



RAJASTHANIS ABROAD
YOUTH SAMAJ

RAYS OF OUR LIVES

[May 2016]



As cliché as it is, time
really does fly by when

A Letter

From Exec

you're having fun. These past few months as president of our newly designed board have been fantastic. The combined experience of Roli and Sarish has definitely helped our board stick to what has made RAYS successful and Prince and his usual awesome self keeps us tech-savvy and polished. Sarika and Mohit have brought in fresh perspectives to our team, and I've been working intimately with MMNA representing our RAYS goals and initiatives, especially regarding the upcoming convention! It's been a lot of work, but definitely worth every minute.

And speaking of the convention, we hope you feel the anticipation building for Independence Day weekend! The RAYS Exec board and awesome committee volunteers are hard at work to make IMRC 2016 the best convention yet - Stamford, Connecticut will definitely be the place to be on July 4th weekend. We have incorporated all of the feedback from past conventions and mixed in some new blood to develop an experience you won't forget. Read ahead for a sneak peek of what to look forward to in just a few months.

If you haven't registered yet, please do so [here](#) ASAP! Registration closes May 31st, 2016. Also, if you are looking for a roommate for the weekend or have any questions, please reach out to rays@mmna.org.

Almost a year has passed since [San Francisco](#) and while it's been great to see pictures of mini-reunions on Facebook and GroupMe, we cannot be more excited to reunite with everyone at IMRC 2016!

- Priya Malani Manchanda & RAYS Exec

**“Registration
closes May 31st”**

RAYS at IMRC 2016

We have a lot of exciting events being planned for IMRC 2016, but need your help to make them a success. We have created a short questionnaire to help us structure speed networking and speed dating, so that the events can be as relevant and fun as possible! Please take a moment to fill out [this form](#), and thank you for your time!

MMNA's Got Talent

We all know our community is full of talented people, so at this year's IMRC, show the MMNA world what makes you special by participating in our first ever talent competition, MMNA's Got Talent! Competitors must be ages 12-35 and we encourage cross-chapter interactions, so grab your talented siblings as well as the friends you've made through RAYS!

Prizes will be awarded for best overall performances, based on criteria such as creativity (aspiring David Copperfields, we're looking at you) and greatest cross-chapter diversity.

For more details, check out these [FAQ](#) and when you're ready to take your first step to stardom, sign up [here](#)! The deadline for entry is May 21st, so register soon! Otherwise your moment in the spotlight, like Mr. Copperfield, may vanish in an instant!

Ice Breakers

What better way to start off the weekend than getting to know the rest of the people you'll be spending it with. Join us for ice breakers that will challenge you to step out of your comfort zone and make some new friends. Who knows, your new bff might be waiting for you on the other side of the "Trainwreck" circle.

Speed Dating

Looking to make new friends? Looking for your Rajasthani bae? Not sure what you're looking for? Whether you want to meet new people, make new friends, or find your future soulmate, come out to speed dating, where we will have something for everyone!

Social Awareness

Care about issues that are impacting the world around you today? We're not just talking Marwari issues, we're talking country-wide, REAL socioeconomic issues. Come join us for a fun, informative, and, most importantly, thought-provoking simulation where you'll get a chance to put yourself in someone else's shoes and experience life as you (maybe) never have before. Youth of all ages are invited to attend!

Cultural Activity

Our shared heritage brings us together at conventions. But what does it really mean to be Marwari?? Come test your knowledge about what makes us so unique! And don't worry if you feel like you don't know - this will be a great opportunity to learn from each other!

Professional Networking

Marwaris are a diverse group in age and experience. Come network with your fellow RAYS members and Maheshwari community members and learn about their achievements in various industries. Mingle with finance giants and successful doctors, while learning how to climb the corporate ladder or the tricks to get funding for your graduate project.

Nighttime Activities

Come let loose with your fellow RAYS after all our evening programs. Bring your best dance moves and get ready to hit the town. Have fun in a casual setting your fellow RAYS members.

We have a lot
of exciting
events
planned for
IMRC 2016

Civic Duty

By Mohit Moondra

For many of our RAYS community members living in the United States, 2016 is a pretty big year. As residents, and some of us citizens, of the US, we are constantly reminded it is the year we elect a new President of the United States. That means for a few months, it's also a time when we as young adults see advertisements, political cartoons, and opinion pieces that become hot topics, all of which remind us not-so-subtly that our vote is needed to impact our future. I think it is important to be engaged in this process, but more importantly focus on how it affects our community locally.

There is a lot being said about millennial voters and how we only focus on the big elections and spend no time focusing on local politics. Though it is pretty well documented that youth ages 18-29 have some of the lowest voter turnout in local and state elections, I see an opportunity to change that paradigm^{1,2,3}.

I think it begins with us as an engaged, educated community. Maheshwaris should get involved and, if anything, become more informed about local issues. A substantial number of the RAYS community is comprised of transplants, moving from across the world or across the country. After getting to a new city it can be daunting and often feel futile to get involved in city and state affairs. As someone who lives in San Francisco, it can be pretty easy to complain about the high rents and sometimes dangerous homelessness situation. After all, I didn't have to worry about these problems growing up in suburban New Jersey!

But then consider that we live in one of the most amazing government systems where our voice can be heard by casting a vote and hold real influence! It can be tough to get informed on the issues, but there are lots of resources out there to help! Find an issue or candidate you are passionate about and encourage those you know to vote and be involved. Resources exist all over to help you get registered and informed ([local](#), [state](#), [federal](#)). Learn [about local issues](#) and find out who is running in your state and city legislature!

As we ramp up to the IMRC Convention on a pretty historic weekend, take some time to consider your civic duty not only to elect a new leader of our country, but also to influence your state and city politics. We are the generation most capable of leveraging the internet and news information to make informed decisions. No matter your political belief, it's important to find ways to get involved, to not just be a citizen of the Maheshwari community, but your local community as well. Register to vote and make a difference!

1 <http://civicyouth.org/2014-youth-turnout-and-youth-registration-rates-lowest-ever-recorded-changes-essential-in-2016/>

2 http://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/Knightfdn_millennial_voting_report.pdf

3 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/capri-s-cafaro-/the-ghosts-of-midterms-pa_b_9572514.html

Seva Spotlight:

Bharat
Pallod

As the RAYS community grows and its individual

members become more and more successful, we've found that that much of the community doesn't remain idle in its successes. We give back, and that makes us who we are. In each edition of RAYS of our Lives, we highlight one of our members that is making a difference. For this edition, we caught up with Bharat Pallod, a native of Houston, Texas and recent co-director of the Hindu Heritage Youth Camp.

***RAYS:** Before we get started talking about Hindu Heritage Youth Camp, tell me, what does seva mean to you, and why do you do it? When did you start volunteering? Do you have a favorite type of volunteer activity?*

Bharat Pallod: Seva to me is giving to the community. I can't remember when I started, because my parents surrounded me with Seva from early on. But they are definitely my motivation. With Seva you won't see value in the work, only in the results. But I got to see early on the impact of my parents' work, of even my sister's work - hate having to say that - and this has taught me to appreciate Seva. My favorite type of volunteer work is anything that's educational - most problems in the world start with lack of education, and while addressing it you get to learn something as well.

***RAYS:** Can you tell us about the Hindu Heritage Youth Camp and why/how you decided to get involved with it?*

BP: Hindu Heritage Youth Camp has been around since the late 1980s. They started off as a day camp for a couple dozen kids, run by a handful of uncles. More than 30 years later, we host two 5-day camps with 100 youth in each, aged 8 - 18. The camp is run entirely by college students, who prep through the summer, teaching kids Hinduism, dodgeball, and everything in between. I grew up going to this camp so it was only natural to give back.

RAYS: *Can you go into detail about your specific role?*

BP: I've served a couple roles, but the past two years I co-directed the camp - which involved overseeing camp as a whole. This is managing the 40 or so counselors and training them through the summer, planning every hour, handling logistics, dealing with crazy parents and even crazier kids.

RAYS: *There are a lot of things, people, and places that need help in the world around us, why was HHYC special to you?*

BP: This stands out because this is a place where not much work is actually done, especially in our community. We're individually one of the most successful communities in the country, but one of the weakest organized. Most kids grow up with very little proper understanding of Hinduism, and what they learn in schools and through media is even worse. But the good thing is that even the smallest bit of time or effort goes a very long way. 5 days goes a long way for many of these kids.



RAYS: *Can you describe your favorite moment during camp?*

BP: At the end of camp we have a few kids go on stage to just discuss their experience. Just hearing that they've had an amazing time and it's their favorite part of the summer, etc. feels good. Also means we can finally go home and sleep.

RAYS: *What kind of impact could you see from your work?*

BP: That the kids take pride in their identity and learn something about their religion. More importantly they're inspired to continue learning, and to strengthen that identity.

RAYS: *What was your biggest takeaway from your experiences at camp?*

BP: It's definitely given me solid leadership skills. Also it's forced me to learn a lot about Hinduism and therefore grow spiritually. But the biggest takeaway is probably the lifelong friends I made out of it.

RAYS: *How can someone who hasn't done anything like this previously get involved with this cause?*

BP: I'd be more than glad to help get a youth camp going in other towns. Otherwise I'd highly recommend they get involved in their college Hindu Student organization, or better yet build one. If you're out of school, Hindu American Foundation can use volunteers, and your local temple could always use some help. If nothing else, get a group going with friends and just have discussions. And then at the bare minimum, just open a book. See where that takes you.

RAYS: *Any final thoughts on your experience?*

BP: This year I've passed the torch to the next guy, as 26 makes me a bit old somehow. But it's been awesome, and made me who I am today.



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