

SONI SANDESH

www.sonisamaj.co.nz

✉ nzsonisamaj@gmail.com

Soni Sandesh April 2016 Edition

A Publication of Soni Samaj NZ Inc

President's Message

Jai Shree Krishna

Greetings to all Samaj members and friends.
Wishing all mums a happy Mothers' Day.



Mega Mothers Day Funtion

On **Saturday, 28th May 2016**, your committee has organized a Mega Mothers Day Function at the Mt Albert War Memorial Hall. There will be an extensive entertainment program. This will have a great mix of items with live singing and dances performed by renowned local artists as well as our own community members. Please contact Tina Meghji if you are interested in contributing towards the entertainment segment. A professional photographer will capture the celebrations with family and groups snapped on arrival and during the glamorous evening.

Cyclone Winstone Appeal

Your Samaj has initiated a fundraising drive in aid of the cyclone Winston victims in Fiji. This is truly a worthy cause. If you are looking to donate, please kindly consider to support our Samaj efforts. Many thanks to all that have already contributed. An update from The Ramakrishna Mission Fiji is included in this Sandesh. The efforts of the Ramakrishna Mission Fiji are truly commendable.

Your Subscriptions

Firstly, thank you to all members that have paid their July 2015 - June 2016 subscriptions. May I please request all pending members between the age of 18 - 65 years to pay their dues. For those who do not indulge in internet banking, the Mega Mothers day function will provide you the perfect opportunity to do so.

NZ Gujarati Soccer Tournament

Our Samaj encourages sporting activities and it was pleasing to have such great participation from our members. Congratulations to all players.

NZ Soni Samellan

There is a fair bit of research that is currently being conducted by our committee. We are in the process of collecting data to determine the most opportune time to host the Samellan. Venues and events are amongst many considerations. Thank you for all our members who have contacted us to volunteer their services to assist in the planning and execution of details. More information will be shared as they are finalised. We are launching an interesting naming competition—see last page for details.

Hari Om,
Ritesh Raniga,
President

Upcoming Events:



MEGA Mother's Day Function:

When: Saturday 28 May 2016. Start time is 7pm sharp

Where: Mt. Albert War Memorial Hall, 751 New North Road, Mt. Albert.

Dress Code: Party/evening wear/ Indian

Entry Fee: \$10 per person. (Under 12 free).

RSVP—email nzsonisamaj@gmail.com

RSVP is essential for catering and preparation.

There will be items and entertainment (please contact Tina Meghji on 0212134640 if you wish to participate in items etc.)

A sumptuous dinner will be served at the function.

This will be a most comprehensive and memorable Mother's Day Function. We urge everyone to attend.

Please don't forget to RSVP and please be on time.

Father's Day and AGM This will be held on Saturday 17 September at the usual hall—Mt. Albert War Memorial Hall. This is a Saturday Function for the first time with a different and unique approach. There will be entertainment and more. Details later.

Grand Diwali, Nutan Varshabhinandan and Bhai Beej Celebrations:

When: Saturday 5 November 2016.

Where: Freemans Bay Community Hall.

Subscriptions:

Annual subscriptions are now due for the period July 1 2015 to June 30 2016. Please post cheque to NZ Soni Samaj, 142 West Coast Road, Glen Eden, Auckland or contact a committee member. Subs are \$20 per person between ages 18 to 65.

You can also pay online into the Samaj Westpac bank account: 030175 0196359 00

It is important to note that subs are a major source of income for the Samaj and helps subsidise expenses like newsletters, communications, functions etc.

Utensil Hire

The Samaj has a set of utensils (pots and pans, serving dishes, spoons etc) which can be used for cooking for up to a thousand people.

We are happy to hire this out. Please contact President Ritesh Raniga (ritesh.raniga@gmail.com or 021576381 or 095763818) if you wish to hire Samaj utensils.

Members: full hire \$200, partial hire \$100

Non members: full hire \$300, partial hire \$150

Non vegetarian cooking will not be permitted. Hirers will need to arrange own transport for pick up and return.

Website—Our website is now up and running. Please go to www.sonisamaj.co.nz where you will find details of events, photos, directory and much more. To access the online directory, please contact a committee member for the password.



News from Fiji...Congratulations to Rajesh Punja, Director of Punja Group of Companies in Fiji on his appointment as Chairman of Fiji Airways.

The Punja family are great supporters of the Soni Samaj in New Zealand and Fiji.

NZSS wishes Rajesh Punja every success on his new appointment.

Executive Committee 20015/2016:**President**

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Gigesh Pala
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Committee Members 2015/2016

- Tarun Pragji (Waikato Coordinator)
- Minesh Raniga (Soni All Whites Rep)
- Ranjana Gauri
- Jitesh Raniga
- Naina Bhindii
- Jayesh Rana
- Pramesh Sundarjee
- Vishal Parekh
- Uma Chopra

Trustees of the Samaj:

Soni Popat Lal Bagia
Soni Harish Sundarji
Soni Ravin Ranchhod

Recognition of Service to the Samaj— Vimal Raniga, former President

(We will be recognising a long-serving member in every newsletter— suggestions welcome)

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.

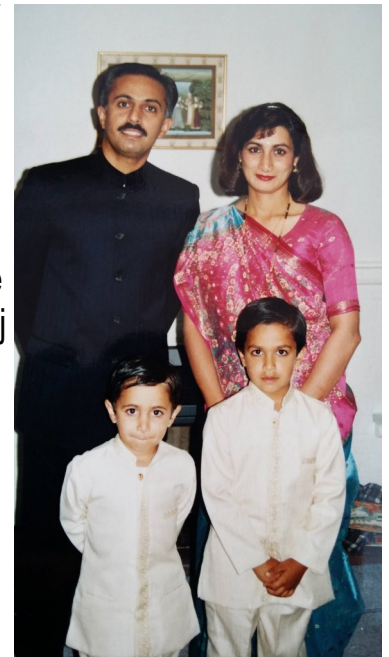
Several meetings were held to write the Constitution, quite a challenge, and finally in July 1993, the New Zealand Soni Samaj, Inc. was registered.

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)



Magic Moments from Diwali 2015



Summary of 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 in the past 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 (former President), Ritesh Raniga (President), C.K Ranchhod (Treasurer/Vice President), Dinesh Raniga and Jagdish Punja.

In early 2016, NZSS renewed its links with Starship by donating another \$4635.

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.

And most recently, the Samaj began an association with the Friends of Fiji Heart Foundation which carries out medical work for the needy in Fiji. In 2015, we contributed by sponsoring the vegetarian meal at their fund raising dinner on 8 August.

In February 2016, after the devastating category 5 Cyclone Winston in Fiji, NZSS launched a major fundraising appeal partnering with organisations like the Ramakrishna Mission Fiji. In addition to financial donations, we have sourced and sent a container load of medical and other supplies and assisted the seeds procurement program run by the Ramakrishna Mission Fiji.





NZ Nadi Gujarati Soccer Team:

Both our teams (i.e. Nadi A and Nadi B) performed exceptionally well in the 26th NZ Gujarati Soccer tournament during Easter. Nadi fielded teams with great balance in its line-ups with a great blend of youth and experience. Our Nadi B team reached the finals of the Senior Division while Nadi A lost out in the semi-finals.

Congratulations to Auckland (Senior Division) & Flying Arrows (Premier Division) for winning the cups.

Yash Raniga (picture on right) was awarded most valuable player in the Senior Division and won the highest goals scorer award also. Other youngsters to mention for their roles in the Nadi B team are: Harshikesh Raninga, Krishan Bagia, Mahir Chand & Sagar Raniga. On behalf of the Nadi team committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the family members of the players who have endured some hard days for the past few months - without your support, none of this would be possible. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the participation of other Soni All Whites boys namely, Vishal Parekh, Bhavik Parekh, Tarun Pragji and Sanjil Mistry for their participation for their respective teams.

Minesh Raniga, Coach & Rep – NZ Nadi Gujarati Committee





Ramakrishna Mission

Location: Malolo, Nadi, Fiji

Postal Address: PO Box 716, Nadi, Fiji

Ph: (+679) 6702786

Email: rkmfiji@gmail.com www.rkmfiji.org

Report # 3: Update on Cyclone Winston Relief: Recovery Phase

The following is a brief update on the TC relief services of Ramakrishna Mission Fiji:

A. Medical Relief:

The Health Services unit of Ramakrishna Mission, has made totally free its medical services (medical consultation, nursing services, medicines, some diagnostics such as ECG, etc.) through its Sarada Medical Centre, Nadi. The SMC-Nadi will provide free services for about 3 months (till 31 May). The free services at SMC-Suva, situated at Rishikul Sanatan College, Nasinu has been extended till the end of April.

To date 1,227 patients (male=607; female=668) have been provided medical services. Briefly; 30 patients had ECGs; 35 referrals were made to the Nadi hospital; 90 received injections and 614 received oral medications).

389 patients were served through outreach clinics in Ba, Tavua and Raki Raki. A volunteer doctor from Brisbane joined our outreach clinic for one week.

The daily patient numbers at SMC-N now reach upto 90 when we have two doctors.

B. Food Security through distribution of vegetable seeds:

5,000 packets containing 10 varieties of vegetable seeds have been distributed to households in the Ba, Tavua and Raki Raki areas.

Repackaging is in progress for another 5,000 packets of seeds which will be distributed in Nadi, Lautoka and some islands.

C. Distribution of Relief materials received from New Zealand.

Devotees, friends and well-wishers have come forward to send 7 containers (5 from Wellington, 1 from Christchurch and 1 from Auckland) of relief items (clothes, food, stationeries, medical supplies, educational items, 20 litre water containers, fishing gear etc.) for distribution to TC affected people. 3 container items have been received and are being sorted while another 3 containers are awaiting delivery to our premises. Distribution will begin as soon as the flood situation improves.

We thank all donors, volunteers and organizations like Soni Samaj NZ that have come forward to contribute to these relief efforts.

Donations to Ramakrishna Mission Fiji are exempt from taxes. Donors may direct deposit into: "Ramakrishna Mission" account No. 9803967323, Bank: Westpac, Nadi, Fiji BSB : 039004, Swift Code : WPACFJFX. After making your deposit, please send us an email to rkmfiji@gmail.com

We look forward to your support and goodwill to assist those affected by the devastating cyclone Winston.

Yours in the service of Humanity,

Swami Tadananda

Relief Coordinator, Ramakrishna Mission, Fiji

M: (+679) 9990123, E: tadananda@gmail.com



CONGRATULATIONS—Sumit Raniga

Sumit was recently awarded the prestigious 2016 Charles S. Neer Award.

“In 1985, Charles S. Neer, II, MD, created a fund to provide recognition for outstanding clinical investigation contributing to the understanding, care or prevention of injuries to the shoulder and elbow. Named after its benefactor, this prestigious award has been presented annually since the first Open Meeting of the American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons. In 1987, the award was expanded to include both clinical and research categories”.

Congratulations to Vishal Parekh (son of Atul and Gita Parekh) and Shikha Hari (daughter of Jayesha and Kiran Hiralal Hari) on their upcoming wedding on 15 May 2016.



New addition to the Bagia Family.

Soni Popat Lal and Mukta Ben Bagia have pleasure in announcing the birth of their grandson, Vyom Dipak Bagia. Vyom was born on the same birthday as his Fai, Jyoty Tappoo - on 14 Mar 2016. Congratulations to Dipak, Aashika, Krishn, Divek and the whole Bagia family.

vyom



Congratulations to Sejal Bagia (d/o Sanjai and Harshila Bagia) and Mayank Raniga (s/o Arun and Sadhana Raniga) on their recent engagement.

We wish the newly engaged couple all the very best.

Sonis of the World:

Message from Queensland Soni Samaj Inc

Jai Shree Krishna and G'Day Mates,

Greetings from the Queensland Soni Samaj! Firstly, we'd like to wish our friends and family in New Zealand a very happy new year. We hope you all have had a great start to 2016.

Kicking the year off with a '2016 Meet and Greet' Function, where one and all had a night of great food and even better company, we are now looking forward to our long-awaited Picnic Bus Trip in Easter. We're also excitedly looking forward to the upcoming Soni Pacific Cup Challenge, to be held in Brisbane in 2017.

We are continuing to strive to do more for the community as a whole. On this note, with the recent devastation in Fiji as a result of Cyclone Winston, the Queensland Soni Samaj mobilized an appeal to raise funds for those on the ground with the greatest need. I am proud to announce that we have raised more than AU\$3,000. Our thoughts continue to be with those affected and we pray for a brighter tomorrow.

With the current leaders of the community comprising of our youth, we truly believe that active participation in the Samaj is fundamental to our success. With this mindset and motivation, let's bring on the rest of 2016! If you would like to keep up to date with the latest happenings and information, make sure to connect with us on Facebook and our website www.qssi.org.au.

Regards from our community to yours,

Prahlad Payda, President, Queensland Soni Samaj.



Message from Sonis of the World: Fiji Soni Samaj

Jayshree Krshna badhai ne

From your former home, I regret to report the massive destruction that Category 5 Cyclone, Winston caused to mainly Northern part of our beautiful islands. It was recorded as the most powerful system in the Southern Hemisphere and second in the World after Phillipines.

Yet, like anyone else, who might have lost all their possessions, however little they had to begin with, we are up standing on our feet ready to re build our lives. Such is the resiliency of our peoples. We are too used to dealing with disasters and life has taught us to stand up and move on.

It is incredibly pleasing to note the massive amount of aid that is flowing to Fiji around the World. New Zealand has been particularly helpful in our re building efforts. Aid is not only flowing from Government quarters but from private citizens, like yourselves, in all forms and shape. This is so encouraging.

I hope that all of you stay connected and I look forward to welcoming you back to our shores. In just over 3 months time it would have been 1 year since we last hosted the Samellan. Before long it will be New Zealand's turn! Time does fly!

Your Samaj is the envy of all Soni's world over. I trust that the momentum continues and new heights are reached.

With best wishes

Always

Continued - Sonis of the World:



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Greetings & Congratulations!

Greetings and Congratulations to all the readers of Soni Sandesh from Vancouver! A week prior to Spring Sonis across Vancouver gathered to witness the World Rugby Sevens-Series. New Zealand (NZ) won the third cup title of the season as a staggering 60,418 fans watched 45 rugby matches at BC Place. The Fijian players were mesmerized by the local support, as the masses who had banked on their win, watched the cup slipped out of Fiji's hands. Canada made all of us proud with their great performance.



Fiji Cyclone Relief Action

The Rugby Game Finale became even more spectacular, as the Government of British Columbia presented a \$100,000 cheque, towards the Fiji Cyclone Winston Relief. Like the NZ Soni Samaj, we are also involved in collecting donations, for those in Fiji that are in need.



A Proud Moment

The Soni presence at this event was remarkable considering the Field Doctor was none other than our own Parth Lodhia. A proud moment for Veeral, the Lodhias, as well as the Sundarjis. The Haka by the All Blacks was certainly the most spectacular finale.



Soni Outreach Events

Our community has been actively involved and engaged in reaching out to those in need with our Outreach Program. We currently serve hot and delicious meals to more than 150 locals, on the first Sunday of every Month.

Looking Forward

We Wish You Every Success With Organizing the Soni Samelan in Auckland!

Sincerely,
Umesh Raniga

Being Proud

(by Deepak Pala)

As they say there is only one lovely child in the world and every parent has it. Every child makes us proud in whatever form it may be. Through their actions, the words they speak or the thoughts they portray. Be it the day they made their first turn, the first step they took, the first word they spoke or that innocent smile. Be it on the soccer field playing soccer and a small thing as scoring a goal are all moments we feel proud of. As time grows these moments of achievements grow with it no matter how small it is or how big it is. Importantly every moment of achievement is a proud moment leaving infinite memories.

She has also made us proud. She began her primary education at St. Francis Xavier and moved to Mt. Roskill Primary. The Catholic Parish gave her an endorsement that she is allowed to study at any Catholic Parish institute in New Zealand. In Year 5 her art work was accepted from the St Francis Xavier school competition and became the school magazine cover for that year.

She continued to study at Mt Roskill and progressed to Mt Roskill Intermediate and then to Mt Roskill Grammar.

During her years at Mt Roskill Grammar she was twice awarded house distinction prize as a junior for academic achievement. As a senior student she has earned a number of merit or excellence grades. She received subject endorsements in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Economics, English, French and Geography. Her attitude to her studies is exemplary and her individual subject reports have been highly complementary.

She was an outstanding student leader and was chosen to be one of the Prefects for Mt Roskill Grammar. Last year she was selected by the student body to be the only student representative on the Mt Roskill Grammar School Board of Trustees, an achievement in itself. She proved her conduct to be of high calibre and connected with students of all types and ages with all accomplishment.

She was selected as a youth advocate for the Ministry of Social Development. She was also involved in the wider community as a leader, including the school's Amnesty international group; a member of the Twinkle Foundation; fundraising for Starship Children's hospital and a student leader of the 40 hour famine. She was the student organiser of the School Ball, a significant event attended by close to 500 guests and with a budget in excess of \$50,000.

She has excelled as a sports person also. She represented the school in hockey, orienteering, and dragon boating. She was selected for under- 18 Auckland trials to represent at national hockey. She has excelled in lacrosse and was the highest goal scorer and achieving the best player of the year award. She has coached and captained junior teams and was a valued and dedicated member of the top team for the last three years. She was twice awarded school colours in recognition of her efforts.

Her sporting adventures have been more than matched by her extra-curricular achievements. She maintained her role on her house committee for five years. She has used her organisational talents to put on assemblies, sporting events and charity collections.

She has developed inter-personal skills and has a genuine concern for others by training as an advanced student mediator, working to find positive resolution to conflicts within the student body. She also set time aside to be a student mentor working to assist the studies of junior students and leading peer support team in planning and delivering a series of workshops aimed at assisting students new to the school.

She is also a talented debater and represented the school at the Auckland model United Nations. This progressed into her getting an invite to attend Parliament for a day in Wellington. On occasions she has spoken in assemblies with clarity, honesty and humour. She has been a superb ambassador for the school at community events.

Amongst other awards she received, she has received one of the Year 13 student standout award and importantly the 'Leaders of Tomorrow' scholarship to University of Otago. She has opted to continue her tertiary education through Auckland.

She is the granddaughter of Nimla Ben Pala and late Chiman Lal Kalyanji Pala. Proudly she is the daughter of Hina and Deepak Pala. She is **Kaaj Pala**.

SONI SAHELIS

Soni Sahelis meet on a regular basis to participate in activities that uplift all levels of our being through satsang which includes chanting, Vedic wisdom and bhajans. All participants have the opportunity to express their passions and interests and thus our get togethers have singing, shayeris, jokes and dancing as well. One of our most popular events is our Christmas party where the focus is just entertainment with lots of games as well as our favourites, including our own special Santa. Young or old everyone loves to receive gifts from Santa. We have shared afternoon tea where we get to sample exquisite cooking sahelis bring and often recipes are exchanged as well.



Sahelis also do Community Seva whenever possible. Some of our ladies led by Saras Raniga have been giving time at an Elderly Care in Hillsborough to chant and sing bhajans for the residents. The experience has a positive impact on all concerned. Our Sahelis are well represented on our Samaj committee and play an active part in all Samaj events. What would we do without Radha Masi and her team of helpers for Samaj dining events!

It is great when family members encourage the women in their families to attend events by dropping and picking them. However some sahelis are missing out on the gatherings because of lack of transport. Please talk to us where transport is an issue and we will do our best to sort it out. All attendees of Saheli functions contribute to its success by their participation. However our event planners and organizers go the extra mile to make the event happen. So a special recognition of the contribution of Saras Raniga, Ranjana Gauri and Chandrika Meghji are in place. Jai Shree Krishna

Uma Chopra

NZ Soni Samellan 2018/19

New Zealand Soni Samaj has already started planning for the much anticipated 2018/19 International Soni Samellan. We are discussing with overseas committees on a date suitable to as many people as possible. We will announce the new date and platform for communication in the next few months.

Firstly, we are launching an international competition for a new name and logo for this event. Entry is open to anyone and everyone. Entries should reach us by post (NZ Soni Samaj, c/- Fresh Choice, 142 West Coast Road, Glen Eden, Auckland, New Zealand 0602) or email nzsonisamaj@gmail.com by 30 June 2016.

Entries should include a name for the Samellan, a logo and a by-line. Ideally, the entry should have a New Zealand/ New Zealand maori theme coupled with a Soni flavour. We encourage you to be creative and thoughtful with your entries. The winning entry will receive \$200 NZD. Final decision will be made by the Executive Committee of NZSS. NZSS reserves the right to edit/modify the winning entry..

