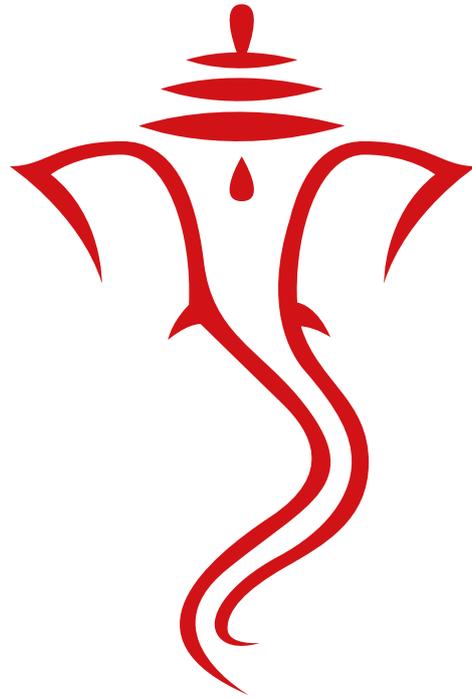


SONI SAMAJ NZ INC

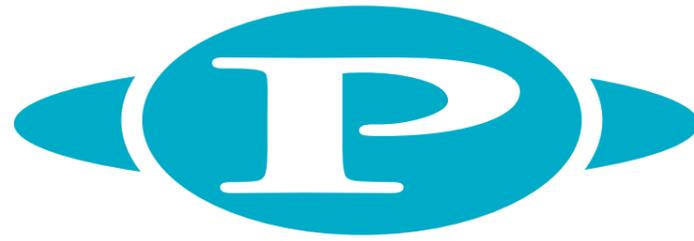


**New Zealand
International Soni
Sneh Milan**

29 March-1 April 2018
Auckland, New Zealand
www.sonisamaj.co.nz

Celebrating Soni Culture Across Generations

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HINGRAJ MA



In the year 145 A.D. there was one bandit leader called Hakmibandha. His real name was Hukamsinh Parmar and was a devotee of Hingraj Mataji. He got tired of living on immoral earnings and realised that the community will never make any progress if they carry on being bandits. So he decided to give up this life style and do something good for the community.

He prayed to Hingraj Mataji and pleaded for her forgiveness for their misdeeds and also asked for her guidance. Legend has it that Mataji answered to his sincere prayers and by giving him jewellery tools and teaching him jewellery business. Hakmibandha then taught this business to his followers and their children. This community from Parajav city then became goldsmiths and jewellers and were called Parajiya Soni Samaj. Thus Hakmibandha is the first person to become a Parajiya Soni.

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Message to the reader:

Personal articles in this publication are the views and opinions of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the NZ Soni Samaj, its trustees and committees.

WELCOME!

Welcome one and all, from the core of the heart of our New Zealand Soni Samaj. A heartfelt welcome to each and every guest who has come from all over the world to our beautiful and bountiful country. This land, with greenery all around and surrounded by the seas, is happy to see you all in this ever new, New Zealand.

For several members of our Samaj, our great India was our motherland, where our ancestors were born. Later, their children moved to different places and landed in every part of the globe. Some to Africa, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, Mauritius among others, but our primary motherland remains India. Later their children chose new countries to settle and prosper.

We honour the present country where we live, that has given us shelter, peace and the comforts of a great land. We respect the laws of the land which is our prime duty. Each and every one lives in harmony, whatever their cast or creed. There is love, respect and mutual understanding aplenty. Our forefathers brought our culture to whatever land they settled, which is revered as our second motherland where our children are born.

We felt inspired when a humble lady, Jacinda Ardern, was elected Prime Minister. Prosperity will be given as a boon, as our society respects women as is written in our scriptures.



Welcome

*Praying earnestly to the Almighty,
In this land, there may be harmony,
Understanding each other with love.*

*May this land of New Zealand provide
More crops, fruit, food and shelter
For its people and visitors to enjoy.
God bless New Zealand.*

(Inspirational thought, by Mrs. Kanta Pala.)



Welcome



MESSAGE FROM DINESH RANIGA NZSS PRESIDENT



Jai Guru Dev, Jai Shree Krishna, Jai Hingraj Mata.

Haere Mai.

On behalf of our trustees, my executive committee, various sub committees and the members of the New Zealand Soni Samaj, I extend a very warm welcome to one and all to the 2018 NZ International Soni Sneh Milan in Auckland, "the city of sails". To all who have travelled from far and wide, from shores beyond New Zealand, a very special welcome on behalf of the members of Soni Samaj of New Zealand.

To all the members of our New Zealand Samaj, let us embrace this moment and welcome all our guests from overseas and reciprocate the hospitality offered to us by Fiji Soni Samaj in 2015 and Queensland Soni Samaj in 2012 whilst hosting their Sneh Milan.

Our journey began in May 2015; before we were heading to attend the Sneh Milan in Fiji, members of our Samaj and Executive Committee with the Trustees met at the "White House" to consider hosting the next Sneh Milan in New Zealand. At the meeting, after very lengthy discussions, with input from all it was agreed to announce in Fiji at their finale that New Zealand was to host the next Sneh Milan. At this meeting I was asked to lead this Sneh Milan when it was hosted in New Zealand. In Fiji, we did announce, under the able leadership of Ritesh Raniga, that New Zealand was to be the next host, with the

tag "Badhai Aavjo".

This Sneh Milan 2018 is a work of numerous working committees, who have given their time and efforts in planning, organising and executing. I would like to thank each and every one who has helped in this process.

In Auckland, we can have four seasons in a day, keeping this in mind we had to keep all our functions in doors. We selected our venues to ensure that we are able to accommodate our plan and projects in the best possible ways. I am sure that you will enjoy every step of the way and partake in all festivities.

The Soni Samaj Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Souvenir Program Committee, Marketing Committee, Entertainment Committee, Sports Committee with Food & Beverages Committee together with the members have joined hands, heart and mind and worked tirelessly to ensure that we leave no stone unturned. Individuals have given their best and I am really proud of each member of our TEAM, with the blessings from our Trustees.

We will exhibit our true talent and display our cultural heritage through various activities in style throughout the course of these four days.

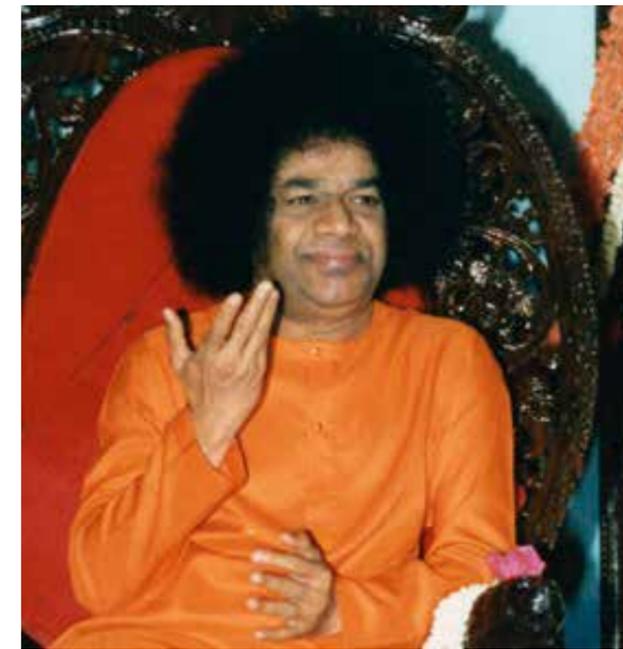
At this point I would like to say a "huge thank you" to Queensland Soni Samaj who have given us their full support in hosting this Sneh Milan and bringing to the shores of New Zealand their biggest contingent. To Fiji Soni Samaj, Soni Samaj of Vancouver, members of Soni Samaj of Sydney and the USA and the rest of the world thank you for joining us in these celebrations. Without your support this would not have been possible. I say thank you. I am sure you will all take a piece of New Zealand in memories where you met with some old and made some new acquaintances.

In compiling the Sneh Milan Souvenir Program, Chandra Kant Ranchhod (CK) with his support crew have done a marvellous job in getting our rich history in perspective for our youth to add to. This will no doubt be in your library to share with friends and family.

A very "Special Thank You" to Soni Popat Bhai Bagia, Soni Harish Bhai Sundarji, Soni Ravin Bhai Ranchhod, Soni Ritesh Raniga and Soni Chandra Kant Ranchhod, for your trust and guidance.

I will love to talk to each one of you whilst you are here, and together we will "Celebrate Soni Culture Across Generations". God Bless!

Dinesh Raniga
President



The foremost activity everyone should engage in is to serve fellow human beings. This body is not meant to be engaged in mere eating and drinking, and thus wasting away our valuable time. We must realise the truth that God has given us this body for serving others. All great men and women have sanctified their lives only by serving humanity. Karmopasana – worshipping God through service is the only means by which human life can be sanctified. Our ancient sages have been able to achieve eternal joy through conscious effort. Therefore, you must develop firm faith in the truth that nothing provides eternal joy, except service to humanity.

**WE MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT WE GET,
WE MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE GIVE.**

- Sathya Sai Baba, Divine Discourse, 1 January 2004 (source: www.radiosai.org)

The Ranchhod Family of Auckland, New Zealand, welcomes everyone to the 2018 Sneh Milan and congratulates the NZ Soni Samaj on all its achievements over the years.



SONI SAMAJ NEW ZEALAND

OUR JOURNEY, OUR STORY

COMPILED BY C.K RANCHHOD



Photo taken 2014

Today, the Soni Samaj in New Zealand is a vibrant and thriving organisation. It encourages participation from all age groups and a wide cross-section of families. As an incorporated society organisation, its practices in financial and overall management are exemplary for a voluntary cultural organisation.

In addition to encouraging cultural and sporting activities, it engages in humanitarian works on a regular basis.

A Brief History Of NZ Soni Samaj (NZSS)

Prior to the 1980s, there were very few Sonis residing permanently in New Zealand.

After the 1987 Fiji coup there was an influx of Indian families into NZ. This was assisted by the more relaxed immigration policy of the then David Lange led Labour government. By 1991 there were about fifty Soni families living in New Zealand, mainly in Auckland. However, many were still moving back and forth to Fiji and were still in the process of establishing a more secure and permanent base in New Zealand.

In 1990, the Auckland Indian Association bought the New North Road site to build The Mahatma Gandhi Centre (one of venues for the 2018 Sneh Milan) to replace the smaller Gandhi Hall in Wellesley Street. For this they were seeking donations and the newly arrived Sonis were also approached to contribute.

Given that most Sonis had just arrived, it was not possible to make major contributions on an individual basis.

Dr. Kantha Soni, one of the pioneering members of the Soni community in New Zealand, in her wisdom and foresight came up with the idea that the Soni families should come up with a joint contribution to the Auckland Indian Association.

Hence, the idea of a “New Zealand Soni Samaj” was born.

Many hours were spent by the Committee to write the Constitution. We are grateful for the legal input by Mr. BC Patel. The Constitution was adopted at a General Meeting of the Samaj on 6th September 1992 and duly registered.

The Committee worked hard approaching the members and raised \$10,000. To make this sum up to the promised \$15,000 we held various functions, inviting people outside the Samaj. Eventually we presented the cheque to the Auckland Indian Association and earned the honour of having our name on the Donors’ Board.

Over the following years the Samaj has gone from strength to strength under the able leadership of Vimal Raniga, Dinesh Raniga (two separate tenures), Dipak Amratlal, Harish Sundarji, Janti Lodhia, Popatlal Bagia, Ravi Jogia, Pramesh Sundarjee, Sanjai Bagia and Ritesh Raniga and their enthusiastic teams.

We have undertaken several worth-while projects including fund-raising for humanitarian causes in Fiji, New Zealand and various other countries and also for our own Starship Children’s Hospital in Auckland.

Trustees of the Samaj



Soni Harish Sundarji, Soni Popatlal Bagia and Soni Ravin Ranchhod

NZSS Executive Committee 2017/18 (current)



Standing L-R, Tarun Pragji, C.K Ranchhod, Dinesh Raniga, Rakesh Dharamsi, Ritesh Raniga and Minesh Raniga
 Seated L-R, Tina Meghji, Aradhana Lal, Shilpa Ranchhod, Reena Bagia, Hima Ranchhod, Chandrika Meghji and Ranjana Gauri
 (Absent – Uma Raniga Chopra, Harish Raniga, Viraj Lodhia, Naina Bhindi, Jayesh Rana)

NZSS Executive Committee 2016/17



Standing L-R, Chandrika Meghji, Ranjana Gauri, Tina Meghji, Naina Bhindi, Reena Bagia, Aradhana Lal, Uma Raniga Chopra
 Seated L-R, Minesh Raniga, C.K Ranchhod, Dinesh Raniga, Ritesh Raniga

The New 2016/17 Committee After Launch of Sneh Milan 2018



Standing L-R, Sanjai Bagia, Harish Raniga, Raj Lodhia, Gigesh Pala, Minesh Raniga, Jayesh Rana, Uma Raniga Chopra, Vishal Parekh, Chandrika Meghji, Ranjana Gauri, Rakesh Dharamsi, Reena Bagia, Hima Ranchhod, Shilpa Ranchhod, Tarun Pragji, Tina Meghji, C.K Ranchhod
 Seated, L-R, Ritesh Raniga, Harish Sundarji, Popatlal Bagia, Ravin Ranchhod, Dinesh Raniga

NZSS Executive Committee 2015/16



Standing L-R, C.K Ranchhod, Minesh Raniga, Harish Sundarji, Ritesh Raniga, Gigesh Pala, Sanjai Bagia, Ravin Ranchhod, Jitesh Raniga
 Seated L-R, Chandrika Meghji, Ranjana Gauri, Popatlal Bagia, Uma Raniga Chopra, Tina Meghji

NZSS Presidents Over The Years



L-R, Sanjai Bagia, Janti Lodhia, Dinesh Raniga, Popatlal Bagia, Pramesh Sundarjee, Harish Sundarji, Ritesh Raniga

Absent, Dr. Kantha Soni, Dipak Amratlal, Vimal Raniga and Ravi Jogia

Humanitarian Works of Soni Samaj NZ



Cheque presentation to Stacey Linford from Red Cross NZ, with Sanjai Bagia, Ritesh Raniga and CK Ranchhod

NZSS has a history of philanthropic work. It has donated nearly \$20000 to flood victims in Fiji and has also assisted victims of natural disasters in India.

A significant sum was also raised for the Red Cross towards the victims of the Canterbury earthquakes. The Samaj endeavours to assist during unfortunate times of need in New Zealand and overseas.

Our Soni Sahelis do their part by working with hospices and retirement villages and also looking after our own elderly members.

While NZSS is proud of its culture and history and works to enhance the Soni identity among its members, it also recognizes the importance of integrating and participating in the wider New Zealand society.

Hence, in 2012, in association with Caltex NZ Ltd, the NZSS embarked on the Sumeet Tappoo Live in Concert project to raise funds for The Starship Foundation, an organisation that raises funds for the Auckland Starship Children's Hospital. And at the same time provide top quality Bollywood entertainment for everyone. The concert was an evening of love, romance and music with Bollywood's rising star – Sumeet Tappoo. This project was virtually an unprecedented event in New Zealand, when a community organization brought together a group of renowned professional artists from Mumbai, the capital of Bollywood, all in the name of charity.

NZSS donated \$37,000 to the Starship Foundation which enabled the foundation to purchase an advanced Mobile Dental X Ray Unit for Starship's operating theatres. This project was led by the "Tight Five" comprising of Sanjai Bagia (President), Ritesh Raniga (Vice President), C.K Ranchhod (Treasurer), Dinesh Raniga and Jagdish Punja.

On 30 May 2015, at the Annual Mothers' Day Function, the Samaj presented a cheque of \$5001 to Red Cross NZ in aid of victims of the Nepal earthquake.

Since 2015, the Samaj began an association with the Friends of Fiji Heart Foundation which carries out medical work for the needy in Fiji. NZSS has contributed by sponsoring the vegetarian meal at their fund raising dinners.

Philanthropic work is a major pillar of the NZ Soni Samaj and it will remain a driving force for the Samaj going forward.

General activities of Soni Samaj NZ

Soni Samaj NZ is an active, vibrant and thriving Samaj. It has regular functions and events like picnics, Mothers'/Fathers' Day celebrations, Diwali and Christmas Party and AGM.

At our functions we encourage participation from our members, in particular the younger members in the form of prayers, speeches, items and dances.

Every three years, at Purshotam Maas, we organise the popular Tirat Yatra. Members take a memorable bus tour of selected temples and places of worship in Auckland and Hamilton.

The Soni All Whites football team have been holders of the Pacific Challenge Cup and remain defenders of the Sneh Milan Cup. This team plays and trains on a regular basis and also partakes in the annual NZ Gujarati Sports Tournament forming the core of the Nadi team.

The Soni Sahelis are another active wing of the Samaj. They meet regularly and have a lot of fun and at the same time do charity and social work.

The Samaj communicates via email, facebook, instagram and the ever popular newsletter - Soni Sandesh, which now has a global following.



Celebrating New Zealand Soni Culture Across Generations



Mihir Raniga



Eesha and Ayunita Ranchhod



Riya Raniga and Riya Punja



Riya Raniga



Riya Punja



The ever popular Jagish Punja



Sheena Rana



Pia Paidia



Shilpa and Eesha Ranchhod



Tarun Nandha



Rebeca Gandhi - a regular performer at Samaj functions



NZ Soni Samaj Picnics, February 2010, and 2016 at Orakei Domain in Auckland.

Celebrating New Zealand Soni Culture Across Generations



Neeral and Shreya Raniga receiving "Decade of Achievement" Award from President Ritesh Raniga and Trustees Ravin Ranchhod, Popatlal Bagia and Harish Sundarjee



Standing L-R, Meenal Raniga, Tina Meghji, Ayunita Ranchhod, Bhavisha Pala Shreya Raniga. Seated, L-R, Bhavisha Punja, Neeral Raniga



Aashi Vaani Pala, Bhavya Pala and Riya Raniga



Neeral Raniga and Shreya Raniga



L-R, Megha Chand, Mahir Chand, Shreeya Lodhia, Arjun Lodhia, Devona Bagia, Kushal Bagia, Khushi Raniga, Sahil Raniga



The Secret is in the Ingredients

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A Taste of Fijian Paradise

A TRUE FIJIAN EXPERIENCE



Celebrating New Zealand Soni Culture Across Generations



Video shooting, Soni style!



L-R, Priya/ Kripalee Raniga, Hima/Eesha/Ayunita and Shilpa Ranchhod

Standing L-R, Aditi Lodhia, Neeral Raniga, Bhavisha Pala, Tina Meghji, Shreya Raniga, Meenal Raniga
Seated L-R, Darshana Raniga, Sheenal Bagia, Lakisha Patel, Poonam Raniga



Madhu Ben, Kriti, Dakshai (former NZSS Committee Member) and Himat Soni

Bhavya, Bhavisha and Ashi Pala

Sejal and Sheenal Bagia

Celebrating New Zealand Soni Culture Across Generations



Shilpa/Zara/Hima/Eesha/Gitisha and Ayunita Ranchhod



Meeta/Megha Chand, Rita/Sanah Raniga, Bhavisha/Ashi/Bhavya Pala, Sheetal/Sheena Rana, Darshana/Riya Raniga



Meenal Lodhia on the left, receiving raffle prize from committee members Ranjana Gauri, Uma Raniga Chopra and Chandrika Meghji.



L-R, Mrs. Mukta Ben Bagia, Mrs. Narabda Ben Raniga, Mrs. Dai Ben Jogia, Mrs. Dhiraj Lodhia

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Celebrating New Zealand Soni Culture Across Generations



Mother's Day Celebrations 2015



The Soni All Whites soccer players receiving their certificates from a great Soni sportsman, Mr. Laxmi Chand Ghutla (seated left).



Young performers receiving their certificates from trustee Soni Popatlal Bagia.

Celebrating New Zealand Soni Culture Across Generations



The Tirat Yatra 2015
Photo taken at the steps of the Buddhist Temple in Manukau, Auckland.



The Tirat Yatra 2015
Photo taken at Shirdi Sai Baba Mandir in Onehunga, Auckland.

Celebrating New Zealand Soni Culture Across Generations



Two very special events hosted by NZSS – the 91st birthday of Mrs. Parvati Jivan and the 90th birthday of Mrs. Dai Ben Jogia



Christmas Party 2015



Something not right, at kids Christmas Party!

The Future – NZSS Under 16s, photo taken 2014



The Evergreen Members of NZSS in 2014



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The Soni Sahelis



The Champion Soni All Whites



little
India
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Best wishes to the
NZ Soni Samaj for the
2018 Sneh Milan

Do come and see us at:

Auckland CBD—19-23 Anzac Ave, Ground Floor, Waldorf Celestial Hotel.

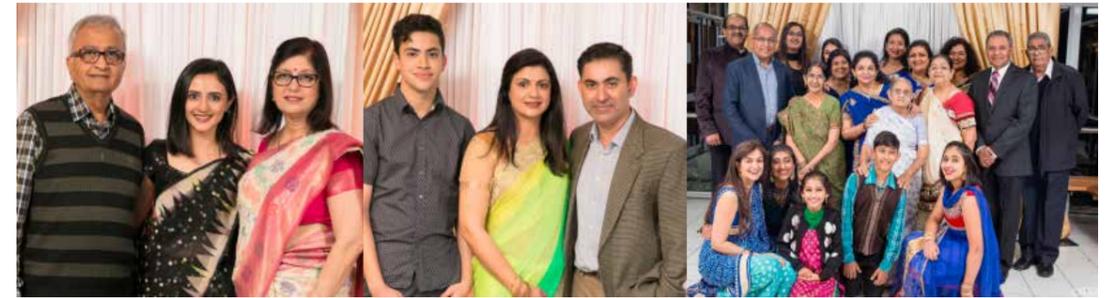
Glen Eden—142 West Coast Road.

www.littleindia.co.nz

Our Samaj, Our People



Our Samaj, Our People



Our Samaj, Our People



Annual General Meetings

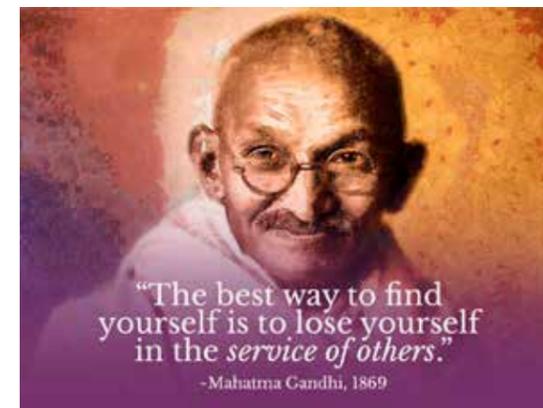
Annual General Meetings are an important and integral part of the functioning of a voluntary organisation. The NZSS holds its AGM around every September. Among items tabled at the AGM are the President's Report and Financial Reports. There is normally enthusiastic and robust discussion and debate before decisions are taken, generally in unanimous fashion.



AGM 2016, chaired by C.K Ranchhod
Seated L-R, Gigesh Pala, Chandrika Meghji, Tina Meghji and Ritesh Raniga

Special thanks to DFK Oswin Griffiths Carlton for providing auditing services and Bharat Parshotam of Parshotam and Co for legal expertise.

Recognising the people behind the success of NZ Soni Samaj



Like any voluntary organisation, NZSS has its share of hard-working people who have ensured continuity and success along the way.

The following people have served the Samaj in various capacities at one time or another and we acknowledge their service.

Samaj Trustees - Soni Harish Sundarji, Soni Popatlal Bagia and Soni Ravin Ranchhod

Samaj Presidents – Dr. Kantha Soni, Vimal Raniga, Dinesh Raniga (two separate tenures), Dipak Amratlal, Harish Sundarji, Janti Lodhia,

Popatlal Bagia, Ravi Jogia, Pramesh Sundarjee, Sanjai Bagia and Ritesh Raniga .

Samaj office holders over the years – C.K Ranchhod, Chandrika Meghji, Tina Meghji, Jitesh Raniga, Tarun Pragji, Rajiv Sundarji, Minal Lodhia, Ranjana Gauri, Milan Raniga, Pranil Ranchhod, Minesh Raniga, Pritesh Raniga, Hima Ranchhod, Shilpa Ranchhod, Ayunita Ranchhod, Reena Bagia, Gigesh Pala, Rahul Raniga, Vishal Parekh, Ashish Jogia, Uma Chopra, Bhavik Parekh, Rajesh Raniga, Nilam Pala, Naina Bhindi, Jayesh Rana, Mira Jogia, Geeta Lal, Sheetal Rana, Akash (Raj) Lodhia, Rakesh Dharamsi, Harish Raniga, Viraj Lodhia, Aradhana Lal, Joshna Sundarji, Dipesh Pala, Amarsi Pala, Ashish Pala, Dakshai Soni, Jagdish Punja, Mandeep Pala, Dhiraj Lal Lodhia

Please appreciate the above list of office holders is by no means exhaustive. It is purely based on available records and human memory! Any omissions are regretted.



We congratulate
the NZ Soni Samaj
for hosting the
INTERNATIONAL SONI
SNEH MILAN 2018.

*May the Divine bless
the entire global
Soni community with
peace, prosperity & unity.*



WITH LOVE & GOOD WISHES
TAPPOO FAMILY

NZSS Volunteer Cooking Brigade



A thriving and successful community organisation requires a solid volunteer base. The NZSS is no exception. We are blessed to have a Volunteer Cooking Brigade that over the course of two plus decades has saved the Samaj tens of thousands of dollars and cooked the most beautiful and sumptuous meals.

Along the way, as you can see in the pictures, they have fun and have built everlasting friendships.

The volunteer cooking brigade is led by Vice President Mrs. Chandrika Meghji and one of the best Soni cooks in the world - Mrs. Radha Ben Raniga. Over the years, they have been assisted by Leela Raniga, Naina Bhindi, Ranjana Gauri, Mira Jogia, Joshna Sundarji, Vimla Ben Sundarji, Savita Ben Ranchhod, Hima Ranchhod, Ayunita Ranchhod, Eesha Ranchhod, Kanta Ben Raniga, Savita Ben Lodhia, Maya Ben Pala, Prabha Ben Raniga, Chandrika Ben Jogia, Vina Ben Jogia, Madhu Ben Soni, Minal Lodhia, Damyanti Ben Morarji, Saras Ben Raniga, Veena Ben Raniga, Narabda Ben Jagjiwan, Asha Ben Hemraj, Asha Ben Pala, Tina Meghji, Shobha Advani,

Devi Ben, Anjana Raniga, Uma Raniga Chopra, Urvashi Dharamsi, Prem Lata Jogia, Savitri Lodhia, Manjula Ben Raniga, Lalita Ben Raniga, Dhiraj Ben Raniga, Aradhana Lal, Reena Bagia.

Our special gratitude to Mrs. Savita Ben Ranchhod, Ayunita and Eesha Ranchhod for hosting and assisting with all the Samaj cooking over the years, serving all volunteers a sumptuous breakfast and also looking after the Samaj utensils during this period. This is a great service to the Samaj for which the Samaj and its members are most appreciative.

We sincerely apologise if a name has been omitted. On behalf of the NZ Soni Samaj, we salute and thank the Volunteer Cooking Brigade for their efforts over the years and look forward to their continued support.

Below are articles, some published earlier in Soni Sandesh recognizing NZSS members for their service.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Dr. Kantha Soni, MNZM



I have the pleasure of knowing Kantha Ben for some 35 years. She is that rare Soni female from the period to achieve higher education. She was possibly the first Soni female to be a medical practitioner; an achievement not many men or women have been able to emulate since. She is extremely well traveled, well read and can speak on a multitude of topics with authority.

Kantha Ben had the vision to form NZ Soni Samaj Inc in the early 1990's. This was soon after the flood of Soni into NZ began post the first Fiji coup. She arranged the inaugural meeting of Soni in Auckland. I have vivid memories of the three of Kantha Ben, Dinesh Raniga and me having weekly meetings at Kantha Ben's kitch-en table to draft the Samaj Constitution. Kantha Ben was our inaugural President.

It was her foresight that NZ Soni should be included in Auckland Indian Association activities. She initiated fundraising a result of which NZSSI made a lump sum donation to AIA when the Association purchased the property now known as Gandhi Centre. Kantha Ben has always been generous with her time in helping the public. Together with other people, I have been the recipient of free medical consultations!

Kantha Ben has achieved so much in life for the Soni community to bask in her radiance. We are fortunate to have a person of such calibre as a member of the Soni community. I am hard pressed to nominate another person with such high qualification to be a role model for all of us. My very best wishes for her continuing health and happiness.

Vimal Raniga , Juris Doctor (Hons), MBA, DPharm.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Mr. Popatlal Bagia and Mr. Sanjai Bagia



This great father-son combination has led the Samaj tirelessly for many years. Mr. Popatlal Bagia served as President in the past. He currently serves as a Trustee of the Samaj.

Then, Sanjai served as President from 2009 to 2013. Sanjai was instrumental in leading the historic Sumeet Tappoo Concert in support of the Starship Foundation. The project donated \$37,000 to the foundation. Without question, under Sanjai's leadership, the Samaj scaled new heights. The father-son team has been instrumental in the revitalization of the Samaj and thanks to them the Samaj is in a very strong position today.

The NZ Soni Samaj thanks Sanjai and Mr. Popatlal Bagia and the Bagia family for their service and contribution to the Samaj.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Mrs. Radha Ben Raniga and Mrs. Joshna Sundarji



This great mother-daughter combination has served the Samaj tirelessly since the nineties. According to the NZSS committee, Radha Ben is without question the best Soni cook in the world today!! She has overseen the cooking of meals for most Samaj functions for many years.

Joshna has been an active committee member for several years. She was a most able assistant to her husband and former President, Mr. Harish Sundarji. Since then, she has provided invaluable guidance and support to subsequent committees.

The NZ Soni Samaj thanks Joshna Ben and Radha Ben for their service to the Samaj and recognises their service to the Samaj.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Dinesh Raniga



Dinesh Bhai Raniga has served the NZ Soni Samaj since its earliest days. Along with Dr. Kantha Soni and Mr. Vimal Raniga, Dinesh Bhai was instrumental in establishing the NZ Soni Samaj constitution. He has served between 1993-2000 as Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President and then was elected President also. He is known for his positive personality and his energy is infectious.

He is always quick to volunteer whenever there is work to be done. A quote from former President Vimal Raniga "I admire Dinesh (and the extended Raniga Family) because of his unselfish attitude, his generosity (with his time and money), his work ethic, his sense of humour, his wit and his intellect".

Dinesh Bhai was also a key member of the "Tight Five" that organized the most successful Sumeet Tappoo concert in support of the Starship Foundation. In 2016, Dinesh Bhai once again stood up to the challenge to lead the NZ Soni Samaj toward the 2018 Sneh Milan. In this task, he is ably assisted by his son Rahul, who is the chair of the Sneh Milan Entertainment Committee.

The NZ Soni Samaj thanks Dinesh Bhai and the entire Raniga family for their service and contribution to the Samaj.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Mrs. Chandrika Meghji and Ms. Tina Meghji



Mrs. Chandrika Meghji has been a loyal servant of the NZ Soni Samaj from about the time of its inception. She has given over 20 years of unbroken service and commitment to the Samaj. On behalf of the Committee and members, we congratulate and thank Mrs. Meghji for her tireless work, support and guidance over the years.

Thanks also to Tina Meghji (former Secretary and current Vice President) and the entire Meghji family

for their service to the Samaj. Tina and Chandrika Ben have played various roles including committee member and are currently Vice Presidents. They have overseen Samaj purchases and have been instrumental in cooking the delicious food served at Samaj functions for so many years. They were also key members of the team that raised \$37,000 toward the Starship Foundation.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Vimal Raniga



We would like to acknowledge the contributions made by Vimal Raniga to our Soni Samaj.

Soni Samaj was formed in 1991 and we had some senior members of the Samaj on the first Committee. However we needed the energy of the younger people to move the Samaj forward. This was done ably by the next President, Vimal Raniga, and his enthusiastic Committee, elected in 1992.

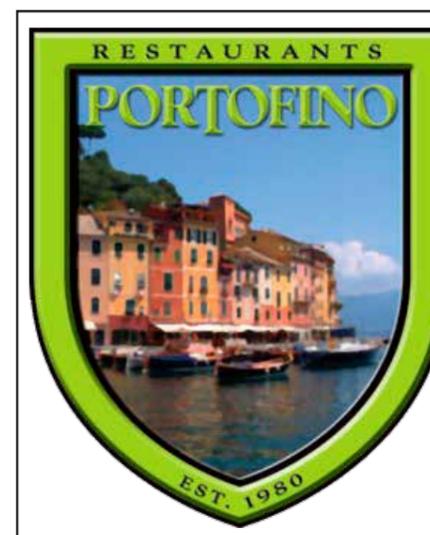
Several meetings were held to write the Constitution, quite a challenge, and finally in July 1993, the New Zealand Soni Samaj, Inc. was registered.

The original purpose of getting together was to raise funds to contribute towards the building of the Gandhi Centre by Auckland Indian Association. The Committee worked hard under the able and dedicated leadership of Vimal to raise \$10,000, no mean task when the members were just establishing themselves in their new adopted country. This enabled us to proudly take part in the events taking place at the Centre as of right.

Many of the events, such as Diwali, New Year Functions, Picnics etc. were established that year.

We thank Vimal, for his enthusiasm, energy and dedication in the formative days of our Samaj, and wish him and his family a happy and successful future.

(Message penned by Dr. Kantha Soni, MNZM, founding President of Soni Samaj NZ)



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Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Milan Raniga and Pranil Ranchhod



Milan Raniga and Pranil Ranchhod have served our Samaj with distinction for almost two decades. They have served in various posts including Vice President.

The two best mates have very few peers when it comes to providing such outstanding service to the Samaj. They have stepped up wherever and whenever required. Most people would be unaware that Milan and Pranil have been the last to leave a Samaj function after all the cleaning etc has been done for many many years.

In the last few years, they have held no official post but their work for the Samaj has continued unabated. They are also instrumental leaders of the Soni All Whites soccer team.

The NZ Soni Samaj recognizes and thanks Milan, Pranil and their families (Darshana, Riya and Aryan Raniga, Gitisha, Zara and Zayne Ranchhod) for their outstanding and selfless contribution to the NZ Soni Samaj and look forward to their on-going service.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Harish Sundarji



Harish Sundarji has served the New Zealand Soni Samaj with exception from the very early days in roles of committee member and for two years as President.

Currently, he is an honourable trustee of the Samaj and Chairman of the important Finance Committee of the 2018 Sneh Milan. He is also a great family man and does wonderful service work for The Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre.

The entire Sundarji Family are great supporters of the Samaj. Their dedication and enthusiasm for Samaj duties is remarkable and exemplary.

On behalf of the NZ Soni Samaj, we thank Harish Bhai and the entire Sundarji Family for their support of the NZ Soni Samaj.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj - Ravin Ranchhod



Ravin Ranchhod is currently a Samaj Trustee.

He has been involved in the Samaj right from its inception and has served in various capacities including committee member and Vice President. He is also the co-chair of the important 2018 Sneh Milan Finance Committee.

Ravin has also played a crucial role over the years in overseeing the Samaj's accounting and financial practices which for a voluntary community organization are run in exemplary fashion.

Ravin has gone above and beyond the call of duty to help in cooking and cleaning at Samaj functions!

Soni Samaj NZ thanks Ravin and his family for giving his time and support to Samaj activities and events for so many years. Thanks also to his wife Hima who is currently a committee member and daughters Shilpa (Assistant Secretary) and Sonya.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj – Dipak Amratlal



Dipak Amratlal was the President of New Zealand Soni Samaj from 2000-2001 and also one of the founding members of Aapru Football Club, now commonly known as Nadi Team.

Dipak with his family moved to Brisbane in 2004.

Utilising his leadership expertise from serving NZ Soni Samaj, he took over as President of Queensland Soni Samaj in 2009. With his capable committee they hosted the 2012 Sneh Milan "Where loved ones unite" and was attended by 600 Samaj Members from all over the world, still being raved by many as the Magical Sneh Milan

With his passion in Samaj matters he again took Presidents role in 2015 and again in 2017. He has been ably supported by his wife Reema as a Committee Member, over the years in his role as President.

Still a Kiwi at heart, he is looking forward in attending the Sneh Milan in New Zealand with his strong contingent of Queenslanders.

NZ Soni Samaj thanks Dipak and Reema for all their hard work for the Soni community.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj – Ritesh Raniga



Ritesh Raniga has served the NZ Soni Samaj for nearly twenty years as Committee Member, Vice President and then from 2013 to 2016 as President.

Ritesh took over as President after the very successful tenure of former President Sanjai Bagia. He ensured the momentum carried on under his leadership. Ritesh has led a very inclusive team of enthusiastic individuals who have led the NZSS to unprecedented heights. Ritesh's leadership cemented excellent financial management

and other procedural protocols for a voluntary cultural organisation like the Soni Samaj.

The NZ Soni Samaj is forever grateful to Ritesh, his wife Anjana, and children Neeral and Yash and the entire Raniga family for their support over all these years.

Recognition of Service to the Samaj – Former Presidents – Janti Lodhia, Pramesh Sundarjee and Ravi Jogia



Janti Lodhia, Pramesh Sundarjee and Ravi Jogia have served the NZ Soni Samaj as Presidents in the past. Their tenures provided the NZSS continuity in a time of need and formed the building blocks for future growth. Once again, the NZSS thanks these gentlemen for their contribution in providing stability and continuity.



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Recognition of Service to the Samaj – Our young people



L-R, Eesha Ranchhod, Yash Raniga, Neeral Raniga, Shreya Raniga and Shilpa Ranchhod.

NZ Soni Samaj has always enjoyed active and enthusiastic participation from its young members.

We take this opportunity to recognize five such young members.

These young people have performed at Samaj functions from a very young age and they have literally grown up in front of our eyes into fine ambassadors for the Samaj. Be it behind the scene assistance, cooking and cleaning, reciting the opening prayer, performing dance items or compering of an entire Samaj event, these guys have done it.

Shilpa, as Assistant Secretary is in charge of all Samaj digital communications.

NZSS congratulates them on their contribution from such an early age and wishes them all the very best for the future.



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AUCKLAND SONI SAHELIS

BY UMA RANIGA CHOPRA

Jai Shree Krishna

Jai Hingrajmata and sadar abhinandan to all Sonis World over and especially to those who have graced our New Zealand Sneh Milan 2018.

We Soni Sahelis in Auckland take pride in our monthly events that brings our women folk together over informal gatherings usually hosted at our members' homes. We also have the use of a hall at a nominal fee if hosting is not feasible.

Over the years we have had guests from overseas who have shown a great desire to participate and meet Sahelis at our events and where possible we have adjusted dates to make it possible.

History of Ladies getting together informally.

Our tradition of singing of bhajans came with our ancestors when they came from India. Our mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers from Fiji used to make an effort to get together for bhajans on Poonam, Ekadashi, Purushottam maas and the like. Children would meet up with their mums after school at the bhajan session for parshad. I have vivid memories of bhajans at HariLal Dosa family and MuljiDaya Family of Ba, Fiji.

Some ladies are very renowned for their bhajans and one such icon was none other than my own Nani Mani Ben Guthla who enjoyed travelling around Fiji in her later years. She had a knack of telling stories (Ek Banyo hato...) and sing Bhajans.

We have Dhiraj Baa Lodhia, our own elder star who has an amazing voice, stamina and presence. She comes along with her collection of song books.

With our onward migration from Fiji to New Zealand and the consequential stresses of work, children growing in a new country and the general demands of making new beginnings, some of our regular social activities lapsed. However we have been very lucky here to have several temples in Auckland that made it was easy to meet up for regular religious and spiritual activities.

The idea to have our Soni ladies meet regularly for a social get together evolved naturally as a by- product of entertaining visitors from Canada who shared what they did there among the Sonis.

With overseas visitors arriving, it was easier to meet up at one place and spend quality time together, sharing food and news. Thus started the occasional gatherings for afternoon tea and joyful activities like bhajans and antakshari.

As more and more ladies joined the group, new ideas of what more could be done in the sessions, came through. Our sahelies then started to take turns to host sessions in their homes. Some hosts used the opportunity to add variety with wellness activities like yoga, including Pranayamas and meditation. Some added women's health related talks and inviting professionals over. One such event at Kantaben Ranga's place had Dr. Kantha Soni talk on health issues and the discussions that followed showed there was a great need to provide women's wellness knowledge.



Possible seva opportunities were investigated and all suggestions were given due consideration

Doing something worthwhile encouraged further increase in participation. Some of our ladies committed to visiting a rest home facility in Hillsborough on a monthly basis to provide joyful company, chanting and entertainment.

We have an opportunity to make

regular donations during our meetings and use the funds for some charity and Saheli events.

Some funds have been earmarked to provide long shelf life food to Ronald Mcdonald house that is attached to the Starship Children's Hospital where families can stay close to their children in hospital.

The growing group which reaches 40 and above at times, and meets over a limited time span of about 3-4 hours monthly, has lead to a need for a more structured program so that the time together has a sense of purpose, achievement as well as entertainment.

Without structure the 3 hours would easily pass just chatting and catching up with each other which would suit some but feel like a total waste of time to others. So lately we have endeavoured to introduce a flexible but structured program:

A sample format:

1. Om Chants. Om is also called Pranava- it increases prana or life force in us and is also the sound energy of the Universe.
2. Ganesh Chants or shrottam- remover of all obstacles.
3. Om Namaha Shivaya chant
4. Gayatri Mantra chant
5. Maha Miritrujai Mantra
6. Hanuman Chalisa
7. Asatoma Satgamaya
8. Om purnamadah purnamidam...
9. Shanti mantra
10. Entertainment: Bhajans , devotional songs, jokes, antakshari, guest speakers.
11. Afternoon tea.

What is Mantra?

A Mantra is a sacred utterance believed to have psychological and spiritual powers.

Mantra meditation helps to induce an altered state of consciousness.

The most basic mantra is OM which is known as 'Pranava mantra', the source of all mantras.

Benefits of Chanting

Research shows Chanting sounds have a therapeutic effect on the body. It soothes all our body systems and activates the body's natural healing process. It also plays a part in reversing heart disease. Chanting blocks the release of stress hormones and increases immune function.

A calm mind makes us more healthy and vibrant. Chanting increases our virtues by eliminating negative thoughts and thus increasing our spirituality.

When we chant in a group, we create vibrations, that affects our combined consciousness as well as purifying the environment. This is great seva in itself.

What is Prayer?

A prayer is when we want God to listen to us.

What is Meditation?

Meditation is when we are willing to listen to God.



Our Christmas Parties are occasions to look forward to.

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CHANDULAL & SHANTA BHINDI AND FAMILY



Saheli Picnics

Summer months provides us the opportunity to explore the Auckland parks and beaches.

Picnics under glorious trees in the Cornwall park, or the Zoo areas or Point Chevalier are our favourites. We are mindful of convenient parking facilities, distance to amenities and shade for our more senior mothers. Just being outdoors in good company with nature and food is very relaxing indeed.



Full Samaj Events

Our regular annual Samaj events like Mother's day, Father's day and Diwali events provide the medium for full family participation. Having the opportunity to have family photos is a great attraction and an opportunity to interact and create memories, as well as always great food.

We do realize that ladies with full time jobs are missing out on our saheli interactions and along those lines we plan to add on a evening event to our annual calendar. Perhaps a cultural night. An evening event showcasing our talents.



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Meet our Saheli Event Coordinators

Every Saheli has a part to play in our events, most importantly by participating. However Saras Raniga, Ranjana Gauri, Chandrika Meghji and Uma Raniga Chopra have voluntarily taken on responsibility to organize monthly events and cater for almost all the interest areas of participants.

1. **Saras Raniga** is a driving instructor who starts her day early with her own chores at home, then teaches her clients driving and by 2 pm is ready to take care of her 3 grandchildren. She looks forward to the Saheli gatherings, as she loves meeting people and is a very active and enthusiastic member of Sahelis as well as a planner and coordinator.
2. **Ranjana Gauri** works for Sona Sansaar with her brother Jayanti Bhai. It is convenient that most of our gatherings are on Mondays or Tuesdays, her days off. Ranjana comes along with her Baa, Dhiraj Ben and Bhabhi Savitri Lodhia. Ranjana's enthusiasm and commitment are a great asset to the sahelies' events.
3. **Chandrika Meghji** who hops between Fiji, New Zealand and other destinations, enjoys the catch up time these gatherings provide. She is a keen cook and often puts in that extra effort to make her special African biscuits and papad loth.
4. **Uma Raniga Chopra:**
Uma left secondary science teaching to take care of her baa, Jalwanti Liladhar Raniga and pursued her interest in Yoga and Ayurvedic Therapies. She is a Teacher with the Art of Living Foundation and also teaches community Yoga and meditation Classes. Uma enjoys meeting and catching up with the Sahelies and at the same time gives Sahelis some level of yogic experience that helps us all at the body, mind and spirit level.



SONI ALL WHITES PAST & PRESENT

BY MINESH RANIGA

Our Past:

About twenty (20) years ago, New Zealand Gujrati Sports Association, had just been formed and Deepak Amratlal along with Dinesh Raniga decided it was an opportune time to form a team. And this gave birth to **Aapru Football Club (AFC)**. Both Deepak Kaka and Dinesh Kaka became the founding members of the team where majority of the team consisted of Soni boys.

During that time, there already were endless means of get-togethers within the community through indoor and outdoor soccer or cricket. So, when the opportunity knocked on the door to field a Soni Team, this was taken up without hesitation. Majority of the members gathered at Sunil Bapa's place, where the first strip for Aapru Football Club was unveiled.

"And believe me or not, it was the red Arsenal strip."

Aapru Football Club:

When the conversation started on what to call the team, we were leaning towards New Zealand Soni's, but our logo on the jersey was AFC. So, we started thinking of names for the team that will fit in with the logo.

A lot of thought went into it and after a few beers (as you do), Sunil Bapa started talking about the team, and he said (quoting Deepak Amratlal) ... "Jho Aapru team hatuu...aapre etc... and we all said Aapru team nu naam mallee gayuu. we will call it Aapru Football Club".

"As you can see...a very thought through process for team naming"

The first tournament was held in 1990 at Kelston Boys High School. The first game was played against Khachia Patel team, which AFC won 4-0 – followed by another win over Flying Arrows team. AFC lost that year in the finals.

Aapru (AFC) always had non-Soni boys playing in its team, and they were always part of the overall organisation. However, somewhere along the way, Aapru team started losing support and was later discontinued due to lack of numbers.

Soni All Whites:

The Soni All Whites team was formed pre-Sneh Milan in Brisbane and with a handful of boys the Soni All Whites were able to win the inaugural Sneh Milan Cup. Since then, the Soni All Whites have dominated the Tri-Nations tournament, having retained the Sneh Milan Cup on successive occasions.

Along with the Sneh Milan Cup, the Soni All Whites have also won the Pacific Cup 3-years in a row, failing to retain the Pacific Cup on its last attempt last year in Brisbane. The Soni All Whites team currently has a no. of youth players and its worth saying that the health of our team hasn't been any better.

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NZ Nadi Sports & Cultural Association:

The success of our first Sneh Milan Cup in Brisbane, became the brain-child for the inception of another club...NZ Nadi Gujarati Sports & Cultural Club.

In 2014, the current bunch of enthusiasts met and decided to form a new club, built upon the same foundations of Aapru Football Club, calling the club **Nadi**. We started off with only 14-15 players in 2014 but has grown from strength to strength ever since.



Currently, we field two (2) teams, Nadi A and Nadi B, with a great mixture of youth and experience.

The standard of football displayed by Nadi teams is second to none and we have reached Semi-finals of NZ Gujarati Tournament for 3 successive years. Looking at the young lads excel, interest is high within the community and we now have numerous youngsters (Soni & non-Soni) wanting to don the green jumper...laying a great platform for the future.



HISTORY OF PARAJIYA SONI

**PRANLAL CHHAGANBHAI ARJAN
DHANAK, LONDON**
WEBMASTER/EDITOR
WWW.PATTNICONNECTION.COM



Pranbhai is a writer who is keen to know about the history of Parajiya Soni and the ancient Indian history. He served as the committee member in the UK Pattni Association in 1980s and was appointed as the editor of the PPA Newsletter for the Parajiya Pattni Association, UK.

In 2005, Pranbhai started a community website called Pattni Connection and with the worldwide support, brought all the community institutions under one website.

He currently serving as the Committee member for the Bhartiya Soni World Federation, Rajkot Samaj Mahamandal and the Mumbai Samaj. He is also a co-admin for the Paraj Vansh Matrimonial Website to encourage Matrimonials within the Soni community.

ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

The history of the uninterrupted survival of the civilisation of India goes back to an unbelievable period of time, which could easily be said to be the beginning of the human civilization on the earth planet, whereas the history of the other countries of the world is the history of only 6,000 to 8,000 years.

It is also very important that, for the knowledge and the encouragement of the existing generation, that they must know and make them aware of the glories of the past of our Parajiya community.

Thanks to the works of our Soni Barot, we have unbroken continuity of the original records of the history is made possible to be available in every generation of the Parajiya Soni Samaj.

HISTORY OF PARAJIYA SONIS

Historically, the early Vedic society was divided into four broad groups:- Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. Sonis came from Kshatriya caste. Today, there are many communities who work in the jewellery trade. Those who are in jewellery business are called Sonis.

When a person is unable to earn sufficiently from one trade will then look elsewhere and venture into other businesses. Such evolution has been going on in the history.

Like we became Sonis from Kshatriyas, there are many others who became farmers, traders, cobblers etc. Barot's family were Sonis before their forefathers became our Barots. Now their sons have again taken up jewellery business so will become jewellers. So the evolution carries on.

BIRTH OF PARAJIYA SONI SAMAJ

2000 years ago, we were all of Kshatriya community. They were settled in the ancient city called Parajav, (it is now called Patiala), located in Punjab, near the Sindh border in India.

The community went through very hard times. Most of them lost all their assets and livelihood. People were confused and found it difficult to meet their daily household expenses. People used to do what ever odd jobs they used to get. Many of them even became bandits to support their families.

In the year 145 A.D. there was one bandit leader called Hakmibandha. His real name was Hukamsinh Parmar and was a devotee of Mataji. He got tired of living on immoral earnings and realised that the community will never make any progress if they carry on being bandits. So he decided to give up this life style and do something good for the community.

He prayed to Hingraj Mataji and pleaded for her forgiveness for their misdeeds and also asked for her guidance. Legend has it that Mataji answered to his sincere prayers and by giving him jewellery tools and teaching him jewellery business. Hakmibandha then taught this business to his followers and their children. This community from Parajav city then became goldsmiths and jewellers and were called Parajiya Soni Samaj. Thus Hakmibandha is the first person to become a Parajiya Soni.

PARAJIYA ANCESTRAL TREE

Following is just a very brief explanation to understand this Ancestral Tree. It is important to have the basic understanding of the origin of Kshatriya and Vansh. This fact is clearly stated in many Hindu Puranic literatures like Bhagwat Puran, Bramha Puran, and Vishnu Puran etc.

Parajiya Soni clans are mainly divided into three branches called Vansh (Lineage) – Suryavansh, Chandravansh and Hanumanvash.

'Suryavansh' : Bhagwan Ram, the seventh avtar of Bhagwan Vishnu is the most prominent Surya Vanshi. Thus all Parajiyas who are 'Suryavanshi' are the descendents of Bhagwan Ram. Some of the Suryavanshi in the Parajiya Soni community are – Suru, Khera, Deviya, Jogia, Pala, Padya, Satikuvar, Vaya, Katira, Vaitha, Bagia, etc.,

'Chandravansh' : Bhagwan Krishna was a 'Chandra Vanshi' So in the Parajiya Ambo, those who are 'Chandravanshi' are the descendents of Bhagwan Krishna' Some of the Chandravanshis are Nandha, Jagda, Lodhia, Bhindi, Raninga, Dhanak, Nindha etc.,

Hanuman Vansh : As the name suggest, Hanuman Vanshi are the descendents of Hanuman. Hanuman Vanshi in Parajiyas are Jethwa and Ghaghada

Parajiya Soni Samaj stayed as united Soni Samaj for next 1000 years. It then split into three Communities: Parajiya Pattni, Parajiya Girnaras and Parajiya Kutchi Sonis. There was also an unfortunate fourth split. This breakaway section converted themselves to Muslims.

PARAJIYA HISTORY DURING ISLAMIC INVASION

The Islamic invasion of India shows India being one of the many countries having a violent spread of Islam. Many Muslims in the Indian sub-continent & surrounding areas (Afghanistan; Iran) are Muslim today because their ancestors were turned to Islam usually by force,

persecution, or by laws favoring Muslims. Examples of this are the invasions of Muhammad bin Qasim and Mahmud of Ghazni.

Mahmud of Ghazni (971AD - April 1030), was the ruler of Ghazni from 997 until his death. During his reign, Mahmud's campaigns seem to be motivated by both religious zeal and an interest in wealth and gold. Mahmud followed the injunction to convert non-Muslims, whom he had vowed to chastise every year of his life. The Parajiya Community was also severely affected during this period.

The spread of Islam in India during this period was the result of immediate mass conversions. It took several centuries during the onslaught of Mughal Empire, especially during the Aurangzeb (reigned 1658-1707) period to finally spread Islam in all portions of India. Most Indian Muslims who converted to Islam belonged to the Hindu fold and some of their ancestors embraced Islam under duress, although some did willingly or under the influence of laws favoring Muslims. Many Kshatriya (warrior) chose to become Muslims during this period. This included many of the Parajiya Soni community.

Prof. K.S. Lal calculated in his book The Growth of Muslim Population in India that between the years 1000 AD and 1500 AD the population of Hindus decreased by 80 million.

PARAJIYA MUSLIMS IN KENYA

There are many Muslim families in Mombasa (Kenya), whom I have met, whose original surnames were similar to Parajiya Sonis. Unfortunately after the spilt Soni's Barot stopped recording births of those who converted to Islam. This community unfortunately do not have the full records about their history.

MAKING HISTORY - FIRST EVER MEETING OF PARAJIYA HINDU AND MUSLIM SONARA JAMAT COMMUNITIES

Muslim Sonis in Mombasa kept in touch with me to know more about their community's history. During my visit to Mombasa in 2012, Muslim Sonis organized a reception inviting both communities on Tuesday, 26th June 2012 and was an honour to be invited me as their chief guest. Members of the Parajiya Pattni Samaj, members of Cutchi Muslim Sonara Jamaat and guests attended this historical reception. This was the first ever formal such meeting of two communities ever taken after more than 1000 years of separation!



HISTORY OF KUTCHI MUSLIM SONIS

At the reception, I gave a brief speech and made them aware of their Hindu Parajiya Soni ancestors. However there is a missing history of Muslims sonis since their conversion. One of the Muslim leader in his welcome speech mentioned following history of the Muslim Sonara Community.

FEW OF THE POINTS IN HIS SPEECH:

Taking their lineage as a tree - we have the information about its roots, courtesy of Mr. Pranbhai (Pattni Connection) - and the most recent history which may form its branches. What we lack is the connection between the two, which I may call the trunk (ambo).

Seeing the plight of educational facilities in Kutch, in those days, one cannot expect from the Sonaras to have left any recorded historical facts about their past. Any history writing about the Sonaras must rely on the memories of the elders of the community. These memories are fast fading away unless the modern youth act promptly to preserve this valued treasure.

Several theories exist on how we left Patan and settled in Kutch. One of which is as follows:

It was in the 18th century during the reign of Mogul emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir somewhere in between 1658 and 1707. A group of Hindu Parajia Pattnis left their homeland in Patan - Gujarat for a yatra heading towards Narayan Sarowar locally known as Naransar in Kutch. On their way they met a muslim saint - Shah Shafi R.A. who converted two thirds of the group to Islam of which some settled in Kutch and others moved to Ahmedabad. And the remaining third continued with the yatra. These people were the ancestors of what is today "The Kutchi Muslim Sonara Community".

Having embraced Islam from the Shree Parajia Pattni Community of goldsmiths, working in gold and silver was always their ancestral profession which they have retained till today. No exact date of conversion to Islam of the Sonaras is available, nor do any records exist about their historical facts.

The facts stated here are based on the memories of the elders of the Jamat, handed down from generation to generation. The Sonaras had already settled in Kutch during the reign of Mogul emperor Aurangzeb.

Kutch being a region of perpetual scarcity where severe droughts strike several times within a decade bringing about hunger and deprivation, the people of Kutch during those days of

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Congratulations to NZ Soni Samaj for hosting International Soni Sneh Milan 2018

tribulations, travel to far-off lands in search of their livelihood. For this reason, Sonaras also went to distant places leaving behind their families at home.

At the initial stage their destination was Sindh – a neighbouring place which was more prosperous compared to Kutch because of the waters of the Indus River. The Sonaras put up their shops in many villages and towns of Sindh, making frequent trips back home.

Moreover they also thought of going abroad, and many of them went to Muscat in Arabia but a majority of such people went to the East African Island port of Zanzibar in the early days of the nineteenth century. Thus their ties with East Africa are more than one hundred and fifty years old.

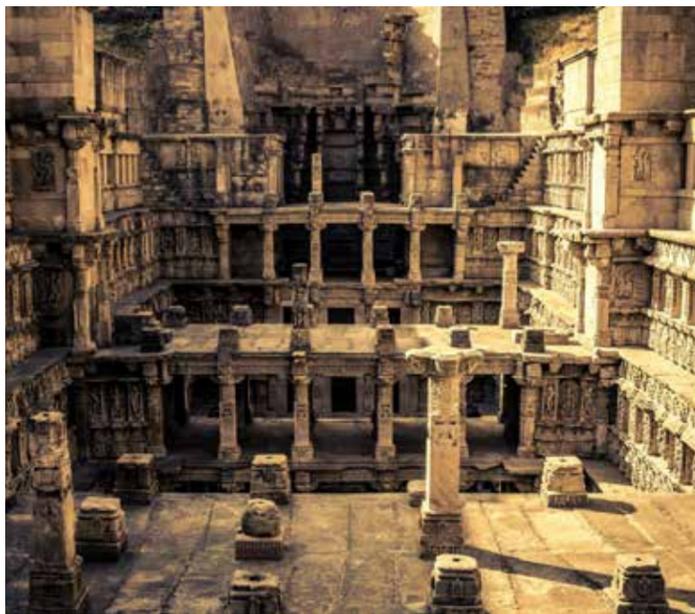
The 'Cutchi Muslim Sonara Jamat', as we know of ourselves, consists about 5,000 members worldwide, out of which over 3,000 are in Karachi, about 200 in Mombasa, about 200-300 are in Dares salaam, Tanzania, a family or two are in the U.K. and the U.S.A each, a handful are in Moroni in the Comoros islands, and a few are still in Cutch.

BREAK UP OF PARAJIYA SONIS SAMAJ

Going back to the Parajiya Soni history, Parajiya Soni Samaj stayed united as Soni Samaj for next 1000 years. Due to severe draught and financial hardship, in the year 1096 the community moved to Patan in Gujarat.

Siddhraj Jaysinh (1094-1143) was the king of Patan. Besides large parts of Gujarat, his control also extended to parts of Rajasthan in present-day Madhya Pradesh. Parajiya Soni community flourished during his reign. The community from Prajav became known as Parajiya Soni of Patan latter called Parajiya Pattni Sonis. They mainly lived in one area of Patan and was called Parajiya Soni Vado (area).

PATAN RANI-KI-VAV DECLARED A WORLD HERITAGE SITE BY UNESCO



Patan - Ancestral Home of Parajiya Pattni Soni Community

Patan reached the heights of glory under the rule of Solankis till Mahmud Ghazni in 1024AD invaded the city and ransacked it. Patan of present times is just a reminiscent of the past glory.

Barely a two-hour drive from Ahmedabad near Patan town, this subterranean stepwell symbolizes the peak of Gujarat-style architecture.

Rani-ki-Vav was built at the height of craftsmens' ability in stepwell construction and the Maru-Gurjara architectural style, reflecting mastery of this complex technique and great beauty of detail and proportions.

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI HAILED THE DECISION OF UNESCO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the decision of UNESCO to recognise an 11th century stepwell in his home state Gujarat, as a World Heritage Site, and said it was a matter of great pride.

VISIT PATAN DURING YOUR NEXT TRIP

The town is soaked in history. Next time you visit Gujarat, do make an effort to visit Patan and Rani Ki Vav. Stroll around the streets where our ancestors once walked. It will be great to be walking down the same streets as did our ancestors.

PARAJIYA HISTORY AFTER THE DEATH OF KING SIDDHRAJ JAYSINH

Going back to the history of Parajiya Soni, since King Siddharaj did not have a son, after his death in 1143 he was succeeded by his grand-nephew Kumarapal. All favours that were showered on Parajiya Sonis by King Siddhraj were lost after Kumarpal took over. He was ruthless and the life was becoming increasingly difficult to survive.

Some of the Parajiya Soni community then decided that it was time to move out of Patan. Thus the community split into three Communities: Parajiya Pattni, Parajiya Girnaras and Parajiya Kutchi Sonis. It was just like a split of three brothers from one family.

Sonis who stayed in Patan kept their identity as Parajiya Pattni Sonis. A rough estimated current population of Pattni Sonis is around 125,000.

Two sections of the Parajiya community left Patan. One was headed by Nandaji Chawda and the other under the leadership of Gangaji Chauhan.

The families headed by Nandaji Chawda settled in Kutch, thus were called Kutchi Parajiya Soni. The families headed by Gangaji Chauhan migrated to Sorath (Saurashtra) and Junagadh which were then called Garana area. Thus the community became known as Parajiya Giranara or Garana Sonis. According to the population census done in 1993 by Girnara Jagruti Mandal in Rajkot, there were 2513 Girnara families.

Total population was calculated as 14,610 Girnara members. (These figures taken from Barot's book – Paraj Vansh Prakash). From this figure, I would make a wild guess of the current estimated population to be around 20,000 - 25,000.

MIGRATION OF PARAJIYA SONIS

We have sufficient information from Shree Barot's books about the history of our community. However we still need to know a lot more about our history, especially the history of Sonis in the last century.

Our forefathers migrated from India about 120 years ago to many countries - Africa, The Middle East, Mauritius, and Fiji and recently to Britain, Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A. and Canada. I do not think any history has ever been written on them to date. It is important that we record this now; otherwise such historical facts will be lost forever. Since most of the Sonis in U.K. came from East Africa, it is appropriate to write a brief history of how the migration started in Africa.

Following is the brief history narrated by our elders on the migration:

PARAJIYA SONIS IN AFRICA

In May 1896 British Government started the construction of the railways in Kenya, which was to run from Mombasa to Lake Victoria. The government brought in 13,000 workers, mainly from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madras. It had not been easy to lay this railway line and many became victims of diseases and wild animals and a number of them lost their lives. In 1899, the railway works reached a flat marshy land. The local natives, the Maasais, knew this place as Ny-robi. This name was later changed and was called Nairobi.

During this period, many middle class Indian traders, artisans and professionals started arriving, particularly after World War 1. These also included many Parajiya Sonis.

PIONEER PARAJIYAS

In January 1901, the work was completed at Port Florence (now Kisumu), at the shores of Lake Victoria. Three quarters of those Indian workers then returned back to India.

The bulk of the migration was between 1920 to 1940, when many of our forefathers migrated and settled in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar. This means that each and every one of us have some kind of history of their forefathers. This is an ideal opportunity to record these historical accounts. It would be wonderful to have such a permanent comprehensive record in memory of our forefathers.

PARAJIYA SONIS IN ZANZIBAR

In the late 19th century, the Sultan of Oman moved his throne from Muscat to Zanzibar, which was the main slave market. Many Indian businessmen were encouraged to settle here.

The mode of Transportation was dhows, moving with the help of sails & winds. Seasonal Monsoon/Trade winds allowed the dhows to move in different directions in different seasons. The majority of the Indians who ventured to settle in this Island, came from Gujarat-mostly from Kathiawar/Kutch, sailing out of the fishing ports of Porbunder, Bedi Bunder, Veraval and other Kutch ports.

The khalasis (sailors) and the Maalums (captains) were mainly from the Kharwa community. Amongst the Indians, were many Sonis who came to Zanzibar were - Luhar Soni, Kansara Soni, Vania (Shreemali) Soni, Memon Soni, Bohra Soni, Parajiya Girnara Soni and the Parajiya Pattni Soni.

FIRST PARAJIYA SONIS IN ZANZIBAR

The Pattni Sonis were mainly were 'Sagars' from Shil, Madhupur and Mangrol and 'Vayas' from Prabhas Paatan and Veraval area.

Some of the Soni names Muslims and Parajiya Sonis were Haji Ahmed Haji Elias, Haji Budha Haji Hasham, Visanji Dunganarshi, Tulsidas Nenshi Devshi, Morarji Devshi, Dhanji Pala and many others. And amongst the Parajiya Sonis were – Pragjibhai Dharamshi, Kakubhai Bhaya, Chhaganbhai Ramji, Laljibhai Savji, Liladharbhai Hansraj, Bhanjibhai Bhagwan, A.P. Bhimji Ranchod Purshottam, Velji Pitamber and many more.

The last two names mentioned started a jewellery shop called Velji & Ranchod. There was also another shop owned by Kakubhai Hirji.

However, it should be noted that the sonara shops also included Bhoj, Arab and Ceylonese Sonis. The coastal Africans who had converted to Islam, the Arabs and the local Indians adored jewellery – whether it was gold, rolled gold, silver or mixed silver (rupu). Thus the sonis had a thriving business.

Chunilal Liladhar catered mainly to the local Indian clientele. He was a very talented craftsman and also led a stylish lifestyle that combined with a contemporary dress sense. Some sonis later moved to the sister island of Pemba; some of these Parajiya included Jivan Mulji, Ramji Hirji and Chhaganlal Kurji. There was another group of sonis that specialised in manufacturing African jewellery, which was being sold by the travelling Arab/Baloch merchants who travelled deeper into the mainland villages to sell the merchandise to the local Africans. Kakubhai Hirji and Velji & Ranchod Co were such specialists. Indeed Kakubhai was the first Parajiya to own a car and also to own a fruit and clove plantation in Zanzibar. A.P.Bhimji of V. & R. Co went on to become one of the renowned and successful businessmen overseas.

Zanzibar was a gateway to East Africa. Many Indians moved to the mainland especially after the construction of Kenya/Uganda Railways. Being in strategic position, not far from the mainland, Zanzibar was a very convenient port of stop for many ships, dhows, and navy. It also emerged as a tourist paradise. Some sonis excelled in the tourist business with curios and Kutchhi artistry 'ghatkaam' the notable sonis in this business were that I could recall were Shivji Morarji and Shivshankar Kalyanji.

The Parajiya Soni pioneers who came to Zanzibar by boat and despite lot of hardships managed to settle down. Zanzibar used to be a stop over port for boats coming from India to collect drinking water en route to Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam. These boats used to anchor for two days. Ranchodbhai and Veljibhai would go and meet all these Parajiya passengers and invite them for lunch at their homes. They then packed some food for these pioneers for their onward journey. These were the generous Parajiya whom we should all be proud of and remember them.

They were in their tender age of between 15 and 20 years. They were the pioneers who left their families and beloved ones to adventure out of India to settle in Zanzibar. Most Sonis became proficient in the local language Kiswahili and the royal language Arabic and Kutchhi, which was the language spoken by the majority Indians. There was also another language which was exclusive spoken by the Sonis called 'fali' language.

They suffered lot of hardship whilst trying to settle down. Most of them would sleep in groups in their own shops. Cooking was also done in groups. So their home and work were all in the same place. Their special dish was Khichdi with orange juice!! All these Sonis had left their families in India. They used to send their remittances to their families by 'Hawalas' through merchant bankers, mainly run by the Bhatias.

FIRST PATTNI MAHILA LADY IN ZANZIBAR

Amongst the first Parajiya women who came to Zanzibar was Maniben w/o Chhaganbhai Ramji. Sonis are fervent worshipers of Mataji. Soni 'Garbi' was popular during Navratri festival. They would spend money lavishly on décor and dresses they had unique technic to play their 'garbi'. Even as of present day, one of the Soni is stilling living in Zanzibar, a descendant of the original settlers- Kamal V.Sagar.

PARAJIYA SONI SHOPS IN ZANZIBAR

There were many other Indian communities like the Brahmins, Vaniks, Lohanas and Bhatias. Parajiya Sonis were highly respected and were referred to as 'Soni Mahajan'. There were about 80 goldsmith or 'sonara' shops throughout the Indian population of some 60,000.

Then there was also an illegal trade in alluvial gold or gold dust, commonly referred to as 'bhuko' and uncut diamonds ('kankara'). These mainly came from then Tanganyika and South African mines. The mineworkers used to pass on such goods to traders in towns near the mines. These were then brought into Zanzibar. There was also importation of gold coins from Italy, bullion gold fondly referred to as 'plates, biscuits and bricks' from South Africa and Europe. The final destination for such gold was India where there was an insatiable demand. Sonis were involved in various stages in the export of this gold, whether legal or otherwise.

The political revolutions, coups, expulsions, Africanisation, racial discrimination or economic disasters forced the Indians, sonis included, to move out of Zanzibar and eventually from East Africa. Many emigrated to the UK, some settled in USA, Canada, Australia and others returned to India.

At present the highest number of Parajiyas outside India are settled in the United Arab Emirates. The rest are distributed all over the world. By and large they are doing fairly well in their chosen professions and businesses. Fortunately for them the circumstances are different. Since many of them are not in the same 'goldsmith' business with their inter-related social and business connections and jealous ...hopefully there is more peace and harmony among them and compassion to help the disadvantaged members of the community.

Times are changing very fast. Today's Parajiya Soni Samaj with its current progress is now making its own history. Let the future generation review this history. I may have missed out lot of names. My apologies for that. The only thing to say now is that the Parajiyas are mostly in a better position. It all started with the courage, sacrifice and the adventure of the few.

Some of them lost their lives in the SIKOTRA storms and went down with dhows into the icy cold waters of the Indian oceans. Our hats off to these brave Pioneer Parajiyas.

PARAJIYA SONIS IN U.K.

The migration to UK happened in four stages. The first one in early 1960s, those who came to study, then in 1967 from Kenyan exodus, in 1973 from Idi Amin's Uganda and lastly 1975 onwards, when Sonis came from various countries. We need the history for all these periods.

PARAJIYA SONIS IN ADEN

Many Sonis settled in Aden in late 1800 and early 1900. Life was normal and businesses were thriving. This was also a period when the movement for Aden's independence from the British was gathering pace. Aden eventually got its independence in 1967 (five years after we left). Due to the political turmoil that followed, majority of the Indians including most of Sonis started to leave Aden.

I do not think any Parajiya Sonis currently living in Aden (now called Yemen)

PARAJIYA SONIS IN U.A.E.

The migration of the Parajiya Pattni Sonis in the Gulf, mainly in Bahrain and Dubai started in around 1950. This was the time where they had to struggle for basic needs, as there was no electricity or drinking water available easily. There was no cultivation of vegetables and grains. These were brought in from India or from the neighbouring countries. Despite such difficulties, gradually managed to establish and expand themselves. Today by contributing to the trade and economy that U.A.E. has carved a very successful and efficient market in gold jewellery locally known as "GOLD SOUK". We owe a lot to our elders to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Since the advent of our elders the population of the community in the U.A.E. has now grown to a sizeable 3000 members (500 families approx.) The largest group resides in Dubai and Sharjah. Our Samaj is known as Shree Parajiya Soni Samaj. We organise many social events and the best being the Navratri and our New Year celebrations when the whole community of Parajiyas get-together.

OUR SONI BAROT

The ancient history mentioned above was written by our Soni Barot, Shree Sagarbhai Barot who resides in Rajkot, India. In the old times, there was no such government system of registering births in India. Barots did this work. Each Hindu community had its own such Barots, who would record the names of new births and other historical details in their books. These books then got passed on from Barot's one generation to the next. These record books are still maintained and updated by Sagarbhai Barot.

TIME TO UNITE AGAIN AS PARAJIYA SONI

It was due to political and economic reasons that the Parajiya Soni Samaj split more than 800 years from Patan to three communities Parajiya Girnara, Parajiya Pattni and Parajiya Kutchi Soni.

The time is now ripe to again unite all three communities to Parajiya Soni Samaj. I applaud the decision by NZ Soni Samaj to organise the world gathering of all Sonis.

MESSAGE TO THE SONI COMMUNITY BY WRITER:

Due to the space constrain, above is a shortened version on history of Parajiya Soni community. I thank the NZ Soni Samaj Committee inviting me to write a main feature for the souvenir to celebrate the Soni World gathering in New Zealand.

I extend my greetings to all our Soni communities members worldwide and wish all guests attending in NZ a successful world gathering.

MESSAGE FROM HARISH LODHIA JP

TO NEW ZEALAND SONI SAMAJ



I wish to congratulate Dinesh Raniga and his executive committee of NZ Soni Samaj on organising this long awaited challenge of hosting Soni Sammelan in New Zealand.

I feel privileged to be born and raised in a Soni family, imbibing the intrinsic qualities that make a good Soni. In essence, Sonis have been active partners in the welfare and progress of every community, society and country in which they live and they have extended their potential to include political governance, public administration, diplomacy and many other areas of activities. We have been recognised as people with good business acumen, compassion and understanding towards all, wealth creation and community responsibilities.

The New Zealand Soni Samaj has been a great stimulant to the ideals and principles that are cherished treasures of our community. Our community in New Zealand and other parts of the world is small, but we continue to punch above our weight, mainly because of the traditional values that find high esteem in us. I believe that it is these values that will continue to mould the character and personality of our young, growing and ensuing generations.

The New Zealand Soni Samaj has planned a number of activities, which I am sure, will evince the interests of our youth and encourage them to adopt and pursue the qualities and values that we inherited from our parents and grandparents. It is this continuous link between the past and the present that will ensure the continuity of our identity in the future.

I take this opportunity to pay my respects to the elders in the community and wish all the members of the Soni family good luck, peace, harmony, progress and prosperity.

Harish Lodhia JP

Honorary Consul for the Republic of Fiji

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SONIS IN FIJI A BRIEF HISTORY

BY AMRATLAL JOGIA AND C.K NANDHA

The term “Soni” or “Sonar” implies one who works with gold and other precious metals. The English equivalent of a Soni would be a Goldsmith.

The Soni/Sonar, by the very nature of his or her profession would be a person with the qualities of great patience, an artistic mind and vision. The end product of their labour would be something that would be loved, admired and adorned by persons to enhance their prestige and beauty. It would normally be an expression of love - love of parents towards their child or love of a lover towards his or her beloved. Therefore, the item a Soni produces will uphold a great sentimental value for years and generations to come, both for the giver and the recipient.

Who is this group of people who have traditionally taken to this profession for its livelihood?

There is an interesting legend and mythology behind this, which is well covered elsewhere. Hence this article confines itself to a brief background on Sonis that migrated to the South Pacific region.

During the British Raj in late 1800s the then rulers of India, through whatever means, took large number of Indians to work as farm labourers to their various colonies. Fiji then had a budding sugar industry and needed such a labour force, and thus began the settlement of the Indian community in Fiji.

Once a sizeable Indian community was established in Fiji, the enterprising Gujaratis started to look for opportunities there. Thus in 1904 two such persons made the first move. It would be of interest to note that these two were Sonis, namely Chunilal Ganji Jogia and Virji Narsi Jogia.

As the news of their success reached home in India, more families were encouraged to make similar moves.

Initially, they traded as hawkers moving from place to place, mainly on foot, carrying their small bag of goods. It was only matter of time when their families started to join them and their lives became more established. They soon started small village shops, and while still carrying on the profession of Sonars, started diversifying into small grocery shops.

By the end of the Second World War in 1945, the Indian community had taken its roots well in Fiji. It faced an uphill battle against discrimination, suppression and poverty. Its struggle for political, economic and social equality had started.

The Gujarati community also made its due contribution to this struggle. Although we were only a small part of the greater Fiji Indian community, we took a full and active part in whatever way we could.

As a trading community, our contribution was mainly financial. We extended a helping hand to whatever projects the greater Indian community undertook. Whether it was a small village school, a temple or anything else, our small village shopkeeper was always called upon to contribute.

But perhaps the most important area in which we came in was the extension of unsecured credit to the sugar cane farmers. The credit was always for long periods and was repaid only when the farmer was paid by the Australian sugar miller (CSR Co) at the end of the harvesting season.

The Gujarati traders had to put in hard work, determination, perseverance and a lot of sacrifice to survive and make progress. When one looks at the names of prominent business firms in Fiji, the names of Soni business houses stand out. Names such as M.K Pala (Suva), Tappoo Kanji (Sigatoka), Samji Jadavji (Nadi), Meghji Arjun and Punja Kara (Lautoka), and Maganlal Jiwa (Ba) are but a few that stand out. There are many others.

As years went by, and it became clear that Fiji was to be our home for generations to come, confidence started to build among our people. They started investing in properties, and diversifying their businesses. Duty-free retailing and manufacturing were some of the areas we went into.

Our elders were always conscious of the value of education. Every family took full advantage of whatever educational facilities were available in Fiji in those days, which was either just primary school or a few scattered secondary schools. However, as we made progress, families that could afford did not hesitate to send their children overseas for university education. It was not long before our qualified boys and girls were seen in every profession. Dr Kanta Soni, Dr Manilal Jogi, CK Nandha and Liladhar Jeraj would be among the pioneers.

Our involvement in the greater Fiji community also was not lacking. From local committees, to various boards, to local and national government, to civil service, we took part and made our mark at every level.

Names such as H.M Lodhia, P.K Bhindi, Hari Punja and Kanti Tappoo are but a few of the hundreds that have served in various capacities in various organisations. To list all of them would be too exacting a task.

In addition to all this, the Soni Samaj in Fiji did not fail in its duty towards its own members. The Samaj started taking shape in an informal way in the 1930s. Its main activities in those early days were to set out norms and guidelines for its members to follow during engagements, weddings, deaths, etc. Even in those early days, members did not overlook the value of education. Money was raised and a boarding school was established in Porbandar, Gujarat.

Whenever called upon, it also extended financial and moral support to its members in need.

The purchase of a suitable land and the building of a community hall by the Nadi Soni Samaj in 1960s was a proud and momentous occasion in the history of Sonis in Fiji. This hall has been well utilised by all the Sonis of Fiji for occasions such as weddings, engagements, religious functions, Navratri Garba, etc.

During 1960s the Samaj was formally established with a proper constitution and registered under the laws of Fiji.

Some of those who served as Presidents since the early days are:

Nanjibhai V Bagia, Makanji K Pala, Sundarji Kalidas, Liladhar Bhanji Pala, Chhaganlal Kanji Nandha, Amritlal Dhirubhai Raniga, Shantilal Amarsi, Harilal Maganlal Raniga, Rasiklal Deoji Jogi, Harjiwan Madhavji Pala, Yogesh Kantilal Punja, Ashwin Chhaganlal Nandha, Romit Jayantilal Meghji.

It would be almost impossible to make a thorough and complete list of all the individuals who played an active part and made positive contribution to the progress of the Soni Samaj in Fiji. At this stage, it would be enough to just record our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all those people and to express our sincere thanks for their time, efforts and sacrifices for the benefit of future generations.

FIJI CHATRALAY BOARDING HOUSE IN PORBANDAR

BY HIMAT SONI

Soni elders who migrated to Fiji in early 1900s thought for the future generations with regard to education. They believed that they should build a Chatralay or boarding house for the benefit of children who wish to go for further education to India. They all believed at the time that they would return to India after earning enough money. Some of them did return to India.

Laxmi Ben Pala of Vancouver, Canada and Mrs Lalji Paidia are examples of students who went to Porbandar for further education.

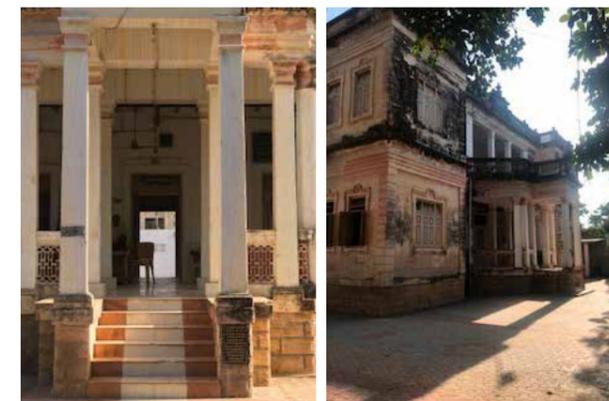
In 1944, under the Presidency of Soni Makanji Pala, funds were raised in Fiji and the land was donated by Rana Sahib of Porbandar on the condition that it would be used for the sole purpose of education and related matters such as boarding house.

The construction of the boarding house was completed and was supervised by Soni Mohanlal Pala and Madhavji Pala. It was officially opened by His Highness Maharaja Natwarsinghji in June 1947.

In fact, many Soni children from the villages are accommodated at the Fiji Chatralay now.

The Fiji chatralay is managed by trustees in Porbandar. Initially, trustees were from Fiji but with time and the demise of the trustees, they were replaced by local trustees from Porbandar, India.

The property is very centrally located and is substantially valuable in monetary terms today. It is a matter of pride that our forefathers from Fiji have left a legacy in the form of a property which is utilised wisely.



There is a great potential in the property if the local trustees in conjunction with international Soni Samaj representatives do a long term feasibility study.

It is important to note that a condition of the donation of land by Rana Sahib was that the land should revert to the donor ie: Rana Sahib if any attempt is made to sell the land.

With this clause in mind, it is the writer's opinion that the present trustees should bring the issue of improvement of the property in the forum and make full use of the potential of this very valuable real estate. International forum should discuss to raise the standard of boarding and lodging facilities and make long term feasibility study taking in to consideration the growth of the city of Porbandar and foreign Sonis visiting Porbandar bearing in mind that Porbandar is the birth place of Mahatma Gandhi.

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT QUEENSLAND SONI SAMAJ INC



On behalf of the Queensland Soni Samaj I would like to congratulate the New Zealand Soni Samaj Inc, for this 2018 Sneh Milan "Celebrating Soni Culture Across Generations" - an enormous feat undertaken by New Zealand Soni Samaj.

As you are aware the foundation of getting together Sonis from all over world was initiated by the Queensland Soni Samaj in 2012, when I along with my 21 committee members successfully staged the first Sneh Milan in Brisbane, Australia and representatives of Sonis from all over the world united over a four-day event to share a long-lasting relationships and family ties, make new friends and enjoy cultural events. I believe the Global Soni Directory launched at the event is still used to network and retain contacts with Sonis all over the world.

This was followed by a paradise success of Sneh Milan in Fiji in 2015.

Now the tradition continues, and New Zealand has proudly taken charge of hosting the Sneh Milan 2018 in Auckland.

My head is held high, that I have served Queensland Soni Samaj, over three Sneh Milan's, 2012 Brisbane, 2015 Fiji and now 2018 Auckland. I am elated that I have also served as President of New Zealand Soni Samaj Inc., for two terms 2000-2001.

Organising a Sneh Milan of this magnitude is no easy task, and always requires dedicated and hardworking members to make it happen as it is a tireless and thankless assignment. I congratulate Dinesh Raniga and his team to have put in a lot of effort in organising this event.

We are on a roll from 2012 as Sneh Milan has gathered momentum and we are confident that in the next four years we again will have a Soni Samelan in another part of the world.

These get-togethers can especially become the foundation and incentive for our Samaj Youth to get together and get to know their extended family members living all over the world and rejuvenate the friendship be it via, sports, entertainment or plain fellowship.

I again reiterate that Sneh Milan is an important occasion for our Soni Samaj Community to renew ties, to celebrate our culture, heritage, and the valuable contribution that we all make in the countries we live in and now call home.



Queensland Soni Samaj Committee 2017/2018 - Photo taken at Brisbane City Hall
L-R: Ashita Trikamji (Secretary), Reema Amratlal (Committee Member), Himesh Trikamji (Treasurer), Dipak Amratlal (President), Harilal Jamnadas (Vice President), Bhawna Raniga (Committee Member), Maansi Amratlal (Youth Wing), Raweena Raval (Committee Member)
Absent: Nimesh Champenari (Committee Member), Eesha Parekh (Youth Wing), Rishil Raniga (Youth Wing)

I would again like to congratulate and thank the New Zealand Soni Samaj, members and families for organising the Sneh Milan 2018, and with the blessing bestowed by our Hingraj Mataji, may it be a great success and a blessed Sneh Milan.

Dipak Amratlal
President



Queensland Soni Samaj Inc.
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Jaswin Gandhi BMS (Hons), LLB - Director
Email: jaswin@gandhilala.co.nz

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Wishing the New Zealand Soni Samaj and all the participants a very successful and an enjoyable Sneh Milan

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SHREE GIRNARA SONI SAMAJ UK

Shree Girnara Soni Samaj UK was inaugurated in 1974 when our members who had settled in UK from East Africa and had an informal gathering to celebrate Diwali and Nutan Varsh in Leicester. At the time, we had appx. 50 families settled in Leicester and surrounding areas and appx. 40 families in London.

In 1976, first elections were held and then every 5 years a new committee is elected to serve on the Samaj. During 1976, the Constitution of the Samaj was also drawn up with the main aim to serve the community.

Ever since the inauguration of our Samaj, I would proudly like to say that for the last 43 years, we have been holding Navaratri and Nutan Varsh Snehmilan for the Samaj free of charge for its paid members. Currently, we have more than 415 Girnara Soni Samaj families living in UK.

In 1994 the Samaj acquired a three-storey building in the heart of Leicester City Centre next to then the Swaminarayan Temple in St James Street. This Community Centre is based in St James Street, LE1 3SU.

The current Trustees of the Samaj are Mr Chunibhai Kurjibhai Nandha, Mr Pradipbhai Santilal Jogia, Mrs Sumitraben (Minaben) Rameshbhai Jogia, Mr Devidasbhai Madhavjibhai Kachhla and Mr Biheshbhai Kantilal Pala.

The executive committee members of the Samaj are chairperson Mr Narendra Bagia, acting secretary Mr Shashikant Raniga, Treasurer Mr Hitendrabhai Lodhia, Mr Ketanbhai Sureshbhai Jogia, Mr Mishal Pravinbhai Pala, Mr Jinendra Rameshbhai Jogia, Mr Pratik Rameshbhai Pala, Mr Manish Rameshbhai Pala, Mr Sharad Biheshbhai Pala and Mr Mitul Rameshbhai Pala.

Since inauguration of the Samaj, we would like to highlight and acknowledge the Seva given to the Samaj by the following Samaj pioneers'

Late Mr Zaveribhai Odhavjibhai Pala, Late Mr Laxmidasbhai Karsanjibhai Lodhia, Late Mr Chagganbhai Ranchodbhai Raniga, Late Mr Bhanjibhai Gokaldas Raniga, Late Mr Harilal Morarjibhai Jogia, Late Mr Gopalbhai Jivandas Vaitha, Late Mr Surendrabhai (Munnubhai) Girdharbhai Pala, Late Mr Chhaganbhai Morarjibhai Jogia, Late Mr Amratlalbhai Lodhia, Late Mr Gordhanbhai Mohanlal Jogia, Mr Ramanbhai Vishrambhai Jogia, Mr Kantilalbhai Jerambhai Pala.

We also acknowledge the following members who have served the Samaj in the capacity of Chairmanship:

Mr Madhavbhai Ramjibhai Lodhia, Mr Chandubhai Ratilal Gunchala, Mr Vipinbhai Gokaldas Lodhia, Mr Avinashbhai Harilalbhai Lodhia, Mr Vinodbhai Sunderjibhai Lodhia, Mr Pradipbhai Santilal Jogia, Mr Dhirenbhai Chatrabhujbhai Jogia.

We wish the NZ Soni Samaj all the best for very successful and wonderful Snehmilan.

Mr Narendra Amarshibhai Bagia

Chair – On behalf of Shree Girnara Soni Samaj UK



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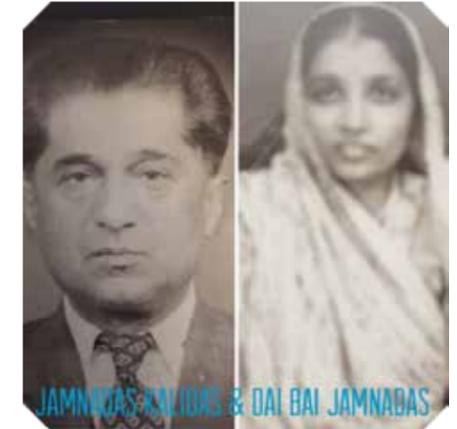
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REFLECTIONS OF PROUD DAUGHTERS

BY DHIRAJ JAMNADAS RANIGA AND GULAB JAMNADAS JOGIA

As we celebrate with much pride and joy the New Zealand International Soni Sneh Milan, we would like to reflect on memories of our childhood with our parents who were also the pioneers of our Soni Community in Fiji.

Looking back it is very obvious now that our father Jamnadas Kalidas and our mother Daiben were truly unique in their journey as the new migrants to Fiji. Most children have fond memories of their parents but we brothers and sisters were truly privileged to be brought up in a home with a sense of justice and fair go for both sons and daughters.



We daughters were never made to feel that we didn't have the same right to education as the sons. That alone in itself was a rare phenomenon in the days of our childhood in the 1950s. Our Father himself was not an educated man, having arrived from Gujrat, leaving his young wife and two children behind. Barely in his twenties, he worked tirelessly in Fiji like lots of other young men who had migrated from India. Our mother Daiben was a posthumous child who was married off at the age of thirteen and left her widowed mother in India to join her husband in Fiji. Barely in her teens, she never saw her mother again. Her resilience and determination in supporting her husband, to forge a better future for her large family was remarkable. What was so unique about them was theirs foresight into the importance of education not just for their own children but all the children in the community.

We still remember with much fondness our father's eagerness to see our school reports which he gave a privileged place in his Tejori. (home safe). As there were no universities in Fiji in those days, it was not unknown for boys to go overseas for further tertiary education. Our father didn't once for a moment hesitate to send our two elder sisters overseas for further studies when they finished high school. This was during the time when girls were usually married off in their early teens.

This sense of justice just didn't stop with education. Our parents somehow managed to merge their large family with generous gestures of contribution to the community. It was not unknown for young girls who were left unsupported by the death of one of their parents to live with our family until they were married and well settled. We as children had a sense of overwhelming pride in our parents when from we would hear these girls, who were now mothers and grandmothers, say that this period of the lives was the best in their memories, when they experienced a sense of secure family life.

Our father was not a religious man but he was a very spiritual man who had a profound sense of right from wrong and he had the courage to voice his opinion. He was strongly opposed to barter system marriages where brothers and sisters and even cousins were exchanged in marriage, because of the insular nature of the Soni community then. These were times when family honour was alleged to be at stake if the bride or a daughter- in-law didn't have a ghunghat!

As we salute our forefathers, let us not forget those who played a truly crucial role in changing our community for the better and who were ahead of their times. Their strength of character and spirit should be a beacon for all of us so we can also voice our thoughts and progressive opinions without hesitation. We learnt from my father that a true mark of a man is not how prosperous he is or what position he has in the community, but it is his strength to speak the truth and help those who have fallen by the wayside in their community.

VALJI BHANJI

(ARTICLE LOVINGLY CONTRIBUTED BY HIS FAMILY)



Valji Bhanji was born in Gir Hadmatia in the year 1891. He completed his education upto the third standard in a gujurati-medium school in India. He stopped his education and started learning the job of a gold-smith under the guidance of his father, Bhanji Bapa.

In the year 1929 Valji Bhanji landed in Narewa, Nadi, Fiji from Gir Hadmatia, India. He was a goldsmith hawker by profession. He also suffered from acute asthma. Fortunately he found a friend named Bhagwandin who cured his asthma by the use of an Indian medicine.

His wife Zaverben with her daughter Prabha Kuar joined him from India in the year 1932. A son was born to Zaverben in the year 1933 who was named Dhiraj Lal Lodhia.

Valji Bhanji later switched his profession and started a grocery business in Narewa, Nadi. He

moved to Lomowai in the year 1936. However his business was not successful which is why he moved back to Narewa in 1938. He started another business in Noamotomoto which was more successful compared to his other shop. His shop still exists there.

He was a strong man. He also had a flair for cooking sweets and savoury. He would close his shop in the afternoon and would prepare delicious food items for several Soni-weddings. He later passed away in 1977 at the age of 87.

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SUMEET TAPPOO

THE PRIDE OF THE GLOBAL SONI COMMUNITY



Sumeet Tappoo, son of Maya & Mahendra Tappoo, is the only Soni who is a professional singer and an international concert performer with a base in India's Film and Music Industry capital, Mumbai. Fiji-born Sumeet graduated with Bachelor of Business and Masters in Business Administration (MBA) with Distinction from a premier University in Sydney, Australia.

However, his passion for music, spirituality and philanthropy motivated him to lead a career in Indian music. Starting from his first public performance at the tender age of 8, he has

performed more than 600 concerts in India and internationally covering the Indian diaspora in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Singapore, Malaysia, USA, Canada, UK, Mauritius & South Africa.

With 30+ albums to his credit, including releases by some of India's leading Music Houses, Sumeet has recorded with and given live performances alongside some of India's music industry legends including Pandit Jasraj, Sonu Nigam, Hariharan, Shankar Mahadevan, Suresh Wadkar, Anup Jalota, Pankaj Udhas, Talat Aziz, Shaan, Kunal Ganjawala, Sadhana Sargam, Richa Sharma, Mahalaxmi Iyer, Bhupinder Mitali and others. His debut Pop album "Meri Deewangi" peaked at #2 on the Indian charts and remained the Top 10 for over 35 weeks.

A live performance in the presence of the legendary Mr. Amitabh Bachchan has brought Sumeet much accolade from media, critics and music lovers globally.

His lineup of prestigious awards includes:

- Lions International Gold Award for "Best Emerging Soulful Singer 2014"
- Lions International Gold Award 2016 in recognition of his contribution to community service through music
- An Indian Government Sanskriti Award in 2016 for his "outstanding contribution towards spreading Indian Culture"
- An Award of Excellence by Fiji's Ministry of Education in 2016 for his "outstanding contribution to Music, Arts & Culture"
- Awarded the GRAMMA Award in USA by the SAI Global Mission for his outstanding contribution towards music and philanthropy
- Felicitated by ISKCON's "Bhakti Kala Kshetra" to spread the Glory of Krishna globally
- Honoured by Facebook to sign their prestigious 'Celebrity Wall' in their headquarters in Silicon Valley

As a Philanthropist, he assists charitable, social, spiritual and non-profit organisations internationally through his music concerts. He also serves on the Advisory Board of the Fine Arts & Service Society in USA and as Chairman of the International Advisory Board of Sai Prema Foundation Fiji.

The NZ Soni Samaj is very proud to have hosted Sumeet's concerts in Auckland and we are very grateful to him that the Samaj was able to raise a record sum for the Starship Foundation.



MRS NARABDA BEN RANIGA

(ARTICLE LOVINGLY CONTRIBUTED BY HER FAMILY)



All elders in our Samaj have a special place in the lives and hearts of their families. Those who came from India to Fiji in the late 1800s and early 1900s – we can only admire their willingness to adopt and embrace a new beginning in an alien land and under very tough conditions. They have all worked hard under difficult circumstances, often in poverty, to raise their children and grandchildren, with a wish to give their descendants a better quality of life than they themselves ever enjoyed. We should all be grateful that we are enjoying the fruits of their blood, sweat and tears today.

More often than not, we take our parents and grandparents for granted. And why not, right? They have always been there. Often we forget to say the simple things to our elders – to remind them that they are special and appreciated. When an opportunity such as this arises, to convey our thoughts regarding our elders, it gives us a chance to pause, think more deeply, acknowledge and show our gratitude to the unsung heroes in our lives.

Narabda Makanji Raniga, better known as Motiba or simply Ba to her family and friends, is one such person among our respected elders. Ba is well known for her wit and sense of humour. In recent years she has been saying (and it is difficult to say whether she is joking or is serious) that she is a Lodhia. When we reply “No, tame Raniga cho!”, her response usually is “Raniga loko bao vaida hoi...”.

Based on the sketchy information we have, Ba was most probably born around 1924 in Barvala, Bhavnagar. She arrived in Fiji from Amreli in 1932. In 1940, Ba got married to our Bapuji, the late Soni Makanji Harjiwan Raniga. Again, the fragmentary information does not enable us to be precise, but Ba and Bapuji had a significant age difference. After getting married, they initially lived in Labasa before moving to Suva during the Second World War. With strength, wisdom and their faith in Maal Bapa, Ba and Bapuji raised 10 children from very modest beginnings. She migrated to New Zealand in 1988.

Ba has also been an active member of the Soni Samaj Mahila Mandal in Fiji during the 70s and 80s. She is renowned for her culinary skills, particularly her amazing monthars and boondi nu ladvo. Her honesty, integrity and sense of right and wrong is unparalleled and something for all of us to aspire to.

Ba and Bapuji’s hard work, tolerance and sacrifice have brought dividends to all their descendants. Like many of her contemporaries, she is extremely proud of the fact that she achieved her dream of providing a better quality of life for her family than she herself ever had. Ba’s positivity makes her more admired and appreciated with every passing year. Her gift is in her kind words, the manner of her encouragement and her reassurance in tough times that Maal Bapa is watching over us and things will fall into place.

When asked to write down their thoughts on Ba, below is a sample of quotes from her children:

“She has always assisted anyone in need in whichever way possible throughout her life.

She had the God given power and wisdom to go through a lot of hardship, raising ten beautiful children.

She used to wash clothes in the Sabeto River, pull water from wells on a daily basis, make breakfast, lunch and dinner for 12 people daily, get us ready for school with lunch parcels, in addition to all the other domestic chores.

I recall her having many sleepless nights when we were sick.

With limited resources she made us what we are today.

The only time I saw her break down and cry was when we lost Bapuji. But even then, seeing those around her were also in shock and pain, she somehow gathered enough strength and began comforting us, saying “Dikra, Maal Bapa ni marji...”

The word which best describes Ba for me is ‘forbearance’.

Ba has always been highly organised and likes to keep her surroundings neat and tidy at all times. You can see that even today - her room is the tidiest of all in her household with everything in its place. When travelling, Ba would organise her luggage in a particular and efficient manner.”

Ba, you are our hero, the pillar of strength and the glue that has held our family together. To the matriarch of our entire Raniga family, we say a big “Thank You” to you, our Ba & Motiba.

Your legacy will continue given your love, values and teachings have trickled down to your 26 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren.

Words of thanks and gratitude can never fully acknowledge where your hard work and sacrifices have bought us today. There will always remain a debt that we will never be able to repay: your unwavering love, selfless sacrifice and the love and attention you have bestowed on each and every one of us.

Ba / Motiba, we love you!



HARSHAE RANIGA



Harshae Raniga was born in 1994 to parents, Shubha and Jaynend and is a close younger brother to sister, Sanam.

Why people consider Harshae to be a high achiever is due to his success and his passionate pursuit of soccer alongside his achievements in his studies. His passion for his sport has provided him great opportunities for travel from a young age to the likes of US, Europe and Asia.

The most rewarding times for him have been when he represented his birth country, New Zealand at the U17s in Mexico and when he was selected as part of the All Whites Team for an international friendly.

Although his soccer means training or games 5-6 days a week and keeping fit and healthy take up most

of Harshae's time; he also enjoys time with his friends, watching English and Hindi movies (sometimes on repeat so he can laugh again and again at some scenes and also scary movies once in a while-preferably during the day!) and listening to a good playlist.

He has a great sense of humor and as his name suggests, he brings smiles and joy to those around him.

Those who know about horoscopes - Harshae is a Libran through and through - fair minded and weighs everything up before he makes a decision, which can be quite painful when he's trying to choose something off a new menu! However, under the Chinese horoscope he is a Dog, loyal and dedicated to those he loves.

One new thing he has started recently is learning how to cook with the help of his mum and so far has made a great roast dinner, chinese noodles and chicken curry. He has also started to dabble a bit in trading shares (on a small scale) and is always on the lookout to try something new.

The people who have had the greatest impact/influence on shaping Harshae as a person are his close family - especially his nani and nana when he was younger - and good friends.

The people who have had the greatest impact/influence on shaping Harshae as a soccer player are his early aged coaches at Wynrs and his parents.

Harshae is currently a Jnr Project Manager at Fletcher Building where he is applying his IT/Accounting degree in their technology area. He hopes to integrate more travel and work across the next few years while continuing to play soccer.



SUNIL RANIGA

A HIGH ACHIEVER IN CRICKET AND FOOTBALL

Congratulations to Sunil on his many achievements. Soni Samaj NZ recognises and thanks Sunil for his efforts within the Samaj and beyond.

Some of Sunil's achievements:

- Eden Roskill Cricket Coach of the year 2013, Cornwall Cricket. Burgess Trophy. Contribution to Club Cricket. 2017. This trophy has been won by many great names in cricket. Some of them are Rex Smith (OBE for services to cricket), A Parore, Adrian Dale, Sam Anderson, T Wilson, M Greatbach, Three Kings United Football. Rees Trophy. 2016 Club member of the year.
- Auckland Cricket Titles in coaching. Year 7/8, Under 14 Pregs, Under 18 Pregs, B1 mens Grade.
- A1 Mens grade at Eden Roskill. (the team was promoted to Prem Reserves Minor and Eden Roskill was the only club to have 2 Prem Reserves Teams.)
- A1 Mens grade at Cornwall. (the team is now in Prem Reserves Minor and Cornwall also have 2 Prem Reserves teams.)

This year Sunil is coaching Prem Reserves Minor and Senior B1 at Cornwall.

Sunil is a fully qualified Level 2 NZ Cricket Coach.



In Football Sunil has been with Three Kings United for 28 years playing at various mens level and started playing over 35 grade 19 years ago. He started playing over 40 grade in 2008 and won Division 1 in 2015.

He has coached at Three Kings united for 12 years from 2002 to 2014.

And indeed Sunil was a founding member, coach, player and manager of the Aapru Football Club, a precursor to the Soni All Whites. We thank Sunil for his great work and contribution to our Samaj over all these years.

DR KANTHA

CONGRATULATIONS, DR. KANTHA SONI

*Not only loved by her parents,
She is loved by several friends.
Giving advice whenever in need,
For she is a doctor in profession.*

*She is a humble doctor,
The only child of her parents.
They were virtuous parents
Who passed away years ago.*

*It was 1953 when they were in Fiji,
No one was sent at that time
For further studies out of the country.
But her parents sacrificed.*

*They sent her to New Zealand,
It was amazing for the society
When hardly one goes abroad
Even for the journey.*

*But her parents were broad minded,
Being their only daughter.
Still ambitious to go alone for further studies,
It was very difficult at the time.*

*Not used to the climate of New Zealand,
Not the eating habits.
It was totally different,
But she was determined to study hard.*

*Congratulations to her parents.
She was the first Indian girl
From Fiji to be a doctor.
The society were proud of her.*

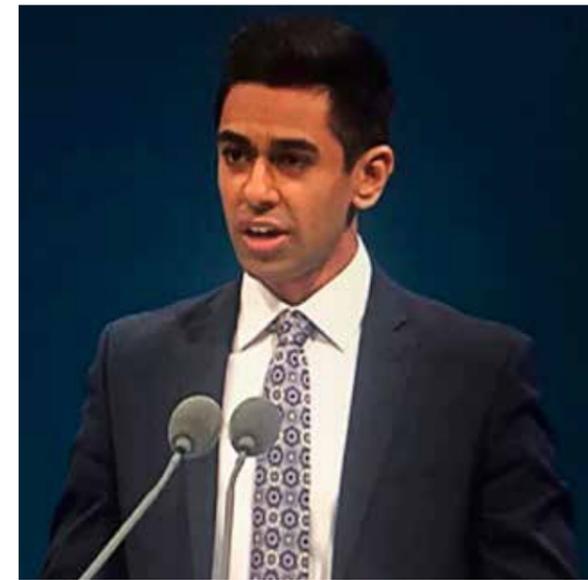
*Her parents were overwhelmed
When she worked in Fiji for ages.
She also did service for the poor
And gave advice to whoever needed it.*

*She is none other than Dr Kantha Madhavji.
To this day, she is a humble doctor with a smiling face,
Loving and generous by nature.
May God bless her in abundance.*

Inspirational poem, by Kanta Pala.

COUNCILLOR

AMEET JOGIA



Ameet Jogia is a young and upcoming British Indian politician in the UK. Ameet is an active member of the Conservative Party, having joined the Party on his 16th birthday. He has been involved with the Party ever since, having been elected as a Local Councillor in his local town of Harrow in 2014 (getting the highest number of votes in his town). In 2017, Ameet was selected as Prime Minister Theresa May's candidate to stand in the June 2017 General Election.

Ameet is a third generation Girnara Soni living in the UK, whose story resonates with many of the Indian diaspora. Ameet is the son of Narottambhai Devshibhai Jogia who originates from Lindi/Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and Hansaben Jogia (nee Vaitha)

who originates from Mwanza, Tanzania. Having been born in Harrow, North West London, his family had moved to the UK in the 1970s from Tanzania in search of a better life.

It wasn't always easy for Ameet - his family business went bankrupt when he was young which left them homeless. Ameet consequently comes from a humble background having grown up on a council estate with his family. He has since been an advocate for aspiration, enterprise and hard-work. Ameet's background has driven his political conviction, as he strives to empower his community members to be the best they can be.

Ameet has been labelled a "blue eyed boy" and "rising star" within the Conservative Party, following his speech at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester in 2015. Ameet's story resonated with many within the Party and was used as an example of what modern day Conservatism stands for. Following Ameet's campaign in the General Election in 2017, Ameet addressed Conference again on fighting injustices within society.

Ameet led a dynamic General Election campaign in June 2017, which was dubbed as being one of the most energetic in London. He harnessed social media to attract younger votes and support. Ameet's experience of working with diverse communities also helped him to engage with a cross section of the community and winning their votes. Ameet made the Conservative message real and accessible, focusing on key policies such as supporting local businesses, reforming education, lowering taxation and addressing immigration. Ameet increased the Conservative vote share in Brent North - a stark contrast to the rest of the swing in London.

Ameet is also currently the youngest Councillor in Harrow. Ameet has served in the Shadow Cabinet in Harrow Council, becoming the Cabinet Member for Culture and Community. He is committed to promoting integration within the borough and strengthening its diversity. In the Council, Ameet also holds responsibility for traffic safety.

Ameet currently works in Westminster as a Political Aide to the Lord Popat of Harrow. Ameet has supported Lord Popat in his role as the former Minister of the Crown for Business



and Transport in the Lords, as well as his current role as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Rwanda and Uganda. Ameet thoroughly enjoys his role with Lord Popat, given his own background from the British Indian and East African community. Prior to that, Ameet graduated from King's College London with a degree in Geography.

Ameet is also very active with the Conservative Friends of India which was launched by Lord Popat and Prime Minister David Cameron in April 2012. In November 2015, Ameet met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his official State Visit to the UK to engage with the British Indian diaspora.

Ameet is a practising Hindu and enjoys spending time with friends and family. Ameet is a Chelsea fan, enjoys going to the gym and has recently taken up golf.

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A TREASURE OF GEMS DAIBAI GANESH JOGIA

I am putting together a few memories that I hope will give the present generation some idea of how our community has evolved over my lifetime.

I was born in the village of Bantwa, Gujarat, India. I was one of three children born to Bhanji Dharamsi and Ram Bai Bhanji. We travelled to Fiji in the 1930s when I was just 6 years old. Travel abroad to earn a living was the norm in those days. I lived in Fiji till 1988 and migrated to NZ thereafter.

During my childhood the attitude of our community was male dominated. Girls were confined to the home and most did not enter into any sort of formal education. At the earliest opportunity the question of marriage of the daughter started taking prominence. I, however, was most fortunate to be allowed to attend St Thomas School and studied to class three. The curriculum back then was taught in Hindi and it was only in senior years that students learnt English and Literature. I was engaged at the early age of 12 and married a year later, again that being standard practice in those days to wed off girls around that age group.

Compatibility of the couple or their respective families was hardly given any consideration. The daughters were given away in marriage to almost unknowns as long as it was within the Soni community. The thinking in those days was 'Khato Kamato Hoi to Chaalse'.

We lived a simple and happy life in Moristaar. We were self-sufficient in practices of sourcing supplies and earning an ample living from the small jewellery and grocery business our family ran. It was only during World War 2 and the imminent fear of bombings that the family moved to Sambeto, Lautoka, where they settled thereafter, and then moved to Nadi in the later years.

In the early days, there was not much formal awareness of Soni Samaj. There was an existence of belonging and community, but in those days, it was usually the male folk who were involved with the comings & goings of the community/Samaj as such. My earliest memory of the Samaj was the formation of the Soni Mahila Mandal after the building of the Samaj Hall in Nadi. The involvement of the ladies was restricted to cooking during weddings and providing support to whatever the men decided. The ladies hardly had a voice in the decision making.

About 50-60 years ago, as times evolved thinking started to change particularly towards education of girls. First it was only primary level, then slowly it moved up to secondary education. Tertiary education came much later. With education, the attitude of on early marriage and some other rigid rules were relaxed with another significant change being doing away with the system of 'Laaj'.

In my opinion, one positive role that the community played was that it got together like one large 'family' in times of need of any member of the community. The Samaj has progressed well over the years in moving with the times.

Soni Samaj NZ is constantly hosting social events during the year where all gather to catch up and enjoy. I am, in fact, most proud of the role the females are currently playing in the Samaj – "NZ ni Samaj ma aamri ii Benno ane Dhikariyo jeje kaam kare che hu Abhiman Dharavu chu ne Danyavad dow chu and haji pan aasha rakhu chu ke haaji pan aagar vadho".

The Samaj needs to carry forth as such to hold the interest of the younger generation. My only wish for the future is that it makes every effort to see that our language, culture and values are maintained and enhanced.

Samaj ne Aashish Aapo chu
Lakhtan

Dai Bai Ganesh Jogia
Auckland, NZ






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A MOTHER'S DREAM TO MAKE HER SON A DOCTOR

AND THE JOURNEY FROM NADI TO BERN AND BEYOND

Sumit an only child of his parents Mansukh and Anita Raniga, spent the first 10 years of his life in Nadi, Fiji. The family migrated to New Zealand two months after the first military coup in Fiji in 1987.

From the time I first met Anita, Sumit's mother, I was impressed by her determination to get Sumit into one of the best secondary schools in Auckland, Auckland Grammar and make him a Doctor. They sold their Mangere home and bought a simple two bedroom flat in Epsom, at considerable financial strain, to be in the Zone for the school.



Anita and Sumit as a toddler.

Sumit started his Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Physiology & Pharmacology at the age of 17 years. In the final year of his Bachelor's degree Sumit finally found something that flicked the switch - he became interested in the field of Molecular Medicine - a fast growing field at the cutting edge of medical science. Sumit feels that his Master's degree was the turning point in his career - he graduated with a Masters in Medical Science with a 1st Class Honours and his research findings were patented by the University of Auckland.

Professor Matthew During, a world renowned medical scientist who was the first to trial Gene Therapy in the human brain became Sumit's friend and mentor and offered Sumit a position as Project Manager at his University of Auckland Lab

*Sumit was blessed with profound opportunities in his field and he also worked very hard to achieve excellence in all he pursued. Sumit's challenges, drive and achievement exemplified the very famous words of Swami Vivekananda - Arise Awake and Stop Not Till the Goal is Reached!

Sumit was given a lifetime opportunity to spent a year as part of the team that developed the Gene Therapy Clinical Trial for Parkinson Disease at the Thomas Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, USA

His time working with Neurosurgeons, inspired Sumit to pursue a career in Medicine rather than medical research so he applied for a place at the University of Otago. He was successful in obtaining a place at the Otago Medical School and so returned home to Dunedin, NZ after a year in Philadelphia.

In Dunedin Sumit met Aparna, his wife to be. He saw her for the first time on the first day of medical school. Sumit and Aparna formed a great partnership and worked together throughout their studies and beyond. They married in their final year of medical school and graduated with their Medical Degrees from the University of Otago in 2006. They both focused on completing two years of preclinical studies in Dunedin and moved to the University of Otago School of Medicine in Christchurch as soon as possible.

In Christchurch, Sumit met another inspiring mentor and guide, Professor Frank Frizelle who was the Head of Department of Surgery and a giant in the league of surgeons. The Professor became a father figure to Sumit and strongly encouraged Sumit to become a Surgeon.

Sumit's performance led him to be accepted into the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Advanced Training Programme in Orthopaedic Surgery only 2.5 years after graduating from medical school. Aparna was also accepted on the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists Advanced Training programme to become an eye surgeon one year later.

Anita and Mansukh moved to Christchurch after 21 years in Auckland to continue with their unwavering support to help Sumit and Aparna through surgical training. Surgical training is very demanding and there were now two trainee surgeons in the house and sacrifices were made and challenges met. Sumit was sent to the Hawkes Bay (Napier/Hastings) for his first year of training and then Wellington for his second year while Aparna was asked to stay in Christchurch. So, three years into their marriage, Aparna and Sumit were apart for 2 years. Sumit still regrets the two-year separation from Aparna.

The Canterbury Earthquakes certainly complicated things. Christchurch suffered badly in the two devastating 1-in-500 year earthquakes that destroyed their home each time.

The Widespread Liquefaction and force of Mother Nature left the city unrecognisable. The Earthquake experience brought home the truth of the fragility of human life and transient nature of all material possessions. The family then moved to Wellington for one year. Change is the only constant in Life.

On the 25th of June 2012, Sumit, Aparna, Anita and Mansukh were blessed with Tanvi Meera Raniga. Tanvi was the first female child in their family after 60 years. According to Sumit, she remains the best thing that's happened to them, period. Anita had devastatingly lost four boys after Sumit - all four were stillborn after full terms with no cause identified. Anita never fully recovered from this tragedy. With Tanvi Anita at last had a little bundle of joy in her life to take care of.

Anita and Mansukh continued to make significant sacrifices to support Sumit and Aparna throughout their surgical training. They took care Tanvi when Aparna had to return to work as well as when the family had to move to Christchurch so Sumit and Aparna could complete the last two years of their training. Anita and Mansukh provided the much valued quality care for Tanvi and a stable home base for the Doctors. Nothing beats a home and child taken care of by grandparent so the parents have peace of mind while pursuing their studies or work opportunities.

The final hurdle for Sumit was to gain the status of becoming a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS) which he crossed in December 2014.

Sumit felt an overwhelming sense of relief that all the sacrifices that he and his loved ones made to get him there had paid off and he had not let his family down.

Aparna also went through a similar examination and passed to become a Fellow of the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists as well.

Sumit was the first Australasian orthopedic surgeon to be offered a one year Fellowship in Shoulder and Elbow Surgery at the world-renowned Bern University Hospital, Bern, Switzerland. Sumit worked on a research project that subsequently won the Charle's Neer Award, the highest honour in shoulder research in the world.

Aparna completed a Fellowship in Glaucoma surgery at the Bern University Hospital.

Sumit describes his year in Switzerland as one of the best years of his life. The Award was game changing for his reputation and career. Sumit's next Fellowship was with Professor Des Bokor for one year at the Macquarie University Hospital, Sydney, Australia.

The Raniga family is currently in Ontario, Canada where Sumit is completing his final year of super specialisation, completing his final Shoulder and Elbow Fellowship at the Roth McFarlane Hand and Upper Limb Centre which is affiliated to the University of Western Ontario.. Aparna is also completing her final Fellowship Glaucoma Surgery at the Ivey Eye Institute.

Sumit and Aparna have now decided to return home to NZ with Anita, Mansukh and Tanvi. The Canterbury District Health Board and the University of Otago have offered Sumit a dual appointment. Sumit is hoping to take the path of Surgeon Scientist towards becoming a Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Otago. Aparna has also been offered similar positions in Christchurch. She will be the Glaucoma Subspecialist in the South Island. They are due to start work in Christchurch in August of 2018.



*Mr Sumit Raniga BSc MSc (1st Class Honours)
MBChB FRACS,
Orthopaedic Shoulder and Elbow Surgeon.*

New Zealand has given them a lot and now they have the opportunity to give back to the community. Sumit's aim now is to contribute to society through excellence in clinical practice and advancement of his subspeciality through research and teaching.

Generations of Doctors will benefit from the teachings of Sumit and so the patients too.

It will be great to have this Raniga family back in NZ closer to their extended family and friends.

All our best wishes to Sumit and Aparna as they continue their journey in NZ.

Love and blessings,
Uma Raniga Chopra

C.K. NANDHA

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Voyage to Fiji

In late 1947, after a month's journey on a ship I set foot on Suva Wharf with my destiny awaiting, all excited to meet my father who I had not seen almost for 11 years. I had arrived in Fiji with my mother Mani Ben Nandha on board the ship "Orna" on her second voyage to Fiji. Having been in Porbandar Gujarat, India all these years the only language medium I was aware of and taught in was Gujarati. My father Kanji Karsanji Nandha was well versed in the English language and assured me that a bit of hard work will get me on par with the rest.

Education

I joined Nadi Sangam School IN 1948 enrolled in Year 8, and with the constant help from my father, Master Gopalan and Master Charlie Wilson, I picked up the English language very quickly and was able to get through primary school.

My high school education began on 9th March 1949 at Shri Vivekananda High School (SVHS) in Nadi, Fiji. The establishment of SVHS was driven by Rev Swami Rudranandaji, supported by AD Patel and my father who was a very strong proponent of education. I was enrolled as a pioneer founding student of Shri Vivekananda High School opened by Rev Swami Rudranandaji Maharaj of Ramakrishna Mission, Mr A.D. Patel, and Sadhu Swami Kuppaswamy (from Then Ikya Sanmarg Ikya Sangam).

The school commenced without backing and approval of Government and with no financial assistance from Education Department. The school had only one class and commenced on 9th March 1949 in Nadi Sangam School compound in a thatched house with 35 students.

We had two fulltime teachers, Mr Krishna Subba Reddy and Mr Gopal Samy Naidu, with Rev Swami Rudranandaji and Mr. H.M. Lodhia as part time teachers of Mathematics and Accounting.

Our batch of students produced an astounding 100 % result, being first in the history of Junior Cambridge exams, and prompted the Education Department to review their decision and we were approved as a school under the Education Department and given the appropriate aid and assistance. The school was in its growth spurt and moved to bigger premises to the old Nadi Temple and with boarding facilities.

On completing high school following Senior Cambridge in 1952, I began working for HM Lodhia (Kaka) in the Accounts for four years. I had a keen interest in furthering my knowledge to a status of Chartered Accountant and thus in 1958 I made my way to New Zealand for further studies. I enrolled in University of Auckland for Professional Accountancy and my tertiary studies culminated in me being admitted as a Chartered Accountant in New Zealand in 1963. Following admission, I worked in New Zealand in a Chartered Accounting firm - Leonard Knight and Company for a year before making my way back to Fiji.

Accounting Practice

On returning in 1963 after completing my tertiary education I started a small accountancy practice with the view to be registered as a public accountant. With the guidance of a very kind gentleman Mr David Barnes, the first Government Commissioner of Inland Revenue, I was able to get the

Practising Certificate. Mr Barnes was my mentor for my future journey in my professional career until he stopped practising.

I also was approached by Shri Vivekananda High School, Nadi Muslim High School, Nadi Secondary School, and Lautoka Muslim High School. to do part time teaching and provided this service while running the practice.

My profession as an accountant and auditor helped me establish the firm and gave me the opportunity to serve the small businesses, bigger firms and institutions, helping them grow. Being a focal point for all sorts of formal services, we ended up providing full spectrum of services including advice for overseas investments into Fiji, migration overseas, services to schools, non-profit organisations, clubs including Jaycees, Lions, Crippled Children Society, Apex Red Cross of Fiji, Fiji Society for the Blind, Special Children School etc.

Accounting practice has been in existence for over 55 years and continues its journey with my sons running the practice.

Association with Ramakrishna Mission and Shri Vivekananda High School

My association with Shri Vivekananda High School and Ramakrishna Mission dates back to the days as one of the pioneering students, later as a teacher and an advisor, Trustee of the mission and Board of Governors of the school. I had the privilege of working closely with Swami Rudranandaji, A D Patel, HM Lodhia, and later be part of the journey to help establish Vivekananda Technical Centre at Nawaicoba, near Nadi. This institution is a technical/vocational TAFE for many industries for the students and the farming community enabling them to get an equitable education. This became a reality after much lobbying, and eventual assistance of the honourable Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamesese Mara the then Prime Minister of Fiji, and support from the European Economic Community (EEC). Upon completion, the inauguration was done by the Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamesese Mara.

Sugar Industry and the Denning Award for Farmers

I was appointed to the Fiji Sugar Board in 1970 to represent the farmers as the Growers' Accountant as provided by the Denning Award. I shared the vision of the Rev Swami Rudranandaji and Mr A.D. Patel's passion to ensure equitable distribution of revenue between farmers and millers. They played a very integral role in the development of the Sugar Industry in Fiji.

As the Growers' Accountant I was involved and part of the era where major restructures were the focus for the Sugar Industry and Ministry of Agriculture organised in conjunction with Sugar Industry to undertake a exploratory tour to study the Sugar Industry in countries which were substantial sugar producing countries. As part of a high powered contingent, we visited Philippines, Florida USA , Brisbane and Toowoomba in Australia , New Found Land, Trinidad , Barbados , Bahamas , Jamaica , Kenya , Congo , Guyana , the Caribbean and Mauritius. A lot of changes were brought about by our reports based on the technology and techniques utilised by these countries based on knowledge of the pricing methods used by these countries and negotiated price with EEC to get the best price for the substantial amount of sugar produced by Fiji.

I was also charged with making representations from the growers side for the distribution of cane proceeds where based on the healthy quota of sugar to be supplied to EEC we were able to negotiate 70/30 split of proceeds between farmers and millers, giving a historical victory in favour of the farmers.

I was also a member also Fiji Sugar Cane Growers' Council and Fiji Sugar Council and looked after affairs in the interest of the farmers and represent them as well in the Fiji Sugar Board. The appointment carried on from 1970 to 1986 and later under the new structure the division of sugar was certified by the Sugar Tribunal and who was given the authority to distribute the funds

between the growers and millers as per the contract in force.

Other Social and Cultural Services

Consumer Council of Fiji appointed me as western representative to look after the consumers issues and to assist in arbitration between businessmen and consumers where there were disputes for an 8-year period. I was also appointed as a member of Ethnical Musical Cultural Council of Fiji simultaneously serving on both the councils for over eight years.

Association with Soni Samaj

Near to my heart is our Soni community. I was the elected as President of Fiji Girnara Soni Sewa Samaj in 1963 and served as president for nearly for 14 years till 1976. I was also the elected President of Nadi Soni Sewa Samaj in the 1970.

President-ship with Fiji Girnara Soni Sewa Samaj was for nearly for 14 years till 1976.

Family

My grandfather Soni Karsanji Kara Nandha come to Fiji in 1932 and joined Soni Mr Mavji Kalidas (Soni , Hargovind Mavji Lodhia's father) in business but later left for India in early 1936 due to poor health.

My father Kanji Karsanji Nandha qualified from Bombay University, came as a bookkeeper to Fiji in late 1936, and later established one small grocery shop in Malolo about three kilometres from Nadi Town.

In early days Soni H. M Lodhia lived at Malolo with my father who taught him and under his tutorship excelled and went onto a successful business and political career, including public service.

Through his shop in Malolo he built strong relationships and repute with people around from Malolo and nearby villages of Korovuto, Tunalia, Togo , Vuniyasi, Navo. He always took interest in cultural and educational activities and was instrumental in the establishment of Malolo Indian School (later named A. D. Patel Primary School) and was the first president of the school. He also assisted in the establishment of Korovuto Indian school and later acted as an auditor of the schools as well.

Even now the shop is regarded as "Master Kanji's Dukaan"

My mother, Maniben was born in Madagascar and later went to India and got married my father in 1930. My father Mr Kanji Karsanji Nandha, and mother Mani Ben had two children, my sister Tara Bhindi and I. I was 3 years old when my father left for Fiji in 1936. My mother and I joined my father in 1947.

My sister Tara Bhindi was born in 1949 in Malolo, Nadi. She graduated from University in India and later taught in Shri Vivekananda High School. She married Pritilal Bhindi who also was a school teacher in 1975 and later ran a very successful business in Nadi and now in Wellington, New Zealand.

I am married to Kasi Ben daughter of Soni Chhaganlal Jeewan of Nadi. We have five sons Ashvin, Pravin, Hitesh, Tarun and Prashant who are all faring well in their works of life.

Further I wish our Soni community from all over the world the best in the celebration and coming together at the Samellan. To strengthen our roots, our values and foster the unity of our ideals. Hearty congratulations for the NZ Soni Samaj in organising this wonderful event and wish it every success.

With good happiness and joy !
God bless you all!

SNEH MILAN 2018 PROGRAM

Thursday, 29 March 2018

SNEH MILAN CUP

Venue: Bill McKinley Park
3 Ireland Road, Panmure, Auckland

2.00pm Mix & Mingle
2.30pm Soccer Tournament Opening Ceremony
Teams Line-up for National Anthems
Special Guest to kick-off the tournament
3.15pm Soni All Whites vs. Fiji
4.45pm Soni All Whites vs. Australia
6.15pm Australia vs. Fiji
8.15pm Grand Final
(Dinner will be served at venue)

Friday, 30 March 2018

GOLF DAY

Maungakiekie Golf Club
5 Anita Ave, Mt. Roskill, Auckland

From 10.30am onwards

WELCOME NIGHT

Venue: Mahatma Gandhi Centre
145 New North Rd, Eden Terrace, Auckland
Dress code: Indian Traditional

5.00pm - 6.00pm Registration, Meet & Greet,
Drinks & Nibbles served on arrival
6.30pm Formal Programme. Maori Welcome
Indian Dance Welcome
Singing of NZ & Indian Anthem
8.00pm Dinner Served
9.15pm International Participation by overseas delegations
10.00pm onwards DJ and Dance

Saturday, 31 March 2018

FUN DAY OF SPORTS

Venue: Lynfield Recreation Center
16-18 Griffen Park Rd, Mount Roskill, Mt Roskill

10.00am - 10.15am Mix & Mingle + Setup
10.15am - 11.00am Kids Indoor Soccer
10.15am - 11.00am Zumba Class (Ladies)
10.15am - 12noon Table-tennis, Squash
12.30pm Lunch will be served
11.30am - 2.00pm Ladies Indoor Soccer
2.00pm - 2.15pm Change setup in Main Courts
2.15pm - 4.30pm Volleyball (Social)

Saturday, 31 March 2018

TIRAT YATRA

Start/Finish: Bharatiya Mandir
252 Balmoral Rd, Sandringham, Auckland

10.00am - 3.00pm Tirat Yatra for all those interested in
visiting places of worship in Auckland
Lunch will be available on the way

NIGHT TWO AT MAHATMA GANDHI CENTRE

Venue: Mahatma Gandhi Centre
145 New North Rd, Eden Terrace, Auckland
Dress code: Semi Formal/Smart Casual

6.00pm Drinks & Nibbles on arrival Mix & Mingle
7.15pm Key Note Speaker
8.00pm New Zealand Performance
8.30pm Dinner Served. Entertainment during dinner.
Singers from NZ and overseas.
9.30pm 2nd Key note speaker
10.00pm DJ and dance

Sunday, 1 April 2018

OPEN FORUM

Venue: Shri Shirdi SaiBaba's Temple
12-18 Princes St, Onehunga, Auckland

10am Open Forum
Topic "Where do you see the Soni Samaj going
forward into the future"
Light lunch will be provided.

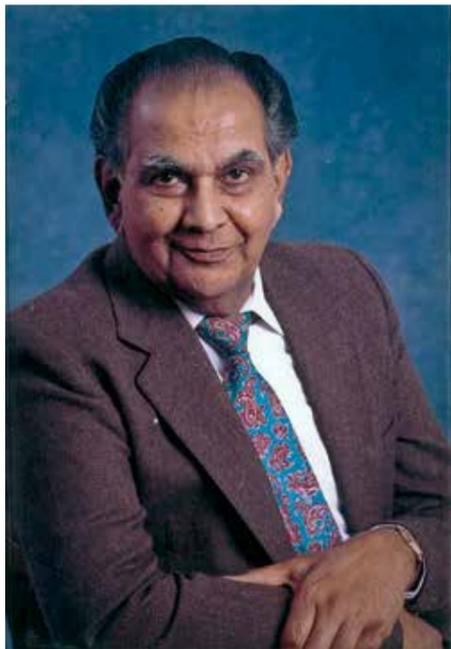
GRAND FINALE

Venue: The Cloud, Auckland Wharf
89 Quay Street, Auckland
Dress code: Indian or Western Formal

6.00pm Drinks and Nibbles on arrival.
Mix and mingle.
7.00pm Formalities, followed by dinner
8.45pm New Zealand performances.
Vote of thanks
Announcement of host for Sneh Milan 2022
DJ and Dance



REMEMBERING AMRITLAL DHIRUBHAI RANIGA



Someone who would have been absolutely thrilled about this Samelan and would have immersed himself fully into it is sadly no longer with us.

Our husband, father, mentor and caregiver Amritlal Dhirubhai Raniga was a devoted supporter of the Soni Samaj throughout his lifetime and served it to the best of his ability.

A D Raniga was the eldest child of the late Dhirubhai Bhovan and Jamkuarben Raniga. He was born in Ba, Fiji on 7 June 1934 and passed away in Hamilton, NZ at the age of 75 on 23 August 2009. He lived a full and complete life always available for assistance to his entire extended family and the community.

In 1954 he came to NZ to study medicine, but his father's sudden death forced him to return to Fiji to look after the family and its business. He was married to Kanta for 48 years and they have 4 children who are all well settled today thanks to his efforts and mentoring. He was the mentor and

guide to the wider Bhovan family who always looked up to him for leadership and advice. He belonged to many organisations and his social and cultural activities were many and varied.

He was an elected member of the Ba Town Council and served as its Deputy Mayor. He was the founding President of the Ba Chamber of Commerce, and the first local District Governor of the Lions Clubs of Fiji and Pacific territories. He also served as a Rotarian in Ba. He served as the Secretary of Ba Gujarat Samaj, Ba Gujarati Sports Club and Ba Gujarat Education Society. He was the President of Soni Samaj in Ba and also the Fiji Soni Samaj. He was also the representative of Fiji Hindu Society in Ba.

Migration to NZ did not lessen his enthusiasm or desire of community service. In Hamilton he served as the President of Waikato Indian Association and the Hamilton Indian Senior Citizens group. He enjoyed many years as a Baal Vikash teacher both in Ba and Hamilton. He was also actively involved in the local Sai and Gayatri organisations in Hamilton. He was well read on Hindu religion and culture.

He had a large circle of friends and acquaintances and was well known as a person on whom anyone could drop in for assistance of any sort, be it business, family, social or whether it was just to take advantage of his unique handwriting. One of the speakers at his funeral aptly referred to him as the 'call centre' to the entire Ba community.

In these days of mass electronic messaging, he still believed in personal touch. He took great pleasure in sending personal Diwali cards to hundreds of friends and family throughout the world. Each card carried a personal message and expressed his love and care for the recipient.

On this momentous and joyous occasion the family misses his physical presence, but takes comfort in the knowledge that he is present in spirit and enjoying the company of all those attending this Samelan.

Lovingly contributed by Kanta, Harish and the entire A D Raniga Family.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF AMRATLAL JAMNADAS & MUKTA JAMNADAS

This Sneh Milan 2018 "Celebrating Soni Culture Across Generations" we would like to remember the late Mr Amratlal Jamnadas and late Mrs Muktaben Amratlal.

Mr Amratlal Jamnadas and Mrs Muktaben Amratlal arrived from India with their parents in 1931. The early business was started in 1948, under the banner of A. Jamnadas & Company.

In 1970 Jamnadas Sports Fiji Ltd was established and he became a pioneer in introducing and promoting a variety of sport brands in Fiji and opened the very first exclusive sporting goods store, introducing and representing brands like Adidas, Puma, Gola, Star Sportswear etc

His passion was to encourage Gujarati youth to participate in sporting activities. He provided the much-needed leadership in soccer through the Fiji Gujarati Soccer association in early 1960s and 70s. and with Girnara Soni Samaj in Suva. He was also the President of the Suva Retailers Assn.

Mrs Muktaben was actively involved in the business and one of the first Gujarati ladies to drive in Fiji.

Their community and charity work is still remembered and acknowledged in Fiji and Australia.

Our thoughts and prayers are always with our parents Late Amratlal Jamnadas (RIP, June 1994) Late Mukta Amratlal (RIP, October 2017)

Amratlal Jamnadas Family, Brisbane, Australia



Standing L-R, Mrs. Uma Bhindi, Mrs. Jyoti Ramsey, Dipak Amratlal, Mrs. Gita Ondhia
Sitting L-R, Late Mukta Amratlal, Mrs. Karuna Nandha, Late Amratlal Jamnadas

RAMABEN DEVIA

NEHRU HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Ramaben Devia Received 2017 'Nehru Humanitarian Award' from the University of British Columbia Dr. Goel family Charitable Foundation, nominated by Indo-Africa Charitable Society of Canada.



Ramaben Devia has spent most of her life in Canada doing charitable work. Charity to her is a virtuous task. She said she feels nobler when she does more and more charity work. "The nobility that leads one towards a meaningful life. One can enhance his or her virtues by giving time to the other human beings in need and charity will pump the meaning of life." She believes unless an individual had done anything remarkable, his or her life is incomplete. Ramaben has done a marvelous work in helping the sick, during the weddings, Society functions and many other places in the society sector. She definitely deserved this award for she loves humanity in sense of caring and nourishing. She also received in 2010 a MIGA award for her contribution and dedication to community at large. In the year 2000 she also received a 'Soni Of The Year' award for her contribution to the Soni Society of BC.

THE CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

Vasant Lakhani is the founder, a humanitarian and a man on the mission.

The organization has two locations, one in Canada and one in UK. His charitable career started when he participated during Tsunami when he helped the victims in India.

HIGHLIGHTS: The charitable organization supplied the following

- School uniform and school supplies to 600 students
- Medical support to 86,000 patients
- Dental support to 1500 patients
- Supplied eye glasses 13,500 patients
- 1080 volunteers around the world
- Fed 11,000 lunches to the homeless
- 18 water wells and filtrations systems in rural schools.



SURESH RANIGA

STORY OF HARD WORK AND SUCCESS

I was born and raised in Varandoli, Ba, Fiji. At the age of 19, I started my business of curry powder, kava and confectionery. My three brothers, Hari Bhai, Chandu Bhai and Dharendra Bhai joined me after a couple of years and then we started Maganlal Jiwa and Sons. With the help of my brothers, we had a very successful business, and as a result our company was the leading confectionery and snackfood manufacturer in Fiji.

In 1983 we had a strategic plan to expand our business in Brisbane, Australia. I started with making Bhuja in a very small scale in Brisbane and selling to Independent supermarkets and wholesalers and Indian shops. Gradually I started importing confectionery from all over the world and distributing within Australia and New Zealand.

As time passed, we made good progress in our manufacturing business and amongst with my brothers, we diversified into Real Estate Property investments in Australia as well. To date the trading business are managed by our younger generation. In Fiji the elderly bapas were leading the Samaj but when I migrated to Brisbane there were not many people from the Soni Community and those who were, lived scatteredly.

In 1992, I held the 1st informal Samaj meeting that took place at Maganlal Jiwa factory in Brisbane. Soon after we consolidated Brisbane Sonis together for the 1st time to form Queensland Soni Samaj. I was the 1st Interim Chairperson and 1st President of the Samaj. It's constitution was written by late Soni Shri Tappoo Bhai Madhoji.

Over the years our Samaj members have shown enthusiasm into taking very active roles as leaders and in organising various functions, and fundraising activities for the benefit of Samaj members in Australia, Fiji and other countries.

We have hosted 3 very successful Sammelans for international audience under various Presidents. There are many outstanding leaders from our Samaj and there are too many to name who have contributed so much towards bringing Samaj members together in Brisbane. Over the last 20 years we have seen a greater participation and involvement of youths in organising sports and various functions in Brisbane and for Fiji and New Zealand.

Our patrons and trustees with the assistance of various presidents have given advice to members when requested by them and this helped solve some difficult problems.

We have encouraged the Soni Ladies to take active part in many aspects of Samaj activities. We are very grateful to all young Soni males and females for their contributions in building a stronger Samaj in Brisbane. We are very proud of past and current patrons, trustees, presidents and committee members for making our Brisbane Samaj stronger.

Queensland Soni Samaj is 26 years old this Year.

On the behalf of all Brisbane Sonis who are present here and those who are in Brisbane who could not attend, I want to express our appreciation to the New Zealand Soni Samaj Organising committee of Sneh Milan 2018 who have worked hard in bringing together our fellow Sonis from all over the world. I am proud to support this Sneh Milan and I wish the committee and participants every success.

Once again a Very Big Thank You to all New Zealand Sonis and hope this kind of functions strengthens our network and brings us closer.

God Bless you all, thank you.

TRAGEDY & DETERMINATION

BY HIMAT SONI

I always wanted to relay the story of Kasturben (sister of Popat Raja), my grandmother. She was a woman of big heart, self-respect and determination. Her husband's name was Kalidas Lodhia, my grandfather.

Early last century when migration started to Fiji, Kalidas Lodhia left the village of Balwa, near Porbandar for Fiji. It is a mystery that he never made it to Fiji. It is believed that he died mysteriously in the boat and he was cremated either in Singapore or in the ocean. The worst part of the story is that my grandmother who had two young boys, namely, Mohanlal Kalidas Lodhia and Ramji Kalidas, did not get the information about her husband's death till six months after his departure from Kolkota.

This tragedy did not deter her ambition to improve the lives of her two young boys. She raised the boys by working as a house girl with rich families in Porbandar and saved enough money to send my father Mohanlal Kalidas, to Tanzania, East Africa. My father worked hard and called my grandmother and younger brother Ramji Kalidas to Tanzania. My father was instrumental in sponsoring other cousins to Tanzania - Girdhar Karsan Lodhia, Nathalal Karsan Lodhia, Ramji Damji Lodhia. All came from the same village, Balwa.

The brothers and cousins were all living in one house in Balwa.

Since all families were living overseas in Tanzania and England respectively, house was occupied by unknown people free of charge. The Village Panchayat (council) wrote a letter advising of the situation regarding the house. Family representatives from England went to village, Balwa and sold the property. With the proceeds from the property and with contribution from Lodhia families from UK, a primary school was built in the name of pioneer forefathers. The school is still in operation. Myself, my wife Madhu and Dakshai and his wife Kriti visited the School early this year, and were very impressed with the school and the management.

However, I would like to point out the thinking of elders in those days about wealth. In those days there were no banks or security vaults. Cash money and jewellery were kept in the house.



When the property was sold, the new owner demolished the property and built a new house at the same place. While the contractor and builder were digging for foundation of the house, they found a pot (urn) full of gold and silver coins and jewellery. In those days, when people travelled overseas either to East Africa or Fiji, and had wealth in the form of jewellery or coins (Mohar), they hid them underground for safety reasons. Till now we do not know who among our great grandfathers had hidden the valuables underground. He must have thought of returning but it did not materialise.

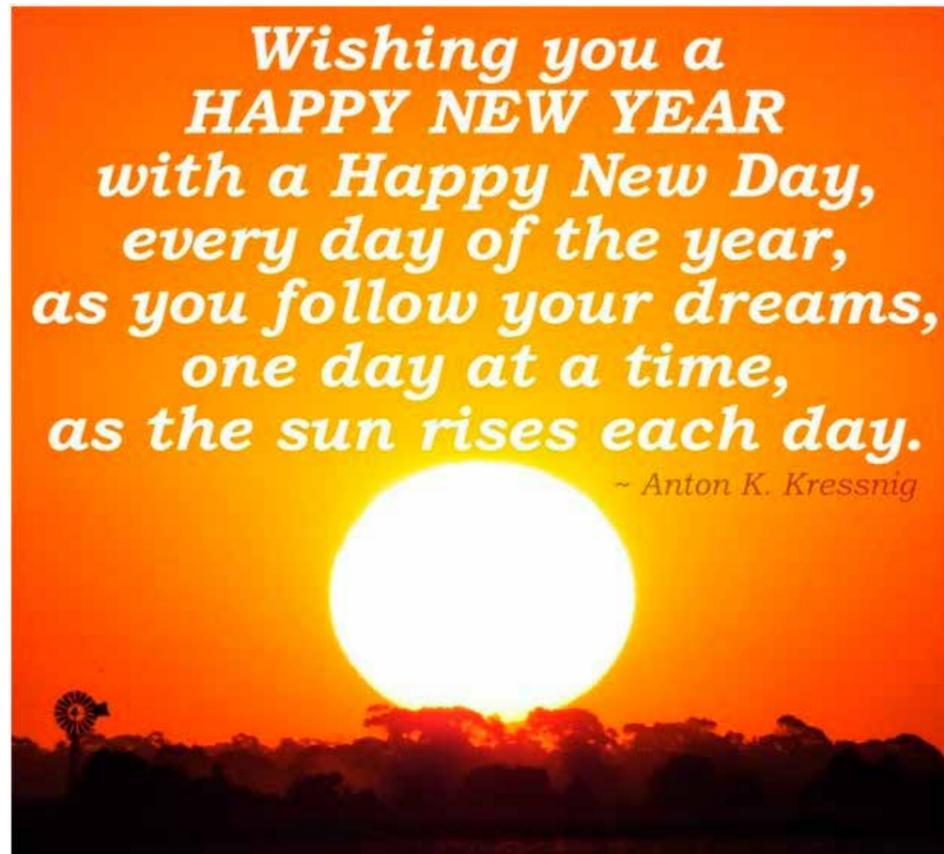
But we do respect honesty, of the new owner of the property who revealed the find of the jewellery pot.

My grandmother Kasturben lived till the ripe age of over 95 and died in Tanzania and all four cousins in the attached photo lived in England. All lived till their ripe old age and passed away in England. There was one cousin by name Ramji Kalidas, my uncle and younger brother of my father who passed away in Tanzania. Majority of the great grandchildren are now residing in UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Tanzania.



GOODBYE 2017

YOGESH JOGIA



So far we have done well, so please keep it up.

Remember do NOT DRINK and DRIVE and do not do any activity if you are tired especially DRIVING.

God Bless you All.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4YqgR5D7dM> brilliantly performed by Anupji in Gujarati with English Translation. A 15th Century Poetry composed by Narsinhji Mehta is worthwhile listening to in the 21st Century. Enjoy.

If you are a person who makes New Year's Resolutions then you are lucky that you are able to think of them and promise yourself that you will keep them.

One of the important things in Life to remember is: "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong." (Mahatma Gandhi)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxRMWOkJmU> This is also Great the Ending Song in movie Gandhi (1982). The song "Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram", the artist was Ashit Desai.

In recent times a New Year passes by without so quickly. In that year many things happen to us and there are some that even change us without us knowing. This is the Act of Nature.

Nature Acts on us through what we eat and drink and also what we wear, especially GEMS and what we give and receive especially things like FLOWERS. However, changes are always taking place and those of us who take note of them and appreciate them are truly wise and blessed.

I Prostrate before my Guru Swami Venkatesananda Saraswati for imparting his wisdom to me and moulding me in the person that I am. Guruji I am and will be indebted to you now and forever and ever.

I thank my Mother Kasiben Jogia and my Father Kanjibhai Jogia for giving birth to me and looking after my needs and formally educating me.

I thank my Late Wife Rhonda Jogia who looked after me with full dedication, sincerity, faithfulness and devotion and who I miss daily so painfully. Sometimes I wonder what Nature gained by taking her away from me.

I thank my Paternal Aunt Gulabben Das for looking after me mainly in my early childhood.

I thank all my teachers at all levels and all the Institutions that I have attended especially Late Mr John Leppitt the Headmaster of Trinity Grammar School, when I was there from 1961 to 1962, who installed the importance of TRUTH in all students. "Truth is God" MK Gandhi. http://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/truth_is_god.pdf

I thank my Children for giving me joy when they were babies, infants and young adults, and comfort and joy currently. Devika, Vikash, Asha and Nikhil who are full with Empathy and Compassion. Keep up all the good work that you are doing.

I thank my brothers and sisters and their spouses and their children for the comfort that they give me and also many thanks to my extended families on both sides for all the Love and Comfort that you show me.

I thank all my Medical Doctors and Nurses and Pharmacists who look after me for my all medical needs especially Professor Krishna Somers to whom I am forever indebted.

I thank all my FRIENDS who helped me with their company and sound advice as well as Love and Comfort and also I like to tell them that I appreciate them all.

I forgive all that have hurt me and those that I have hurt I am sorry and ask for their forgiveness.

I thank my creator who I call Nature for giving me energy to survive for so long.

Thank you for making 2017 a Fruitful and Peaceful Year for me.

Jai Shree Krsna

Yogesh Jogia



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SAMELAN

EASTERN AFRICA 1940's & 1950's



Nairobi, Kenya (1940)

REMINISCENCES OF LATE SONI NARSI JADAVJI GHUTLA

Through the courtesy of his family we have been given access to the original hand written copy of the reminiscences of the late Soni Narsi Jadavji Ghutla, originally of Ranavau, Gujarat, India, then of Nadi, Fiji and later of Sydney, Australia.

The memories are recounted by Soni Narsi Bhai in Gujarati, and more importantly in the form of poetry, rather than essay.

Because of the deep personal feelings expressed in the writings, there is always the risk that the essence of the message would be lost in translation.

However, reading through it gives you a glimpse of the man and the ideals he lived by. His faith in God, his love and respect for everyone from his motherland (village of Ranavau), his adopted countries (Fiji and Australia), his community (Soni Samaj) and, above all, his extended family and friends shines through in his writings.

His courage and perseverance in the face of all adversities is the other outstanding side of his life. Hard work, coupled with honesty, spirituality and ethics show up as his second nature.

With this in mind, we attempt to give a brief glimpse of his life by way of English translation through a small part of his writings.

Narsi Jadavji Ghutla

CHILDHOOD - RANAVAU - SCHOOL LIFE

Mother - Parvati Ben, Father - Jadavji Bhai

I was born on Septempter 12, 1908 in Ranavau, Kathiawad, now Gujarat. On the sixth day (Chatti), I was named Narsi. Life went on until I was enrolled in primary school. In school I was given a stone slate and first number 1 (one) was written and I was instructed by teachers to practice writing 'one'. I was requested to show my first number 'one' on slate to my mother, Parvati Ben. In this way, my education progressed from class I to class VIII and I studied English in grade III.

There were discussions about sending me to high school in Porbandar but it did not materialise due to financial constraints. I was very disappointed to not be allowed to proceed further in secondary education.

I started work with Master Ranchod as a salesperson. My brother Vallabh earned 50 rupees a month (NZ\$1.20) and I earned 30 rupees per month (NZ\$0.68). Both of



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Life is Time - If ever you run out of time, we have a Plan that will continue to accomplish your Vision.

us started very early in the morning. After eating khichdi we proceeded to our daily routine as street salesmen.

In July 1924, I received a telegram from Fiji that Devji Bhai (older brother) was arriving in Ranavau, India. I was very pleased and so was everyone else in the family. Devji Bhai recommended that I learn the art of goldsmith. He got engaged then married in Kothar village.

Now at the age of 18, I prepared to depart for Fiji.

November 30th, 1925 - Preparation for Fiji Trip

Took a train with family – Devji Bhai, Narsi Bhai, mother Parvati Ben. After farewelling all the residents of Ranavau and doing all pujas at temple, we left Ranavau for Jetalsar Junction. From here we proceeded to Kolkata – and mother returned to Ranavau. It was the most emotional moment in my life – realising that I may not see my mother again and my favourite place, my birthplace, Ranavau.

Travel Schedule

1st December - left Ranavau for Kolkota

14/12/1925 - reached Kolkota

14/1/1926 - reached New Zealand

17/1/1926 - reached Nikalau Depot

19/1/1926 – left Suva for Lautoka

The ships name was S.S Hugli

Total 252 passengers. The following Sonis accompanied Narsi bhai. The list is as follows:

1. Soni Devji Jadavji Ghutla, Ranavau
2. Narsi Jadavji Ghutla, Ranavau
3. Murji Pragji Ghutla, Ranavau
4. Rugunatk Daya Ghutla, Ranavau
5. Pradhanji Devji Polra Ghutla, Ranavau
6. Dayalal Damji Lodhia, Ganod
7. Mrs Rambai Dayalal Lodhia, Ganod
8. Bachilal Jadavji Lodhia, Ganod
9. Soni Sawji Devia, Bhanvad
10. Mrs Panbai Gokarbhai Devia, Bhanvad
11. Amratbhai Gokarbhai Devia, Bhanvad
12. Soni Meghji Arjun Paida, Oddhar
13. Soni Keshavji Punja Paida, Oddhar
14. Soni Pragji Rugnath Paida, Oddhar
15. Mrs Sakarbai Dhanji Bhinji
16. Soni Laksmi Chand Jivan Pala, Barvaru
17. Soni Odhavji Amarshi Bhindi, Batwa
18. Soni Devchand Ranchod Lodhia, Ameril
19. Soni Tapu Jadavji Raniga
20. Soni Jiva Ramji Patni, Jamnagar
21. Soni Jethalal Patni

All sonis stayed in Dharamsala in Kolkota. We enjoyed our stay and were very impressed with Howra Bridge. We toured Kolkota at night and saw museums, circus and Indian play in theatre.

We purchased shirts and trousers. We visited office of Mac and Mackenzie. Bought tickets- Kolkota- New Zealand– Fiji. Proceeded to Hugli port. Doctors checked health of each of us on the journey.

On 14.12.1925, we departed by S.S. Hugli. First four days were very rough at sea and felt sea sickness. Otherwise journey was very interesting – singing, playing cards and celebrated Christmas on boat.

On 14.1.1926 we reached New Zealand.

We stayed 2 days in New Zealand. We were surprised to see the Western style of dressing. We found people of New Zealand very kind and cooperative. The country was very beautiful. We were impressed with fresh fruit and enjoyed for the first time oranges, grapes and apples of New Zealand. And of course, butter and cheese.

On 16.1.1926 ship sailed for Fiji.

After ship sailed, Captain called the roll call of the passenger list and found total was 251. It was supposed to be 252 but one of the passengers named Kachia Govan had sneakily stayed back in New Zealand!

Arrival in Fiji - on 20 January 1926 arrived at the Depot (Nikalau) where each and every passenger had to undergo a quarantine period. I was given a strong laxative to clean my system and will not forget that day. Arrived at city of Suva and stayed at Popat Jogia's place for two days. We left for Lautoka wharf via Steamer Nam. Reached Lautoka in the evening and saw lots of people at the wharf. We left for Nadi in a motorcar owned by Babunav. After one hour we reached Nadi.

Life in Nadi

Nadi was a small town with houses made of grass and tin. Roads were rough with pot holes. Started doing work as a salesman from village to village. After making own breakfast in the morning both brothers left house for selling in villages. I covered nearby villages and my elder brother Devji covered faraway villages and his gold and silversmith work at home. We travelled by feet selling in villages through jungle, on rivers and mountains.

I admit we sometimes cheated selling jewellery – buy pure and sell fake!

On August 7, 1924 my father left for India with Bhimji Soni.

In 1928, my elder brother Vallabh Bhai came with his wife to Fiji. Ladhi Ben (Tappoo) also came. We were so happy that the hard work of cooking meals was relieved and we started eating hot and fresh vegetable curries.

Hurricane of February 1931

Hurricane did considerable damage to Fiji and lots of lives were lost in floods. To save our lives, we escaped to higher ground and took shelter in Sangam School. We spent two days in the shelters, and suffered loss of goods and stock, and our business was closed.

1931 – May – birth of Dhankuvar Ben. Prayed to God to guide us in future.

In January 1934, we opened shop selling drapery and grocery in Nawaka, Nadi. Then we opened a second shop in Votuvalevu village. Business prospered.

I remember the coronation of King Georgie VI in 1936. Bad luck arrived when Samji Majan sold one shop to a Punjabi person and we had to vacate the shop.



In June 1938, opened shop in Vunayasi. Business was good. Brother Vallabh did sales and Devji bhai did jewellery work. I did hawking going on bicycle from village to village.

February 13th 1939 – my mother joined us in Vunayasi, Nadi and brought a lot of joy and happiness.

In June 13th 1939, my mother arranged my marriage to Dhanbai – daughter of Bhanji Bhindi. At the same time Ganesh got married to Daiben (mother of Amrat Lal), and younger daughter of Bhanji Bhindi

Kanyadan of Dhanbai was performed by Jadavji Bhindi

Kanyadan of Daiben was performed by Bhanji Bhindi.

We had a traditional wedding with a lot of fun and food.

1939 – Samji Majan came to our house in Vunayasi and offered us an old home with shop for a sum of 100 pounds on credit. Although house was old it had a lot of room. In 1940 we prepared the house and moved there to reside. Business was flourishing as it was cash business. Everything in life looked happy and rosy. My mother was very happy and prayed for grandchildren.

30 April 1940 –our eldest daughter Kamla was born. This was the time of the second world war and this had a direct impact on Fiji. Imminent threat of Japan invading Fiji was affecting Fiji. Some people escaped and hid in hills and mountains. However, Japan lost in Solomon Island.

I stayed in Tongo village and Devjibhai and Vallabh stayed in Nadi. From there we went to Nawaka. With the influx of American soldiers, the tortoise shell business flourished. Life at night time was non-existent because of blackout due to curfew.

1945 – Third daughter Pushpa was born. Due to risk of gunfire at night, we moved to Nadi town at Narewa road but business at Martintar continued.

1946 – Bhanji Soni – my father in law came with a proposal of property in Lautoka. The building was opposite Gurudwara. Price was 1200 pounds and deal was made for 1000 pounds. Bought in name of Narsi, Vallabh and Devji Bhai. House was rented out at 12 pounds.

Tenants were:

1. Patel Odhavji (Bhiwai)
2. Patel Daya
3. Postmaster

1947 – Sold Lautoka property for 1500 pounds and purchased shop of Dhanji Bhai who went to India with stock of 3000 pounds.

We paid 1500 pounds by selling Lautoka property and balance 1500 pounds was given on credit.

1949 – 5th daughter Manjula was born

1950 – birth of son Ramesh

1952 – birth of sixth daughter Sarla

1953 – birth of son Ramnik

1953 – Mother passed away

July 1936 – Nadi auction of central town property belonging to Jiwan Ranchod. Lots of people attended auction such as Odhavji Bhai Raniga, Meghji Bhai from Sigatoka and Khushal Bhai. Khushal Bhai offered the highest bid of 8125 pounds. This was purchased on behalf of my brothers and I.

1988 – moved to Australia. I am very content. I am so happy that I have more happiness than I expected. My happiness is fulfilled by witnessing the success of my children and grandchildren. However, I regret losing my childhood friends and those friends who are alive are far and away.

Message to Fiji:

*“Oh my mother Fiji, I am going far away from you
I have to leave you reluctantly
I bow my head to you*

The place where I endured suffering and hardship, still I love you and will visit in time to experience the debit and credits of my life there and discuss happiness and regrets. I will see with my own eyes.

*My first birth place is India
My second mother was Fiji and my third mother is Australia.
And fourth will be Kailash (heaven). “*

Narsi Bapa's Philosophy and Message

1. Wealth does not belong to anyone and will not last forever. After a few generations it goes away.
2. If there are senior and old people in the home, it will provide the beauty and vibration in the home. However, if there is no respect for seniors in the home the home will become like a cremation place.
3. Poverty is unfortunate, but the most bitter thing in life is poverty
4. Daughter is daughter but daughter in law is more precious. She will serve until death.
5. Ups and down are the feature of life but when time changes, it changes personalities as well
6. In this world, money is more valuable than human beings. Wealth is the main junction station from where earth train of life commences its journey
7. Wealth and religion do NOT always see eye to eye. Intoxication of wealth makes you forget religion.
8. In Lord's life, who will experience changes is uncertain, however in life one gets lucky opportunities which will take one forward or leave him halfway
9. This world is funny. If you look from distance cinema or public bar and if you see person is drinking milk, the impression it creates to the generalised public is that he is drinking liquor.
10. If you are fortunate then do thank God. If your time is good then do some charity. If you have both wealth and intelligence, God has created you as human, then you must do some charity.
11. There cannot be a country like Fiji anywhere in the world whose poor and rich sit together and have lunch, where all wear the same clothes, and lifestyle is same, where rich and poor are the same and there is no distinction on race – Hindu, Muslim, Christian.
12. Children are enjoying life. Parents look after daily life. Children on world tour. Parents give money. Parents have to face hardship. Children have 'Diwali' every day. Parent's life from home to shop.
13. There was no fear in Fiji. No robbers or thieves. Used to travel with bag full of gold and silver. Neither wild animals nor reptiles. Move freely at night without any fear. Fijians will meet you and call you 'bula tamana'. That was Fiji. OH GOD WE WERE VERY HAPPY IN FIJI PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE US
14. It was wonder of the Lord that we enjoyed Hindu festival of Holi and Muslim festival of Tajia together. There was plenty of green fruits and vegetables and gold and silver was sold openly.
15. I HAIL FIJI. Remain forever and continuer your blessings on us as we are well off and happy. SUVA CITY with its seashore charm and beautiful shopping is wonderful.
16. Children of poor parents from India look after spoiled children. They go out at night, knocking hotel doors. They are happy, drinking, eating, sleeping late and getting up late. They are born lucky, mothers feel happy but fathers cry in silence.
17. Asked one man from Canada about his view of Fiji. He said Fiji is poor and underdeveloped country compared to Canada. I replied: Fiji is small but plenty of facilities one can enjoy life without money, you can get food anywhere, no one can starve in Fiji. You can make living with small effort. If you work, no one will ask you to leave.

18. 1925 - Mother raised me with a view that I will look after her in old age. But mother's bad luck that she experienced many hardship. Her luck did not favour her. Her age was a handicap. We left her alone in India. We are guilty and fake.
19. OH GOD YOU WATCH US FROM ABOVE. In young age you have everything but everyone does not have proper direction. Time is of the essence and a person has to adjust to the time and no work is small
20. Generally, there is no family unity in the west. Boys and girls leave home at age of 18. They stand on their own feet. But the result is that there is nobody to look after retired old parents. They do not have any interest in life. If they visit children, they have to think about staying in hotels.
21. 1936 – had been street seller for years like a vagabond. Had crossed mountains and rivers. Had a big hope in life. But did not achieve any success. And remained where I began, very distressed as luck did not favour, and directed me to wrong direction. Now, I realise, the peace, and tranquillity and sleep, enjoyed in the lap of my mother – Parvati Ben
22. Came to Fiji at 18 years. Worked very hard but result was negligible, yet continued hard work, climbed mountains and crossed rivers. Accept whatever the luck has to offer. Mother had given string of 'mala'. And advised to do Puja and pray and your future will be bright.
23. Trust has so much power that it can reduce the speed of the waste flow and can convert sand into sugar
24. Bribery is like a fire which one cannot extinguish. It spreads like a wild fire.



Special thanks to Himat Soni and Amrat Lal Jogia for translating and compiling this article.

MESSAGE FROM C.K RANCHHOD

CHAIR, SOUVENIR PROGRAM TEAM



Welcome to everyone from New Zealand and beyond to the 2018 NZ International Soni Sneh Milan.

It has been both a challenge and pleasure to compile this Souvenir Program.

From the outset, our aim has been to enlighten, inform and inspire, but above all, to “Celebrate Soni Culture Across Generations “.

In this magazine, we trace Soni history dating back 2000 years. We tell stories never told before. We recount the New Zealand Soni Samaj journey and recognise those behind our success. And we share phenomenal Soni achievements ranging from charity work, music and public service to education, business and sports.

My humble thanks to Himat Soni, Amrat Lal Jogia, Dinesh Raniga and Ritesh Raniga for their invaluable advice and contributions.

My gratitude to our Honourable Trustee, Soni Harish Sundarji for availing the amazing services of the graphic design team at Fashion Biz - Sandy Ip, Bert Cleenwerck, Jaye Liu and Kyle McLachlan.

Special thanks also to all other contributors, advertisers and sponsors.

And as always, I am privileged to have the unconditional love and support of my family- Ba, Eesha and Ayunita, my brothers Ravin and Pranil and the entire Ranchhod family.

I sincerely hope you will find this publication worthy and enjoyable.

C.K Ranchhod
Secretary, Soni Samaj NZ



FOR ALL YOUR UNIFORM NEEDS



SNEH MILAN 2018 PROGRAM

Thursday, 29 March 2018

SNEH MILAN CUP

Venue: Bill McKinley Park
3 Ireland Road, Panmure, Auckland

2.00pm Mix & Mingle
2.30pm Soccer Tournament Opening Ceremony
Teams Line-up for National Anthems
Special Guest to kick-off the tournament
3.15pm Soni All Whites vs. Fiji
4.45pm Soni All Whites vs. Australia
6.15pm Australia vs. Fiji
8.15pm Grand Final
(Dinner will be served at venue)

Friday, 30 March 2018

GOLF DAY

Maungakiekie Golf Club
5 Anita Ave, Mt. Roskill, Auckland

From 10.30am onwards

WELCOME NIGHT

Venue: Mahatma Gandhi Centre
145 New North Rd, Eden Terrace, Auckland
Dress code: Indian Traditional

5.00pm - 6.00pm Registration, Meet & Greet,
Drinks & Nibbles served on arrival
6.30pm Formal Programme. Maori Welcome
Indian Dance Welcome
Singing of NZ & Indian Anthem
8.00pm Dinner Served
9.15pm International Participation by overseas delegations
10.00pm onwards DJ and Dance

Saturday, 31 March 2018

FUN DAY OF SPORTS

Venue: Lynfield Recreation Center
16-18 Griffen Park Rd, Mount Roskill, Mt Roskill

10.00am - 10.15am Mix & Mingle + Setup
10.15am - 11.00am Kids Indoor Soccer
10.15am - 11.00am Zumba Class (Ladies)
10.15am - 12noon Table-tennis, Squash
12.30pm Lunch will be served
11.30am - 2.00pm Ladies Indoor Soccer
2.00pm - 2.15pm Change setup in Main Courts
2.15pm - 4.30pm Volleyball (Social)

Saturday, 31 March 2018

TIRAT YATRA

Start/Finish: Bharatiya Mandir
252 Balmoral Rd, Sandringham, Auckland

10.00am - 3.00pm Tirat Yatra for all those interested in
visiting places of worship in Auckland
Lunch will be available on the way

NIGHT TWO AT MAHATMA GANDHI CENTRE

Venue: Mahatma Gandhi Centre
145 New North Rd, Eden Terrace, Auckland
Dress code: Semi Formal/Smart Casual

6.00pm Drinks & Nibbles on arrival Mix & Mingle
7.15pm Key Note Speaker
8.00pm New Zealand Performance
8.30pm Dinner Served. Entertainment during dinner.
Singers from NZ and overseas.
9.30pm 2nd Key note speaker
10.00pm DJ and dance

Sunday, 1 April 2018

OPEN FORUM

Venue: Shri Shirdi SaiBaba's Temple
12-18 Princes St, Onehunga, Auckland

10am Open Forum
Topic "Where do you see the Soni Samaj going
forward into the future"
Light lunch will be provided.

GRAND FINALE

Venue: The Cloud, Auckland Wharf
89 Quay Street, Auckland
Dress code: Indian or Western Formal

6.00pm Drinks and Nibbles on arrival.
Mix and mingle.
7.00pm Formalities, followed by dinner
8.45pm New Zealand performances.
Vote of thanks
Announcement of host for Sneh Milan 2022
DJ and Dance



Celebrating Soni Culture Across Generations