INDIA ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 2

A COMMENT

In 1993 I was introduced to Godan Nambudiripad and Ram Gada of the India Association of Minnesota by David Nystuen, Field Services Coordinator for the Minnesota Historical Society. The Society's Minnesota History Center had opened the previous autumn, and in touring the building exhibits and its Library, neither had found much on the history of Minnesotans who had come to the state from India. They asked to meet with me to discuss how that reality might be addressed.

The result of that meeting became the first oral history project of the India Association of Minnesota. The sixteen narrators in that project, chosen with an eye to diversity of birthplace in India and religion, provided remarkable perspective on their lives and on the many facets of adjustment to American life and culture, and to settlement in Minnesota. The success of that project, and the rich historical information it provided, launched a joint effort of the Society and the India Association to ensure ongoing documentation of Minnesota's important and growing Indian community.

The second project to come from this joint effort is contained in the fifteen volumes of which this volume is a part. The leadership of Godan Nambudiripad and Ram Gada has been crucial to continued success, and the interviewing skill of Polly Sonifer has enriched both projects. As this second series of oral history interviews goes into print, a third series is ready to be launched - a testament indeed to the importance attached to their history by both the Indian community and the Minnesota Historical Society.

It remains a great pleasure for me to work with members of the India Association of Minnesota's Oral History Committee, and with other members of the community as well. Their ready appreciation of history, exceptional organizational skills, and generous commitment of time and talent have made the accomplishment of both projects a genuine delight. On behalf of the Society and its mission to document all Minnesotans, I am especially grateful for the productive and supportive relationship which these projects have engendered.

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