

Houston's "Little India"

Representing diverse cultures, religions, and languages, some 55,000 recent immigrants from India call the Houston area home.

A focal point for many Hindu Indians is **Sri Meenakshi Temple**, 17130 McLean Rd., Pearland, 77584-9510; 281/489-0358. Web site: www.meenakshi.org. From Houston take Texas 288 south to FM 518 (approximately 14 miles from downtown). Go left (east) on 518 for 8 miles to McLean Rd. (CR 104). Turn right on McLean (by West Side Plaza Shopping Center) and go just over 2 miles to the temple. Hours: Mon-Thur 9-noon and 5-8, Fri 9-noon and 5-9, and Sat-Sun 9-8.

Hindu and non-Hindu visitors are welcomed. Remember that this is a religious site with guidelines--for example, you must remove your shoes before entering certain sacred areas. Check in at the office for guidance. Free guided tours are 10 a.m. July 18, Aug. 15, and Sept. 5. (Groups of 10 or more should call in advance.) Other tours generally are available weekday mornings and weekends with two-weeks' advance notice.

On Sept. 3 at 7 p.m., the temple hosts **Janmashtami**, celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna. An area-wide **Birthday Party for Lord Krishna** happens 7 p.m.-midnight Sept. 11 at the George R. Brown Convention Center, 1001 Avenida de las Americas (713/853-8000). Sponsored by Hindus of Greater Houston (call Poonam Kewalramani, 281/579-2954), the free festival features Indian music, dance, and foods.

October 17-25, Sri Meenakshi Temple holds a **Navarathri** festival honoring three goddesses, with special services each day at 8 a.m. A display of fancy

dressed dolls--depicting regional Indian dress and representing various deities--will be on display during regular temple hours at no charge.

Oct. 30 from 11 a.m. to **TIME**, the temple celebrates Deepavali (or Diwali), the **Festival of Lights** , with a colorful bazaar (no admission charge) of Indian clothing and gifts for sale, plus Indian vegetarian snacks and sweets.

Restaurants

Houston offers a number of Indian restaurants. **Pavani Madras Cuisine** is at 7320 Southwest Fwy; 713/272-8259. **Taj Mahal Restaurant** is at 8328 Gulf Fwy; 713/649-2818. **Bombay Palace Indian Restaurant** is at 3901 Westheimer; 713/960-8472. **India's Restaurant** is at 5704 Richmond Ave.; 713/266-0131.

Dance and Music

July 10 at **TIME**, the **Anjali Center for Indian Performing Arts** (713/772-2787) presents local and Indian dancers in modernized classical Indian dance at Hamman Hall (**ADDRESS**) on the campus of Rice University. **Admission: PRICE** Aug. 20 at 8 p.m., the center presents traditional classical Indian dances at Miller Outdoor Theater, 100 Concert Dr. in Hermann Park near the Houston Zoo. Admission: free. Sept. 10 at **TIME**, Anjali joins New York's Battery Dance Company in modern and traditional Indian dance performances at Wortham Center, **ADDRESS. Admission: PRICE**

Each Sat. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., listen to traditional Indian music on radio station KELR/1070-AM (713/787-5367).

Cricket Matches

Each Sun., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., July 25-Oct. 31 (except Sept. 5), the Houston Cricket League sponsors matches between teams of local players from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the West Indies. The league final is Oct. 17. Games are held at Tombass Park, Texas 288 at Beltway 8. Call Dharmendra Patel (281/277-2774) or Mike Greathead (713/869-9600).

Books

Examine the religions and cultures of India in the award-winning book, *India Unveiled*, by Robert Arnett. His personal odyssey through India features 260 color photos and seven maps. It's available at local bookstores or by mail (\$45 including shipping) at Atman Press, 2525 Auburn Ave. #345-11, Columbus, Georgia 31906 (800/563-4198).