

Kannada Sangha of Toronto Canada - A great organization.

by Dr. B Ramaswamy in the Silver Jubilee Souvenir May 1998

A great place for Kannadigas to meet, greet, share, promote and preserve our Kannada culture, customs and tradition. Kannada Sangha was official born in the year 1973. A few like minded people who had a great passion for Kannada and Karnataka mooted the idea on July 8, 1973 at a small gathering during the Ganesha Puja and thus Kannada Sangha was born.

In the mid sixties, Kannada families used to celebrate the religious functions such as Ugadi and Sankranthi in their homes and visit their friends. Four such families that were meeting regularly were : Mrs Rajalakshmi and Dr. B. Ramaswamy, Mrs. Uma and Dr. S. Satyanarayana, Mrs. Ramaa and Dr. S Nagaraja Rao and Mrs. Vasantha and Mr. S. Raghavendra Rao. In early 1968 they decided to organize a community celebration of Ugadi to which other Kannada families were invited.

The first community celebration of Ugadi by the Kannadigas of Toronto was held on Sunday the March 30, 1968 at the basement of St. Luke's United Church at the South-east corner of Sherbourne Street and Carlton Streer (next to Allan Gardens) in Toronto. The function was attended by over 30 people.

This was followed by a Picnic in a Provincial Park in the summer of 1968. And it became a regular format for the next 5 years. Kannadigas were looking forward for the Ugadi and Picnic every year. More families in addition to the original four families that got actively involved in the functions were Mrs. and Prof. K Iswaran, Mrs and Mr. G. Baichwal, Mrs. and Dr. H S Radhakrishna, Mrs. and Dr. J Islur, and Mrs and Mr. K Venkataraman.

Picnics and Ugadi celebrations continued every year from 1968 to 1972. However there was a growing feeling among the kannadigas that a formal association with a constitution and elected committee should be formed to give a group an institutional framework. Other Indian regional and linguistic groups were forming their own associations as the Indian population in Toronto increased in number. As such a general meeting was called to discuss the formation of an association of Kannada speaking people at 30 Charles Street West, Toronto. At the meeting it was decided to form the Kannada Sangha and the constitution was drafted in the Spring of 1973.

Kannadigas were invited for the first General Body Meeting and Picnic as Edwards Garden Toronto on July 22, 1973. It was a historic occasion at which the torch was passed from the informal Kannada Group to the formal Kannada Sangha. It was an enthusiastic and excited group of nearly 40 people that attended the first General Body meeting and the constitution of Kannada Sangha was approved. Some of the people active in the formation of Kannada Sangha were : Mrs. Rajalakshmi and Dr. B. Ramaswamy, Dr. Shankara Sastry, Mr. S N Somasundar, Mrs. Sharada and Mr. S Nagaraja Rao, Mr. S Rama Murthy and Mrs. Ramaa and Mr. Sundaresan. The first function organized by Kannada Sangha was Ganesha Puja in September 1973 at the meeting hall of 30 Charles Street West, attended by over 100 people.

Today the seeds sown by those passionate kannadigas as above has grown into a great organization with over 220 families as permanent members. The functions are attended by over 500 to 600 people and the participation by the kannadigas in every function is indeed overwhelming. Among the founders, Mrs.

Rajalakshmi and Dr. Ramaswamy, Mrs. Sharada and Mr. Nagaraja Rao and Mr. S. Rama Murthy are still very active members, while the others have either migrated to the U.S or moved back to our homeland.