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Samarpan



an offering....



ICAM'S NEWSLETTER SPRING 2025

Editor's Note

Samarpan's editorial team is pleased to share the spring newsletter of 2025 with our readers. We are looking forward to publishing new contributions from our readers. Please submit your articles [here](#). Thank you!!

Newsletter Team

Subhankar Bhattacharya | Shatavisa Mukherjee | Anu Gupta | Sarika Gupta | Ram Kadirvel | Nisha Kurup | Alka Mehra | Anu Nair | Salitha Philip | Priya Sampathkumar | Ajay Singh | Namrata Tomer

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President's Message

Dear friends, Namaste!

I wish you a Happy New Year according to the Hindu calendar - Vikram Samvat 2082 begins on March 30 . Our best wishes for all the festivals which are celebrated during this time, like Ugadi, Bihu, Makar Sankranthi, Pongal, Baisakhi, Holi etc.

We had a good start this year when all the board members met in person to plan dates for major events in 2025. We currently are looking for a venue to host events like Utsav, Holi, festival of colors, and Diwali cultural program. Will communicate the dates as early as possible.

ICAM completed the election process in the beginning of this year, we welcome new board members, Sarika Gupta, Director (Communications), Subhankar Bhattacharya, Treasurer, Pranav Kaila, Director (Outreach), and Vijaykumar Kittuswamy, Director at Large, who is now new president of Hindu Samaj Temple. Vijay has given assurance to fully support to continue to grow our partnership. I am also happy to inform that Verna Simon has stepped up to take the role of vice president.

We will continue to work towards meeting our goals to provide a common platform for all groups in Rochester to come together to serve the community. We supported Bengali Association (CABERI) last year in organizing India day and Malayali Association of Rochester (MALAR) to celebrate Onam festival. This year we plan to support Telugu Association of Rochester (TARMN) to celebrate Ugadi festival. We have partnered with Rochester Vidyalaya to submit grant application (offered by MN state) for educating students in Indian music and dance during summer break. ICAM, IAM and the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA), are partnering with the Film Society of Minneapolis St. Paul/MSP Film, to show Asian Indian films in festival running from April 2 - 13, 2025 in Twin cities and Rochester.

Thank you again to board members, volunteers, and community members for your continued support.

Please visit our website, icamn.org and subscribe to our mailing list for more information and to become an ICAM member now.

Best wishes,
Ajay Singh
President, ICAM Board

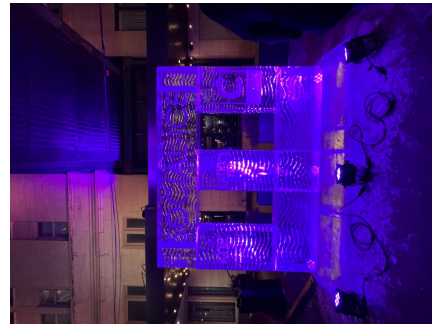
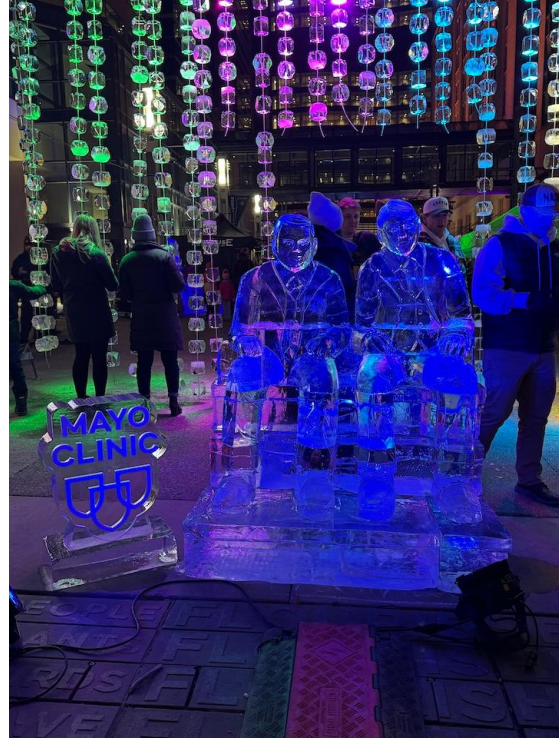
Since Last Newsletter

Social-ICE 2025 **Salitha Philip**

Social ICE is a beloved reoccurring winter event that happens in Rochester every February. Peace Plaza is the host to this event with music, thematic drinks from top restaurants and brilliant ice sculptures paying homage to icons local to Rochester. As you walk past the bright and colorful ice cube curtain you are instantly immersed in the booming beats of the DJ spinning hit after hit and lines of people trying to purchase drinks and one of those drinks is called the Oompa Loompa.

Top restaurants like Chester's, Victoria's, The Tap House, and Mill Valley Kitchen all have fun themes associated with them like Alien Encounter, Roaring 20's and Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. The event welcomes both adults and families with games, fire pits for warmth and smores, and even mini golf. The real star of Social ICE is the ICE sculptures! Talented ice sculptors are called upon to imitate life on ice. One of the most popular sculptures was of the famous Mayo brothers of the well renowned Mayo Clinic. The other popular one was from the Tap House doing their rendition of the Game of Thrones Chair. Regardless of the weather the community supports this new tradition year

after year.



Saraswati Puja 2025

Debanjali Dasgupta

Saraswati Puja, also renowned as Vasant Panchami, is celebrated in different states in India. As per Hindu belief, Maa Saraswati symbolizes knowledge, wisdom, and creative energy. Vasant Panchami or Saraswati Puja is celebrated every year on the fifth day of the bright half of the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of Magha. This year it was on February 2.

Like every year, the puja was celebrated in the Hindu Samaj Temple of Minnesota, Rochester, MN. The day started with the Abhishekam of Maa Saraswati by the Priest, followed by Arati and Prasad distribution. Cultural Association of Bengalees in Rochester (CABERI), Minnesota organized another Saraswati Puja on the same day after the Abhishekam. As part of the puja, Maa Saraswati deity was decked up with white flowers. Kids offered their books to Maa Saraswati for worship, as a tradition to embrace their daily learning and creativity.

Saraswati Vandana was accompanied by ritualistic practices, that included chanting mantras, offering prayers, Pushpanjali, Bhog nivedan, and last but not least, Hate Khori. Hate Khori is a ritual celebrated by Bengalis, as a symbolic start of a child's education, where children are first made to write as a process of the initiation of their lifelong journey of learning. The devotees offered homemade Bhog to Maa Saraswati, with our Bengali emotions - Khichuri and Labra (mixed vegetable), with fries, Payes (Rice kheer), Narkel Naru (coconut laddu) etc. Everyone, who participated in the celebration, enjoyed authentic homemade Bengali Bhog Prasad after the puja. As Maa Saraswati is the patron of knowledge, music, and art, a cultural program was held by the community people after the puja. Kids and adults showcased their creative aspects towards the arts by traditional songs, recitations, instrumental music etc. Celebrating the auspicious event of Saraswati Puja with friends and families from different cultures, away from our home country, is a great way to keep our tradition alive, and to introduce and propagate our beautiful Indian culture to our kids.







Pongal 2025: A Celebration of Tradition and Togetherness

Prasaad Ayyanar, General Secretary, Thamarai Tamil Sangam

Pongal, the festival of gratitude and harvest, was celebrated with great enthusiasm by Thamarai Tamil Sangam on January 14, 2025. It was a heartwarming sight to see our Tamil community in Rochester come together to honor our traditions, share joy, and strengthen our cultural roots. As the General Secretary of Thamarai Tamil Sangam, I am proud to say that this event was not just a celebration but a reflection of our collective spirit and heritage.

The cultural performances were a major highlight of the event. It was a pleasure to watch talented members of our community perform Bharatanatyam, folk dances, and soul-stirring Tamil songs which captivated the audience and helped educate the younger generation about the values embedded in our traditions.

Of course, no Pongal celebration is complete without a grand feast! Attendees enjoyed a delicious spread of authentic Tamil dishes, including sakkara Pongal, vadai, and other traditional delicacies prepared with love and care. Sharing a meal together reinforced the sense of unity and belonging among us.

On behalf of Thamarai Tamil Sangam, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our President Sivapriya Natarajan, Vice President Santhi Subramanian, Cultural Secretary Sasi Ramana, Treasurer Arun Jayakumar, and all the dedicated volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this event a grand success. Without their commitment and hard work, such a vibrant celebration would not have been possible.

As we reflect on this joyous event, let us carry forward the spirit of Pongal – a celebration of gratitude, unity, and cultural pride. Thamarai Tamil Sangam will continue to serve as a platform to preserve and promote our Tamil heritage in Rochester, and we look forward to many more such celebrations in the future.

Wishing everyone a year filled with happiness, prosperity, and togetherness!

வாழ்த்துக்கள்! இனிய பொங்கல் நல்வாழ்த்துக்கள்! (Best wishes! Happy Pongal!)



INDIA DAY IN ROCHESTER



Celebrating India Day

Ashima Makol, MD

On a chilly winter day this January, it was heartwarming to see so many parents and children coming together to celebrate India Day in the Rochester community. Indian Republic Day is celebrated on January 26 to commemorate the day in 1950 when the Constitution of India came into effect, making India a republic. The date was chosen because it marks the anniversary of the declaration of Purna Swaraj (complete independence) on January 26, 1930, by the Indian National Congress. This was a pivotal moment in India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule. The Purna Swaraj declaration was a call for total freedom from British control, and it symbolized the collective determination of the Indian people to fight for self-rule. Although India gained independence on August 15, 1947, it wasn't until January 26, 1950, that the country's constitution was fully adopted, replacing the Government of India Act 1935 and establishing India as a sovereign republic. Republic Day is, therefore, a celebration of India's democratic values, the adoption of its Constitution, and the country's journey toward becoming a republic with a system of government that is of, by, and for the people. It is marked by grand ceremonies, including the famous Republic Day parade in New Delhi, showcasing India's military strength, cultural diversity, and progress.

On Jan 25th, to celebrate this occasion, Rochester Hindi School (RHS), with support from the Indian Cultural Association of Minnesota (ICAM), hosted India Day celebrations with great enthusiasm, bringing the spirit of patriotism and culture to life. Students of RHS, full of excitement, participated in a vibrant event that blended tradition with personal expressions of love for India. They sang the National anthem, Hindi songs that echoed the pride of their heritage, while some dressed up as iconic freedom fighters, paying homage to the brave individuals who fought for the nation's independence.

The celebration was made even more special as the children gave heartfelt speeches in Hindi about their travels to India. They shared stories of visiting historical sites, experiencing the rich culture, and connecting with their roots. Others took the stage to speak about famous celebrities who inspired them to take up musical instruments, sharing how these role models shaped their aspirations. My daughters, Rhea and Samaira Grover, 10 and 11 year old, both students learning Hindi at RHS, enjoyed the cultural celebrations and proudly sang in a duet "Nanha munha raahi hoon, desh ka sipahi hoon, Bolo mere sang Jai Hind, Jai Hind, Jai Hind", a very popular patriotic song that has plucked the heart strings of all Indians alike across the world. The RHS teachers gave inspiring talks, and played a key role in the beautiful celebrations, dressed in ethnic attire draped in saffron, white and green sarees representing colors of the Indian National Flag.

To top it all off, the community gathered to watch a YouTube recording of last year's Republic Day parade, reliving the grandeur and spirit of the national event. This served as a reminder of the nation's unity and progress over the years, and the innovation and diversity, that makes Indians proud to be Indians wherever they are in the world.

The event concluded with a delightful feast featuring a variety of Indian street foods. From spicy chaat to crispy samosas, the delicious flavors brought everyone together to celebrate the diversity and beauty of Indian cuisine. It was a day filled with joy, pride, and cultural connection, leaving everyone with a deeper appreciation for India's rich history and vibrant traditions.

Celebrating India Far from Home!

Shelly Goel

Proud to share that my daughter, Avika Goyal, had the incredible honor of representing Kalpana Chawla – the legendary Indian-American astronaut at the Annual Rochester Hindi School Republic Day Celebration!

She delivered a heartfelt Hindi speech about her idol and ended with the motivational poem "Koshish Kar, Hal Niklega," leaving the audience truly inspired.

For the third year in a row, she has experienced a glimpse of India while being miles away from home, embraced by a warm and welcoming community. With each passing year, her excitement grows as she deepens her connection to her heritage, finding a sense of belonging among familiar faces.

From the Republic Day parade to captivating performances by kids of all ages, the event was a beautiful showcase of culture, unity, and patriotism. Huge applause to the Rochester Hindi School teachers and volunteers for organizing such a memorable and enriching celebration! Rochester Hindi school has empowered my child with the confidence to express herself freely in her native language. Being far from home in a foreign country, this connection to her roots plays a vital role in shaping her identity. It not only helps her stay grounded but also fosters a deeper sense of belonging. As she sees more children embracing the same language, it reassures her that learning Hindi is not something out of the ordinary, but rather a beautiful part of her educational journey — one that bridges her heritage with the world around her

Congratulations and best wishes to Rochester Hindi School!





Ajay Mehra Ji' Obituary

Ajay Kumar Mehra, age 61, a resident of Rochester, MN passed away peacefully and surrounded by his family on January 29, 2025 at Rochester Methodist Hospital.

Ajay was a beloved member of his community, family and friends in India. Throughout his years, he wore many hats including educator, chef extraordinaire, and Scotch-connoisseur, but he was most proud of his roles as husband, father, friend and, most recently, grandfather.

His loss has left a deep chasm in the community, and he will be greatly missed by many. He was a pillar of our Rochester community. ICAM acknowledges and is ever thankful for his dedication and passionate work for the community. We will continue to celebrate his life and legacy by sharing the vibrant memories he created with his communities.

Ajay is survived by his loving wife, Alka, his daughter, Aakriti, son-in-law, Ryan, grandson, Remy, and grand-doggy, Penny. He is also survived by his brother, sisters-in-law, brother-in-law, nieces, nephews, and his beloved mother and mother-in-law.





Main Article

Mahakumbh

Subhankar Bhattacharya

The Maha Kumbh Mela, an integral part of Indian tradition, is renowned globally as the largest peaceful congregation of people. The festival is a testament to the human quest for divine and spiritual liberation, representing the belief in freedom from the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This gathering allows

millions of devotees to immerse themselves in the holy waters of Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati, symbolizing a purification of the soul and, as believed, a path to attaining Moksha or liberation.

Lord Vishnu (the preserver), while fighting the demons, shed drops of nectar that were the source of divine energies that changed the soil and water of these areas. Since then, Haridwar, Prayagraj, Nasik, and Ujjain have become the holiest places to go on a pilgrimage.

The Mela is organised along the banks of the sacred rivers that flow through these cities.

Therefore, to greet the devotees with great pomp and zeal, one of these sacred places arranges the fair in rotation every three years. Dates are set by looking at the many zodiac signs that are active during that time. The auspicious dates to start the celebrations are determined by the placements of Brahaspati (Jupiter), Surya (the Sun), and Chandra (the Moon).



The fair is held near the banks of the sacred Ganga in Haridwar. It occurs in the springtime, in the Hindu month of Chaitra, which is between March and April. Jupiter's zodiac sign is Aquarius, while the Sun's sign is Aries. Shivratri is always the first bathing day.

The Purn Kumbh/Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj (Allahabad) in 2025 took place at the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. According to the Hindu month of Magha, it is organised in the winter months of January and February. Makar Sankranti is always the day of the first bath. Jupiter is in either Aries or Taurus during this time, while the Sun and Moon are both in Capricorn.

The setting of Nasik is created by the River Godavari's ghats. In the summer, specifically in the Bhadrapada months of August and September, the fair is held. Chaitra Purnima is the first day for bathing. Last but not the least, the fair is held in Ujjain on the banks of the River Shipra. Simha Sakranti is the day before the first bathing day. Additionally, the celebration takes place in April and May during Vaisakha, the spring season.

The Kumbh Mela is the type of event that is difficult to express in words. This is a festival with many attractions, significant occasions, rites, and spiritual ascensions to God. But when we discuss the main draws of this fair, we focus on a few key points.

Naga Sadhu: The foundation of this event is the Naga Sadhu. Nagas are difficult to locate in India because they mostly live in the Himalayas or locations with thick forests. They perform live at this fair among the general public as the event's star attraction. The best draw for pilgrims and tourists from all over the world is always the naked body covered in ash, the long hairstyles, and the technique of armouring.

Bathing at Triveni Sangam: This major event's focal point is Triveni Sangam, where devotees take a sacred bath in the meeting place of three rivers.

"Kinnar Akhara": This women's Akhara was held for the first time at the preceding 2019 Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. For the first time, women were treated with the same respect and took part in the event alongside their supporters during a male-dominated event.

It was an uncommon experience for pilgrims and devotees to interact with the lady priests and saints for the first time. The same thing will occur in 2025 at the next Kumbh Mela when they arrive in large groups and pilgrims ask for their blessings.

The pilgrims proceed to the temples, where the priests conduct the yajnas after taking a dip in the holy river. Crowds swarm the stage when Brahmins or priests kindle a sacred fire. The priests begin mouthing Sanskrit mantras to worship and ask for the blessings of the All-Powerful after making offerings to Agni, the holy God of fire. The Gods and their followers are supposed to be connected spiritually through yajnas.

Kirtans are another type of spiritual recitation. Priests perform musical rituals and chant hymns of adoration that tell the folklore and traditions associated with their Gods. While playing classical instruments like the harmonium, veena, sitar (a string instrument), tablas (single drums), flute, and

cymbals, musicians sing along with the audience.

Courtesy: www.mahakumbh.in



Youth Scape

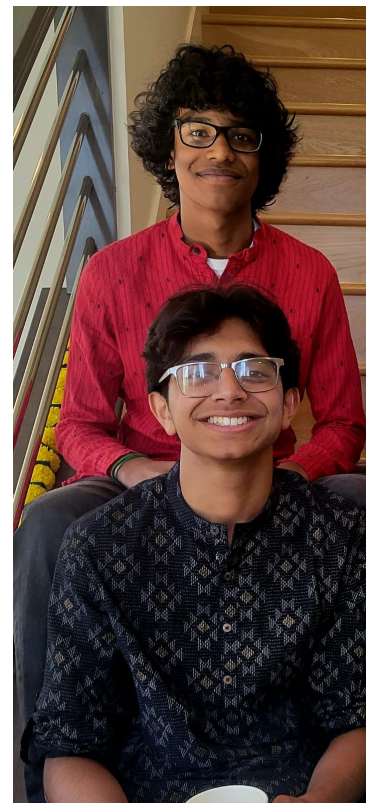
Volunteering versus Paying Job Krishna Kadrival & Mahdedev Krishnan

Sooner or later, high school students will have to come to the decision on whether they pursue a part time job, or engage in local volunteer work. A job provides financial responsibility, helping students contribute to personal expenses while gaining

real-world experience. It teaches essential skills like time management, communication, and financial responsibility not found anywhere else. There is no class that can be taken in school to learn these things, and a job teaches by experience. Additionally, working in a professional setting allows students to understand workplace expectations and develop necessary independence for their future. However, balancing work, school, and social life can be challenging, and when entry-level jobs often don't align with a student's passions, these jobs can feel like financial obligations rather than valuable experience.

On the other hand, volunteering offers a different kind of reward. While it lacks financial compensation, volunteering develops valuable skills such as individual motivation, grit, and service in a community setting. It also fosters connections that could lead to career opportunities in fields students are genuinely passionate about. Unlike paid jobs, where motivation is almost always money-driven, volunteering stems from personal interest, allowing students to make a direct and meaningful impact on their communities.

Ultimately, the ideal scenario for a student is to engage in a mix of the two tailored to their needs and interests. A paid job builds responsibility and financial stability, while volunteering supports passion and a deeper fulfillment. The choice between the two depends on an individual's circumstances, but balancing both can provide the most well-rounded experience.



Recipe

Ven Pongal Indra Vilambi Reddy

Indra ji is a resident of Rochester who enjoys cooking and hosting. Below is a traditional dish which is frequently cooked and enjoyed at Pongal in various parts of South India and which was lovingly made and shared by Indra Ji on this auspicious day with friends and family. Hope you have as much fun making it as we all did.

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp oil
- 1 tbsp ghee (optional, but recommended for flavor)
- 1 cup raw rice (preferably Sona Masoori)
- 1/2 cup split moong dal
- 1 tbsp whole black peppercorns
- 1/2 tbsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tbsp crushed ginger
- 1 sprig curry leaves
- 2 pinches of hing (asafoetida)
- 1 green chili (optional)
- 4 1/2 cups water
- About 12 cashews
- Instant Pot or pressure cooker
- Salt to taste

Procedure

1. Wash and drain the moong dal
2. Turn on the Sauté mode (high) on the Instant Pot. Add the oil
3. When the oil is hot, add the peppercorns, cumin seeds, and hing
4. Once the peppercorns start to sputter, add the cashews. Fry them until golden, then remove and set aside for garnish
5. Add the green chili and curry leaves
6. Add the moong dal and sauté for about 2 minutes, just until the raw smell goes away. Do not let it brown
7. Add the water and bring it to a boil. Then add the rice and salt
8. Cancel Sauté mode. Close the Instant Pot lid and pressure cook on High for 5 minutes.
9. Allow the pressure to release naturally
10. (If using a regular pressure cooker: cook for 5 whistles, then let the pressure release naturally)
11. Open the lid, fluff gently, and garnish with the roasted cashews
12. Drizzle with ghee before serving for enhanced aroma and flavor
13. Serve hot and enjoy!

Upcoming events



Happy Ugadi

Please join us for celebrations

*Saturday, may 3rd at 4:30pm
kellogg middle school,cafeteria,
Rochester*



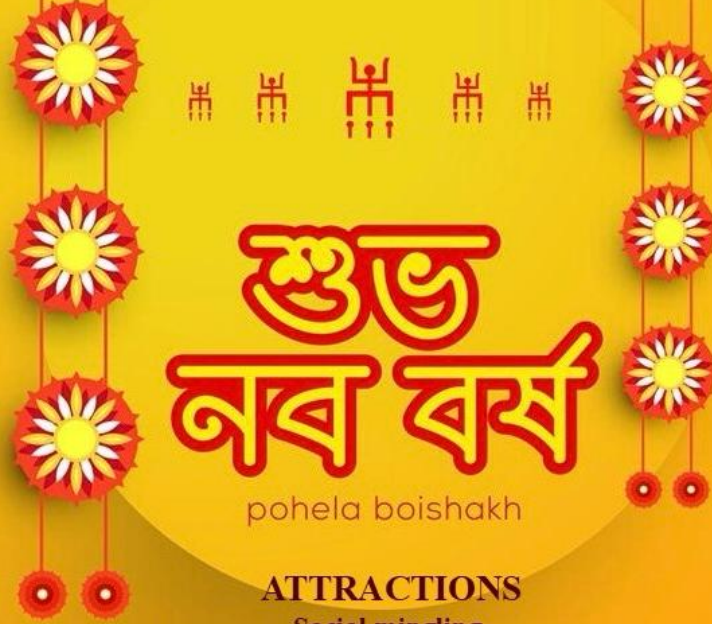
Noboborso 1432

CABERI is cordially inviting you all to join for celebrating

শুভ নববর্ষ ১৪৩২

On May 10th, 11am - 5pm,

Venue: Cascade Township Hall, 2025 75th St NE, Rochester, MN 55906



ATTRACTIONS

Social mingling,
Traditional Bengali Lunch plater & Snacks,
Cultural Program, Quiz contest & many more..

CABERI is cordially inviting you and your family to join Bengali New Year celebration (Noboborso 1432) on May 10th, Saturday, 11am-5pm at Cascade Town Hall.

Program details: Follow CABERI Facebook page for more details.

Event link: <https://facebook.com/events/s/noboborso-1432/1444728649838690/>

Please RSVP for attending Noboborso and/ or participating in the cultural event either via text to 612-227-9359 or email to Caberi.ec@gmail.com

**44th Annual Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival /
MSPIFF44**



ASIAN INDIAN FILMS

Indian Cultural Association of Minnesota (ICAM), India Association of Minnesota (IAM), and the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA), are partnering with the MSP Film Society, presenter of the annual Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival, during this year's film festival. Several Asian Indian films will be shown over the course of the twelve day festival running April 2 - 13, 2025.



CACTUS PEARS

Rohan Parashuram Kanawade | India, UK, Canada | 2025
Anand returns to his rural Indian town to mourn his father. There he sees Balya, a childhood friend, rekindling and nurturing old feelings. A 2025 Sundance award winner.



LOST LADIES

Kiran Rao | India | 2024
India's sweetly comic 2024 Oscar submission follows two young brides whose lives take unexpected turns when they are accidentally swapped during a chaotic train ride.



THE SHAMELESS

Konstantin Bojanov | India, Switzerland | 2024
Renuka is on the run, having killed an abusive policeman. Hiding at a rural brothel, she falls in love with Devika, a young woman with few prospects.



SISTER MIDNIGHT

Karan Kandhari | India, UK, Sweden | 2024
Trapped in an arranged marriage in Mumbai, Uma unleashes her pent-up anger, and boredom, to transform into a feral creature in Karan Kandhari's visionary black comedy.



VILLAGE ROCKSTARS 2

Rima Das | India, Singapore | 2024
Dhunu is back! Now 17, she's still got rock star dreams. But adulthood has a way of pushing back, in Rima Das' highly anticipated sequel.

SHORTS PROGRAM: A HOME AWAY FROM HOME



THE SEAS BETWEEN US

Faisal Lutchmedial | Canada | 2024
In the mid 1960s, a young girl who has never seen anything but rural Trinidad has her eyes opened to the world when her adventurous Auntie from India comes to visit.



mspiff.org

Indian Cultural Association of Minnesota (ICAM), India Association of Minnesota (IAM), and the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia), are partnering with the Film Society of Minneapolis St. Paul/MSP Film, presenter of the annual Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival/MSPFIFF, during this year's film festival. Several Asian Indian films will be shown over the course of the twelve day festival running April 2 - 13, 2025.

Venues: The Main Cinema (Hub of MSP Film/MSPFIFF)/Minneapolis, Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia), The Edina Theater/Edina, and Pops Art Theater/Rochester, MN.

MSPFIFF annually presents more than 250 new international and independent films to a broad community of movie lovers.

The MSPFIFF44 line-up goes live at MSPFILM.ORG on March 5; the MSPFIFF44 schedule goes live and single tickets go on sale on March 12.

ICAM and Mia members will be provided with a discount code for ticket purchases!

Watch for more information on Indian movies, show times, tickets and venues in the IAM April newsletter and at <https://mspfilm.org/>

[Have you considered becoming an ICAM member?](#)

Check out <http://icamn.org/membership> to learn about the amazing benefits you can enjoy!



Indian Cultural Association of Minnesota | 911 11th Avenue NW | Rochester, MN 55901 US

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