

## FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS (DIWALI)

**Dey Barriga\***

**Assistant to the Vice President for Student Development**



Photographs by Dey Barriga



**R**ivier College's International Student Advising office continues to support and encourage their international students to celebrate their cultural tradition to make them close to home and also to have the opportunity to share it with the rest of the community. Last October 24, 2008, the Indian Student Association of Rivier College (ISARC) celebrated Diwali with Rivier College faculty, staff, students and families. The ISARC officers, Vineeta Sharma, Anitha Srinivasan, and Swati Kangle performed enchanting dance with colorful, traditional saris. Games, great conversation and delicious Indian food added to the success of the event.





## FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS (DIWALI)



While Deepavali or Diwali is popularly known as the "Festival of Lights", the most significant spiritual meaning is "the awareness of the inner light". Central to Hindu philosophy is the assertion that there is something beyond the physical body and mind which is pure, infinite, and eternal. Just as we celebrate the birth of our physical being, Deepavali is the celebration of this Inner Light, in particular the knowing of which outshines all darkness (removes all obstacles and dispels all ignorance), awakening the individual to one's true nature, not as the body, but as the unchanging, infinite, immanent and transcendent reality. With the realization of the Atman come universal compassion, love, and the awareness of the oneness of all things (higher knowledge). This brings Ananda (Inner Joy or Peace). Diwali celebrates this through festive fireworks, lights, flowers, sharing of sweets, and worship. While the story behind Deepavali varies from region to region, the essence is the same - to rejoice in the Inner Light (Atman) or the underlying reality of all things (Brahman). On the day of Diwali, many wear new clothes and share sweets and snacks. Some North Indian business communities start their financial year on Diwali and new account books are opened on this day.



The officers of Indian Student Association of Rivier College 2008-2009 and Dey Barriga organized the Diwali event and it was sponsored by the International Student Advising Office (ISAO).

Dey Barriga, International Student Specialist/Asst to the VPSD works with Linda Jansky, Vice President for Student Development/International Student Advisor. Both assist international students with matters such as immigration regulations/procedures, housing, social security, cultural adjustments, employment, traveling outside USA as well as re-entry to the country. She developed and maintains the ISAO website with current USCIS news and regulations. She continues to work with the international students in coordinating their traditional celebrations as well.



**2008-2009 ISARC Officers**

**Anitha Karthikeyan**

President for ISRAC

Completed a Bachelor in Computer Science in South Asia

Worked for two years in India in a software firm

Married in 2004 with a beautiful 3 months old baby girl, Shana

M.S. in Computer Science Program

**Vineeta Sharma**

Vice President ISARC

Married in 2007 and a resident of Nashua, NH.

Earned a Bachelor of Engineering in Electronics and Communications in India.

M.S. in Computer Science Program.

Graduate Assistant for International Student Advising Office/Student Development



**Harika Samudrala**

Communications Officer, ISARC  
Born in Hyderabad, India  
Married in 2006  
M.S. in Computer Information Systems Program.

**Anitha Srinivasan**

Design Coordinator, ISARC  
Completed a Bachelor Degree in Bio-Medical Engineering in Bapuji Institute of Engineering & Technology, Davangere, Karnataka  
Fortunate to be one among 6 candidates picked up from 600 students, for the position of Associate Engineer at SunGard Technologies, Bangalore, India, during a campus recruitment event at the university in 2006. Was an employee of SunGard in Bangalore. Married  
M.S. in Computer Science Program

**Supriya Pimpalwadkar**

Treasurer, ISARC  
Married  
M.S. in Computer Science Program

**Swati Kangle**

Communication Officers, ISARC  
Married  
Master in Business Administration Program

**Neha Gandhi**

Married  
Supporting Coordinator, ISARC  
M.S. in Computer Science Program

**Lavanya Siddareddy**

Married  
Supporting Coordinator, ISARC  
M.S. in Computer Science Program

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\* **DEY BARRIGA** was born in the Philippines, and migrated to the USA with her brother in 1990. She completed her Bachelor's Degree in Mass Communication in Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines, in 1989. She loves gardening, cooking and photography. She is married to a wonderful man, Celso Barriga, a Software Engineer. She continues to take classes toward the Masters of Educational Studies program in Rivier College. Being an immigrant herself, she always has the enthusiasm to help immigrants who came to her for help. She used to volunteer her services to immigrants who cannot afford to pay legal fees to file for naturalization, or those who needed help in petitioning their relatives abroad. In a way, Dey feels that she continues to do what she loves to do by providing assistance to international students of Rivier College. Dey works as an International Student Specialist/Assistant to the Vice President for Student Development. She is blessed to be working with Lynn Jansky, the Vice President for Student Development/International Student Advisor. Both provides assistance to international students with matters such as immigration regulations/procedures, housing, social security, cultural adjustments and employment. Dey strives to educate herself and learn more about the current immigration rules and regulations affecting international students. Dey had the opportunity to attend a couple of NAFSA: Association of International Educators conferences with Lynn.