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## Australia India Society of Victoria Inc.

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## President's Message

I was at the Vatican in 2010 when I met with an American girl, who was acting as a guide to our group. She told me she was doing her master's degree in Theology. When I asked her about her views on religion she said, "Religion is the single most powerful controlling factor of the human mind".

So true is that statement in today's religious wars that is affecting the Islamic states. The fighting in Iraq, Libya, Bahrain and now Syria are all religious wars. The fighting in these countries is in the news with horrifying and nauseating footage of wounded men, women and children being treated in overflowing hospitals and on roadside. The killings of thousands of people and destruction of whole of towns with people fleeing the war in Syria in to neighbouring countries is sheer madness. It is a religious war between the Sunnis and Shias.

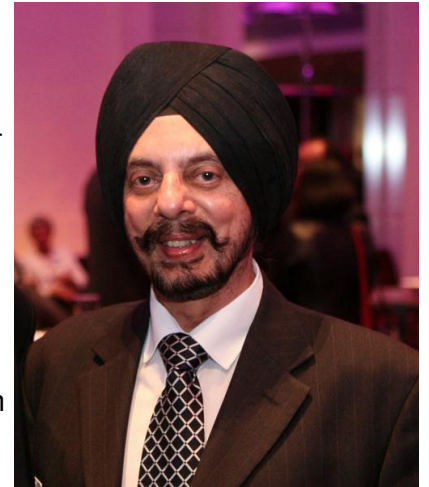
Sunni and Shia are the two major denominations of Islam. It is estimated that 75–90% of the world's Muslims are Sunni and 10–20% are Shia, with most Shias belonging to the 'Twelver' tradition and the rest divided between several other groups.

The major split in Islam is that between the majority Sunnis and the minority Shiites. The split goes back to events in the 7th century:

As per my knowledge of History, after Prophet Mohammed's death in 632, leadership of the Islamic community passed to Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, one of Mohammed's closest companions. Some in the community felt that this succession was not legitimate, and that the title of caliph really belonged to Ali ibn Abi Talib. Ali's claim was supported by the fact that he was Mohammed's cousin, his adopted son, his first convert (at the age of nine), and husband of his daughter Fatima. Both sides believe that Mohammed specifically designated their man : Supporters of Abu became the Sunnis, those of ibn Ali the Shiites.

Sunnis are a majority in most Muslim communities: in South East Asia, China, South Asia, Africa, and most of the Arab world. Shia make up the majority of the population in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, and Bahrain (all together called the Shia Crescent), while Pakistan has the second-largest Shia Muslim (Twelver) population in the world.

The Sunnis and Shiites have been fighting these religious wars for over 1600 years and I am of the opinion that there has never been and there



Dr. Gurdip Aurora

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will be no political solution to these wars.

I am of the opinion that unless the two sects learn to accept each other's differing beliefs and stop 'brain washing' their children that one sect is better than the other or that one is superior or legitimate compared to the other, the Islamic states will continue to tear each other apart with hatred resulting in unwanted suffering and killings of innocent men, women and children, destruction of infrastructure and personal property thereby sending millions of peoples to a state of destitution.

The western world including USA and Australia, all of whom have been referred to as "Infidels" by the Fundamentalist Islamic Religious and Political leaders, as it happened during the Iraq, Iran and Libyan uprising, should stay clear of these religious wars and the United Nations should spend all its energy and Resources to educate the two sects that the earth is a large enough place for all of us to live peacefully and harmoniously without interfering in each other's religious beliefs. A united religious Islam (Sunnis and Shias living side by side) would be a great achievement if we were to work hard on it.

## Upcoming Events

### India's Independence Day celebrations

The committee of Australia India Society of Victoria has decided to celebrate India's Independence Day on 15th August this year. It has been a bold move as it is a Thursday, a normal working day and we are not sure of the response from members of the Indian community. The committee also decided to hold the inaugural function in the Queens hall of the Victorian Parliament on Spring Street.

We have planned a couple of multicultural dance shows for the evening. We have invited several Ministers and Members of Parliament, a few of whom have already agreed to attend our function. The committee sincerely hopes you will support this bold move from us and if this is successful, we will henceforth celebrate India's Independence Day every year on 15 August.

The details of the costing for the Independence Day celebrations are elsewhere in the newsletter.

### "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

I would also like to inform you that the Indian government has decided to celebrate the "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)" in Sydney this year from 11 November to 13 November.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (English: Non-resident Indian Day), is celebrated in India on 9 January each year to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India. The day commemorates the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa in Bombay on January 9, 1915. It was established in 2003, and is sponsored by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs of the Government of India and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region of India. A celebratory event is held on 7-9 January each year in an Indian city: a forum for issues concerning the Indian Diaspora is organized and the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards are given.

I would like you to support the function by attending it in Sydney this year.

Gurdip Aurora

# Australia India Society of Victoria Celebrates India's Independence Day 2013

**At The Parliament House, Melbourne**



AISV is celebrating India's Independence day on Thursday, 15 August 2013 at 6:30 for 7:00pm at The Parliament House on Spring Street, Melbourne.

All members and their guests are cordially invited to attend.

**COST:**

Members: \$110

Non Members: \$120

**Price includes:**

- 3 Course meal
- Cultural Program
- Tour of the Parliament House
- Chance to mingle with MPs

**For further inquiries, contact:**

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# Australia India Society of Victoria Inc.

## Annual Membership\* - New/Renewal Application Form

New Application .....Renewal.....

Title/s .....

First Name.....Surname.....

Partner/Spouse's First Name.....Surname.....

Children's names

1.....

2.....

3.....

Address

.....

City .....Post Code .....

Tel (B/H) .....Tel: (A/H) .....

Mobile: .....

Email: .....

Other Details: (Hobbies, Interests)

.....

Would you be interested to join the committee of AISV Yes ..... No.....

Membership Category (Circle one) Life: \$500, Family: \$80, Concession: \$50, Single: \$50

Do you want a receipt Yes/ No

I hereby apply/renew membership of AISV in the above category. I am aware of the rules and regulations of the society.

Signature / Date / Place

Membership Application may be sent to:

**1401 Ferntree Gully Road, Scoresby, VIC 3179**

\* Except Life membership

Australia India Society of Victoria is an integrated non-sectarian, Indian Association in Victoria. It represents Indians and Australians from many parts of the world. AISV membership is open to anyone who is interested in India, her culture and her people.