

# THE LOTUS

A Quarterly Publication of the Federation of India Community Associations (FICA)



July 2024 - November 2024: Special Edition

Since 1967

## INSIDE

FICA Matters.....  
pgs 1 - 6

Community News.....  
pgs 7 - 20

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## FICA Deepavali Celebration with Mayor of Cleveland City - Mr. Justin Bibb



Diwali or Deepavali is the Hindu Festival of Lights. It symbolizes the spiritual, "victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance". It is a privilege and honor for FICA members to attend the festival of lights with our honorable mayor of Cleveland Mr. Justin Bibb.



FICA is an organization dedicated to serving the needs of the Asian Indian Community in Northeast Ohio. From its humble beginnings as a student association in 1962, it has grown to be the voice of a diaspora of over 25,000 and is on the increase. FICA helps Asian Indian families assimilate into the mosaic of greater Cleveland. Its community service arm, Project Seva, and the India Cultural Garden have been instrumental in building bridges and promoting a greater understanding of Indian culture. The other two arms are Helping Hands and Shiksha Daan.

FICA newspaper The Lotus has become the principal vehicle of communication for the Indian community in Northeast Ohio. The Lotus is a quarterly newspaper that reports on the Indian Community and its activities. It was started in 1967 and is the oldest Indian Community newspaper in the U.S.A. and the only non-profit Indian Community newspaper in Cleveland, Ohio.

FICA would like to thank Chia-Min Chen Asian Liaison Community Relations Board City of Cleveland and Angela Shute Woodson Director of Community Relations & Senior Advisor, Community and Government Affairs Community Development for all their efforts to bring this together. Chia worked hard and diligently to make this celebration happen. We would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to both. We want to thank all the city hall staff, photographers, and TV20 media personnel for supporting this celebration.

## The Elephant in the Room

Written by and featuring Priyanka Shetty. Presented by Cleveland Public Theatre and FICA



Unapologetically Indian, Irreverently American, "One-Woman Wonder" Priyanka Shetty's *The Elephant in the Room* is a witty, dark comedy about just your typical Indian metalhead and software-engineer-turned-actor who must navigate life as an immigrant arriving in Trump's America. When Priyanka makes the bold move to defy her family by quitting her IT job and moving to the U.S. to pursue an acting career, things don't quite turn out how she imagined. The play navigates Priyanka's real-life journey as she transitions from her deeply embedded roots in India to finding context and common ground in America. Everyone geared up to watch this funny, tumultuous ride through immiscible cultures, unforgettable love, irreparable loss, and the desperation of not belonging anywhere.



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## FICA Diwali Celebrations 2024

This year, FICA Diwali was celebrated at La Villa Banquet Hall. More than 350 people attended the event, and the night's highlight was Hollywood/Bollywood star Mr. Omi Vaidya. Omi Vaidya is an Indian American actor and filmmaker who gained widespread recognition for his role as Chatur Ramalingam, also known as "The Silencer," in the critically acclaimed Bollywood film "3 Idiots". An NYU Tisch Grad, he has also made appearances in American television shows such as "The Office" and "Arrested Development" and other Bollywood films like Dil Toh Baccha Hai Ji, Desi Boyz, Jodi Breakers, Blackmail and the Indian web series, Metropark. Omi has successfully bridged the gap between the Indian and American film industries and has gained a dedicated fan following. His charismatic and relatable persona, coupled with his comedic talent, has endeared him to audiences worldwide. He continues to work in both India and the United States, showcasing his versatility as an actor and filmmaker. He is most proud of his new Marathi Movie "Aaicha Gavati Marathi Bol" that released in theaters in India and USA this year.

The chief guest for the evening was Maria Stutsman y Marquez. Maria Stutsman y Marquez serves as the Associate Dean of Recruitment and Enrollment at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. With a strong commitment to education, Maria has devoted her career to supporting individuals from all backgrounds in their academic and professional journeys. Throughout her time in higher education, Maria has worked on developing recruitment strategies aimed at enhancing diversity and inclusivity within student populations. She believes that successful enrollment goes beyond just meeting numbers; it involves creating a welcoming environment where students can feel supported and encouraged to thrive academically. Her collaborative approach has led to the introduction of initiatives designed to promote student success and retention, reflecting her belief in the potential of every student.

Honorary Guest for the evening -David E. Weiss has served as the Mayor of the City of Shaker Heights since April 2018 and was re-elected to his second four-year term in November 2023.

A longtime Shaker resident, Weiss brings to the office more than three decades of legal and business experience – particularly in the area of real estate – as well as significant

participation in Shaker Heights government. He previously served as an elected council member for the City and as a member of the Shaker Heights Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals.

Other guest was senator State Senator Niraj Antani is serving his first term in the Ohio Senate. Having been first elected to the Ohio House at age 23, and elected to the Ohio Senate at age 29, he is the youngest currently serving member of the Senate. He is the first Indian American State Senator in Ohio history.

From 2014-2020, he served as the State Representative for the 42nd House District in the Ohio House of Representatives. He was the second Indian-American state elected official in Ohio history and the first Indian-American Republican. While in the House, Antani served as Vice Chairman of the Rules and Reference Committee and as Vice Chairman of the Committee on Insurance, and as a member of the Committee on Health, Committee on Public Utilities, and Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee.

Sudarshan Sathe spoke and felicitated the Mayor. Shekhar Ganore, president of FICA welcomed Maria .Sudarshan Sathe is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Federation of India's community associations, FICA. Sudarshan's philanthropic activities extend to Ekal, the One Teacher Schools, Akshaya Patra the inexhaustible food bowl- lunch program in schools to end world hunger and Medical Yatra, among others.He has been on the board of Project Love, Values-in-Action which aims to end bullying in schools.

In 2024, he was inducted in the Cleveland International Hall of Fame which permanently recognizes those individuals who have made a valuable and lasting contribution to the multicultural city of Cleveland and to inspire a new generation of leaders.

Kids and adults presented various cultural programs. Ladies celebrated Karwa Chauth because karwa Chauth happened to be on the same day of FICA Diwali Celebrations. Hindustani Mehfil group Mr. Madhu Gangesha, Mrs.Aarthi Krishna and Paddy Ragunathan performed at the event.

We also had a raffle ticket and the proceeds went to Connecting for Kids. We collected \$340 and gave that to Connecting for Kids. Sarah Rintamaki from Connecting for kids was present at the event and she introduced connecting for kids.



## Indian Associations/Organizations in the Greater Cleveland Area

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FICA -Independence Day, One World Day & Anand Mela



**Independence Day** on August 15th 2024 at 6.00PM. The Cleveland Indian community gathered in the India Cultural Garden to sing the national anthems and patriotic songs and had a short program since it was a working day.

**One World Day** - One World Day was celebrated at India Cultural Garden on August 25, 2024.

**Anand Mela** was a huge success. Post Covid this is the first year FICA did Anand Mela. More than 35 vendors (food, jewelry and clothing ) participated in this event. There were more than 600 people who attended the Mela.



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## Helping Hands

Helping Hands is the latest addition to FICA's suite of community services. Helping Hands was initially conceived by its three founders, Mrs. Mona Alag, Dr. Gita Gidwani & Dr. Jaya Shah as an informal network of assistance to aid women and families going through the cycle of domestic violence as well as new immigrants, seniors, and community members in acute need of help. In 2019, Helping Hands joined FICA and acquired further structure and resources. During Covid, Helping Hands launched an initiative called 'Aangan' a platform where ages 50 plus in our community could virtually gather and listen to subject matter experts on topics of interest to them. Broadly, these talks covered health and wellness, law and finance, hobbies, and holistic lifestyle.

After 23 successful virtual Aangan sessions on Zoom, the organizers held their first in-person meeting of participants, volunteers, and board members.

This event took place on Sunday, November 10th at the Beachwood community center. It was indeed heartening to see a turnout of over a hundred senior members of our community. The afternoon started with welcome remarks by the current Chair of Helping Hands, Swati Sathe. The keynote speaker Dr. Rupesh Raina gave an illuminating talk on Healthy Aging. Sumita Kedia was the MC of the program and three amazing singers, Mr. Soumen Bhattacharya, Dr. Geetu Raina & Mr. Nitin Samant thrilled the audience with melodious Bollywood hits. As the senior population of our community is increasing, Helping Hands' goal is to understand what specific services, for example, meal services, senior living, transportation, companionship, hospital visitation, etc. our aging population is looking for. To that end, each attendee was given a questionnaire geared towards understanding their needs. The attendees got a chance to mingle with each other. The afternoon concluded with a luncheon and complimentary dessert from Mrs. Nikita Upadhyay. The one word that would aptly describe this first in-person meeting is 'Joyful'. For a complete description of Helping Hands Mission please go to: <https://www.helpinghandsneo.org/>



Helping Hands Board: (From L to R) Poonam Punwani, Sumita Kedia (Treasurer), Swati Sathe (Chair), Mona Alag, Dr. Jaya Shah, Dr. Gita Gidwani, Guniya Bafna (Secretary), Ritu Mahna & Mala Garg



## Solon Senior Center

Sanjay Garg made a presentation on India on behalf of FICA at the Solon Senior Center on Sept. 26. This talk is part of the senior programming for "Country in your backyard". There were about 70 seniors in attendance.



The talk was very well received. He was assisted by Mona Alag and Poonam Punwani - who brought artifacts from India to show to the audience, and Mala Garg who brought some choodis and bindis to share with the women. Also, the organizers served samples of Indian food - chicken tikka, paneer

pakora, various burfis, and mango juice. Everyone in attendance seemed very pleased with the overall exposure to India. Pictures attached from the event



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Shiksha Daan

**\$2000 to Salvation Army:**



Shiksha Daan gave a gift of \$2000 to the Salvation Army to buy school supplies for the children residing in their family homeless shelter. The Salvation Army has established a young professionals Board called Echelon, and that group took the responsibility for buying the school supplies, packing them into individual bags, and distributing them to the children in the homeless family shelter.

Echelon held an event for their members and the Salvation Army Board members on June 14 to encourage everyone to pack one bag each with supplies. Photos from that event are attached. On August 3, Echelon held a Back to School Carnival for the children at the

homeless family shelter where the school bags were given to the children. Some photos of the kids receiving the bags are attached - it is wonderful to see the smiles on the faces of the children.

**\$2500 to RE:Source (previously Refugee Response):**

Shiksha Daan has partnered with Refugee Response, now called RE: Source, for many years supporting their Youth Mentoring Program (YMP). RE: Source identified the need to develop a collection of literacy materials that are appropriately leveled for the skills, abilities and growth goals of the

children of refugee families participating in their program. Shiksha Daan



has given RE:Source \$2500 to design a literacy resource library, specifically tailored for one-on-one mentoring. The resource library would include differentiated pathways for learners at various levels and it would accommodate a variety of learning styles. In September, RE:Source would work alongside students and mentors to identify specific learning goals

for the year after which they would recommend learning pathways from the resource library. We will share more information on the final product towards the end of the year after it has been put into use.

Once again, we are grateful to our donors for their generous contributions and for trusting us to use the funds appropriately to further the mission of Shiksha Daan. Our activities help bring positive recognition of the Indian Community by local leaders.

If you are interested in donating to Shiksha Daan, you can do so online through the FICA website:

Federation of India Community Associations – FICA Cleveland or the Shiksha Daan website - [www.shikshadaan.org](http://www.shikshadaan.org)

If you want to send a check, then please make it out to FICA - Shiksha Daan and mail it to: FICA, PO Box 39474 Solon, OH 44139

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## Global Cleveland Annual Meeting 2024



Congratulations to our Youth Leader Award winner, Ankit Naresh

Ankit is an accomplished professional MBA in Business Analytics and Supply Chain Management and brings over 6 years of experience in sales, strategy, analytics, and business operations.

Congratulations to Ying Pu, Founder of Erie Chinese Journal! Ying Pu, a longstanding business owner in AsiaTown, has been a cornerstone of information, culture, and community connection for the AAPI community for over two decades. She is a bold entrepreneur whose determination to bridge the gap

led her to launch her bi-weekly newspaper, delivering comprehensive coverage of local, state, and international affairs.



## FICA Youth Initiative by Mr. Shekhar Ganore

FICA started a new initiative called Youth Wing. This new initiative is to support the youth in volunteering, leadership mentoring, community engagement, leadership development, and networking opportunities for internships. The youth can serve as FICA Youth Ambassador in the Cleveland community. Also, networking opportunities for internships, leadership skill development, meeting business leaders of various organizations, volunteering at various FICA events throughout the year, mentorship and guidance



on academics and career paths, continuous pool of resources for jobs, internships, charity projects, cultural activities, and extracurricular activities. FICA will be rewarding youth ambassadors with volunteering hours and a certificate.

The kick-off meeting was held on June 9th at North Royalton Library. The meeting was attended by middle school, high school, and college students. The plan is to have our next recurring meeting.

### Youth Wing of FICA: Vision and Goals

1. Community Engagement and Empowerment: The Youth Wing seeks to engage Young Indians in community service projects and initiatives aimed at addressing social issues such as education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. Empowering youth to take active roles in community development fosters a sense of belonging and social responsibility.

2. Networking and Professional Development: FICA & Youth Wing provides networking opportunities and resources to help young Indians connect with peers, mentors, and professionals across various fields. This includes career development workshops, mentorship programs, and networking events to support their personal and professional growth.

3. Education and Skill Development: FICA & Youth Wing supports educational initiatives and skill development programs to empower young

Indians to reach their full potential. This includes scholarships, workshops, and mentoring programs to enhance academic achievement and career readiness.

4. Cultural Preservation and Promotion: FICA & Youth Wing aims to preserve and promote Indian culture among the younger generation, both within the Indian diaspora and in the wider community. This could involve organizing cultural events, workshops, and festivals to celebrate Indian heritage.

5. Cultural Exchange and Diversity: The Youth Wing promotes cultural exchange and celebrates diversity by organizing events and programs that unite people from different backgrounds. This fosters understanding, tolerance, and friendship among youth of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

### Various Partners of FICA At FICA Events

- FICA Arm Organizations
- Sewa Organization
- AIPNO
- Cleveland Food Bank
- Med-Wish
- Global Cleveland
- Cleveland Public Theatre
- Cleveland Foundation
- GCCC
- Cleveland Asian Festival Volunteering
- CCWA programs

### The guest speakers for the afternoon were

- Dr. Nadkarni
- Mr. Sanjay Garg, Shiksha Daan
- Mr. Amit Jain, Career Path in Business, Investments & amp; Finance
- Mr. Anil Kumar, Sewa Organization
- Dr. Rupesh Raina, Opportunities in the Medical field
- Zachary Nelson, Global Cleveland

Northeast Ohio Marathi Mandal



**Ganpati Bappa Morya!**

Northeast Ohio Marathi Mandal celebrated the Annual Ganesh Festival on Sunday, Sep 15th at Independence Middle School. The festival kicked off by welcoming Lord Ganesh with Dhol-Tasha-Lezim musical performed by volunteers of NEOMM's Garjana group. This was then followed by Ganesh Puja and Aarti. One of the major attractions for aarti was that we had many kids participating in aarti recitals. All guests enjoyed Maharashtrian delicacies for lunch which included steamed modak (sweet

dumplings) with ghee.

For the cultural program, we were blessed to have Mr. Shridhar Phadke (one of the famous classical singers from India) with his team performing classical songs sung by his father Late. Shri Sudhir Phadke. NEOMM's volunteers joined him for chorus.

The event concluded with a truck procession and dhol-tasha-lezim performance bidding goodbye to Lord Ganesh.



Ganesha Pooja and Daasa Vaibhava Celebrations

The Daasa Vaibhava music program is an annual event organized by the Kasturi Kannada Association and held in conjunction with the Ganesha Pooja festivities. This year, the programs were held on September



22nd at the Parma City Hall under the leadership of the president Smt. Mamatha Ramegowda. The Ganesha Pooja festivities were held in the morning and began with a procession to bring the idol into the hall and installation in the mantapam. Priest Sreedhara

Sree from the Shiva Vishnu temple conducted the pooja ceremonies. Many children and their families actively participated by performing abhishekam on their small Ganesha idols. Kasturi members sang hymns to Lord Ganesh. The mangalarati was followed by a sumptuous lunch that featured kadubu (modakam) and many staples of the Karnataka cuisine.

The Daasa Vaibhava program was held the same afternoon. This event has been held annually since 2017 by the Kasturi Kannada Association and celebrates the rich "Haridaasa" (devotees of lord Vishnu) poetic tradition of Karnataka. This repertoire includes compositions predominantly in the Kannada language but also in Sanskrit. These songs have been an integral part of the Carnatic (south Indian classical) music tradition for well over a century. In addition, these compositions have been celebrated in the Hindustani (north Indian classical) music tradition in Karnataka in recent decades as well, predominantly by proponents of the Kirana gharana.

This year's program featured compositions of Purandara Daasa, Kanaka Daasa and Sripada Raaya. They were presented by students of

gurus Kanchi Ramanujam, Deepa Murthy, Sreekrishna Pasumarthy, Shanti Raghavan, Shruti Aring, Lalit Subramanian, Chandrika Gopal and Srivishnu Pasumarthy. The vocal performances were enhanced by accompanists on the violin and mridangam. In addition, there were group performances on the violin (students of Guru Shruti Aring) and flute (Guru Sreekrishna Pasumarthy and his son). A total of 47 students trained by 7 gurus participated in this year's event and captivated the audience with their musical skills and polished performances. Dr. Naveen Uli coordinated and compered the event, ably aided by Sri Mahesh Humchadkatte (audio management) and many other members of the Kasturi Kannada Association executive committee.

This program has grown in scope since 2017 and provides an opportunity for the youth of northeast Ohio to showcase their talents in Indian classical music while propagating the Haridaasa literary tradition far beyond its roots. Music lovers of the northeast Ohio community have enjoyed these performances since its humble beginnings and find it very gratifying to note the maturity and growth of the students on their musical journeys. We hope to grow this event in the years to come.

By Dr. Naveen Uli



NEOTS



We had a good mix of sports, educational and cultural events during this time. The last 2 Saturdays in July saw us hosting Lawn Tennis events for juniors and adults. Both had good responses. 49 kids played at 5 different venues in multiple categories for boys and girls. Adult tennis was doubles and saw some good contests. September was our Badminton event for women that saw over 7 teams compete. October had Tamizhodu Vilayadu, meaning Play with Tamil. As the name suggests kids from 5-15 came in to showcase their love, understanding and expertise of the language. The Diwali event had the popular playback couple from Chennai, Selva Ganesh and Rajalakshmi with their troupe making the 250+ audience from 6-60 years dancing for 3 straight hours. With all such interesting events in the second half of 2024, and our last event for the year with a celebrity couple, it was an eventful year and ending 2024 on a high note!





NEOTA



The North East Ohio Telugu Association (NEOTA) celebrated the Diwali festival on November 9, 2024, at Independence Middle School. The event saw an incredible turnout of about 600 attendees, making it one of the largest gatherings for NEOTA in recent times. The celebration featured a variety of stage performances, ranging from traditional Telugu folk dances to Bollywood and Tollywood numbers. A yoga demonstration added a health awareness element to the evening. Delicious food was provided by Tandul Restaurant, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. The stage was beautifully decorated by Sri Decors, who did a wonderful job creating a stage backdrop that added to the festive atmosphere. Both kids and adults actively participated in the programs, making the event lively and fun. TazBeats provided an audio system for the event, which was well-received by the audience. NEOTA's executive committee worked tirelessly to coordinate the celebration and ensure its success. With this year's event being a great success, NEOTA is already planning more exciting and energetic festival programs for next year.

Lady Behind the Camera



Yogini Desai is business owner of a fast food restaurant and also owner of Krishna video and photography. Her husband Mr. Mahesh Desai is a media partner with TV ASIA. They shoot many events in and around the Cleveland area. They shoot weddings, receptions, birthday parties, & many occasions. Photography is her favorite hobby. She says she loves to do

it with pleasure and pride. She proudly says "I am the lady behind the camera". She feels very proud of her work.

By Deepa Rao



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## Information Overdrive: a drag on brain health

Information overload is a term popularized by the digital age. It refers to the overwhelming amount of information individuals encounter daily. Historically, information was scarce and valuable. However, progressive inventions such as the printing press, the internet, and social media have rapidly increased our ability to receive and disseminate information.

Our brains process information in calculable units. These units are also used to measure information processed by computers. When we interact with the world, we can measure the amount of information our brain absorbs in units like bits, megabytes, kilobytes, gigabytes, and so forth. Current scientific estimates suggest that our brains can store up to 2.5 petabytes of information. It is also believed that the brain can process 1.5 million bytes of information per second but can only consciously track 10-20 bytes of information in that same period.

One of the primary reasons that we find ourselves approaching an 'information overload threshold' has much to do with the way we have been learning lately. Videos seem to be the main culprit. Smart phones, social media, and countless streaming services are now popularizing their stories, lessons, and content through this form of media.

Let us use an example to explain why this is important. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (1997) is a book that contains 0.5 megabytes of information. However, if you decide to watch the movie instead of reading the book, it will contain 6.5 gigabytes of information. That is a 13,000% increase from text to screen.

When we watch reels on our phones – be it on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube or another platform – our brains are forced to process that



information. Even if the video you are watching is meaningless, it is slowing your ability to process other information by way of mental fatigue. So, what does all of this mean?

In short, the human brain is powerful, but its capabilities cannot be accessed in a limitless manner. The quantity of information available to the average individual of the world populous is now far greater than ever before. In fact, the measurable amount of information created every two days (as of 2012) is equivalent to the amount created between the beginning of human civilization and the year 2003! Simply, our brains are biologically ill-equipped to process all the information available. Our ability to create information has advanced too rapidly for our biology to keep up.

More importantly, not all information is worthwhile, reliable, or beneficial. We have diminished the overall quality of our total shared knowledge by adding meaningless information to our knowledge pool. Content creators have every right to publish videos on any topic or non-topic that they desire, but you have no obligation to watch them.

People who struggle to process excessive data, can experience mental fatigue, difficulty in decision-making, and heightened anxiety. This constant bombardment can impair focus and diminish our capacities to engage deeply with any one subject. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst that redirected too much of our focus to screen displays.

Information can be powerful, but too much of it can be harmful. Limit your intake. Your mental health will prosper.

by Dr. Rakesh Ranjan

## India Fest USA: Celebrating Unity, Diversity, and Cultural Connections in Northeast Ohio

India Festival USA has become a vibrant symbol of unity and diversity in Northeast Ohio, hosting events that celebrate Indian culture and its deep ties with American traditions. This year's festivities began with a lively Indian Independence Day celebration at Broadview Heights Amphitheater, in collaboration with the City of Broadview Heights. Despite rainy weather, the event was a colorful display of cultural assimilation, featuring traditional attire, delicious Indian cuisine, and a parade that united children and adults as they proudly waved the Indian tricolor alongside the Stars and Stripes. Mayors from multiple cities and local Indian organizations participated, underscoring the festival's spirit of inclusivity.

The celebration continued in September with the 15th annual India Festival USA, a cornerstone event that has welcomed over 100,000 attendees since 2010. This year's festival, supported by organizations like the Julio de Burgos Cultural Art Center and Ohio Council of Arts, featured diverse performances, artisanal goods, and ethnic cuisine.



Highlights included the "You've Got Talent" competition, showcasing local talent, and "Abhaya – The Fearless," a transcendent fusion of Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Kuchipudi by celebrated dancers Sujatha Srinivasan, Antara Datta, and Kalyani Veturi. This performance honored the indomitable feminine spirit, revered in Indian culture as a force of creation, sustenance, and transformation. Beyond entertainment, the festival's impact is profound, awarding over \$25,000 in arts scholarships to Cuyahoga County students, strengthening cultural connections and education.

by Mrs. Mahima Rao



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## BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Hosts Grand Diwali Celebrations

The BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Brunswick, OH, hosted a series of vibrant Diwali celebrations, drawing participants from across the community.



The festivities kicked off with a Kids Diwali Celebration on October 19th. This event combined the teachings of Diwali with an inspiring musical stage show by BAPS youth as well as carnival-style games, providing a unique and enjoyable experience for over 300 young attendees.

The following weekend featured a traditional Sharda/Chopda Puja and Fireworks Show. More than 550 adults participated in the puja, while 150 children engaged in a separate ceremony designed to educate them on the significance of the rituals. The evening concluded with a spectacular fireworks display, delighting all in attendance.

The celebrations culminated on November 2nd with a New Year's Day event at the mandir. The day saw over 1,750 guests, who were treated to a 30-minute show by the youth, highlighting the BAPS organization's activities over the past 50 years and the importance of preserving Indian culture in the United States. The event was filled with various activities and featured traditional prasada from the annakut, along with other dishes prepared by dedicated volunteers.

These events not only celebrated Diwali but also fostered a sense of community, supported by the spirit of volunteerism & devotion to build

cultural pride among participants.

Article by Ankur A. Patel

BAPS Cleveland - Outreach Admin  
or.cle.admin@usa.baps.org



## Cleveland State University Garba Night

Cleveland State University Indian Students Organization celebrated Garba Night on November 14th, 7PM at the SC Ballroom. There was Live Garba Music, Delicious Traditional Food, dance performances and prizes for best dressed. FICA sponsored this event.





## Rasa Darpana: Reflections of Emotions - Antara Datta

### Kathak Guru, Captivates Northeast Ohio with Rasa Darpana: Reflection of Emotions

In an evocative three-hour performance, *Rasa Darpana: Reflection of Emotions*, the Anga Kala Kathak Academy captivated Northeast Ohio, transporting audiences into the soulful world of Kathak under the direction of the brilliant Guru Antara Datta. Guided by Antara's vision, students from all levels took part in this mesmerizing exploration of India's classical dance heritage, expressing the depth and beauty of human emotions through intricate movement, storytelling, and metaphor.

The evening opened with Ganesh Vandana, a sacred invocation to Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, setting a reverent tone that resonated throughout. From there, the performance paid homage to the spiritual forces that shape Kathak, including revered gurus, the Rangmanch (stage), and Lord Krishna. These pieces introduced the audience to the devotion inherent in Kathak, underscoring the art's reverence for tradition while captivating with its elegance and grace.

At the core of *Rasa Darpana* lay an exploration of the Navarasas (Shringar/Love, Hasya/Laughter, Karuna/Kindness, Raudra/Anger, Veera/Valor, Bhaya/Fear, Bibhatsa/Disgust, Adbhuta/wonder, Shanta/Peace)—the nine foundational emotions in Indian aesthetics. Antara's choreography intertwined mythological tales with contemporary themes, capturing these emotions with expressive depth. For instance, the Raudra (anger) and Bibhatsa (disgust) emotions were rendered through delicate yet potent expressions, enhanced by music selections that deepened the audience's emotional experience, resulting in a collective sense of awe.

The performance's second half brought an unexpected yet imaginative twist with *Cinderella's Tale: From Ghungroos to Glass Slippers*, where Antara reimagined the classic fairytale using a Kathak lens. This cross-cultural fusion was a testament to her versatility as both choreographer and performer, adding vibrancy through elaborate costumes, evocative music, and rhythmic sequences. Each dancer embodied their role with finesse, blending the technical intricacies of Kathak with the universal appeal of *Cinderella's* journey, underscoring Antara's ability to creatively adapt and engage with timeless stories.

Antara's personal journey with Kathak began at the tender age of five under Srimati Laxmi Bannerjee in Kolkata, India. Holding dual diplomas in Kathak from Bangiya Sangeet Parishad and Prayag Sangeet Samiti, and having pursued advanced training in the Lucknow gharana (school/style) under "Sringer Mani" Srimati Anuradha Nag, Antara has devoted her life to the art. Moreover, during her annual trips to India at Kalashram, New Delhi she trained under the legendary Late Pandit Birju Maharaj and his pupil Vidushi Saswati Sen. In addition, she regularly visits Mahagami Gurukul in Aurangabad, India to receive intensive training from Guru Parwati Dutta.

Antara specializes in Lucknow gharana style of Kathak, the Lucknow gharana is known for grace and expressiveness. Antara appreciates how Kathak uniquely blends Hindu and Muslim influences, creating a profound cultural and spiritual expression that continues to inspire her own practice. This fusion, she explains, is why Kathak remains timeless, offering a depth she strives to channel in her choreography, teachings and performances.

As a teacher, Antara has faced the challenge of adapting traditional Kathak instruction for students in the U.S., where cultural nuances aren't as intuitive. She emphasizes patience and understanding, balancing the



preservation of Kathak's authenticity with making it accessible to students from diverse backgrounds. When teaching expressional pieces like a Thumri or Bhajan, she takes care to explain the stories and emotional contexts, urging her students to internalize the character's perspective. "Imagine yourself as Radha, divine and graceful," she might say, emphasizing how mythological characters embody emotional depth that transcends the everyday.

Antara's journey as a choreographer began at age 24, initially grounded in her gurus' styles. Over time, however, she developed her own style, seeking specialized choreography training in India and working with senior gurus who encouraged her to interpret dance independently. Today, she approaches choreography like writing a book, first

choosing a concept, then researching and crafting a mental script for each layer of meaning. Influenced by thumri, she explores how a word like "Lal" might evoke son, blood, or sindoor, each carrying unique emotional weight and how it can contribute to creative canvases.

Antara's approach to casting and music is equally thoughtful, ensuring each dancer's role complements the narrative. She collaborates with musicians in India to select or create music that harmonizes with each theme, particularly for mythological pieces. For instance, when choreographing around Lord Shiva, Antara instinctively opts for traditional compositions that evoke the deity's gravitas and spirituality, underscoring her commitment to authenticity in both music and movement.

One of her strongest influences has been Bharatanatyam maestro Guru Deepak Mazumdar, whose mentorship in Mumbai honed her critical thinking and enriched her unique choreographic voice. Teaching in the U.S. has presented additional challenges in bridging cultural gaps for students

less familiar with Indian mythology. By contrasting traditional stories like those in *Rasa Darpana* with more relatable themes, such as *Cinderella*, Antara enables her students to connect personally with both mythological and contemporary characters. This duality offers students a foundation in Kathak's spiritual roots, while encouraging self-expression within a familiar context.

Antara Datta, the visionary Artistic Director of the Anga Kala Kathak Academy, has cultivated a transformative platform for Kathak since founding the academy in 2010. With thriving branches in Washington, Ohio and Pennsylvania her academy has expanded swiftly, reaching students across Greater Seattle, Northeast Ohio, and Central Ohio. Through her nonprofit, Arts Without Borders, a 501(c)(3) organization, she extends her mission, fostering classical performing arts throughout North America and providing a

dynamic stage for emerging talent.

In close collaboration with Indian and diasporic artists across Ohio, the U.S., and India, Antara passionately advances Kathak's reach. Her teaching intertwines tradition with accessibility, allowing students to deeply resonate with Kathak's narratives while safeguarding its heritage. Antara asserts that mastering Kathak demands both open-mindedness and passion, a belief she instills in each of her students. As she bridges cultural divides, her artistry and pedagogy remain a powerful tribute to Kathak's timeless beauty, guiding a new generation to carry its legacy forward. Antara's contributions continue to enrich the cultural fabric of Northeast Ohio and beyond, inspiring more resplendent work from her and her students.

by Mrs. Mahima Rao



## Entrepreneur Gauri

**Deepa Rao** - Tell me something about yourself and your childhood?

"I'm from Mumbai, a city known for its vibrant culture and diversity. Growing up here, I was immersed in a unique blend of Western influences and traditional arts like Hindustani and Carnatic classical music. This dynamic environment helped me develop an appreciation for a variety of music genres and taught me to adapt to different cultures with ease. I'm a foodie at heart, and I love experimenting with different cuisines. I believe food is a powerful way to connect with people and understand their culture. Outside of work, I enjoy traveling, discovering local foods, and meeting new people—it's how I gain new perspectives and connect with the world around me."

**Deepa Rao** - How did you get an idea of being an entrepreneur?

"My journey to becoming an entrepreneur started with my passion for fitness, health, and natural foods. I've always been fascinated by how different foods and spices can have a profound impact on our health, acting as natural healers. To deepen my understanding, I completed a nutrition program affiliated with Harvard Medical School, which gave me insight into the science behind food and its effects on our bodies.

Through my research, I discovered countless superfoods from around the world that many people aren't even aware of. This sparked my mission to create a global platform to make these natural, nutritious foods accessible to everyone. Every time I walk down the grocery store aisles and see rows of packaged snacks filled with unrecognizable ingredients, it reaffirms my belief that food should be simple, natural, and easy to understand.

I truly believe that we are what we eat, and my goal is to offer foods that are both delicious and healthy, bringing back the simple, nourishing ingredients I grew up with. I want to make healthy eating accessible, enjoyable, and something that everyone can benefit from, no matter where they are."

**Deepa Rao** -How difficult is it to set up a business in Cleveland?

"Setting up a business in Cleveland has its challenges, but it's also a place with strong resources and support for entrepreneurs, especially women. The city has a vibrant community of women entrepreneurs who actively support each other, creating a network that helps new business owners navigate startup hurdles. Cleveland offers various resources, including mentorship programs, business incubators, and grants, which make it easier to establish a business. However, like any city, it requires thorough planning, understanding local regulations, and finding the right market fit. With the right approach and the support Cleveland provides, building a business here can be rewarding."



**Deepa Rao** - You are selling a healthy product. Tell me something about your product?

"Our brand Zip Fruit is all about making nutrient-dense, natural foods convenient, delicious, and accessible. We believe healthy eating should be simple and flavorful, and our mission is to highlight traditional superfoods that promote overall wellness. One of our upcoming products is Jamun Fruit Rolls. Known as black plum, jamun is a powerhouse fruit packed with antioxidants and renowned for its support in digestive health and blood sugar regulation. Our jamun rolls capture the authentic, tangy flavor of this fruit, without added sugars or artificial ingredients, providing a tasty, guilt-free snack with real health benefits.

We're also excited to introduce our Mango Fruit Rolls. Mangoes are rich in vitamin C, fiber, and natural sugars, making them an excellent, energy-boosting snack. These fruit rolls deliver the pure, sweet flavor of mango, with all its natural goodness intact—perfect for a refreshing, nutritious treat on the go.

In addition to our fruit rolls, we offer Sapota (Chikoo) Powder and Sapota Fruit Slices. Sapota is a naturally sweet, fiber-rich fruit that serves as a great source of vitamins A and C, potassium, and iron. Our sapota powder is a versatile, nutrient-packed ingredient that can be used as a natural sweetener in smoothies, yogurt, or baking, adding subtle sweetness without processed sugar. Our Sapota Fruit Slices are another wholesome option, with a caramel-like taste similar to dates but almost half the sugar, in a convenient, on-the-go snack that is naturally high in fiber and promotes digestive health. You can find Zip Fruit Sapota products in Heinen's, Fairfax Market and on Amazon.

Each of our products is designed to make nutritious choices easy, accessible, and enjoyable. With our Jamun, Mango, and Sapota products, we're bringing the goodness of these traditional superfoods into everyday life, offering delicious ways to eat well without compromise."

**Deepa Rao** - A piece of advice to budding entrepreneurs

"To budding entrepreneurs, one key piece of advice is to stay adaptable and resilient. The journey of entrepreneurship is full of highs and lows, and flexibility is essential when things don't go as planned. Listen closely to your customers, learn from feedback, and be willing to pivot when necessary.

Also, stay true to your vision and purpose. It's easy to get caught up in trends or quick wins, but the most successful businesses are those built around a genuine passion and a clear mission. Keep reminding yourself why you started and let that purpose guide your decisions.

Finally, build a strong support network. Surround yourself with people who inspire you, challenge you, and keep you grounded. Seek out mentors, connect with other entrepreneurs, and remember that you don't have to do it alone."

## Poricha Kozhambu Recipe



1. Soak a large gooseberry sized tamarind in hot water.
2. Cook toor dal with turmeric in a pressure cooker.
3. Cut veggies of your choice. I usually use vegetables like, french beans, carrot, potatoes, white pumpkin, broad beans, cluster beans, chayote squash, brinjals and plantains.
4. Chop the vegetables into small uniform pieces.
5. Add them to the tamarind water and boil until the vegetables cook. They should not lose their shape.
6. In the meantime, roast 1 tablespoon chana dal, 1 tablespoon urad dal, half teaspoon black pepper, three red chillies, half teaspoon hing.
7. Mix 4 tablespoons of fresh grated coconut to this mixture and grind it into a fine paste.
8. Once the vegetables are cooked, add salt and cooked dal and let it boil for a few minutes. Finally add the ground paste and let it boil till it foams.
9. Then season with mustard, urad dal, dried red chillies and curry leaves

by Ranjani Varaghur



## Raksha Bandhan in Cleveland

### “Hindu Community Celebrates Bonds of Protection with City Officials and First Responders”

Amid a world frequently marked by division and discord, a profound gesture of unity unfolded today in Solon, Ohio. The Cleveland chapter of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) celebrated the traditional Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan by sharing its message of universal oneness with local city officials, first responders, and community members. As part of a nationwide outreach initiative by HSS, more than 2,000 volunteers across the United States are engaging with leaders and law enforcement to foster trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. Raksha Bandhan, which translates to „the bond of protection,“ is a deeply rooted Hindu tradition that symbolizes a pledge to safeguard and support one another. At Solon City Hall, Beachwood High School student and HSS volunteer, Radha Pareek, captured the essence of the event: “Raksha Bandhan reminds us that our duty to protect extends beyond family,” she remarked. “It’s about our responsibility to the vulnerable in society and our commitment to fostering peace, harmony, and shared prosperity. Raksha Bandhan is more than a tradition; it’s a celebration of the values these leaders and first responders live by—protection, service, and sacrifice. We honor their commitment to ensuring our collective well-being, often at great personal cost.”

More than 50 volunteers and community members gathered at the Solon Fire Station to express their gratitude by tying Rakhis—symbolic threads of protection—on the wrists of firefighters, police officers, and city officials. This simple yet profound gesture served as a tribute to those who risk their lives daily to uphold safety and order in the community.

Adding depth to the event, an exhibition titled Darshana was displayed, featuring 24 posters that highlighted the contributions of Hindu culture across diverse fields. These ranged from rich traditions, rituals, and architecture to advancements in science, yoga, mathematics, and philosophy. The exhibition offered attendees an educational opportunity to explore how Hindu culture has shaped global knowledge and values throughout history. The display emphasized the enduring relevance of these contributions in bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary life.

The event also featured heartfelt remarks from city leaders, emphasizing



the importance of cultural understanding and diversity. Solon Mayor Edward Kraus underscored the city’s commitment to inclusivity as a key strength. “Diversity is the foundation of our thriving community,” Mayor Kraus said. “Events like this not only build bridges across cultures but also dispel ignorance and foster trust. I’m grateful to HSS for sharing their traditions and for their ongoing contributions to our shared vision of a harmonious community.”

Solon’s Vice Mayor Nancy Meany echoed these sentiments, praising the festival’s spirit of unity and reaffirming her commitment to cultivating a peaceful, cooperative environment where all residents can flourish. In a touching moment, Solon Fire Chief Mark Vedder proudly displayed a Rakhi tied to his vehicle from last year’s celebration, symbolizing his dedication to the community’s safety. “This Rakhi is more than a thread; it’s a daily reminder of our noble duty to protect and serve,” he noted.

Sachin Deshpande, the HSS outreach coordinator for Cleveland, highlighted the broader impact of these efforts. “Across the country, we are seeing a positive response as

we engage with city officials, law enforcement, and the broader community. The message of Raksha Bandhan is one of universal brotherhood and shared responsibility—a message that resonates deeply in these times.”

As the event concluded, Cleveland HSS secretary Santosh Khandelwal delivered a resonant message of solidarity. “Raksha Bandhan is a call to action,” he stated. “It’s a reaffirmation of our shared social responsibility to uphold happiness and peace by promoting the ideals of universal brotherhood. On this day, let us recommit to protecting one another, fostering harmony, and working together for a prosperous and peaceful future for all.”

The celebration transcended a simple cultural event, serving as a vivid testament to how shared values can overcome differences, strengthen community bonds, and build a more inclusive and compassionate society. Through small acts of kindness and mutual respect, the Hindu community of Cleveland demonstrated how diverse traditions can be seamlessly woven into the fabric of American life, reminding us all of the enduring power of unity in diversity.

## Cleveland Bollywood at World on Stage

The Cleveland Cultural Gardens hosted a World on Stage Concert event in the Centennial Plaza on Saturday September 7, 2024. It featured acts from 3 continents - the Zumbercani Tamburitza Orchestra from Croatia (Europe), the Black Beanz from Uganda, Tanzania and Congo (Africa) and Cleveland Bollywood from India (Asia).

Picture & article Dan Hanson



## MotivAsians Taste of Asia Gala

MotivAsians for Cleveland is a non-profit organization established to cultivate a vibrant Asian community for Greater Cleveland by promoting the attraction and retention of Asian-American professionals. They hosted their first Taste of Asia gala banquet in the Dolan center of John Carroll University on Saturday November 2, 2024. The evening included Asian food, entertainment, cultural performances, silent auction and more including a performance by Maanasa Humchad and Maitri Radhesh who performed a Bollywood Indian Fusion Dance.

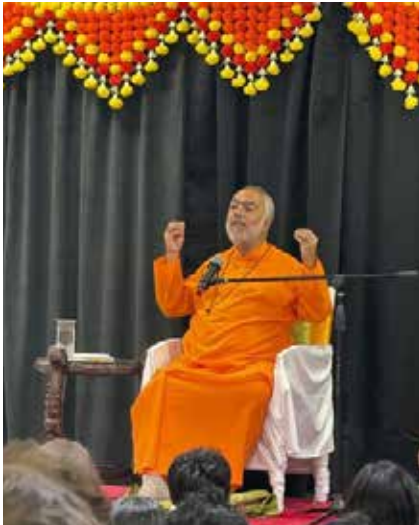
Picture & article by Dan Hanson





## Bhagavati Gayatri Devi Murti Sthapana

Bhagavati Gayatri Devi Murti Sthapana was completed in the presence of the Global Head of Chinmaya Mission, Pujya Swami Swaroopanandaji on August 4, 2024, at Chinmaya Mission Cleveland, 3105 Farnham Rd, Richfield, Ohio. Guided by Shri Vivek Gupta and driven by the tireless Sevaks and Sevikas (volunteers), this event was the culmination of a 17 month-long project of purchasing and extensively renovating the building as well as getting the Murti from India which took almost 10 months to be shipped to the US. This would not have been possible without the generosity of many CM families and Cleveland community members who responded through financial commitments, time, and efforts, which led to the fruition of the sankalpa of bringing Bhagavati Gayatri to Chinmaya Mission Cleveland.



In preparation for Murti Sthapana, Ganapati, Navagraha, Durga, Lakshmi,

event with their presence. Ohio State Senator Mr. Niraj Antani and Mayor of Richfield Village, Mr. Michael Wheeler also attended the event. Many representatives from Buffalo, Columbus, and Pittsburgh CM centers in the USA and Niagara Falls and London centers in Canada were also present for this event. Board Members of Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu temple, Sree Venkateshwara temple, BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Jain Temple, and Gurudwaras participated in this significant event on August 4, 2024. Swami Swaroopanandaji also unveiled a plaque, which formally named the CM Cleveland Ashram as "Chinmaya Gayatri".



Bhagavati Gayatri Devi Homam was performed each day, in the evening, prior to Swamiji's spiritual discourses from August 4-6, 2024. Swami Swaroopanandaji eloquently explained the necessity and significance of the



Saraswati & Vastu pujas and Havans were performed on August 3, 2024. This was followed by Bhagavati Gayatri Devi Murti Sthapana on the morning of August 4, 2024, in the presence of Pujya Swami Swaroopanandaji, which was attended by nearly 250 individuals from Cleveland and other locations in the USA, Canada, and India. Priests from Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple and Sree Venkateshwara Temple performed the Havans and Sthapana puja according to Vedic traditions on these days which were well appreciated by everyone present.

Gayatri Mantra to an audience of more than 100, who were present each evening. Delicious Lunch and Dinner prasad by the local caterers were enjoyed by all after the events. Everyone appreciated the substantial logistics support provided tirelessly by several youth volunteers of CM Cleveland during the events on all four days.

Along with Pujya Swami Swaroopanandaji and Shri Vivek Gupta, teachers from other CM centers, Shri Vijay Gupta, Smt. Madhu Gupta, Brni Stutiji, Shri Shankar Rajupetji and Br. Darshanji, graced this auspicious

By B Venky Venkatesh  
Chinmaya Mission Cleveland  
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## Fall Photography 2024

Harshita Mahajan - Contact : 440-289-5750

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## Global Sister Cities Flag Dedication



Global Cleveland sister cities flag dedication - September 17th 2024 at 10.30AM was held at Cleveland Public Library. Bengaluru,India is the sister city of Cleveland(1975). Kasturi Kannada Sangha Executive Committee member Mrs. Shwetha Ravikumar attended the event.

## HINDI DIWAS in Cleveland

Report by Dr. Somnath Roy, Secretary of North East Ohio branch of IHA ( International Hindi Association )

Hindi Diwas is celebrated annually on September 14th 2024 to honor Hindi, one of India's most widely spoken languages. As per the census of 2011, about 57 percent of the Indian population could speak Hindi. Hindi Diwas marks the day when the Constituent Assembly of India adopted the Hindi language as the first official language of the Union of India on September 14th, 1949 Hindi Diwas is also known as the National Hindi Day.

Hindi Diwas 2024 was celebrated in Cleveland on September 29th, 2024 by the North East Ohio branch of International Hindi Association ( IHA ) in the Shiva Vishnu temple hall with much pomp. The program started with the traditional ritual of lighting the lamp (Deep Prajwalan ) by the IHA National President Dr. Shail Jain, Mrs. Sweta Chari, Mrs. Prema Narayan, Mrs. Veena Arora, Mrs. Renu Chadda, Mrs. Tasneem Lokhandwala & Dr. Sanjay Chaudhary. This was followed by the speeches of IHA National President, Dr. Shail Jain, IHA NE Ohio

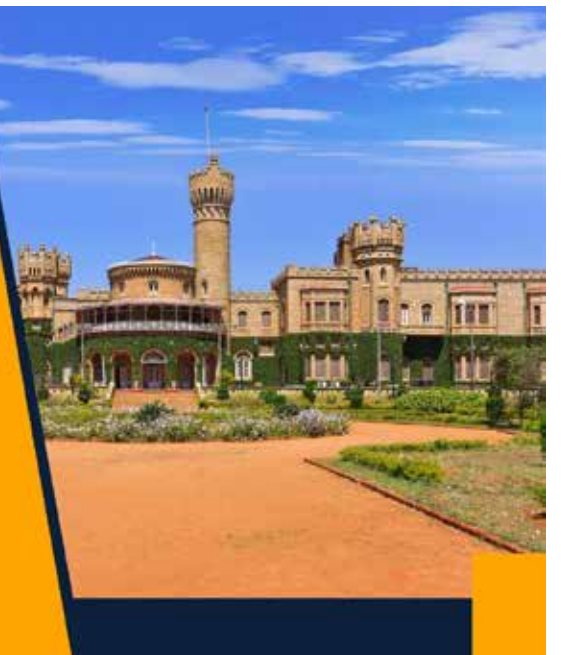


branch President, Mr. Ashwani Bhardwaj on the importances of Hindi Diwas and different activities being performed by the IHA to facilitate the teaching of Hindi language among the younger generation including Sunday online Hindi School, Summer Hindi camps & periodic online Hindi Seminars. This was followed by a two hour long cultural program conducted by the MC, Mrs. Sunita Dwivedi, which included Hindi songs, poems, drama & group dances. This was followed by group singing of USA & Indian National Anthems. This was followed by the "thank you note " by the NE Ohio branch IHA Secretary, Dr. Somnath Roy. During this program about ten new members joined the IHA membership. The program was attended by about two hundred people. At the end of the program, dinner was served to everyone.

### BANGALORE, INDIA

The third-most populous city and fifth-largest metropolitan area in India is named Bangalore (Bangaluru). Although there are some remote rural areas, the city is primarily urban. The Greater Bangalore Municipal Corporation handles the city's administration.

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• 1975





## 35th International Mushaira

The Aligarh Alumni Association is part of a non profit federation of alums from Aligarh Muslim University, UP in Northeast America. They started hosting International Mushairas in 1989. They were officially organized and registered in 2004. There are 15 AMU associations in North America and they all belong to the Federation of AMU associations. Each association is involved in charitable causes such as scholarship programs and other education related charities. They also contribute to the University endowment fund.

The Cleveland chapter is very active and hosts internationally acclaimed poets and Shayars for their annual Mushaira but also holds various local events for appreciation of Urdu poetry and literature and ghazals written in Urdu and Hindi. Mahakavi Gulab ji Khandelwal was always present as one of the panelists and sometimes as the Sadar (chief guest) at their annual gala.

The local chapter was founded in Cleveland by Mr. Rajendra Khanna whose pen name was "Gauhar Muradabad". He established Bazm e Adab (a gathering of Urdu poets in the community). Over the years, many people from India, Pakistan, and the Indian diaspora from other countries have joined it for their common love of Urdu poetry. The literary evening is rife with humor, satire, liberal, heartfelt, revolutionary thinking and ideologies through serious Urdu poetry.

Padma Shri Javed Akhtar ji, a screenwriter, lyricist and prominent poet from Mumbai, India has come to share his pearls of wisdom with the Cleveland community several times in the last few decades. At the age of 80, it's our community's good fortune that he came once again on Friday, October 18th, 2024 for the 35th International Mushaira that was held at the Signature of Solon Country Club in Solon, Ohio.

He was accompanied on the stage with Mr. Shakil Azmi (Mumbai, India); Mrs. Nusrat Mehdi (Bhopal, India); Mr. Ahmad Salman (Karachi, Pakistan) and Mr. Ashfaq Hussain (Canada).

Some prominent local poets from North America Dr. A. Abdullah (India), Dr. Saeed Pasha (Pakistan), Mr. Atiq Haider (Pakistan), Mr. Suhail Khurram



(Pakistan) and Mr. Narender Singh (India) kickstarted the Mehfil by reciting their own poetry.

"Jidhar jaate hain sab jaana, udhar achcha nahin lagta  
Mujhe pamal raston ka safar achcha nahin lagta  
Galat baton ko khamoshi se sun na Hami bhar lena  
Bahut hain fa-ede is men magar achcha nahin lagta"

Javed Akhtar lit the Mehfil with his revolutionary poetry and a two hour long question and answer session where he answered questions about his childhood, the reason he is an atheist and about the foundation of his literary style. He shared a funny anecdote in Hindi about an older man with his young child eating dal and toast, then picking a pistol out of a suitcase and hailing an auto rickshaw and the child looking helplessly at him. He analyzed each word and shared that in that one seemingly Hindi statement, the words were derived from about 8-9 major languages from around the world. He alluded that there is no pure spoken language in the world

anymore as all major languages have so many diverse influences from other languages and they constantly borrow words from each other.

"ishq men majnun  
-o-farhad nahin hone ke  
ye naye log hain  
barbaad nahin hone ke"

Dr. Nusrat Mehdi, from Bhopal, India is a highly decorated poetess with MA in three languages Hindi, Urdu and English. Her poetry was mostly on women empowerment, self determination and breaking the societal barriers. Can't help sharing these few pearls of wisdom she shared with us :

Haq-paraston ki jahan rai-shumari hogi  
Sabse pehle wahan aawaz hamaari hogi  
Sirf azdaad ki tehzeeb ke dhaage honge  
Odhni par koi gota na kinari hogi  
Tol kar dekh le azmat ke tarazoo me ise,  
Meri chaadar tere dastaar se Bhaari hogi"

"kuchal kuchal ke na footpath ko chalo itna  
yahan pe raat ko mazdoor khwaab dekhte hain"

Ahmad Salman is a prominent realist poet from Karachi, Pakistan. He recited poetry on unrequited love, social issues and advocacy of the underprivileged.

"Yeh sheher sara to roshni me khula padha hai so kya likhoon main?  
Woh door jungle ki jhonpadi me jo ok diya hai woh shayri hai!  
Tamaam dariya jo ik samandar me gir rahe hai to kya ajab hai?  
Woh ek dariya jo raaste me hi rah gaya hai woh shayri hai!"

Shakeel Azmi, from Mumbai, India is an Indian lyricist and poet who has written ghazals for Bollywood. He recited some Shayri on unrequited love and a great poem on Urmila's state of mind when Laxman was gone for 14 years with lord Ram on vanavaas

Ghar se jungle ko chale Ram jo duniya ko samet  
Urmila ko bhi chadhaya gaya vanavaas ki bhent  
Ek chingari bhi na bhadki; hui raakh me raakh  
Uske ashkon se na bheegi kabhi itihaas ki aankh  
Aisa kirdaar ki jiska koi kissa bhi nahin  
Urmila Ram ke vanvaas ka hissa bhi nahin"

"mohabbat kis se kab ho jaaye andaaza nahin hotaa  
ye vo ghar hai ki jiska koi darwaza nahin hota"

Ashfaq Hussain is a romantic poet with very progressive leaning from Canada. He drew a beautiful visual imagery about going inside a town, inside a street, inside a house, inside its door, in a person inside their heart his memory and also recited a realist poetry about the effects of communalism.  
"Ghana shajar tha koi shaakh shaakh kaat gaya  
Tassubaat ki daldal me mujhko baant gaya  
Meri zabaan to na Hindu, na Sikh na Muslim thi  
Meri zabaan ko mazhab ka zehar chaat gaya! "

About 200 some Indian and Pakistani community members attended the Mushaira this year. Javed Akhtar ji graciously stayed back to sign everyone's book and also allowed everyone in the audience to take pictures with him.

by Mrs. Tasneem Lokhandwala





## Empowering Women Through Strength: Mrs. Parul Parikh's Zoom Workout Journey



Parul Parikh, a passionate advocate of strength training, has been helping women embrace fitness through her Zoom workout classes. Living in Akron, OH, Parul began her fitness journey over 30 years ago, trying everything from Pilates to Zumba. Her passion for fitness deepened when she started working out with her kids, transforming it into a fun and motivating family activity. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Parul, like many, found herself

training for women, especially those hesitant to lift weights. Parul believes strength training is vital at any age, offering benefits like increased bone density, reduced risk of osteoporosis, improved balance, and joint protection. Her classes are inclusive, with modifications to suit all fitness levels, and her friendly, encouraging attitude keeps women coming back for more. Join her in free Zoom classes and take charge of your health! Reach Parul Parikh to get added to her classes at 330.289.3340

By Mahima Rao

stuck at home. She began offering free Zoom classes twice a week, mixing strength training with Bollywood music and lots of laughter. Her classes quickly gained popularity among friends and acquaintances, and now, she teaches up to five times a week, focusing on the importance of strength



## The Missing Bike

**The Missing Bike**



One summer afternoon my mom Deepa and my aunt Krupa wanted to get an Ice-cream from a nearby Ice Cream shop. Although it was a two minute walk, they decided to take their bike to the shop. It was a hot afternoon. They both sat down at a table with their ice creams which were fast melting from the hot sun, relishing the ice cream. They were delightedly enjoying their ice cream with a worry free feeling. Once they finished their ice cream they started walking back home.

Since it was a hot afternoon, they decided to have a nap. My mom had to go to group study in the evening. She opened the garage and there

was no bike. Worries filled up in her head. My mom and my aunt's friends started looking for the missing bike. There were around 20 kids looking for her bike. One of her friends asked my mom where she went last on her bike. By then my grandma came back from the office and she was told about the missing bike by my mom's friends. My grandma got so angry and scared she went to my mom's neighbor who was the chief of police to complain. By then my mom remembered the ice-cream shop and ran towards the ice cream shop to see her precious bike was still standing like it hadn't been touched at all under a tree shade.

My mom and her friends ran back and informed my grandma and the police officer. Everyone had a nice laugh after seeing the bike back at home.



Read more stories on - Anika Rao's blog - <https://anikaarunrao.wixsite.com/anikarao>

By Anika Rao

## Paintings by Medha Lalit





## Tame the 'Tiger' - Cancer

### Saving Woman's Life ONE Kit a time!



"Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced support worth USD 7.5 million in sampling kits, detection kits, and vaccines for countries fighting cervical cancer. Speaking at the Cancer Moonshot (USA-President Joe Biden's Initiative) event in Delaware, Modi emphasized India's commitment to global health care and its initiatives against cervical cancer."

Medical YATRA Physicians ask themselves 'What Role can we Play to support our Motherland?'

#### Medical YATRA Initiatives:

Dr. Stacie Jhaveri-Ob/Gyn Physician from Cleveland Clinic took a GIANT step in examining 300 women in Medical YATRA in Chennai in Jan.2024 with Self Testing Kit for vagina And found SIX-6- Women with Precancerous lesions. She REMOVED them with Thermo angulation Gun-NO ANESTHESIA, NO Hospitalization, saved women lives!

-Dr. M. Cremer, President/CEO of Basic Health International joined Medical YATRA team 2025

-Dr. Dhadwe, Ob/Gyn, Gram Seva Trust Hospital, Kharel, Guj first to use "Clinic in a Suitcase" and use CRYOGENIC GUN to remove precancerous lesions without ANESTHESIA & save woman lives.

-Dr M. Dhawan, Sarabha Hospital, Ludhiana, P. uses CRYOGENIC GUN to remove precancerous lesions & saves the woman's life.

-Nirali Cancer Hospital, Navsari, Guj \*& Lions Cancer Center Hospital, Vizag, AP have started using CERVI-PREP Self testing Kits.



Navaratri Dolls at Dr. Lakshmi Hanasoge house and Mrs. Shubha Prasad House during Dasara 2024



## Medical Yatra 2024 (MY-2024) Report

"Medical Yatra", multispecialty medical camps initiated by a group of compassionate volunteers, operating as a sister organization of AIPNO, started as a disaster relief health mission in 2001 after an earthquake in India, now grown to be a comprehensive medical care to the needy, underserved rural population in Indian villages.

In 2023, my husband Meyy and I agreed to coordinate the Medical Yatra 2024 (MY-2024) camps, in Tamil Nādu, a southern state of India. Clinicians and non-clinician volunteers from the USA joined together as MY-2024 team. With the on-site support from the Rotary Club of Madras West (RCMW), AIPNO-MY2024 conducted a series of medical camps in 8 different locations across Tamil Nadu between January 22, 2024, and February 1, 2024

Camps were conducted in the following villages for surrounding marginalized communities:

1. Yelagiri Hills - 2 days saw 780 patients from school children to aged ones.
2. Thaalavady - 1 day about 437 patients.
3. Sathya Mangalam - 1 day about 328 patients
4. Pudukkottai -1 day about 708 patients including 120 School children.
5. Neyveli - 2 days about 726 patients
6. Chennai Minjur covered different areas of North Chennai for 2 days and saw about 483 patients.

We are happy to say that the number might be a little more than this, as many were seen after the registration was closed in most of the locations. In each camp, the local organizations such as local Rotary clubs, Panchayat, and public health centers (PHC) organized the camp arrangements under the guidance of RCMW. They provided meals and/or snacks to the patients and all volunteers at appropriate times. All the beneficiaries were screened for chronic illnesses and were provided free medicines, counseling, and education.

The MY 2024 clinical volunteers team consisted of Internists, Family practitioners, Gynecologist, Nephrologist, Pediatrician, Intensivist and Surgeon serving as primary care providers, yoga therapists, Residents and aspiring medical students. Nonclinicians volunteered for registration, triage, coordination of travels between camps, meals organization, monitoring dispensing of medications, and camp items, and did not leave an area where they did not help. We were very fortunate to have the team,

supporting each other everywhere. It was more a MY-2024 family than a working team.

Yoga therapy by our volunteers on-site was provided to the appropriate patients and guided home exercises to continue at home. This service made a big difference in raising awareness about health conditions with a plan to work on for patients while taking some burden off the caregivers, and it was much appreciated by the community and all.

RCMW coordinated the stay, travel, and meals for the MY 2024 volunteers and AIPNO-MY shared the cost for the above expenses. MY 2024 volunteers contributed \$450 per person towards their travel expenses during the yatra in India.

Apart from volunteers from MY team from USA, about 500 Rotarians from different Rotary clubs, Rotaractors, and local nursing college students all volunteered to make the camp very successful and a community event. Medical Yatris truly appreciated the volunteers for their Tamil language translational support, which made our mission work possible. RCMW supported MY 2024 with 3 special buses with equipment to screen Cardiac, Cancer, and Dental ailments and also a mobile lab available during the camp days.

This Medical Yatra 2024, conducted in the state of Tamilnadu, was very well received and appreciated by all patients, camp organizers in Tamil Nadu. Our Medical Yatris felt this was a very rewarding experience despite being tiring, with the number of patients seen each day by the providers and the travel to different sites almost every day.

In addition to these camps, as part of MY-2024 activity, RCMW identified needy blind folks in Chennai and AIPNO-MY donated 30 smart glasses in October 2023 at Gnanadharshan Seva Foundation for the Disabled. Gnanadharshan residents with smart glasses Mr Shah with blind residents

Finally, I cannot close without mentioning the cheering support from AIPNO leadership for Medical Yatra 2024 guiding us in the process and providing encouraging- positive support all along.

By Dr. Swarnalatha Meyyazhagan MD

**Personal Growth Series**

**The Effective Communicator**

Tips, tricks, and techniques to deliver memorable messages that inform, persuade, entertain, and inspire audiences.

**Episode 4 (November 2024) – Our Body Speaks**

In the last three episodes, we have covered what public speaking is, how we can organize our material for a conversation/speech/presentation, and the power of an authentic voice.

While communication is mostly talked about in terms of verbal and written patterns, nonverbal communication, aka body language, plays a significant role in how messages are expressed and received. Research has shown that 55% of our communication is nonverbal, with 38% attributed to vocal, and 7% to actual words used. It is therefore easy to appreciate how by paying attention to our body language, we may amplify the impact of our presence as speakers and listeners.

Stance, movement, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact that we use to express or receive message(s) are powerful complements to our vocals and words, whether our interactions are one-one or one-many. Professional speakers may take all these nuances to the next level by rehearsing their formal presentations to create sensation, suspense, or the final pitch, but the foundations remain the same. Here are some core tips that we can all benefit from:

Be genuinely interested in other people and what they have to say - lean in, maintain eye contact, and give them your full attention. One-one interactions can benefit a great deal from these gestures. Listen actively - nod, smile, raise your hand, ask questions, clarify answers, etc. Take notes and reach out after if you have more to ask, or share additional feedback or compliments. Step away if you are distracted, or have something else to attend to. Return once you can be fully present. This is better for your brand than to have the other person(s) assume you are disinterested, or disrespectful. Mind your expressions; your facial expression must be consistent with the feelings or

information you are communicating. This congruence is pivotal to creating trust in your audience. Understand that excessive movement and proximity can be distracting or uncomfortable to others in close quarters. When speaking to a larger audience, practice purposeful movement using the right, left, and center of the speaking area as you see fit.

Gestures are the most expressive part of body language and consist of movements of the head, shoulders, arms, hands, or some other part of the body. For this very reason, let's dive a little deeper into this aspect of nonverbal communication. Know that gestures can mean many things and these meanings may vary from culture to culture; be sensitive to your audience. Be Curious. Apologize if you are wrong. When speaking to a larger audience, and depending upon the purpose and desired outcome, you may want to adopt a combination of gestures. Size, weight, shape, direction and location. These physical characteristics call for hand gestures. "He went that way!" you may exclaim as you dramatically point out the direction. Importance or urgency. Show your audience how important your point is. Hit your fist into your open palm. Comparison and contrast. Move both your hands in unison to show similarities; move them in opposition to show differences. To be most effective, gestures should be made above your elbow and away from your body, and they should be vigorous and definite to show conviction and enthusiasm.

Remember that our body speaks more than we know, and mostly unbeknownst to us, so being genuine in our interactions and maintaining congruence between our message and our expressions are crucial to elevating our nonverbal communication to the next level.

The magic of words is next. Stay tuned...

Happy Speaking!  
Contributed By Sravanthi Vallampati  
Distinguished Toastmaster  
To share feedback or learn more, contact  
svallampati@gmail.com  
Visit <http://www.toastmasters.org>



**Youth Cultural Ambassadors of Northeast Ohio**

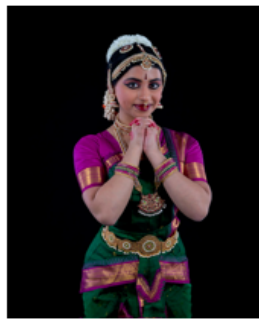
Congratulations to all the artists who have performed Rangapravesham/Arangetram this year in Carnatic Classical Music, Bharatanatyam and Kuchupudi dance forms.

Diya Nuka



Freshman at OSU major in Biology for Pre-Dental track  
Guru: Sudha Kiranmayi Totapally  
School- Nartanam Dance Academy

Sneha Upadhyayula



Rising Senior in Hudson High School  
Guru: Sujatha Srinivasan  
School- Sree Kala Mandir

Hamsika Totapally



Freshman at University of Cincinnati on Pre-medical track  
Guru: Sudha Kiranmayi Totapally  
School- Nartanam Dance Academy

Sudhiksha Ramesh



Freshman at Columbia University, New York  
Guru: Sujatha Srinivasan  
School- Sree Kala Mandir

Aksara Sai Venkatesan



Freshman at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Guru: Lalit Subramanian  
School- Madhuralaya School of Music

Nandini Agarwal



Freshman at University of Pennsylvania major in Biology for Pre-Dental track.  
Guru: Shoba Narayan  
School- Nritya Gitanjali School of Dance & Music

Nandaki Bhonagiri



Freshman at OSU major in Computer Engineering  
Guru: Sree Krishna Pasumarthy  
School- SapthaSwara Academy

Mrunmayi Warade



Freshman at OSU major in Computer Engineering  
Guru: Sudha Kiranmayi Totapally  
School- Nartanam Dance Academy



Beauty tips by **Abhi Santhosh**

Rice Powder and Milk: Mix rice powder with milk to create a paste. Apply it as a mask to exfoliate and brighten dull skin. Banana Peel for Acne: Rub the inside of a banana peel on acne-prone areas to reduce inflammation and redness.

Reach out to Abhi Santhosh for Bridal Makeup at 440-657-7454





# Hindu Heritage Month

Drs. Vikas Jain and Rakesh Ranjan

Hindu Heritage Month celebrates the rich heritage of Hinduism and fosters unity among its diverse communities. Mayors of seventeen cities in the Greater Cleveland area joined this year's celebrations by issuing the Hindu Heritage Month proclamations. The Hindu-American community of the Greater Cleveland area appreciates their gestures. Some of the mayors presented the proclamations during the city council meetings.

The mayors of Parma, Richfield, and Brunswick participated in the temple functions and read the proclamations to the devotees. The Mayor of Medina gave the proclamation at a Gujarati Samaj Diwali function attended by hundreds of people. The Mayor of Shaker Heights attended the Diwali celebrations organized by the FICA (Federation of India Community Associations).

The Governor of Ohio, Mike Dewine alongside a few other states also proclaimed October as Hindu Heritage Month. The number of cities and states participating in Hindu Heritage Month is increasing, as are the celebrations of Navratri and Diwali across the United States and the world. Gov. Shapiro declared Diwali a state holiday in Pennsylvania this year. New Jersey lawmakers passed a joint resolution to designate October as Hindu Heritage Month.



## Lime Chili Chicken Skewers Recipe



Grilling season is in full swing and these simple lime chicken skewers make an easy and quick dinner, for any weeknight BBQ party. Do try and let me know!

**Ingredients:**

- Chicken boneless – 2 pounds
- Chili powder – 2 tsp
- Garlic powder – 1 tsp
- Virgin olive oil – 2 tbsp
- Freshly squeezed lime juice – 3 tbsp
- White wine vinegar – 3 tsp
- Cayenne pepper – 2 tbsp
- Pepper – 1 tsp
- Salt – 1 tsp
- Lime wedges for squeezing over chicken

Marinade – remember when it comes to marinating, longer is better.

**Cooking Instructions:**

1. Whisk all ingredients together and set aside.
2. Cut chicken into cubes and pour the marinade over the chicken and rub to coat well.
3. Then keep aside for 30 mins or more the better.
4. Remove chicken from marinade and place on four skewers, place lime wedges on tray and spray butter on oil, preheat the oven or grill for 425 degrees.
5. When the grill is hot, add skewers. Close lid and cook for 10 – 12 minutes or until juices run clear, turning half way through.
6. Remove and garnish with cilantro and enjoy with a spicy dip.

By Mrs Sushma Lohit



### CHINMAYA MISSION CLEVELAND

**JANUARY - JUNE 2025**  
**VEDANTA LEADERSHIP IMMERSION:**  
 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LIFE AND LEADERSHIP FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Presented by Chinmaya Mission Cleveland, the Vedanta Leadership Immersion is a 6 month leadership development program designed for high school students. This unique program blends the timeless wisdom of Eastern Vedantic philosophy with practical leadership experiences, guiding participants to discover and cultivate their personal leadership styles.

The program will consist of (1) Classroom Workshops, (2) Community Service Projects, (3) Presentations by Local Leaders, (4) Marquee Fundraiser: Color Walk, (5) Civic Engagement and Field Trip to Washington DC.

Now Accepting Applications: Deadline: December 15, 2024  
[www.tinyurl.com/2025vedanticleader](http://www.tinyurl.com/2025vedanticleader)  
 Virtual Open House: Saturday November 16 & 23 9am  
 Email: [hrishue@gmail.com](mailto:hrishue@gmail.com) For Details

