homage to this great literary personality. His songs are called 'Rabindra Sangeet' and bear that unmistakable flavor which connects all who find a song to be an amalgamation of both lyrics and music. Known mostly for his poetry, Tagore wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, dramas, and thousands of songs. Enacting his plays, reciting his poems, dancing to his songs is a staple in Schools, colleges & universities of Bengal on this day. Many clubs arrange events showcasing local talents to mark the occasion.

Tagore had also visited the United states a few times. The first visit was in 1913. The second visit in 1916 was quite eventful. At that time, there was a nationalistic organization called the 'Hindustan Ghadar party' which expected Tagore to speak up against the atrocities of the British. Tagore did not and had also accepted the Knighthood from the British by then. Two Ghadar party members had allegedly tried to attack Tagore but were timely apprehended. Tagore escaped unharmed.

He was staying in Los Angeles where he was immensely popular. The 'Examiner' wrote that "The Cult of Tagore has Taken the World by Storm," *The Los Angeles Times* wrote glowingly that "Tagore is 55, and looks like the pictures men paint of the Christ. He has been the inspiration for India's new nationalism and cornerstone of its modern education." Another California newspaper, the *Hanford Kings County Sentinel*, had a piece titled, "Why the World Loves Tagore."

Tagore's legacy lives on and is synonymous with art and culture in this part of India. His works are still quoted widely, across media platforms. Most of the parallel cinemas contain at least a passing reference to this stalwart's works and thoughts. Each year, a new artist will introduce him/herself with an album of his songs. The Nobel Prize committee writes "For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution."

Courtes: www.scroll.in; www.wikipedia.com; www.nobelprize.org

# Recipes



### Chanar Paturi (Paneer cooked in Banana leaf) Abhinga Dutta

Paturi is an age-old Bengali delicacy in which fish, shrimp, Dahl, Paneer coated with traditional spices are wrapped in banana leaves (if not available, banana leaves can be replaced by pumpkin leaves), either deep fried or baked to give it a final smokey flavor. Chanar Paturi is a vegetarian delight, specially loved by those who like the aroma of mustard.

Ingredients: washed and dried banana leaves cut into 4"/5" rectangular pieces, shredded coconut 100g (about 3.53 oz), chana or cottage cheese 350g (about 12.35 oz), paste of 50g yellow mustard, paste of 50g poppy seed (called as posto baata in Bengali), red chili powder ½ tsp, nigella seeds 1 tsp, turmeric powder 1 tsp, green chillis, freshly chopped coriander leaves, mustard oil, salt to taste.

#### Preparation:

1. Take chana (To prepare chana milk is boiled and then curdled with an acidic ingredient like lemon juice) in a bowl and add shredded coconut, mustard paste, poppy seed paste into it and mix them until well blended.

2. Add turmeric powder, chili powder, nigella seeds (kala jeera), freshly chopped coriander leaves, salt, 1 tbsp mustard oil to the mixture and then mix well.

3. Then place the mixture on a parchment paper or any nonabsorbent paper, cover the mixture with another parchment paper and press gently with your hand to help the mixture to be spread such a way that it makes same thickness throughout.

4. Now cut the mixture into equal blocks with a sharp knife. Put one green chili on each of the blocks.

5. Gently separate the blocks from each other and place each block on a strip of banana leaf. Now fold the leaf so that it covers the paneer mixture. Use toothpick to bind the leaf. Paturi is ready to be fried.

6. Now heat mustard oil in a pan and shallow fry both the sides of the paturis in medium flame.

7. Serve them hot with plain boiled rice.

## Have you considered becoming an ICAM member? Check out http://icamn.org/membership to learn about the amazing benefits you can enjoy!

