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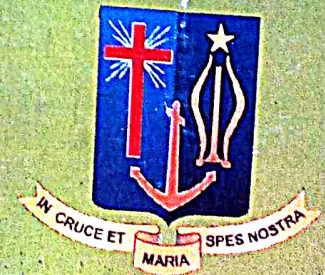
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Gujarati Settlement in Coimbatore

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Abstract

Gujaratis are the most admirable and appreciable people in every part of Coimbatore. Upon their arrival they were engaged in various activities. They started the Gujarathi Samaj with a challenging spirit. They are involved in cotton business and contributed for the progress of cotton trading in Coimbatore. Their contribution for the flourishment of textile industries in Coimbatore is laudable. Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj was founded in 1942, with the objective of catering the needs of Gujaratis in various spheres. The Gujarati Mutual Welfare Society is run by this Samaj. The Gujarathi Samaj is helping the economically backward people in Coimbatore. In the field of education the Gujaratis excelled others by establishing various excellent educational institutions. Kikani groups of institution stand as a model for other institution in the City.

Introduction

The Gujaratis came to Coimbatore for the purpose of trade and a few families settled in Coimbatore way back between 1830 and 1850. They engaged in cotton business with the local farmers and traders. Gujaratis are number one businessmen of the Country engaged in trade and industry. Gujaratis are adventurous and have spread over nook and corner of the world seeking wealth and fame as businessmen. The Gujaratis are doing business like handloom cloth and cotton. They reached Tirupur which produces cotton and supply the cotton to the spinning Centres in Maharastra and Gujarat. It is just a few miles away for them to reach Coimbatore.

Kikani Family

The Kikani family established a business in Coimbatore. This family won the love and affection of the owners in and around Coimbatore and continued to maintain extensive business connections even now. The textile industry sailed safely through hard times and success and the name of the Kikani family will top the list of such brokers starting business under the name and style "Kishahdas Kikani" Kikani and Co., Kikani and sons Co "Coimbatore Fine Mercerising Co". They were able to survive through years and maintain a leading position in business through admirable honesty and integrity for decades. The textile mills overcame financial difficulties. The mills turned to the Kikani brothers for help and advice and they began to flourish.

Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj

As the number of families increased Gujaratis felt a need to have an association. So Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj was founded in the year 1942 which was registered under societies registration act 1952. Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj put up a small building of its own in Shree Church round on a piece of land donated by a leading Gujarati Sri Phanji to plan and carry on the work of binding Gujaratis.

the City and other social work for the local Community. There are seven hundred families associated with Gujarathi Samaj. The Samaj conducted periodical, monthly and yearly meetings. At present, Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj functions under the regulation of Tamilnadu Societies Registration Act with a 16 member working committee elected for two years term. The present President is Sripratap G. Raichura, Secretary Sri Harish G.Shah, Treasurer Srimahendra and 12 Community members. On behalf of the Samaj "Navaratri" festival is being celebrated at the Samaj every year for nine days in the month of October/November. Diwali and the New Year day (next day to Diwali day) are the important festival days of the community where large number of the Gujaratis get together and exchange greetings. Every year, they have a grand celebration worshipping the three purges with kolu steps arrangement and a special theme.

Activities of Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj

- The Samaj has several stalwarts in the past to lead it in the path of service and fellowship among the Gujaratis of Coimbatore.
- The Samaj can now boast of 65000 sqft of built up area with all facilities to hold wedding, meeting, seminars,

small get together. It also has a huge open air auditorium with 1100 seating capacity.

- The guest house with A/C and non A/C rooms and dormitory are a great comfort to the traveling public.
- The Samaj is all the time buzzing with activity like holding medical camps, Tambola Anandmela, Gujarat Utsav, Anthaksshadi.
- The various assistance like medical, education, house rent, foodgrains, to the less fortunate members is note worthy.
- The Samaj also runs a full time medical clinic for economically weaker section of the Community.
- The Samaj acts as arbitrator to settle disputes between members and issues marriage certificates for wedding conducted in its premises.
- A monthly magazine "Kavai Gurjari" brings out the activities of all the various affillated associations in a detailed manner. The magazine is celebrating its silver jubilee.
- Shree Baldevdaskikani Vidyamandir with a higher secondary a matriculation school founded by the Samaj is run in the most efficient manner with more than 2100 students.

This kind of social activity has brought the people closer and get involved in various welfare programme.

Gujarati Mutual Welfare Society

Gujarati Mutual Welfare Society is a unique institution run by the Samaj to help Gujaratis of Coimbatore. The Gujarati Community has strived to serve the local Community and adopts Coimbatore as its foster mother City. They have contributed their mite in times of need like drought, floods, or calamity in Tamilnadu a large number of RAP (Rapid Action Force) personal were housed in Gujarathi Samaj complex continuously for 3 months (free of charge) when the City was affected by serial Bomb blast. Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj organized great relief work for Earthquake victims of Gujarat Earthquake and sent lakhs of rupees worth food, medicines, blankets, clothes etc.

Medical dispensary

The medical dispensary was started by Gujarathi Samaj in 1979. One doctor and 3 staff are working in the medical dispensary. The dispensary is catering to financially weak population, and medical needs of the people in Coimbatore.

Camps

The Gujarathi Samaj organized the following medical camps for the welfare of the people.

- Children Camp.
- Eye Camp.
- Free Medical Camp.

Awareness Programs

Awareness programs like

- Diabetes awareness program
 - Aids awareness program
- were also launched for people.

In the field of social welfare, the Gujaratis are not far behind. Their role in medical services is tremendous. At an affordable cost, they invariably offer medical services to the poor and needy.

Library

Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj built a spacious building complex in the year 1984-1985 on Mettupalayam road named "SREE GUJARATI SAMAJ BHAVAN" housing a library with 5000 books, a daily reading room and many more books are available in library. Gujarathi Samaj is publishing a monthly "KOVIL GUJARI" regularly every month for the past 25 years in Gujarati featuring all important events of Gujaratis, programmes of ensuring information. This monthly has wide circulation in South India.

Hall

Shree halls & people celebra family organiz Educati I importar developr society. towards giving th beyond th Education instrumen played a process of has initiate Kikani Sch The Kikani fami Samaj in a h years back. It is the high

- ABJI Ranypatel hall
- A.C Hall
- S.B.G.G. Hall
- Sibi Hall
- Open A/C Auditorium
- Kavin Hall
- Kikani Hall

Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj has ten halls which are used by the Coimbatore people for many purposes, wedding celebrations, official meeting, seminars, family gatherings and medical camps are organized in these halls.

Educational Services

Education is one of the most important and vital factors in the process of development of the individual as well as society. It helps to generate an attitude towards developmental programmes by giving the masses a capacity for thinking beyond this immediate needs and problems. Education is considered as the powerful instrument of social change. It has always played a decisive role in the development process of a country. So the Gujarathi Samaj has initiated several steps in this direction.

Kikani School

The Kikani School was started by Kikani family founded by Shree Gujarathi Samaj in a humble way in a rented place 50 years back. Now it has progressed beyond. It is the high ideal and farsighted vision of Kikani family that has brought the school

here and the Coimbatore are enjoying the fruits of this perseverance of the great family. The school education is the foundation on which the edifice of life is built Kikani school and Kikani family in particular has been trying this best to impart the best possible education for the last 50 years to the student, to build value based holistic education so that the students passing out from this school are second to none in this competitive world.

SBKV Trust which was established in 1955 to manage and administer the following educational institutions.

- Shree BaldevdasKikaniVidyamandir Higher Secondary School.
- Shree BaldevasKikaniVidyamandir Matric Higher Secondary School.
- Shree KishindasKikani Arts and Commerce College.

Meaning of Kikani

Kind hearted and knowledge thirsty people from Gujarat.

Installed a school, in the ever busy Coimbatore's heart.

Kikani is the name of this institution.

Arts, science and crafts are parts of the syllabus of education.

No books and heavy school bags, making children burden free.

Indeed the little ones attend this school, with mirth and greet.

S.B.K.V- A Brief History

In the year 1951 seeds were sown by Shree Coimbatore Gujarathi Samaj by establishing a small "GUJARATI VIDYAMANDIR". Today it has grown into an eminent educational institution called "SHREE BALDEVAS KIKANI VIDYAMANDIR". Shree BALDEVAS KIKANI VIDYAMANDIR Trust was formed in 1955 to administer the institution and expand its activities. The board of trustees is continuously striving to make the school a model institution catering to all sections of the community irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

The institution is centrally located in the heart of Coimbatore on a vast expanse of land with sufficient space for playground. Shree Baldevdas Kikani Vidymandir High School, started in the year 1957 was upgraded as a higher secondary school with classes upon 12th standard in the year 1978. The school is well equipped with good laboratories for physics, chemistry and biology, Equipments such as DVD and public address system, are also available for audio-visual modes of teaching. Computer classes have also been introduced in the school in tune with the technological advances of the day.

An enlightened institution cannot rest with imparting only formal classroom teaching but should conceive "education" as

encompassing all activities such as games, music, science, exhibitions, participation in quizzes, debates, cultural programmes. The school encourages the students to participate in such activities and competitions are conducted inside and outside the school. The students have brought laurels to the school, winning cups, medals, shields and certificates in diverse competitions. The institution is fortunate in having a dedicated and forward looking teaching staff.

In order to make our country prosperous and enrich the society, the management is very much interested in the admission to all kinds of students irrespective of their financial, social or even physical conditions. Their mission is to provide good education to all students, not merely looking for the results in the examination. This young, enthusiastic and enlightened institution has been serving the society for the past fifty two years. In the year 2008, they celebrated the Golden Jubilee of their prestigious institution. The management of the school is ever keen to make the institution a model institution and would always consider the growth of the school. The school would always consider the growth of the school through practical suggestions received from parents, authorities and persons interested in the future of the youth of this country.

Conclusion

A century ago, a group of Gujaratis moved towards southern India and some of them settled at Coimbatore. Their efficiency in trade brought tremendous developments in the City. By their virtue of the trade, the commercial and industrial phase of Coimbatore City improved a lot. Upon their arrival they were engaged in various activities. They started the Gujarathi Samaj with a challenging spirit, they are involved in cotton business and there by laid down their contribution for the progress of cotton trading in Coimbatore. Their contribution for the flourish meant of textile industries in Coimbatore is laudable. The Gujarathi Samaj is a charitable non-profit social welfare organization involved in various social welfare activities in Coimbatore City and its adjoining areas without discrimination of caste, creed, color, religion, or faith. It is a champion of social causes.

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