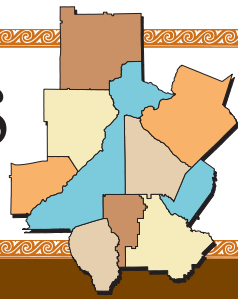


# GLOBAL ATLANTA SnapSHOTS

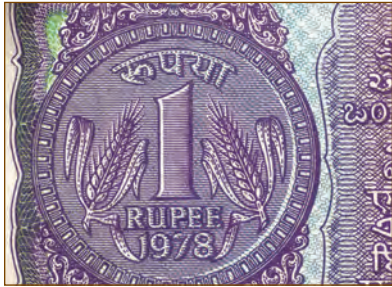
A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION



## A S I A N - I N D I A N S

The Global Atlanta Snapshots were created to foster understanding among all people of the Atlanta region. The Snapshots show the rich ethnic and cultural diversity that our region now enjoys. The residents of Atlanta's ethnic communities may have lived in the region for a long time or may have recently arrived. They may come from cultures and have customs significantly different from each other's, and from those of the general population of the Atlanta region. What they have in common with the rest of the region is that they make it their home, and they share in and contribute to its success. The Snapshots introduce and portray selected communities in terms of their backgrounds, their customs and cultures, their roles in the regional economy, and specific local resources available throughout the region.

### Asian-Indians in the Atlanta Economy

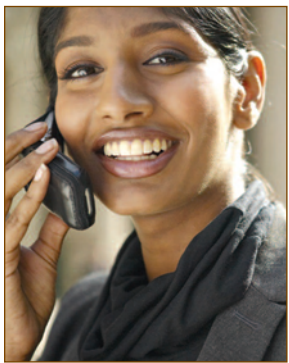


The high educational attainment found in Atlanta's Asian-Indian community may explain much about its record of economic success. Among men 25 years old and over, 38 percent have graduate or professional degrees and 71 percent have bachelor's degrees or higher; for Asian-Indian women the comparable figures are 25 and 63 percent, respectively. Median household income among

the region's area Asian-Indian households stands at \$60,800, 17 percent higher than that for all Atlanta area households.

Many professionals, well-educated in their native India, were attracted to Atlanta to participate in businesses requiring expertise in information technology (IT). This occupational specialization clearly stands out in the 2000 data on the local labor force. A total of over 3,700 Asian-Indian men and women hold computer and mathematics-related occupations. This represents over 21 percent of the community's employed workers. Other areas of high concentration include management, business and financial occupations (2,700 men and women) and sales/ office jobs (4,500 jobs). About 440 men and women in the community are physicians and surgeons.

### Asian-Indian Life in Metro Atlanta



Asian-Indians are found throughout the 10-county region, but they are heavily concentrated in four counties: Gwinnett (6,600), DeKalb (4,700), Fulton (4,200) and Cobb (3,800). Areas heavily populated by the community may also be indicated by the locations of retail and service establishments serving the community. Asian-Indian shops are found at Global Mall on Jimmy Carter Blvd and I-85. Some strip malls are also Asian-Indian owned, with clusters of establishments in North DeKalb, along DeKalb Industrial Way and in the Lawrenceville Highway area. Movie theaters, such as Bollywood on Memorial Drive that is owned by Asian-Indians, and the Galaxy

Theater chain that shows Asian-Indian movies, reflect the Asian-Indian cultural influence in the region.

While many in the Asian-Indian community have done well economically, there are concerns related to unemployment in the IT industry due to the "dot.com" decline in 2000-2001. Some IT professionals have moved back to India under these less favorable economic circumstances, a movement which would not be reflected in the 2000 census data. With the general decline in tourism after the 9/11 attacks, there has also been a notable slowdown in the hospitality industry, which has impacted those Asian-Indian business people who are in motel ownership. Increasing numbers of bankruptcies are reported in this sector of the economy.

The post-9/11 environment has also resulted in changed attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. For some in the community,

*Continued inside*

#### CONTENTS

Who are the Asian-Indians? • Asian-Indians in the Atlanta Economy • Where is the Asian-Indian Community? • A Personal Story • Languages Spoken • Asian-Indian Life in Metro Atlanta • Mahatma Gandhi • Asian-Indian Customs and Culture • Holidays Celebrated • Resources



## A PERSONAL STORY

Narsi Narasimhan was born in 1962 in Tamil Nadu, the southernmost state in India. After receiving his undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, in 1984 he came to the United States to pursue his doctoral studies.

As a graduate student at a University of Texas campus in suburban Dallas, he claims that he did not face “major obstacles”, but that he did have to adjust to his new environment. Narsi, who is a vegetarian, wanted to be able to eat out and socialize with his friends. He found that very few Dallas restaurant menus could satisfy his vegetarian tastes. Even more daunting was the limited public transportation system that Dallas offered at the time. With \$700 to his name, buying a car was out of the question and to travel between his apartment and campus he depended on his college friends for many months.

He received his Ph.D. in management sciences and first came to Atlanta in 1988 to take a position at Georgia Tech as Assistant Professor in the College of Management. But budget cuts in the early 1990's eliminated his position and Narsi turned to management consulting. Although his consulting practice included some major corporate clients, such as Delta Air Lines, securing a steady stream of business was difficult for the new entrepreneur. "There are cul-

tural differences," he says. "It was very hard for me to sell myself." As a result, he decided to return to teaching, moving to New Jersey to join the faculty of Rutgers University-Camden. Still, he kept his hand in consulting, trying to maintain his Atlanta-based practice. Eventually, Narsi pursued consulting full-time, working as a subcontractor for other companies.

Today, Dr. Narasimhan, having returned to Atlanta, is co-founder and CEO of Palaam, Inc. Palaam, which in Tamil means “bridge”, serves as a link between U.S. information technology firms and software development talent found in his native India, as well as in other nations, including Malaysia and Jamaica.

Narsi has also become very active in the Atlanta business and civic community, serving on the advisory boards of several companies and participating on the board of the Georgia Indo-American Chamber of Commerce. He is the founder of the Indians Professionals Network, an informal network of 3,000 professionals in the metro Atlanta area. He has also provided volunteer support to the United Way of Metro Atlanta and, in 2000, he attended the Regional Leadership Institute of the Atlanta Regional Commission. He now serves as a member of the Regional Leadership Foundation.

## Who are the Asian-Indians?



India is the largest democracy in the world and, with its estimated 1.07 billion inhabitants, the second most populous nation, ranking just below China. About 7,000 years ago, the valley of the Indus was one of the cradles of civilization. An early Bronze Age culture flourished between 3,500 and 4,300 years ago and had ties to western Asian civilizations located in what is now Iran. A second Bronze Age culture developed in the Ganges Valley. Starting 3,500 years ago, with the arrival of the Aryans, a light-skinned population from central Asia, a series of invasions by people from other regions of Asia left their imprint on the subcontinent. Later groups included Muslims from Arabia in the early 700's, Persians and Afghans in the 1000's and the Tatars, led by Tamerlane, who raided India in 1398. In 1526, much of northern India was conquered by Babar, the Muslim ruler of Samarkand. Babar established the Mogul Empire and by 1600, the Moguls ruled most of India.

By the 16th century, European traders had established routes along India's coasts. The establishment of the East India Company by British interests in 1600 marked the beginning of what would eventually become the British Indian Empire. In 1858, the British government took over control of India from the East India Company. During the period 1858-1905, the British developed an extensive railroad system, a postal system, established manufacturing production and their education system. While India has 850 languages and dialects and recognizes 16 “official” languages, English was widely used. Most Asian-Indians in the Atlanta region are English speakers and have an easier time settling into life here than other immigrant groups.

Experiencing harsh economic conditions under British colonial rule, Asian-Indians began leaving their homeland in significant numbers at the end of the 19th century. They headed for new opportunities in such far-flung destinations as the British West Indies, Uganda, Mauritius, and British Guiana, while others headed for Canada and the United States. Asian-Indian workers began arriving on the West Coast in 1907, but this earliest wave of immigration was short-lived. Official restrictions on their immigration were put in place in 1909 and by 1917 Congress had prohibited immigration from India. After World War II, when the gates of immigration were reopened to people from South Asia, the Asian-Indian population in America numbered only 1,500.

*Continued inside*



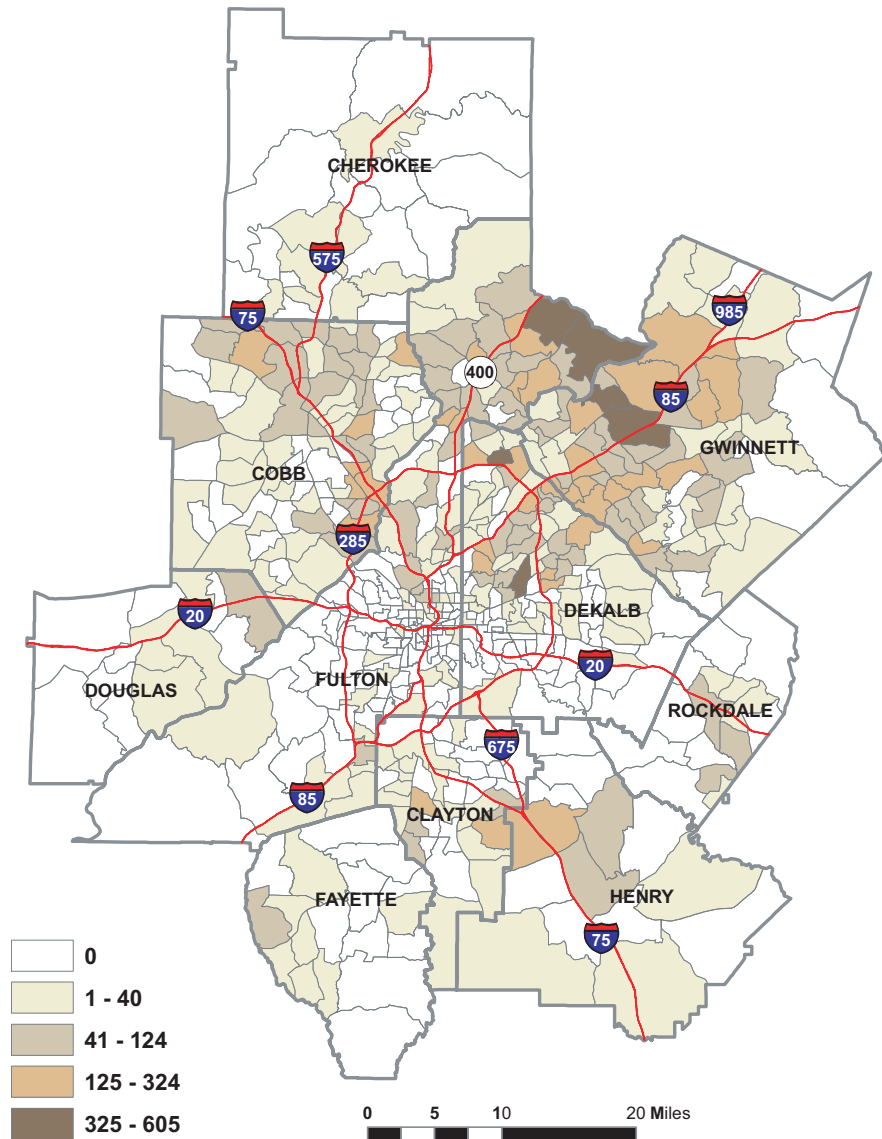
## Asian-Indian Citizens in the Atlanta Region: By the Numbers

Cherokee: 133	Clayton: 911
Cobb: 3,779	DeKalb: 4,731
Douglas: 144	Fayette: 191
Fulton: 4,221	Gwinnett: 6,575
Henry: 517	Rockdale: 252

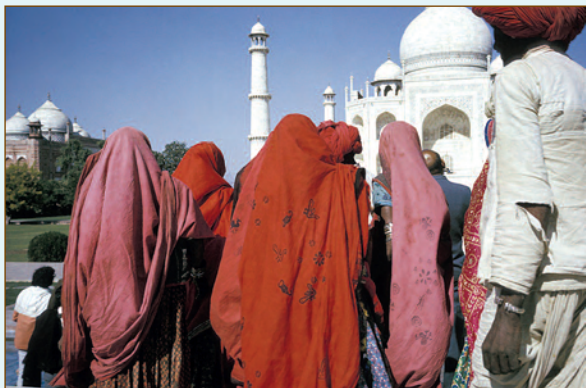
**Total 10-county Region: 21,454**

- Gwinnett is home to the largest Indian-born population, with 6,575, **39 percent larger** than DeKalb, which ranks second in the region with 4,731 persons born in India.
- Of the region's **110,789 persons born in Asia**, 21,454 were born in India, or **19 percent**. This represents the **largest population group from Asia in the region**.
- Gwinnett County is home to **24 percent of all Asian-Indians in the 10-county region** and **31 percent of all Asian-Indians in the state**.
- The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately **42 percent of Georgia's total population**, but is home to **77 percent of the state's Asian-Indian population**.
- Like most of the foreign-born populations in the region, the **Asian-Indian population is concentrated along the interstates**, particularly **I-85 North in DeKalb and Gwinnett counties** and **I-75 North in Cobb**. One of the largest concentrations is in **unincorporated Fulton County** near Duluth and the Gwinnett County border.

## ASIAN-INDIAN POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



Source: 2000 Census Data on Foreign-Born Population by Region, Country or Area or Area of Birth



## Asian-Indian Life in Metro Atlanta (cont'd)

there is a real fear of hate crimes. The Sikhs from India's Punjab region, recognizable by the beards and turbans worn by their men, feel particularly vulnerable. There is also an expressed concern about the application of the Patriot Act. Some local law enforcement agencies are said to have been particularly problematic with respect to the rights of members of the community.

Religious temples in Jonesboro and Riverdale serve as the sites for celebrations of holidays and community festivals. Churches attended by the community are also found in Kennesaw and Jonesboro. The Gwinnett Civic Center holds a festival in August to celebrate Indian Independence Day. In October, there is a nine-day long communal dance where 5,000 to 7,000 people attend.

# Who are the Asian-Indians? (cont'd)



Following the war, Britain no longer had the resources to maintain its hold on the Indian Empire. In 1947, the land was divided into India, a predominantly Hindu state, and Pakistan, a Muslim nation. Conditions and attitudes in the United States also changed. The 1965 Immigration Act allowed

Asian-Indians to arrive in increasing numbers; the Asian-Indian population in the United States increased from around 10,000 in 1965 to over 1.6 million at the time of the 2000 census. Buoyed by Atlanta's rapid economic expansion, particularly in high technology sectors, the region's Asian-Indian population experienced phenomenal growth in the 1990s. From under 10,000 in 1990, the population grew to about 21,000 in 2000.

## Languages Spoken

Linguists estimate that about 850 major languages and dialects are spoken in India. Of these, about 15 are considered "national" languages, that is, they are spoken throughout the country, as opposed to regional or local dialects. The most widespread language is probably Hindi, which is spoken by at least 300 million Indians, primarily from northern India, by some as a first language, and others as a second language. Hindi and English are both required in the public schools. Urdu, spoken by Muslims in northern India, differs from Hindi only in script. They sound virtually the same.

The official language of the State of Gujarat is Gujarati, which is spoken by about 30 million persons. In Atlanta, there are close to twice as many native speakers of Gujarati than of Hindi. There are language and writing classes available in the region in Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu, as well. Asian-Indians speak several languages fluently and slip easily from one language to another in every day speech. Other languages represented in the Atlanta region, are Kannada, Marathi, Kashmiri, Telugu, and Tamil.

### HINDI

आप कैसे हैं  
*aap kaise hain*  
How are you?

धन्यवाद  
*dhanyavaad*  
Thank You.

### URDU

آپ کیسے ہیں  
*aap kaise hain*  
How are you?

آپ کا شکریہ  
*aapka shookriya*  
Thank You.

### TELGU

నీవు ఎలావున్నావు  
*ninu yalavinavi*  
How are you?

మంచిది  
*manchidi*  
Thank You.

### TAMIL

நீ எப்படி இருக்கிறாய்  
*nee eppadi erukkinrai*  
How are you?

நன்றி  
*nanri*  
Thank You.

### GUJARATI

તમે કેમ છો?  
*tame kem chho*  
How are you?

આભાર  
*abhaar*  
Thank You.



"WHILE MANY IN THE ASIAN-INDIAN COMMUNITY HAVE DONE WELL ECONOMICALLY, THERE ARE CONCERNS RELATED TO UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE IT INDUSTRY"

# What are Asian-Indian Customs and Culture?



Asian-Indians are quickly acculturating to the American lifestyle, while holding on to important traditions. Individuals who live outside of India, whether in the United States or another country, often refer to themselves as “NRI’s”, which stands for Non-Resident Indians. They still look to India as their homeland and visit whenever possible. The India Cultural & Religious Center in Smyrna helps fill the gap between homeland and here. The center encompasses seven acres, housing a 280-seat auditorium, a Hindu temple, a religious school, and a library.

Religious thought is woven deeply into Indian culture. Even traditional art forms are linked intimately with religion; architecture, sculpture, music, dance, and theater are part of the ceremonies of worship. India is the birthplace of two of the world’s most important religions – Hinduism and Buddhism. Asian-Indians may be Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, as is prevalent in the Atlanta region, or they may adhere to Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism or Parsi. Hindu is probably the largest group in the region; Hindu temples are located in Cobb, Gwinnett, DeKalb and Clayton counties. The temples offer spiritual fellowship and social activities for their members. The second largest group is Muslim and believers practice their religion of Islam at mosques in Atlanta, Clarkston and Norcross. Christians attend Protestant churches through-

out the region, or belong to one of several Indian Baptist congregations in Clayton, DeKalb, Cobb or Gwinnett counties. There are Buddhist and Sikh temples in the area as well.

Possibly the most important secular celebration of the year is the annual observance of Indian Independence Day in August. Festival of India was inaugurated in 1997 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of India’s independence. The festival, which has now expanded to a three-day celebration, is the single largest Asian-Indian community event in the Southeast. Festival of India brings together a culturally diverse audience to enjoy, explore, educate and entertain. Other Asian-Indian celebrations are religiously based. Muslims will observe Ramadan, for instance, while Christians celebrate Christmas, and Hindus observe Diwali (which honors the goddesses Lakshmi and Parvati).

Asian-Indian food, a favorite among vegetarians, is richly flavored and low in fat. There are many excellent Indian restaurants in the Atlanta region. For meat eaters, Indian restaurants often offer chicken or other meat dishes. A special favorite is tandoori chicken, a grilled chicken breast given a distinctive flavor and texture by a yogurt marinade enhanced with various spices.

A favorite sport, introduced during British colonial days, is cricket. It is a national sport (and obsession) in India where there is a strong rivalry with Pakistan. The Atlanta Cricket League began in 1989, and teams consisting of British expatriates, Pakistanis, South Africans, Jamaicans, West Indians, as well as Asian-Indians, meet in competition from May to October.

The traditional greeting in India is the *namaste*, where the palms of the hands are pressed together in a praying position and held about chest high, accompanied by a slight bow forward. It is also used when saying goodbye. For those living in the Atlanta region, the practice is still evident among those who have immigrated here. To show respect, Indians may affix “ji” to the last name of a person. For example, Mathama Gandhi would be Gandhiji. The “ji” is also added to greetings and words for relatives to convey respect, “namaste ji.”

## Mahatma Gandhi



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (also called Mahatma or “great soul”) is universally revered throughout India and by Indians living in the Atlanta region. He brought the whole of the Indian people together for the first time in many centuries with his resistance to British colonialism. Assassinated in 1948, a year after independence, his memory stands for nonviolence, courage, and social justice.

# Asian-Indian Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations who work with the Asian-Indian Community. Additional resources are available at [www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Art of Living Foundation

(Non-profit educational & humanitarian organization)  
(770) 218-3135  
(404) 433-9797 - Georgia Tech  
[www.artofliving.org/atlanta](http://www.artofliving.org/atlanta)  
e-mail: [Atlanta@artofliving.org](mailto:Atlanta@artofliving.org)

### Chinmaya Mission Balvihar Northeast

(Alpharetta)  
(678) 566-5018 or (770) 410-1261  
[www.atlantabalviharne.org](http://www.atlantabalviharne.org)  
e-mail: [balhivar\\_centerne@hotmail.com](mailto:balhivar_centerne@hotmail.com)

### Metro Atlanta Indian Community

312 Spring Creek Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30350  
(770) 698-9833  
[www.ipnatlanta.net](http://www.ipnatlanta.net)

### Pujari

(A non-profit organization of the Bengalis of Georgia)  
[www.pujari.org](http://www.pujari.org)

### Raksha, Inc.

(A support Network for South Asians in Distress)  
P.O. BOX 12337, Atlanta, GA 30355  
(404) 876-0670  
e-mail: [raksha@mindspring.com](mailto:raksha@mindspring.com)

### Sindhi Sabha of Georgia

(770) 242-6475

### United Indian Student Alliance

e-mail: [uisaga@yahoo.com](mailto:uisaga@yahoo.com)

### Atlanta Dunia

(Directory of Indian Organizations)  
[www.atlantadunia.com](http://www.atlantadunia.com)

## ARTS/CULTURAL

### Brahmin Samaj of Georgia, Inc. (BSOGA)

P.O. Box 80162  
Atlanta, GA 30066  
(770) 662-8628  
[http://members.tripod.com/~Brahmin\\_Samaj\\_of\\_GA/](http://members.tripod.com/~Brahmin_Samaj_of_GA/)

### Carnatic Music Association of Georgia (CAMAGA)

6011 Rocky Shoals Court  
Tucker, GA 30084  
(404) 651-4464 or (770) 493-6534  
[www.camaga.org](http://www.camaga.org)

### Datta Avadhoota Satsang Sabhaa Atlanta (DAASA)

2690 Kingsbrooke Lane  
Duluth, GA 30097  
(678) 474-0376  
[www.dattaapeetham.com](http://www.dattaapeetham.com)

### Indian Cultural & Religious Center

1281 Cooper Lake Rd. SE, Smyrna, GA 30082  
(770) 436-3719  
e-mail: [postmaster@icrctemple.org](mailto:postmaster@icrctemple.org)  
[www.icrctemple.org](http://www.icrctemple.org)

### Indian Classical Music Society of Greater Atlanta (ICMS)

(770) 416-8901/8907

### Punjabi Cultural Society of Georgia, Inc.

[www.indianatlanta.com/association](http://www.indianatlanta.com/association)

## ASSOCIATIONS

### Association for India's Development (AID)

[www.aidindia.org/atlanta](http://www.aidindia.org/atlanta)  
e-mail: [Atlanta@aidindia.org](mailto:Atlanta@aidindia.org)

### Bengali Association of Greater Atlanta

(678) 624-0316  
[www.baga.net](http://www.baga.net)  
e-mail: [partho@e-tizens.com](mailto:partho@e-tizens.com)

### Greater Atlanta Malayalee Association (GAMA)

P.O. Box 931206  
Norcross, GA 30003  
(770) 923-8866  
[www.gamaonline.org](http://www.gamaonline.org)

### Indian-American Cultural Association (IACA)

1281 Cooper Lake Rd. SE, Smyrna, GA 30082  
(770) 436-4272  
[www.iaca.info](http://www.iaca.info)

### National Federation of Indian Associations (NFIA)

(770) 270-1757  
[www.nfia.net](http://www.nfia.net)

## BUSINESS

### Asian-American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA)

66 Lenox Point NE, Atlanta, GA 30324  
(404) 816-5759  
[www.aahoa.com](http://www.aahoa.com)

### Georgia Assoc. of Physicians from India (GAPI)

1021 N. Houston Rd.  
Warner Robins, GA 31093  
(678) 922-9944  
[www.ipnatlanta.net/gapi](http://www.ipnatlanta.net/gapi)  
e-mail: [ManojShah@cox.net](mailto:ManojShah@cox.net)

### Georgia Indo American Chamber of Commerce

4780 Asford Dunwoody Rd., Suite A-276  
Atlanta, GA 30338  
(678) 230-3283  
e-mail: [info@qiacc.org](mailto:info@qiacc.org)  
[www.qiacc.org](http://www.qiacc.org)

### Indian Professionals Network (IPN)

P.O. Box 49494, Atlanta, GA 30359  
(678) 405-4440  
[www.ipnatlanta.net/ipn](http://www.ipnatlanta.net/ipn)

## MEDIA

### WREK FM 91.1

Indian Masala  
(770) 872-7011  
[www.wrek.org](http://www.wrek.org)

### Khabar, Inc.

(Asian-Indian Community Magazine)  
3790 Holcomb Bridge Road, Suite 101  
Norcross, GA 30092  
(770) 451-7666  
e-mail: [info@khabar.com](mailto:info@khabar.com)  
[www.khabar.com](http://www.khabar.com)

### Little India (Publication)

[www.wownow.com](http://www.wownow.com)

### WRFC 89.3 FM

(Music from India - Sun. 11 am - 1pm)  
(404) 728-0600 or (404) 315-8009  
[www.wrfc.org](http://www.wrfc.org)

## RELIGIOUS

### Atlanta Tamil Church

2534 Duluth Highway, Duluth, GA 30097  
(404) 245-7674  
[www.atlantatamilchurch.org](http://www.atlantatamilchurch.org)  
e-mail: [info@atlantatamilchurch.org](mailto:info@atlantatamilchurch.org)

### BAPS Swaminarayan Temple

3518 Clarkston Industrial Blvd.  
Clarkston, GA 30021  
(404) 297-0501  
[www.swaminarayan.org](http://www.swaminarayan.org)

### First Asian-Indian Baptist Church (AIBC)

C/O Piedmont Baptist Church  
570 Piedmont Rd. NE, Marietta, GA 30066  
(770) 516-5751  
[www.ipnatlanta.net/aibc](http://www.ipnatlanta.net/aibc)

### First India Baptist Church

1995 Clairmont Rd. NW, Decatur, GA 30033  
(404) 636-6595

### Hindu Temple of Atlanta (HTA)

5851 Georgia Hwy. 85  
P.O. Box 741210, Riverdale, GA 30274  
(770) 907-7102  
[www.hindutempleofatlanta.org](http://www.hindutempleofatlanta.org)

### Vedanta Center

2331 Brockett Rd., Tucker, GA 30084  
(770) 938-6673  
[www.vedanta-atlanta.org](http://www.vedanta-atlanta.org)

## Contact:

E-mail: [globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com](mailto:globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com)

Order printed copies from the ARC Information Center at 404-463-3102 or download free from the ARC website at [www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com)

Atlanta Regional Commission • 40 Courtland Street, NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.463.3100 • [www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com)

Charles Krautler, Executive Director Darlene Daly, Project Coordinator

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the ten-county Atlanta region including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale, as well as the City of Atlanta and 63 other cities. ARC provides a forum where leaders come together to discuss and act on issues of regionwide consequence.

The Community Foundation • 50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 449, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.688.5525 • [www.atlcf.org](http://www.atlcf.org)

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