

FOREWORD



Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright from the 19th century, would say that a community is like a ship, everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm. To produce the Greater Los Angeles Area community book, Project Chair Inder Singh and his team worked very hard to select and shortlist names that could find space in the following pages.

Southern California is home to several successful Indian Americans, perhaps the most across any region in the USA. They come from various walks. What marks them out is their quest for excellence. Their stories are inspiring for every generation of reader. Dr A S Marwah, for instance, arrived in the USA over 66 years ago on a Dental Fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation. This intellectual nonagenarian has not just been a dentist, but a guiding beacon for the community at large. Growing up in undivided Bengal,

Mani Bhaumik walked barefoot four miles each day to school from the thatched mud hut where his family lived. In June 2016, Dr Bhaumik made a donation of USD 11 million to the UCLA's Department of Physics and Astronomy, all thanks to the fairy-tale success he achieved in the USA. During his younger days BU Patel had the same problem as Mani Bhaumik, his family could hardly afford two square meals a day. An opportunity to escape from his impoverished existence came when he moved to Zambia to join relatives from his Gujarat village. In 1976, sensing a Uganda-like trouble for Indians, he immigrated to the USA. Today his firm has completed over 200 acquisitions and sales transactions worth over USD 4 billion. Dr R Narayanaswami has been a distinguished space scientist with NASA—an institution where Indians have been shining like stars—before venturing out into his own. KV Kumar is the proud recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, awarded to those distinguished American citizens that exemplify a life dedicated to community service—he's put in over 100,000 hours of volunteer work. By founding the Shankara Dance Academy, Arti Manek has transformed thousands of lives through *Kathak*. The celebrated *Kathak* maestro Pandit Birju Maharaj has equated her California academy with top ones in Lucknow and Delhi. Deepi Singh could only take her first baby steps in life at the age of 5 after being afflicted by polio when just nine months old. She was told that she would not walk beyond the age of 40, but walks with dignity even at 81. Climbing little mental hillocks every day, she rose to the top of her department at Kaiser Permanente—an institution to which she gave 40 years of her life! Dr Harvinder Sahota, celebrated cardiologist, had two dozen patents against his name, and became the inventor of the perfusion heart balloon. His fame took him across the world where he performed angioplasty, including for the first time in India. Indar Sethi was about eight years old when the horrors of partition played out live before him. His family became refugees. Over the years Indar Sethi became a success, working on NASA sponsored scientific missions and other projects in an outstanding career spanning 40 years. Harry Sidhu is the Leonardo da Vinci of the Indian community in Los Angeles. He's been a mechanical engineer, a private pilot, a fund raiser, a philanthropist, an entrepreneur, a politician, a community worker and an actor. Is there something he cannot do? Abdulgani (Ganibhai) Shaikh could have happily earned a living selling buffalo milk all his life but pursued academics. The first to earn an engineering degree in his community, he became a distinguished aerospace engineer in the West Coast of the USA.

The list of high performers runs long, and it is not possible to put all the names here. In their own ways each one profiled in this book has left a mark. If the community is a ship, they are all captains.

Finally, no amount of praise can be adequate for Mr Inder Singh. But for his inspiring vision, extraordinary patience and abundant drive, this book would have remained in the mind.

Syantana Chakravarty

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