

Motherland

by Vineeta Vijayaraghavan



**Coming Together in Skokie
Book Selection for
January - March 2010**



Dear Skokie Community:

I am pleased at the collaboration that has resulted in the **Coming Together in Skokie** project that I believe presents a great opportunity for everyone to participate in a valuable community reading initiative and learning experience.

The committee's selection of *Motherland* is an outstanding choice for the project. The book is thought-provoking and should spark meaningful conversation among those who participate. It is my sincere hope that many people in the Skokie community will read the book and open themselves to learn about a different culture. In our community, and across the globe, it is more important than ever to gain understanding of other cultures and countries; it is in this understanding and compassion for each other that we find our strength and resilience.

I look forward to meeting author Vineeta Vijayaraghavan as part of the **Coming Together in Skokie** program activities, and also hope to meet many Skokie residents who participate.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the **Coming Together in Skokie** Committee for developing this opportunity for enrichment, learning and understanding.

Sincerely,
George Van Dusen, Mayor
Village of Skokie

Dear Fellow Skokians:

The Indian Community of Niles Township is honored and proud to support such a meaningful project as **Coming Together in Skokie**. Bringing people together through their culture is the most beautiful way to connect with each other. Learning about cultures in depth gives us a better understanding of people and their heritage. It enables us to maintain more peace and harmony among ourselves.

Coming Together in Skokie will spark our awareness about the lifestyles and habits of people from different parts of the world. It will, I hope, help us to respect each other for our individual beliefs. It will guide our children to a greater understanding of people who are different from them, and open the way for new friendships.

I congratulate the entire **Coming Together in Skokie** team for making this inspiring project a reality. Let us continue to work together to bring all the cultures together and create our own Skokie culture, in which there will be respect for all.

Best Wishes,
Usha Kamaria, President
Indian Community of Niles Township

Dear Skokie Community:

The Village of Skokie is a community rich in diversity. Our residents come from a variety of different countries and speak more than 90 languages and dialects. While many of our older residents have lived here for decades, we also have many young families moving to the area to raise their children.

The Village, Skokie Public Library, and Niles Township High Schools welcome everyone to participate in an exciting new program—**Coming Together in Skokie**—to build knowledge, awareness and appreciation of our different backgrounds, and to weave us all into the vibrant tapestry that is Skokie.

Each year we will highlight a different culture in our community. Our first annual **Coming Together in Skokie** features the Asian Indian population. As a starting point to explore Indian culture, we have chosen a book, *Motherland*, by Indian author Vineeta Vijayaraghavan. The book explores an eventful summer for a young person who experiences the pull of two cultures and comes to appreciate both, while also gaining an understanding of older generations and the meaning of “home.”

We hope that residents and students will read *Motherland*, and take part in public book discussion groups at the library and high schools, and events sponsored by additional groups including Oakton Community College and Skokie Hospital.

The official kick-off event for **Coming Together in Skokie** will be the celebration of the Republic of India’s 60th birthday, in which the Indian Community of Niles Township will present a special cultural program at Niles West High School on Saturday, January 23. Through the following six weeks, numerous events highlighting India’s literary, cultural and artistic history will take place at the Skokie Public Library, Niles North and West High Schools and Oakton Community College.

We invite you to join us in this celebration by reading the novel and attending some of the many activities, including a visit by the author on March 8. Please read this program brochure and choose one or more events. It is through knowledge and appreciation of one another that we will continue to be the Village, with its many important institutions, that literally brings its citizens together in peace and harmony.

COMING TOGETHER IN SKOKIE COMMITTEE

Carolyn Anthony
Dir., Skokie Public Library

Susan Van Dusen
First Lady of Skokie

Dr. Nanciann Gatta
Superintendent, District 219

Sheila Gilani
Holiday Inn North Shore &
Skokie Business Community

Usha Kamaria
President, Indian Community of Niles Twp.



VINEETA VIJAYARAGHAVAN

Ms. Vijayaraghavan, the author of *Motherland*, was born in India and raised in the United States. She is the daughter of Raji and M. K. Vijayaraghavan of Edison, N.J. Both parents worked in the health care and pharmaceutical industries. Vineeta graduated magna cum laude from Harvard, where she also received an M.B.A.

Vineeta is married to Thomas James DeLong, a professor of management practice at Harvard Business School as well as a trustee of Mount Holyoke College. She is currently the Senior Research Fellow and Project Manager at Innosight Institute Healthcare in Boston.

SUMMARY

Motherland is the story of an American teenager whose life bridges two cultures. Its narrator, fifteen-year-old Maya, was born in Kerala, India where she spent the first four years of her life. Maya's parents are concerned that her New York friends are a bad influence on her so they arrange for her to spend the summer with relatives in India. Maya is disgruntled and resentful. When she arrives in India she sees through Western eyes and is very aware of cultural differences. Throughout the summer, Maya struggles with identity issues. Eventually, with the help of her grandmother who cared for her when she was young, Maya gains insights into her past and her heritage, and an appreciation of Indian values. She leaves India with the realization that she could live anywhere, and still be at home.





India is a land of striking contrasts with lush tropical rain forests, deserts and mountain ranges, exotic tastes and aromas, and a deeply rich culture. The country, located in southern Asia, is home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world. A population of more than one billion, its people are as diverse as its ecology. There are four major religions – Hindu, composing 80% of the population, Muslim, Christian and Sikh. Hindi is the official language, with more than 17 additional major languages and 844 dialects.

Although the British colonized India in the 19th century, the Indians fought for their freedom. Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru led the country to independence in 1947 using nonviolent resistance toward the British colonists. The current India is a republic with a parliamentary system of government.

Rajiv Gandhi (1944-1991) became India's prime minister in 1984 on a wave of sympathy for his assassinated mother and widespread admiration for his youthful dynamism and modern outlook. His tenure was notable for promoting high technology in India, though without much impact on reducing poverty. He died in 1991 when a suicide bomber from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam detonated a bomb in South India, killing Gandhi and 18 others.

With an economy on the rise due to globalization, the country currently produces great numbers of engineers, scientists and doctors. Still, there is a great disparity between the wealthy and the poor, and almost two thirds of the working population depend upon agriculture for a livelihood. Though challenges of education, poverty, and disputes with neighboring countries exist, the massive republic is bound together by a deep sense of spirituality, a great appreciation of its culture, and an abiding pride in its independence.



Join in a book discussion of Vineeta Vijayaraghavan's Motherland.

Tuesday, January 19

7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room

Wednesday, January 20

Lit Lounge, a book discussion group for adults in their 20s and 30s.

7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Edwardo's Natural Pizza, 9300 Skokie Boulevard, Skokie

Thursday, January 21

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room

Saturday, February 13

2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

Wednesday, February 17

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room

Thursday, February 18

7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Book Discussion Room

Tuesday, February 23

Teen Book Discussion

7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

Tuesday, March 9

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Dual Campus Presentation:

Des Plaines Campus, TenHoeve Room 1604 - author will be present

Skokie Campus, Room C240 - program via telecast

Friday, March 12

Come discuss the novel, *Motherland*, with the Niles West librarians. A light breakfast will be served.

7:15 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Niles West High School, IRC



1. Do you feel Maya's parents were right to worry about their daughter's "Americanness"?
2. How does Maya react to the sights, sounds and customs when she arrives in India?
3. The story is told only from Maya's point of view. How might it be different if it were told with the viewpoints of other characters?
4. Should parents be more forthcoming with family secrets to their children?
5. How is Maya changed by her trip to India?
6. How can new immigrants best balance old and new cultures in their family life?
7. Is the story a realistic portrayal of an immigrant teen?
8. Besides the cultural gap that exists between Western and Asian Indian values, there is a generational gap. How does this gap affect immigrant families?
9. How well does this book exemplify the immigrant experience in America?
10. Which is Maya's motherland?



All events are open to the general public. Register for Skokie Public Library events at www.events.skokieliibrary.info.

Event Locations:

- Niles North High School, 9800 Lawler Ave., Skokie
- Niles West High School, 5701 W. Oakton St., Skokie
- Oakton Community College, Des Plaines Campus, 1600 E. Golf Road
- Oakton Community College, Skokie Campus, 7701 N. Lincoln Ave.
- Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie

Celebrate The Republic Day of India

The Indian Community of Niles Township celebrates The Republic Day of India with this special event at Niles West High School on January 23. Republic Day marks the adoption of the Constitution of India and the transition of India from a British Dominion to a republic on January 26, 1950. The celebration includes a feast of Indian food available for purchase, followed by a program showcasing cultural dances by prestigious dance academies as well as presentations by District 219 Indo-Pak Clubs.

Saturday, January 23

5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Purchase refreshments

7:30 p.m. Cultural Program

Niles West High School

Republic Day Celebration

A morning celebration will be held honoring Republic Day. Readings by Niles North Indo-Pak students and staff will be performed. Chai (tea) and breakfast snacks will be served.

Monday, January 25

7:15 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Niles North High School, Codell Commons

Reading Hour

Join Superintendent Nanciann Gatta as she reads segments from *Motherland* by Vineeta Vijayaraghavan. Bagels and juice will be served.

Thursday, February 4

7:15 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Niles West High School, Room 2040



Indo-Pak Night

Niles West and Niles North students will perform dances, a fashion show, and a skit based on an old Indian movie. Tickets are \$5.

Saturday, February 6

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Niles West High School Auditorium

Indo-Pak Day

Come to the IRC to experience the rich tradition and culture of India and Pakistan with culinary treats, choral performances, “Hollywood vs. Bollywood” with the theatre students, henna painting and more.

Wednesday, February 10

Niles West High School IRC

8:10 a.m. to 3:23 p.m.

The Bollywood Ticket: An American Guide to Indian Movies

Bollywood movies are known for their glitz, glamour, and song-and-dance extravaganzas. Not all style and no substance, Bollywood is worthy of the same serious consideration as Hollywood. Jennifer Hopfinger, founder of www.thebollywoodticket.com clears up the misconceptions about Bollywood films and explains what makes them magical.

Wednesday, February 10

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

Movie and Henna Party

Join the Indo-Pak Club students in viewing a contemporary modern classic film from the world of Bollywood! (Film to be announced). Dan Montgomery, Niles North English teacher, will discuss the history of Indian cinema before the film. A table will be set up for henna drawing. Beverages and snacks will be served.

Friday, February 12

3:45 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

Niles North High School, Room 1100



Film Screening: Bride and Prejudice

A Bollywood-style movie based on Jane Austen's classic novel *Pride and Prejudice*! When Lalita Bakshi (played by international star Aishwarya Rai) meets wealthy American businessman William Darcy, sparks begin to fly. Meanwhile, Lalita's mother is determined to arrange advantageous marriages for all her daughters. Is it love or not? You decide!

Monday, February 15

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Petty Auditorium

Cultural Roundtable: Focus on India and Pakistan

The 3rd Cultural Roundtable is an opportunity for Mr. Osburn, Niles West's principal, and students to meet, talk, and celebrate diversity and embrace its challenges. This Cultural Roundtable will dedicate itself to confronting the issues that Indian or Pakistani members of our community face. It will ask students and community members of all cultural backgrounds to share in listening or speaking to their experiences with the particular challenges faced by Indian-Americans and Pakistani-Americans today.

Tuesday, February 16

3:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Niles West High School Student Commons

Celebration of Coming Together in Skokie

The Indo-Pak Club is sponsoring an evening celebration of dinner, a shopping bazaar and entertainment, which will include a fashion show, music and dancing. Tickets are \$7 for dinner and entertainment, \$5 for entertainment only. Children 5 and under are free.

Friday, February 19

6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Niles North High School, Cafeteria and Field House



Screening: Modern Indian Films

Join the Niles West Film Club for a showing of Indian film(s) and popcorn, of course. \$1 admission.

Monday, February 22

3:45 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Niles West High School, Film Room 2040

Cricket Match: Niles Township High Schools vs. Rolling Meadows

Come watch Niles West and Niles North students play a cricket match with Rolling Meadows students.

Monday, February 22

6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Niles West High School, Field House

An Introduction to Henna Tattoos

Join professional body artist Allison Weston for a presentation on the ancient art of Mehndi, otherwise known as temporary henna tattoos. Allison will give a presentation on the history of henna and demonstrate techniques and designs with the help of a few volunteers. During the second part of the program, some attendees will be randomly selected to receive a simple henna design.



Wednesday, February 24

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

International Night

As part of this night highlighting the cultures at Niles West, the Indo-Pak Club will perform. Tickets are \$5, Students and Seniors \$3.

Thursday, February 25

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Niles West High School, Auditorium



Fulbright-Hays Study Abroad Group Discussion

Join a panel discussion by Oakton Community College faculty, who as a part of a Fulbright-Hays program spent five weeks in India studying “Gandhi and Globalization” as an introduction to creating Oakton’s Peace and Social Justice Programs. Refreshments served.

Friday, February 26

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Skokie Campus, Rooms A145-152

Deeva Dance Troupe

The Deeva Dance Troupe is a nationally recognized all-female dance troupe from Northwestern University that blends the best of Indian classical, film, and folk dance styles with jazz, modern, and hip-hop. Representing diverse regions of South Asia, each dancer brings a unique background, finesse, and attitude to the table as they fuse their styles. The Deevas are a group of independent, talented women, who are, in the best sense of the word, Divas!

Friday, February 26

7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Petty Auditorium

Indian Festival at Oakton Community College- Skokie Campus

The Festival is sponsored by the South Asian Student Club and the Library. *Desi* performances include dance, song, *Desi* student fashion show and student-produced play based on *Motherland*. Henna tattoos and bazaar. All food is *zabiha*. \$5 entrance fee includes dinner and entertainment. Children under 5 are free.

Friday, March 5

6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Skokie Campus, Rooms P103-104



Making Indian Cooking Healthier, Together!

NorthShore University HealthSystem Family Medicine physician and professionally-trained chef Michael Rakotz, MD will educate and demonstrate how to make traditional Indian cooking healthier. Dr. Rakotz will talk about nutrition as it applies to Indian cuisine and will also cook a few traditional dishes for you, sharing his recipes with a healthy twist! Please register with the Skokie Public Library for this event.

Saturday, March 6

1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

MEET THE AUTHOR, VINEETA VIJAYARAGHAVAN

On March 8 at Niles West and Niles North, Vijayaraghavan will be speaking about her novel and the experience of immigrating to the United States from India. During "A Conversation with the Author" at 7 p.m., Skokie Public Library Director Carolyn Anthony will engage in a dialogue with the author, followed by a chance for the audience to ask questions. Seating is limited.

Monday, March 8

8:57 a.m. to 10:26 a.m. at Niles West High School Auditorium

1:07 p.m. to 2:36 p.m. at Niles North High School Auditorium

7 p.m. at Skokie Public Library

Tuesday, March 9

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Oakton Community College, Dual Campus Presentation:

Des Plaines Campus, TenHoeve Room 1604 - author will be present

Skokie Campus, Room C240 - program via telecast



Introduction to Indian Vegetarian Cooking

Join well-known Indian cooking instructor Ranjana Bhargava for an introduction to vegetarian Indian cooking. Ranjana will discuss the basics of Indian spices and techniques. Attendees will also have an opportunity to taste samples of her recipes and ask questions about how they can create their own dishes at home.

Wednesday, March 10

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

Reading Hour

Join Superintendent Nanciann Gatta as she reads segments from *Motherland*, by Vineeta Vijayaraghavan. Pastries will be served.

Thursday, March 11

7:30 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Niles North High School, Literacy Center

Faces and Places of India

Join world traveler Bill Helmuth as he presents an eyewitness account of modern-day India. Bill spent one year in India traveling to the remote regions of the Himalayas, to exotic Rajistan, and the northern Mughal Empire with its magnificent mosques and forts. He also visited great cities including Calcutta, New Delhi, and Mumbai, whose history incorporates the British Empire.

Saturday, March 13

2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Skokie Public Library, Mary Radmacher Meeting Room

Cricket Match

Come watch the Midwest Cricket Club, the Niles North Indo-Pak Club and the District 219 Cricket Club play a cricket match.

Saturday, March 27

5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Niles North High School, Fieldhouse





Kerala

Located in the extreme southwest of India, a lush, fertile land crossed by rivers, beaches and marshlands. It is rich in culture, cuisine, and particularly martial arts.

Language

The major languages of Kerala are Malayalam, Tamil and English. Malayalam is the official language of Kerala; inhabitants are called Malayalis.

Cuisine

Vegetarian dishes, as well as meat, poultry and fish. Curries, coconut, rice and lentils are eaten daily.

Martial Arts

There is a tradition of martial arts training in Kerala. Many are based on holistic physical development and are taught in combination with ayurveda, accupressure and herbalism.

Onam

The most popular Hindu festival of Kerala celebrated annually in the Malayalam month of Chingam (August – September).

Matrimony

Marriages traditionally are arranged by one's family.

Clothing

Every day clothes for women are saris and churidar (tight leggings)/salwar-kameez; Traditional attire for men are shirts, trousers and the mundu, a piece of fabric tied around the waist, worn under the shirt, flowing down to the feet.



<i>Aapam</i>	A flat bread popular in the Kerala state of India.
<i>Ayah</i>	A caretaker or baby sitter.
<i>Bhajans</i>	Religious songs.
<i>Cricket</i>	An outdoor game with eleven players on each team, played with a ball, bats and wickets. A game may last from an afternoon to several days.
<i>Curry</i>	A fragrant, rich sauce including spices like coriander, cumin and turmeric with garlic and ginger, stirred into a tomato puree.
<i>Dal</i>	Dried beans split in half like split peas.
<i>Dowry</i>	Money, goods or estate that a woman brings to her husband in marriage.
<i>Garam masala</i>	From Hindi - garam (hot) and masala (mixture); a blend of ground spices common in Indian and other South Asian cuisines.
<i>Idli sambar</i>	Steamed rice cakes with red lentil stew.
<i>Malayaly</i>	One of the four major languages of South India. One of the 22 major languages of India.
<i>Onam</i>	A joyous harvest festival of Kerala celebrated by Malayalees across India and the world.
<i>Pakorās</i>	A South Asian fried snack made with one or two ingredients, such as chicken, chick peas and other vegetables.
<i>Pappadum</i>	A thin, crispy Indian wafer like a cracker or flatbread, typically served with a meal in India.
<i>Payasam</i>	A Kerala dessert like rice pudding made on special occasions such as Onam.
<i>Pooja (Puja)</i>	A form of worship relating to dedication and belief.
<i>Rassam</i>	South Indian soup with lentils and many spices.
<i>Salwar Kameez</i>	A traditional dress worn by both women and men in South Asia. Salwar or shalwar are loose pajamas; kameez is a long, loose top reaching to the knees.
<i>Sari (Saree)</i>	A female garment worn in India; a strip of unstitched cloth four to nine meters long which is artfully wrapped around a woman.
<i>Tamil Nadu</i>	The eleventh largest state in India.



Namaskar (Namaste)

The most popular form of greeting in India. It is used to say hello and good-bye. Both palms are placed together and are raised just below the face to greet a person.

Arati

A ceremony of veneration and love, often performed to seek blessings from God, to welcome guests, and for special occasions.

Five small lamps (niranjanas) are filled with ghee or oil, and are placed on a small metal tray. A cotton wool wick is placed in the lamps. A conch shell filled with water, leaves, flowers, and incense are also placed on the tray. The lamps are lit and the tray is rotated in a circle in front of the honored person or deity to welcome them and to ward off evil.

Garlanding

Flower garlands are offered to welcome visitors or to honor the Gods. The garlands are made with white jasmine and orange marigolds woven together with thread.

Bindi

A red dot made of vermillion powder worn by women between their eyebrows on their forehead. Considered a symbol of Goddess Parvati, a bindi symbolizes female energy and is believed to protect women and their husbands. Traditionally a symbol of marriage, today many unmarried girls and women wear a bindi as decoration. Bindis are now worn in different shapes and colors.

Nose Pin

A nose pin studded with stones is a symbol of purity and marriage. Today it is frequently worn by unmarried girls as well.



Check www.skokiellibrary.info for available copies.

LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry

A River Sutra by Gita Mehta

A Suitable Boy by Vikram Seth

Bombay Time by Thrity Umrigar

Fasting, Feasting by Anita Desai

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie (1981 Man Booker Prize)

Q & A by Vikas Swarup (Basis for the film *Slumdog Millionaire*)

Sister of My Heart by Chitra Banerjes

The Death of Vishnu by Manil Suri

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy (1997 Man Booker Prize)

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai (2006 Man Booker Prize)

The Space Between Us by Thrity Umriga

The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga (2008 Man Booker Prize)

THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri (2000 Pulitzer Prize)

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Born Confused by Tanuja Desai Hidier

Homeless Bird by Gloria Whelan (2000 National Book Award)

Secret Keeper by Mitali Perkins



Coming Together in Skokie Planning Committee

Village of Skokie

George and Susan Van Dusen, Mayor and First Lady of Skokie

Skokie Public Library

Carolyn Anthony, Director

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Special Thanks

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Program Booklet

Karyn Malench

