

# THE LOTUS

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



January 2024 - March 2024

Since 1967

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## India's 75th Republic Day Celebration



Solon Mayor Mr. Edward Kraus

2024 FICA Events began with the celebration of India's 75th Republic Day and the announcement of FICA's new Executive Committee. State Senator Niraj Antani graced the event along with Solon City Mayor Mr. Edward Kraus. The event began with both the US and Indian National Anthem followed by guest speakers' talk. Mrs. Keyuri Hazarnis shared Mr. Sudharshan Sathe's message. Dr Rupesh Raina spoke on behalf of FICA. FICA Student Achievement Awards and Essay competition winners were announced and students were felicitated at the event. Mrs. Ritu Mahna was awarded the Community Award and Dr. Geeta Gidwani was awarded the FICA Service Award. Nartanam Academy of Dance presented Madhurastakam. There were a few other solo performances and the evening ended with an Ethnic Fashion show by ladies. The current President Mr. Shekar Ganore and past president Mrs. Ritu Mahna walked the ramp with gorgeous ladies carrying the Indian National Flag. People had a sumptuous dinner and spent the evening having fun and dancing to DJ music.



Dr. Rupesh Raina



State Senator Mr. Niraj Antani



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# FICA's General Body Meeting Minutes

The Annual General Body Meeting of Federation of India Community Association (FICA) was held on December 17, 2023, at 2:00 PM via Zoom. The meeting was attended by 53 members.

Before calling the meeting to order, Dr. Chittaranjan Jain expressed concerns related to making changes to the strength of Board of Trustees and Executive Committee (EC). Utkarsha Hazarnis (2023 FICA Secretary) requested that no agenda or any other business to be laid on the table before the meeting was called to order. Also, all the attendees were notified that no changes were made to the constitution and any proposed amendments would be made only after passing them by FICA's General Body.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Utkarsha Hazarnis at 2:15 PM. He welcomed all the members and gave his valedictory remarks on behalf of the EC members who were completing their term as office bearers. The meeting agenda was placed on the table for everyone's information.

Mr. Sudarshan Sathe (Chair BOT) urged and requested the new EC and BOT committee being elected know that India Community Center is the unfinished business of the previous term and urged everyone to make it their primary focus. He proposed the following resolutions to the General Body for vote:

- Change BOT Strength from 20 to 9.
- President of every sister organization becomes nonvoting member of BOT.
- Each newly elected BOT member has a financial obligation of raising or donating \$5000 over 5 years.
- Dr Chittaranjan Jain, Ms. Mona Alag, and Ms. Subha Sen to be emeritus members of the BOT.
- Mr. Dharminder Kampani to be appointed as permanent legal advisor to the BOT.
- EC Strength should be minimum of 10 and maximum of 16.

Mrs. Ritu Mahna thanked all the founding members of FICA for creating a platform for the Indians in Cleveland. She thanked all the members of the Executive Committee for working hard for 6 years under her leadership. She also thanked BOT Chair Mr. Sudarshan Sathe, BOT Vice Chair Ms. Mona Alag, Legal Advisor to FICA Mr. Dharminder Kampani, and Dr. Rupesh Raina for their support and guidance throughout her tenure. Finally, she thanked the heads of all FICA initiatives (Shiksha Daan, Project Seva, Helping Hands, India Cultural Garden, and LOTUS) for their phenomenal work with all the causes supported by FICA. In addition, she thanked all the donors for their continuous support to FICA and the nomination committee for compiling all the nominations for 2024 elections.

Mr. Hemant Kanodia (2023 Treasurer) presented FICA's financial report to all members of the General Body. One of the key observations was an exponential increase in the operating funds of FICA under Ritu Mahna's leadership and tenure. The resolutions proposed by Mr. Sudarshan Sathe were then put to vote via Zoom. Few members who were not able to vote due to technical reasons were asked to send their vote to Mr. Utkarsha Hazarnis via text message or WhatsApp message. The phone number was shared with everyone via Zoom Chat.

Here are the results of the proposed resolutions put on Vote:

- Change BOT Strength from 20 to 9 (Yes - 43, No - 4, Abstain - 6)
- President of sister organization becomes nonvoting member of BOT (Yes - 41, No - 5, Abstain - 7)
- Each newly elected BOT member has a financial obligation of raising or donating \$5000 over 5 years (Yes - 39, No - 4, Abstain - 10)
- Dr Chittaranjan Jain, Ms. Mona Alag, and Ms. Subha Sen to be emeritus members of the BOT (Yes - 19, No - 22, Abstain - 12)
- Mr. Dharminder Kampani to be appointed as permanent legal advisor (Yes - 37, No - 4, Abstain - 12)
- EC Strength should be minimum of 10 and maximum of 16 (Yes - 41, No - 0, Abstain - 12)

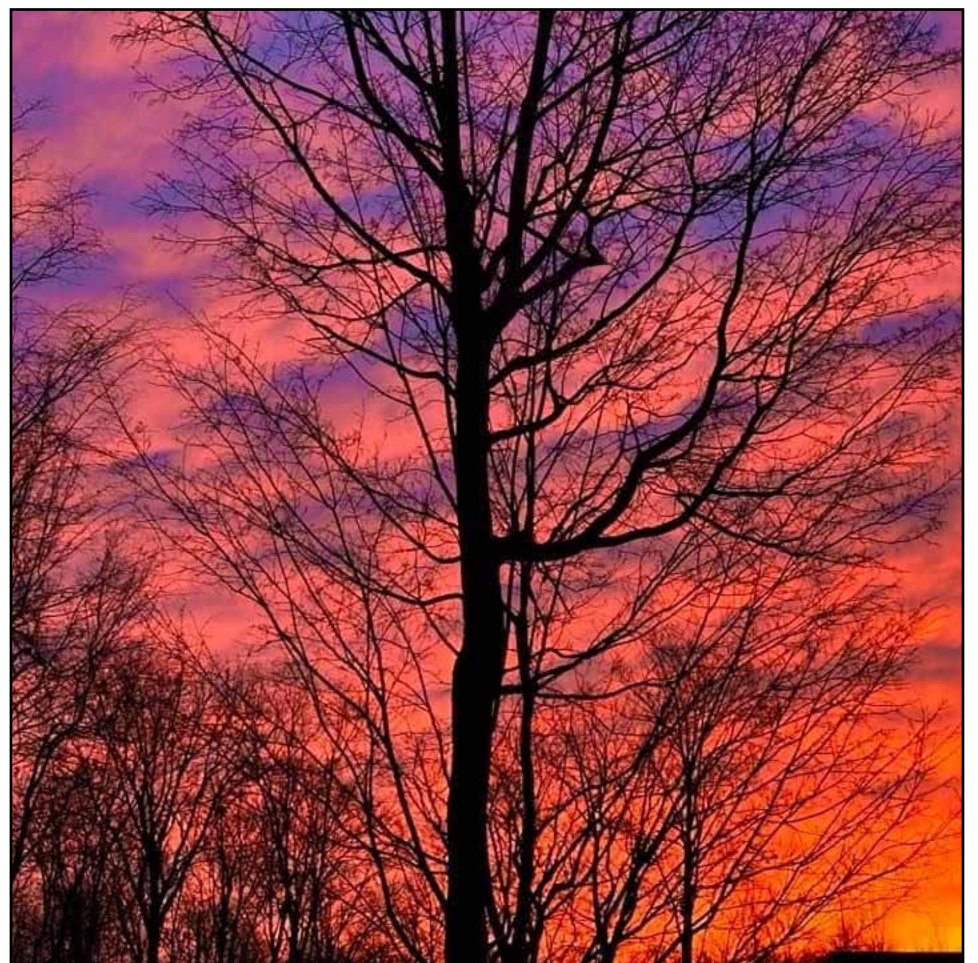
The following leaders of FICA Initiatives provided a summary of all the activities:

- Mrs. Sangita Bafna – Project Seva and LOTUS Newsletter
- Mr. Sanjay Garg – Shiksha Daan
- Mrs. Sumita Kedia – India Cultural Garden
- Mrs. Poonam Punwani – Helping Hands

On behalf of the nomination committee, Mrs. Poonam Punwani presented all the nominations received for the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees. Since nominations received were equal to the open positions, no voting was required, and all nominations were declared as elected. The newly elected Executive Committee and Board of Trustees were asked to have separate meeting to elect their respective office bearers. Dr. Chittaranjan Jain objected to the approach to electing the new Executive Committee and Board of Trustees as extra constitutional. However, since none of the other General Body members expressed any concerns about the process or supported the objection made by Dr. Chittaranjan Jain, these were respectfully noted but no further action was deemed necessary. Meeting concluded with the permission of Chairperson Mrs. Ritu Mahna.

## Photography

By  
Dr. Suma Achar







## Message from President of FICA

Namaste and greetings to the wonderful members of the Federation of India Community Associations (FICA)!

I am honored and humbled to be appointed as a President of FICA. It is an honor to lead an organization that embodies the spirit of unity, cultural richness, and community engagement.



I am truly thankful to the Board of Trustees, executive committee, and past FICA EC for showing faith and trust in handing over the FICA's vibrant mashaal to me.

Previous EC team (led by Mrs. Ritu Mahna) did marvelous work for the last 6 years. It's because of their efforts FICA has reached new heights year over year. Their commitment has paved the way for

us to continue building bridges, fostering connections, and making a lasting impact on the communities we serve.

FICA's mission going forward is to grow and propel this Mashaal forward. Our passionate endeavor for the next few years will be to connect and unite as many Indians in Northeast Ohio as possible. We Indians should be heard as ONE voice in Cleveland. We all can work hard, walk an extra mile to demonstrate and show our Unity as an Indian.

FICA's journey has been remarkable, and our potential is boundless. We will continue to be a voice for the Indian community, advocating for its needs, celebrating its achievements, and addressing its challenges. We want to be a voice of everyone in NE Ohio- whether it's a student or a new resident, or an established family, rising businessman or rising talent, or someone in distress or need. Me and my executive committee are driven by this passion and purpose to grow with unity.

We cannot do all this without your help, support, and blessings. Community engagement is crucial to our success. FICA will actively seek partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and governmental bodies to create a supportive network that fosters growth and mutual understanding. Together, we will organize cultural programs, festivals, career fairs, networking events and activities that showcase the richness of our culture and strengthen the bonds that tie us together.

I urge each one of you to actively participate, share your ideas, and contribute to the collective success of FICA. Your energy, enthusiasm, and insights are invaluable, and together, we can create a positive impact that extends far beyond the boundaries of our community.

In conclusion, I am excited about the journey ahead. Let us embrace the challenges, celebrate our successes, and, most importantly, strengthen the bonds that make us a vibrant and united community. With your support, FICA will continue to be a beacon of inspiration, promoting the values that make the Indian community a force for positive change.

Let's embark on this journey together with enthusiasm, dedication, and a shared commitment to the success of FICA!

I look forward to connecting with you all. Jai Hind !  
Sincerely, Shekhar Ganore



## Sports Update

Strongsville Residents lead by Mr. Lohit Kumar (Captian), have won the District Championship for USTA Northeast Ohio.



## CHINMAYA MISSION CLEVELAND

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At Chinmaya Gayatri 3105 Farnham Road, Richfield.

Date: March 6-8, 2024  
Time: Wed, Thu: 7-8.30 pm | Fri: 7-8 pm  
MAHASHIVRATRI celebration on Friday 8-9 pm

**HELPING HANDS**  
A project of FICA

Helping Hands supports South Asian women who are trying to break the cycle of domestic and sexual violence and assists them to learn to become independent and take back control of their lives. We recognize that immigrant survivors of gender violence in the United States face unique challenges, including limited access to medical, legal, social, protective and support services. We provide personalized, confidential support to empower women by connecting them with local counseling, advocacy and crisis intervention services.

Helping Hands is also set up to assist the elderly in the South Asian community. We offer support and friendship to our elders, who have already sacrificed a huge part of their lives to nurture two generations of their families. Our services include, but are not limited to, services and programs to promote health and independence for the elderly, information and referral services for medical, food, transportation and meal programs.

Helping Hands can also provide additional assistance, as needed, to members of the South Asian community, new immigrants and visitors. All Helping Hands services are free and confidential.

**SERVICES**

- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- SENIOR SERVICES
- AANGAN

**Our Team**

Swati Sathé - Chair  
Guniya Bafna - Secretary  
Sumita Kedia - Treasurer  
Poonam Punwani  
Mala Garg  
Mona Alag  
Dr. Jaya Shah  
Dr. Gita Gidwani  
Jasvir Sahota

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## Interview with Shiksha Daan Chair Dr. Sanjay Garg

### Deepa Rao: What is Shiksha Daan and what is the objective or purpose of Shiksha Daan

Shiksha Daan (Gift of Education) is an activity of FICA which was started in 2013. The objective of Shiksha Daan is to get the members of the local Indian community more involved with the education and development of youth and adults from under-privileged backgrounds in the Greater Cleveland area. We achieve our objective through recruiting volunteers from the local Indian community to serve as tutors/mentors for our own online tutoring program and our partner organizations with the missions aligned with our objectives. We also use the funds we receive as donations from the Indian community to support activities at our partner organizations such as buying school supplies for children from homeless families. The overall purpose of Shiksha Daan is to showcase to the overall Cleveland community as to how the Indian community is supporting those in need in our adopted homeland.

### Deepa Rao: Tell me about different activities and programs Shiksha Daan caters to?

In 2013 Shiksha Daan started in-person tutoring of children from Nepalese refugee families in Cleveland Heights. Tutoring was held on Sundays 2:30-4:30 pm with a focus on helping the students with English and Math. Typically, we had about 15-18 students and 7-10 tutors for each session. We will serve pizza and cookies for snack in the middle of the session and also take some time to talk with the students about aspects of U.S. culture.

We started a similar tutoring program on the West side of Cleveland in 2017 with tutoring held from 2:30-4:30 pm on Saturdays. At the West side location we mainly had students from Middle Eastern refugee families – typically 10-12 students with 5-8 tutors each session. When COVID happened, we had to stop our in-person tutoring in March 2020. The parents of some of the children in our tutoring program contacted us to request if we can do online tutoring for their children. So in April 2020 we started our online tutoring program. Tutoring is done during the academic year. The way the online tutoring program works is that we match a student with a tutor and then the assigned tutor and the student's parents set up the days of the week and times that tutoring will be done. We request that the volunteers do tutoring at least 2 hours a week with a preference to have two separate one-hour sessions during the week. In 2020 we started with only 7 students which grew to 20 students by 2022.

In addition to our online tutoring program, we also partner with other organizations in the Cleveland area and seek out volunteers from the Indian community to serve as mentors and tutors in these programs.

### Deepa Rao: Tell me different partnerships/collaborations Shiksha Daan has?

In 2013 Shiksha Daan started partnering with Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.). This organization provides training and summer jobs to high school students and out of school youth from low-income families. Volunteers from the Indian community support the Y.O.U. activities such as conducting mock job interviews with students, and supporting them with resume writing. In 2017 Shiksha Daan received the Y.O.U. Volunteer of the Year award.

In 2015 we started a partnership with Greater Cleveland College Now. College Now matches mentors with students starting college with a focus on helping students from low-income families. Mentoring involves providing guidance to students on how to face challenges of college and succeed in their education. Time involvement for mentors is about 2 hours a month – with a College Now requirement that mentors connect with their mentees at least twice a month via electronic communications and do an in-person meeting at least two times a year. We are very pleased to note that this partnership has been extremely successful. We have 10 to 15 volunteer mentors from the Indian Community each year with some of the mentors mentoring 2 students. It is very satisfying to see the student you are mentoring successfully complete their college degree program with some guidance from you. Over the years we have had two of the Shiksha Daan volunteers recognized as College Now Mentor of the Year.

In 2016 we started a partnership with Refugee Response. This organization provides support to refugee families and runs a youth and adult mentoring/tutoring program. We have had a couple of Shiksha Daan volunteers serving as mentors for the youth program and one volunteer serving as a volunteer for the adult tutoring program over the years.

In 2020 we started a partnership with Seeds of Literacy. This organization runs a tutoring program for adults who dropped out of high school and are now studying to get their high school graduate equivalency diploma. The tutoring can be done online or in person at one of the two Seeds of Literacy locations. This is a very well run program with the Seeds of Literacy staff

tracking progress of the students and providing material to be covered in the tutoring session. The commitment is to do at least one 2-hour tutoring session each week. We are pleased with the support we have received from the Indian community for this and currently have 5 members of the community serving as tutors.

### Deepa Rao: Tell me about yourself and your journey with Shiksha Daan?

I have a Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering from Purdue University and worked at NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland for 30 years before retiring in August 2018. I always had an interest in helping under-privileged youth with education and regularly spent time tutoring secondary and high school students from the Cleveland Municipal School District and local Charter schools. When both my children had gone to College, I had more time available to pursue this interest. In early 2013 I was having dinner with some friends – all of them empty nesters, one evening and we started discussing how the local Indian community can help with the education and development of under-privileged youth in the Greater Cleveland community. The idea was that the Indian community members are well educated and the community is very well to do economically. Our adopted country has been good for us, so how can we give back

to the community in our adopted country? The concept of Shiksha Daan and getting the Indian community members to volunteer their time for this purpose evolved from this discussion. We proposed the concept of Shiksha Daan to the FICA Board, and the Board of Trustees approved our proposal. We established a committee to implement the Shiksha Daan concept with participation from some of the people involved in the original discussion and other like-minded leaders of the Indian community. We started the tutoring program for the Nepalese refugee family children in 2013 and we were able to continually expand our programs with the wonderful support we received from the Indian community.

### Deepa Rao: Can you brief me your experiences with Shiksha Daan

As I mentioned earlier, we are very grateful to the local Indian community for showing such a strong support for Shiksha Daan. We have overall more than 40 volunteers giving their time to support our various programs. We are also extremely grateful for the young community members – high school students, who have serving as volunteer tutors for our online tutoring program. It

is very gratifying to note that some of the students we started tutoring early on – Nepalese refugee family children from 2013 and Middle Eastern family refugee children have stayed with our online tutoring program and have shown tremendous improvement in their academic achievements. One shining example of how we have been able to help those in need is the story of a single-mother migrant family from Palestine with 4 boys. The mother came to us crying in fall of 2017 at our West side tutoring location saying that her 3 boys were failing at school (the 4th one was too young for school at that time). The Shiksha Daan volunteers started tutoring the 3 boys and then continued tutoring them through our online tutoring program. The youngest one joined our tutoring program when he started first grade. All the boys are now doing extremely well at school getting all As or Bs. In fact, two of them are doing so well that they don't need our help anymore. The mother and the boys are very grateful for the support Shiksha Daan volunteers provided them and it is a very gratifying experience for us to see the fruits of our efforts.

With the funds we received from the members of the Indian community, we have been providing school supplies for children living in the Salvation Army homeless family shelter, funding education software licenses for the Refugee Response youth mentoring program, and supporting the Ambassador program at Seeds of Literacy which helps recruit new students in the program.

### Deepa Rao: If someone is interested in volunteering, can you please guide them or help them with more information on how they could join Shiksha Daan and help?

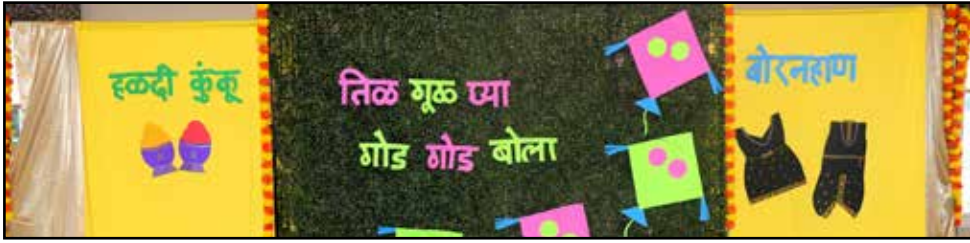
Our website, [www.shikshadaan.org](http://www.shikshadaan.org), provides an excellent overview of our programs and how prospective volunteers can support our activities. Currently, we have enough tutors for our online tutoring program, but we are always looking for new volunteers to support the programs of some of our volunteers. There is a special need for tutors for adults in the Seeds of Literacy program – tutoring can be done in English, Math, Social Studies or Science – volunteers interested in tutoring can choose which area they want to tutor in. Also, College Now is always looking for more volunteer mentors for their program. So for those interested in giving their time to make the difference in the life of a youth or adult from a low-income family, I will encourage you to visit our website or contact me via email at [shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com](mailto:shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com). Thanks.







North East Ohio Marathi Mandal (NEOMM)



North East Ohio Marathi Mandal (NEOMM) is proud to be part of the larger Indian community and is eager to share and contribute towards the rich festivals, tradition and heritage of our beloved India. NEOMM celebrated Makar Sankranti on 14th Jan with record turnout for the event. Never in NEOMM's history had we received such a large participation of 180 participants from our fellow Maharashtrians. NEOMM committee and volunteers took great efforts in planning and executing the event to make it a great success.

"Haldi-kunku" was a fun event with pretty ladies in black sarees exchanging "vaan" (gift) continuing the auspicious tradition. Toddlers enjoyed the "bor-nahan" (showering) of candies over their heads. A delicious maharashtrian lunch followed which the attendees enjoyed. The Bingo game with Makar Sankranti related squares was



a big hit. Ladies also competed in little table games to win prizes. In addition, kids enjoyed kite making workshop organized by Marathi School.

We hope to have many more of these fun cultural events throughout the year. Wishing everyone and their loved ones at FICA a very happy, healthy and fulfilling 2024.



NorthEast Ohio Telugu Association



North East Ohio Telugu Association, a non-profit organization promotes Telugu culture and heritage in the Greater Cleveland Area. Every year, NEOTA organizes charity, cultural and sports events



that recognize and embrace the community's diversity. NEOTA organized a highly anticipated Diwali event on December 17th at Nordonia High School Auditorium with about 200+ attendees. The highlight of festivities were beautiful decorations, a flavorful multi-course Indian dinner, high-energy performances by diversified local talent of about 23 performances including classical (Carnatic music, Kuchipudi and Odissi), semi classical, free style singing and dance performances. A presentation on Autism Spectrum Disorder by Anu and Nathan Yadavalli captivated the audience. Event concluded by recognizing the executive board and helping hands including volunteers, event sponsors and supporters for all the successful events throughout the year.



PFLAG CLEVELAND



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Celebrating Diwali by bringing light to struggling Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer + individuals and their families in our Indian Community

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## 2024 Individual Excellence Award for Choreography - Sujatha Srinivasan

This February, the Ohio Arts Council (OAC) announced the Individual Excellence Awards program recognizing outstanding accomplishments by artists in a variety of disciplines across Ohio.



Under the choreography category, Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan of Strongsville won the award for her master pieces in Bharatanatyam, which experiments and explores the concept of time called "Samayam -A Moment in Eternity", and a production about climate change called "Vivarta-Transformations". This award gives artists the resources to experiment and explore their art forms, develop skills, and advance their careers, and receive affirmation and acknowledgment for their outstanding work.

Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan is an accomplished dancer, choreographer, art director and art educator in Northeast Ohio. She is the artistic director of Shri Kalaa Mandir, started in 1993 in Cleveland, which is a Center for Indian Performing Arts offering holistic training in Bharathanatyam that encompasses culture, knowledge of music, critical thinking, and adherence to the classical dance form and techniques.

Sujatha's career started under the tutelage of illustrious gurus like Ranganayaki Jayaraman, Chitra Visweswaran, Swamimalai S.K.Rajaratnam, Udipi Laxminarayan and Kalanidhi Narayanan, in India. Known as a prodigal talent from a young age, she started experimenting with traditional pieces using different combinations of rhythm, music and rasas or moods in her productions. She imbibed the knowledge from her gurus incorporating different styles to produce relevant, contemporary pieces in a traditional setting. Her inimitable choreography paired with dynamic rhythm and creative productions can be attributed to her deep knowledge of Carnatic music, yoga, mridangam (percussion) and her command over multiple languages. As an artistic creator her versatility has gained accolades from the press and connoisseurs alike locally and internationally.

Known for her meticulously curated music, costumes and themes, Sujatha's productions are a treat to all the senses. Her award-winning productions are unique and socially relevant. "Samayam" showcases a unique concept of time which tells us how time is ever changing, and time is the only constant we have, relative to past, present and future. The second production "Vivarta" showcased climate change and its effects. This is one of those productions where audiences were engaged from the beginning. The uniqueness of this piece was when Sujatha herself portrays mother earth and engages audiences in a thought-provoking performance and presents questions about ownership and responsibility. She boldly asks who and how they could take stewardship of ever-changing climatic effects on us every day. This mesmerizing performance left audiences in awe and a sense

of obligation towards protecting earth and climate change.

After witnessing numerous performances of Sujatha, one can easily understand her penchant for experimentation and her socially inclined thematic productions. In a conversation, the ever-smiling Sujatha explains that each of her productions starts with a theme. If the production is based on traditional themes, she looks for Carnatic music repertoire starting from Muthusamy Dikshitar, Thyagaraja, Annamacharya, Papanasam Sivan, Narayana Tirtha, Meera Bai, Purandaradasa and many more. To bring out the powerful emotions and graceful performances from her students, she starts inculcating them with Indian culture and knowledge. She becomes their source of information and inspiration while explaining several concepts of God and Goddess and their narratives.

For newer concept productions like Vivarta, while teaching choreography, she initiates discussions to educate and enhance their knowledge and motivate them to think about their art and learning. She emphasizes that their thinking should find solutions during the practice sessions, and it brought out intense emotions and energetic performances. She is grateful that her students absorbed the concept and gave a delightful performance to her narrative, highlighting the significance of saving earth.

Sujatha's award-winning thematic productions are newer experimentations in the traditional Bharatanatyam sphere. Her 90-minute-long productions are far apart from the older traditional productions which ran for two and a half hours with breaks in-between. Describing the ever-evolving landscape of Bharatanatyam choreography, she explains that shorter duration poses a pleasant challenge to an artist. Her philosophy has been to choreograph programs with brevity, compelling theme, eye catching costumes along with melodious music complementing the story showcasing the versatility of the artist as well as the Bharatanatyam dance form. She enjoys curating programs based on audience, theme, and social relevance all within the traditional landscape of Bharatanatyam. She is known to create productions exclusively based on music composers, Hindu deities, language-oriented pieces, and socially relevant thought-provoking themes.

Her quest for newness transcends her desire in creating variations in her choreography of regular Bharatanatyam pieces like Varnams, Javalis, Thillanas and many more. Her perseverance has taken her and her students across the globe to showcase the intricacies of Bharatanatyam. When asked to advise younger generation artists, Sujatha smilingly says "always stay true to your art form, imbibe the learnings from your gurus and do research before creating any new form. Getting carried away with trends is good for a short period but it is important to avoid gimmicks in your art form".

As Sujatha transcends into newer heights, we wish her great success in all her endeavors and wish to see her newer creations soon.

By Mahima Rao

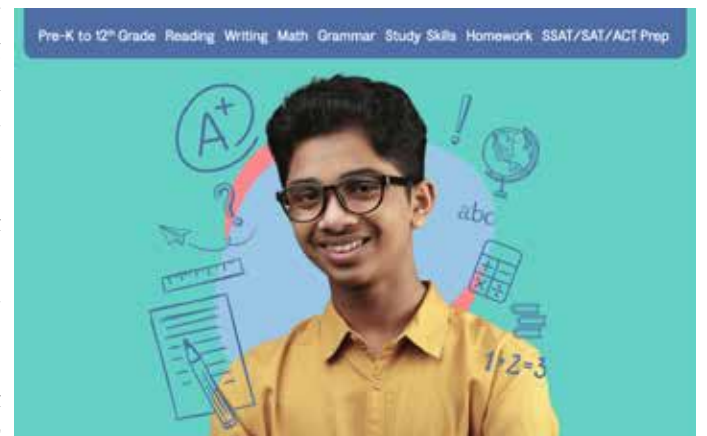
## Beauty Tip by Mrs. Usha Srinivas

Natural Bleach Face Pack for glowing, bright, clean and clear Skin.

Ingredients

1. Clear Potato Juice about 3 teaspoons (grate and extract juice)
2. 1 Teaspoon Tomato Juice
3. Besan (chick pea flour) add as need
4. 2 pinch of Turmeric

Mix all the ingredients well and apply the mixture evenly on your face. Be careful not to apply it around the eyes. After 15 minutes, clean your face thoroughly, paying extra attention to the areas around the eyes. This facial mask helps to reduce dark spots and clear pimple marks. For best results, it is recommended to use it once a week.



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# NEOMM Garjana Team Member – Mrs. Vishweshwari Samantaraya



**Deepa Rao :Tell me something about yourself?**

I am a UX Designer, living with my husband and 6-year-old boy in Strongsville. I studied design in India, this education opened many gates of hobbies, some of them I took up and developed as skills later. I am drawn to photography, painting, art cinema and music while studying product design.

**When did you learn this form of Art?**

As a child, I used to look forward to ,Ganapati bappa's 10 days festival'. Especially the 10th day ,Anant Chaturdashi'. I was drawn to the rhythm of Lezim, the sound of Dhol-Tasha, and the spiritual feeling these sounds brought along. Fast forward to the year 2011 when I was a design student studying in Pune, my friends took me to the visarjan processions (the birthplace of this festival). I heard 150 dhols playing together and making the

small gully vibrate! It was magic! For me the dhol -player was the happiest person on earth. My heart was filled with different kinds of energy and positivity. Since then, I have taken part in small festivals where dhols are involved. I got to play a little bit in my college as well.

I think for me it was not the learning but the urge to play dhol was so much that I didn't want to lose the chance in any way. That urge helped me learn this instrument.

**Deepa Rao : Tell me something about Dhol-Tasha and when did you become passionate about it?**

I like the vibrations that Dhol creates in your whole body when you play it! It fills my heart with positivity and energy. As a curious toddler, I was attracted to dhol because it was so huge and made a loud sound. As a rebellious teenager, I was drawn to it because people around me told me that it's not meant for girls. Finally, as a music lover, I wanted to experience that positivity and magic that I witnessed throughout the years.

I never missed a chance to be a part of this.

**Deepa Rao :When did you learn this art and from when are you performing?**

I was participating in college events back in India, but when I got married and flew here in Cleveland, that got a little break. But when NEO-Garjana (dhol-tasha group here managed by NEO- Marathi Mandal) extended the invite to participate in the event where we will be presenting our Indian culture, Music, and Dance on the basketball courts I didn't want to miss this chance. I am at the stage of life where I want to create positive energy around me and my family, and this is the best way to create it!

**Deepa Rao :Performing Dhol-Tasha requires immense physical and mental endurance and I also see it as a spiritual experience. What daily routines did you adopt while learning this art form?**

I do agree that playing dhol needs immense physical and mental endurance. I had people asking me whether I had a normal delivery or c-section? because the dhol seems heavy and you carry it on your waist. But I was so excited that I am getting this opportunity after 10 years that there was no chance that I could let that go.

My husband and my son encouraged me throughout my practice sessions which made me mentally ready to do this. I also got support from my team members who would extend their hand to carry the dhol or if I am wearing dhol someone will support it so it will be an easy walk. These things elevate your confidence and encourage you to give your best.

Also, my team NEO-Garjana had 2 more female dhol players both coming from different backgrounds juggling study, work, family, and social life and showing up to practices. I do feel that the wives of all male-dhol players also played very important roles. It's not easy for anyone to add one extra thing in their calendar and keep up to it till the end.

**Deepa Rao : If someone is interested in learning especially our younger generation what would you say and how will you guide them**

The younger generation is so aware nowadays that I think we should ask their opinion when in doubt. We also had the young Tasha-player in our dhol-tasha group. He can be the icon for all the young generation. Having said that, if my opinion matters, I will say that the art forms that our culture has given us are meant to create positivity and energy in our body to fight with all kinds of challenges. This younger generation is a bridge between two cultures, and I feel they can create magic with what they have. It's the parents who need to figure out their inclination and give them the right guidance to flourish their choices. Avinash is our Dhol Tasha group, he has been playing Tasha for past 3 years in this group.







## Mrs Deepa Vedavyas - Community & Sustainability Leader

### Deepa Rao : Tell me about yourself – A brief Introduction.

I am originally from Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu, India. My interest in shaping spaces led her to pursue degrees in Architecture from Hosur, India and Urban Planning from Richmond, VA, further specializing in housing, community development and sustainable cities and communities. In the process, community development became my passion, landing my first job serving the Buckeye neighborhood in 2008. Additionally, I served in various leadership roles in India between 2014-19 as a guest professor and on the board of studies in architecture and planning schools, United Way planning consultant, and founding principal of an architecture firm before returning to Cleveland.

### Deepa Rao : Tell me all about your transformative initiatives in the mayor's office of sustainability in Cleveland.

In my tenure at the Mayor's Office of Sustainability in Cleveland (2019-2021), I've had the opportunity to lead transformative initiatives aimed at fostering a greener, more equitable future for our city. Notably, securing a selective grant from the U.S. Green Building Council, City of Cleveland attained LEED for Cities silver certification in a year, demonstrating our commitment to sustainable urban development. I am happy to have led this demanding and important effort for our city. Additionally, as a sustainability manager, I had the opportunity to lead a dynamic cross-functional team with support of consultants to craft the "Cleveland Clean and Equitable Energy Future Plan", charting a course of action toward 100% renewable energy by 2050. Collaborating with the Cleveland Department of Public Health's Healthy Neighborhoods Committee, I was part of the team to launch impactful community programs like the 'We Wear the Mask' campaign and 'Toxic' documentary, addressing socio-economic and environmental disparities head-on. These endeavors underscore our city's dedication to fostering a healthier, more resilient community for all Clevelanders and the region, grateful to have played a small part in it.

### Deepa Rao : Give us some insights on your innovative projects in community development.

In my role as the Assistant Director of Development for Buckeye Neighborhood (2008-2012), I had the privilege of leading transformative projects focused on sustainability and equity. One standout initiative was my involvement in Ohio's first LEED ND Silver Certified pilot project and a 53-acre project, "Saint Luke's Pointe." With a budget of over \$63 million, we created a unique learning campus, including an Energy Star-rated school and a LEED Silver-certified library, alongside 25 affordable homes and the transformation of the historic Saint Luke's hospital building into a senior living facility. As part of the leadership team, had the opportunity to commission several public art projects, engaging the community in co-creation and revitalizing the neighborhood.

Through strategic grants from DOE, EPA, and NEORSR totaling \$170,000, I implemented free energy audits and retrofits for 20 local businesses through COSE, completed first rain garden installation as a demonstration project in the region and launched impactful initiatives such as Green Houses and Greenhouses in partnership with the Environmental Health Watch. Additionally, led the redevelopment planning for the Woodland Corridor, resulting in the demolition of over 20 buildings, the creation of green spaces, and the establishment of the then largest Green Corps urban farm in Cleveland. My journey as a community development professional has deeply shaped my personal and professional growth, fueling my commitment to purpose-driven career paths focused on community betterment.

### Deepa Rao: You were a part of Cleveland Foundation. Tell me your role there and all about impactful grantmaking you did at the Cleveland Foundation?

**One of the most rewarding aspects of being a sustainability professional** in our region is the ability to carry forward the impact of past projects and relationships as you progress through different organizations. Transitioning from roles in city and community development to role as the Senior Program Officer at the foundation (2021-2024), I was able to leverage my diverse experiences and connections to strengthen ongoing projects and initiatives. This seamless integration of past roles has allowed me to amplify my impact as a sustainability professional, regardless of the organizational setting. Some tangible examples are the funding support offered for the initiatives in southeast side neighborhoods, through Purpose Built Communities work,

the Woodhill transformation project, and resident empowerment funds. Additionally, I was able to **extend funding support** for the implementation of the city's Healthy neighborhood committee's "We Wear the Mask" project and expand on my commitment by funding clean energy transition efforts under Mayor Bibb and Sustainability Director O'Keefe's leadership through Cleveland Foundation for creation of the regional decarbonization framework through technical expertise from UN SDSN US.

Excited to have spearheaded one-of-a-kind partnership in our region with ICLEIUSA, through the establishment of the groundbreaking, Resilient Cities Leadership Academy, a collective regional decarbonization effort aimed at combating climate change in Northeast Ohio, set to launch in Feb 2024. One other notable accomplishment was securing a record-breaking \$150k grant from the Mott Foundation that enabled Cleveland Foundation to launch a yearlong NEO SDG learning cohort for foundations, fostering the adoption of best practices by using the global framework towards impact measurements.



### Deepa Rao: What is your current role and where?

I currently serves as the inaugural Director of Resiliency and Sustainability at NOPEC.

### Deepa Rao: What initiatives have you taken up in your current role? Can you name a few of them and explain?

As NOPEC's inaugural Resiliency and Sustainability Director, my role is multifaceted, focused on leading initiatives to bolster the resilience and sustainability of NOPEC communities. I see my responsibilities falling into these key areas: strategy development, community engagement, program development, capacity building, policy advocacy, and measurement and reporting.

### Deepa Rao: You do so much for the Cleveland Community. Was this your passion or ambition?

Cleveland is our region and our home and a strong sense of responsibility drives me from within, recognizing the urgency of serving our communities. Informed decision-making, partnerships and collective action drives my work. In a world where climate action cannot be delayed, I'm committed to driving meaningful change swiftly and decisively.

I find solace and happiness in others' joy. I recognize the profound connection we share as a community. While altruism guides my actions, there's also self-interest involved. It's the understanding that my own happiness is intricately tied to the well-being of those around me. This awareness fuels a sense of responsibility, compelling me to act rather than remain idle. Knowing that my inaction could impact others' lives drives me to actively contribute to positive change for collective well-being.

### Deepa Rao: What advice would you give other women and university students interested in your field?

In the field of sustainability, success hinges on cultivating grit, perseverance, and passion, recognizing that progress is deeply rooted in building and nurturing relationships and trust. As a sustainability professional, much of the work is collaborative, emphasizing the importance of collective effort. As impact expands, so does the need for partnerships and collaborations, demanding patience, and unwavering commitment. For women and university students entering this arena, embracing compassionate leadership, and fearlessly advocating for change are essential. Ability to work inclusively and across disciplines, especially connecting with the field of environmental science and making the knowledge accessible will go a long way.



## Sarva Gunn Sampann – Platform to Inspire & Motivate Women

### An Interview with Anu Yadavalli

**Deepa Rao : Interview Questions Tell me something about yourself and what triggered you to start Sarva Gunn Sampann program?**

For the past 25 years, Cleveland has been my proud home, where I've embraced the roles of a devoted mother to three wonderful kids, the proud owner of an endearing beagle boy, and a life partner to my amazing husband. My journey originated in India, where I completed both my undergrad and postgrad studies before contributing to an NGO in Bengaluru. After marriage and relocation to the U.S., I pursued another master's degree and dedicated over two decades to diverse roles in HR, Career Services, and IT workforce development in Northeast Ohio. Recently, I decided to step back from my professional pursuits to focus on self-discovery and family, coinciding with the launch of the Sarva Gunn Sampann (SGS) podcast. The inspiration for SGS struck me while watching Sudha Murthy's interview on YouTube. Her simplicity and wisdom have always resonated with me. The realization of the overwhelming popularity of celebrity videos at airports led me to reflect on the lack of attention given to real-life role models. SGS is born out of my admiration for resilient women in our community, especially immigrant women who arrive with just two suitcases on a dependent visa. Despite the unique challenges they face when relocating from India, they bring their values, upbringing, and facets of their personality and character. The program serves as a spotlight for their exceptional journeys, celebrating individuality and providing a dedicated platform for women to recognize and showcase their unique gifts. Tell readers about Sarva Gunn Sampann program and where people can watch that. Sarva Gunn Sampann is a video podcast available on YouTube, paying tribute to women from India and the diaspora. It encourages women to learn from each other's strengths rather than comparisons. The program provides a 360-degree overview of a woman's life, offering insights into her experiences. This podcast celebrates the unique identities and perspectives of women, striving to illuminate various aspects of their lives. Through inspiring stories, it aims to motivate women globally to take positive action and engage in self-reflection. To watch the podcasts and stay updated, subscribe to our channel at [www.youtube.com/@SGS108](http://www.youtube.com/@SGS108).

**Deepa Rao : You have created an excellent platform for inspiring and motivating women. Do you think we can empower women and motivate them to achieve their dreams by showcasing inspiring women stories? Give us some highlights of your program.**

Sarva Gunn Sampann (SGS) is a dynamic platform with five segments tailored to women from all walks of life from around the world. It transcends the conventional focus on professional achievements, extending its reach to include those who prioritize families. The program is committed to empowering and motivating women by sharing stories from diverse backgrounds, offering insights into the varied experiences, challenges, and triumphs that women face. One distinctive aspect of SGS is its advocacy for recognizing innate talents, challenging societal roles, and addressing imposter syndrome. Notably, the program refrains from introducing guests solely by their work or professional credentials; instead, it highlights their values and strengths. This unique approach underscores the belief that every woman possesses these intrinsic qualities. The program comprises five insightful segments: \* Bachchpan Ke Din (Childhood Days): This segment not only provides the background story of the guest but also offers insights into child psychology and the impact of parental and home environments for parents and grandparents of kids of all ages.. \* Yeh Kahaan Aa Gaye Hum (The onward journey): Delving into the life journey and how individuals relocate and cope with new environments, providing interesting nuggets of knowledge about new places. \* Kaam Ki Baath (Work Wise): Viewers have the opportunity to gain career experiences and insights into various occupations and career trajectories. This segment proves especially helpful for young individuals as they embark on their career choices. \* The X-Factor: Explores the aspects of personality central



or core to each woman. \* Self Care: In this segment, women share their self-care routines at mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual levels. SGS actively encourages women to cultivate their interests and hobbies, prioritize self-care, and envision themselves beyond societal expectations. By sharing both triumphs and hardships, the program aims to break down barriers, fostering a supportive community that celebrates individuality. The emphasis on values and strengths contributes to creating a space where women can authentically share their stories, inspiring others and building a collective sense of empowerment.

**Deepa Rao : What is the message you would like to give the readers?**

The underlying message we aim to convey revolves around acknowledging and harnessing our inherent abilities and strengths. While each of us may have gaps in our knowledge, there is tremendous value in learning from one another without judgment. We advocate for appreciation and understanding towards the unique journeys of fellow women, even those who may outwardly appear highly accomplished and successful. SGS functions as a platform to tackle imposter syndrome by revealing the authentic stories behind success, thereby dispelling pluralistic ignorance. It offers a comprehensive perspective, enabling women to assess their own skills, talents, values, and strengths. The program motivates every woman to embrace her true self, fostering a collective celebration of diverse qualities. By spotlighting the multifaceted nature of success, SGS strives to empower women to overcome self-doubt, appreciate their individual journeys, and recognize the depth of their capabilities. If you are interested in being a guest on the show or would like to recommend someone, please message via LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarvagunnsampann/> \*

**Deepa Rao : FICA Lotus team wishes you all the very best in your future endeavors. Do you think you can extend this program to high achieving youths and kids so the younger generation would get motivated and inspired?**

Thank you for your kind wishes! We truly appreciate your support. The idea of extending our program to high-achieving youths and kids is fantastic and aligns with our mission to empower and inspire the younger generation. We are actively exploring ways to incorporate content that not only resonates with, but also motivates and uplifts youths and children. Your encouragement strengthens our commitment to making a positive impact on individuals of all ages. We acknowledge the importance of approaching content for young audiences with sensitivity, ensuring it doesn't inadvertently create feelings of inadequacy or demotivation. Recognizing the uniqueness of each individual journey is paramount. We are dedicated to crafting content that highlights the diversity of paths to success, with the goal of inspiring and motivating without fostering comparison or unrealistic expectations. Stay tuned for exciting developments as we work towards inspiring and motivating the next generation!



# Ayurveda the science of Self Healing

By DR SUNITA CHUGH BAMS, MPH

Ayur means life and Veda means knowledge. Ayurveda is the science of life based on achieving mind-body balance. It encompasses physical, spiritual, psychological, and philosophical components focused on promoting lifelong wellness. Ayurveda has come to the forefront because it is genuinely holistic. A complete analysis of body type, psychological tendencies, specific kind of imbalances and dietary requirements opens up a host of lifestyle choices.

Modern life has reached a level of speed, stress, mechanization and complexity that the simplicity of remaining in tune with nature has been forgotten or often neglected. Health is not just absence of disease but balance between body, mind, and spirit. Ayurveda is attributed to God Dhanvantri, who received it from god Brahma. Its earliest concepts were found in Atharva Veda. Later on in the Samhita period various scholars wrote the granthas (texts) on ayurveda – Caraka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtang Samgraha and Ashthang hridayam are the main ones.

Ayurveda has two main aims

“Swasthya Swasthya Rakshanam

Aturasya vikara Prashamanam cha II” - Carak Samhita

Its first aim is to preserve the health of an individual which is based on prevention even before the sickness arrives. In Summary how to keep your body healthy and fit and avoid illness. Second aim is to focus on methods,

medicine and tactics for disease management and cure.

The four ayurvedic aspects of the body - Doshas, Dhatus, Malas, and Agni must be balanced for optimal health. The three functional doshas are Vata, Pitta and Kapha. These doshas are energies used to describe your body, mind, environment, and everything else. Imbalance in the doshas leads to disease.

Nutrition is the “great medicine” in ayurveda. A wholesome well balanced diet is the foundation of health, strength and happiness for both mind and body. The Ayurvedic concept of balanced diet is not the same as the modern diet of proteins, fats, carbs and antioxidants.

Yoga is the sister science to ayurveda which helps to attain a fit body and connect with higher self.. The Ayurvedic knowledge is vast and even following some golden rules can definitely improve life quality and lead to healthier self.

In future we can continue to talk about the principles and how to include them in your daily life. Sunita Chugh is an Ayurvedic Practitioner working from Studio 83 in Avon Lake and Stella Luna Therapy in Middleburg Heights. She offers consultation and many other ayurvedic services <https://stellalunatherapy.com/ayurveda-cleveland/>

If you have any questions please email me at: [ayurveda.satnam@gmail.com](mailto:ayurveda.satnam@gmail.com)

## FICA Service Award Winner

Dr. Gita Gidwani was the first woman surgeon appointed to the staff at Cleveland Clinic in 1976 and continued to serve as a gynecologist at the Cleveland Clinic for over 30 years. Notable among her multiple achievements is her involvement as a founding member of the Women’s Professional Staff Association (WPSA) and founding member and later president of the North American Society for Pediatric & Adolescent Gynecology.

She is also the founder of Helping Hands, an organization which has supported the Indian community by providing much needed support to families, new immigrants and people in need; and also one of the founding members of Medical Yatra, the humanitarian mission under the umbrella

of AIPNO in 2001 . The organization first started after the earthquake in Gujarat, India and other than the exception of the pandemic has continued its yearly trips to India.

The Gidwani Mid-Career Leadership Development Scholarship which is awarded specifically to advance women professional staff to leadership positions at Cleveland Clinic has been made possible through a gift from Dr. Gidwani.



## Dal Dosa *By Mrs. Sushma Lohit*

### INGREDIENTS:

- Urad dal - 1/4 cup
- Green gram - 1/4 cup
- Chana dal - 1/4 cup
- Toor dal - 1/4 cup
- Masoor dal - 1/4 cup
- Rice - 1/4 cup
- Ginger - 1/2 inch
- Red chili - 3 - 4
- Cumin and Hing
- Salt as needed
- Water to grind
- Ghee or oil

### METHOD:

1. Wash all the lentils, drain water and fresh water. Soak for at least 6 hours or overnight.
2. Drain the water completely add them to a blender jar along with ginger, chili, hing, cumin and salt. Pour water and blend to a thick batter.
3. No need to ferment, you can make dosa.

### TIPS:

Serve hot with chutney or pickle.



## Personal Growth Series

### The Effective Communicator

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

### How to craft a purposeful message

1. Now that we know what public speaking is and how we might overcome it with a sense of belief, intention, and diligent practice, let’s talk about how to organize our material for a speech/presentation.
2. The first step is to know our WHY - the purpose of the speech. (Tip: Write in one sentence what you want the audience to take away at the end of your speaking.)
3. The second step is to understand our WHO - the audience. (Tip: Assume that the audience will receive your speech differently based on their level of interest and understanding.)
4. The final step is to decide on HOW - the presentation pattern. (Tip: Research your topic ahead and then pick a pattern to organize and present.)

As you work towards organizing your speech, consider the following

patterns to arrange your material for presentation:

- Chronological (step by step or in the order in which events occurred)
- Spatial (location, geography, or moving through a space)
- Cause and effect (actions and consequences)
- Problem-solution (pain point/challenge, its impact, and ways to eliminate or minimize impact)
- Topical (main theme/ topic and supporting subtopics)

While selection of topic, researching, and organizing material are critical, delivery is what ultimately enhances how memorable your speech/presentation will be. In the next episode, learn how to use your voice to keep words and emotion congruent to project confidence and deliver a purposeful message.

Happy Speaking!

Contributed By Sravanthi Vallampati

Distinguished Toastmaster

To learn more, contact [svallampati@gmail.com](mailto:svallampati@gmail.com)

Visit <http://www.toastmasters.org>.







## Awareness about Bullying in schools

By TASEEM LOKHANWALA

### School Bullying -Awareness and Intervention

Schools started in August for most young children and adolescents. Many of our children may have entered a new grade this year or a new school; enrolled in a new district or moved to a new city. That transition itself creates its natural pressure and a resulting level of stress. Sometimes our children do well with novel situations, sometimes they are nervous or overwhelmed, and sometimes they are not happy. It is not common, but there is a possibility that sometimes the reason behind their nervousness and unhappiness is due to their experience with peers at school and bullying. Deepa Rao asked me to write tips about how to address "bullying in school" for the parents, so I am sharing them here. Bullying is a serious issue that can produce long-lasting and very negative effects. Parents must recognize the risk factors, and warning signs of bullying and are well informed to prevent it, to intervene, and to stop the behavior as early as possible. I will give you some tips on how to recognize the signs if your child is being bullied, or has witnessed bullying, and what you should do. Please Note the victims, the perpetrators, and the bystanders can all require intervention and support.

The following warning signs, including but not limited to, may be indicative of your child being bullied:

**Physical** - If your child comes home suffering from unexplainable injuries (i.e., scrapes, bruises, cuts), complains of stomach aches, headaches, chronic pain, or feeling sick (these headaches or illnesses may be faked to avoid situations where he or she is being victimized); shows changes in eating habits (e.g., binge eating, restricted eating, or being unusually hungry from skipping lunch). an older child may engage in smoking – these are warning signs that warrant careful questioning.

**Psychological** - If your child is unhappy or depressed, has anxiety, has difficulties with sleeping, has difficulties with falling or staying asleep, has nightmares that interrupt sleep experiences increased stress, and sometimes even has suicidal ideation. Students who are bullied typically demonstrate lower subjective well-being and lower overall satisfaction with life, they engage in negative self-talk. These are again warning signs that warrant careful questioning to rule out bullying.

**Social** - If your child feels isolated from their peers and lacks the prosocial skills necessary to make friendships, may avoid social situations, hang out with peers, and demonstrate runaway behaviors – both from home and at school. They have lower self-esteem, lower belief in self and others, as well as lower social problem-solving skills. These in turn result in limited coping skills. They may come home frequently with lost or destroyed possessions or property (e.g., jewelry, clothing, books, or electronics). These are again warning signs that warrant careful questioning.

**Educational** - Your child suddenly has lower academic performance, more school absences, declined grades, or loss of interest in schoolwork.

**Risk factors.** Although there are no specific factors that predetermine who will be a victim of bullying, there are many factors that increase the potential risk of becoming a victim of bullying. In general, students who may be perceived as different from their peers, or as weak or powerless, are at an increased risk of being victims of bullying. Your child may have a higher likelihood of being a victim of bullying, if:

- They have a physical, mental, or intellectual disability—this includes if they suffer from depression, anxiety, or have low self-esteem. They are at risk.
- If they are perceived as being different based on their weight, clothing, race, ethnicity, religion, language and/or social status.
- If they are considered weak by their peers and are unable to defend themselves.
- If they are less popular than others and have few friends.
- if they identify as lesbian, gay, or as LGBTQI2-S.

**Where does bullying happen?** Bullying can occur during or after school hours. While most reported bullying happens in the school building, a significant percentage also happens in places like on the playground or the bus. It can also happen traveling to and from school, in your neighborhood, or on the internet/ social media.

**Types of bullying.** Students can bully verbally by teasing, name-calling, threatening, taunting, or making sexually inappropriate remarks. They can bully socially by spreading rumors, asking others not to befriend your child, and embarrassing them in public, or on social media. They can bully physically by hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, and breaking things that belong to your child.

**What can parents do?** Young children who experienced or witnessed bullying may want to discuss it with their parents but may not know how to bring it up. Some children may be afraid that they'll be "in trouble" for what happened.

Others may feel embarrassment or shame. You, as parents, can start by encouraging open discussion and sharing at home regularly.

Start with initiating talks in the car, before or after homework, over dinner or breakfast, or when doing something together.

Keep it casual and curious.

Talk about the daily schedule.

Listen.

Show that you trust them.

Ask open-ended questions about their day or activities.

What's the funniest thing that happened today?

What was the best and worst thing that happened to you today?

What new thing did you learn about a friend or another student this week?

What would you change about today?

If you are concerned about your older child being cyberbullied or bullied but not talking about it, start the conversation in a general way. Let them know you are there for them no matter what.

I've noticed that you seem stressed /anxious/ upset – has anything happened?

I've noticed that you're spending more time alone /on your phone /in your room – is there anything you want to talk about?

Is there something going on at school that is upsetting you?

I've noticed that you don't talk about your friend(s) anymore. Has anything happened?

I've been hearing about cyberbullying a lot lately. Have you ever seen it? How did your friend or school handle it? What would you have done?

Some of my friends were talking about bullying happening at their child's school. Have you ever seen any bullying happening at school? How does your school deal with it? What do you think of that?

I'm here if there's something you want to talk about.

Another thing you, as a parent, can do is to use your own experience to help your child talk about theirs. For instance, share an age-appropriate story about bullying you experienced or witnessed. Talk about how it was distressing, awkward, scary, upsetting, and left you with questions. Start with, "Hey, did I tell you about...?"

However, if your child shares that they have been bullied, the first rule of thumb is to stay calm. Don't panic. You need to model for your child how to tackle it. Determine if you need to talk to the school about it. Try to understand if there is a power imbalance between the one who was bullied and the one who was bullied. Please note a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. Ask them questions because your goal is to hear about their experience, provide support, and help prevent it from happening again. This isn't your fault. No one deserves to be bullied no matter what is said or done.

Has this happened before? What will make you feel safer?

Can I reach out to the school/teacher to talk to them about it?

Can we come up with some things you can do if it happens again?

Teach them some user-friendly tricks on how to be assertive and investigate the bully's face and ask them "to stop"; to use humor and laughter to dispel the power of the bully; to walk away; to keep away from the perpetrator; and always stay near adults. Typically, bullies won't bully if there are adults around.

"Bullying is a learned behavior. It's up to us to teach our children how to be kind and respectful to others." Caroline Kennedy

Reference: The information for this article is taken from the Parent Handout of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), NASP position statement on Bullying and Ohio Revised Code – section 3313.666

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## EKAL Vidyalaya

EKAL Abhiyan is a Gandhi peace prize winner 501(c)3 organization working in remote rural and tribal India to promote basic education by single teacher schools. Ekal trains a youth from a village for few weeks and that youth provides basic education to a group of 20-30 children in that village. It happens under a tree or in the teacher's house or in the community hall. Your donations support the honorarium to that teacher. Around 70% of Ekal teachers are females and this encourages the girl child education also. A donation of \$365 dollars supports one such school.

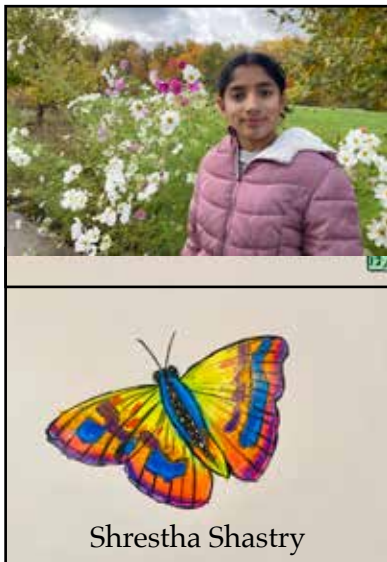
This year's Bollywood musical fundraiser would be on 4/28th (Sunday) at Independence middle school. You would enjoy the dinner and a mesmerizing 2.5-hour long Bollywood musical program by professional singers from India. Further information will be available by First March on the Facebook page of Cleveland chapter of Ekal and on the FICA WhatsApp group. The Cleveland chapter has been successfully conducting this for more than ten years and the last year's show was attended by more than 425 people and was sold out.

Ekal Abhiyan and its volunteers are also focusing on digital literacy, basic computer education, telemedicine, and skill training projects to promote holistic development of remote tribal areas and villages. More information and success stories can be found on the website [ekal.org](http://ekal.org). You can get more information by emailing [ekalcleveland@gmail.com](mailto:ekalcleveland@gmail.com) or contacting Dr. Vikas Jain at 440-539-9652. Many youth volunteers passionately participate in this program and get volunteer hour certificates.

## Art



Anika Rao



Shrestha Shastry

## Poem

### Who can stop this?

Who decided that we needed war?  
Is that the best way to resolve conflicts?  
Does war solve all of our problems?  
War, war, war... That's all we hear nowadays

Chaos, Casualties  
Displacement, Death  
Trauma, Tyranny  
War, war, war... Do you think you are spared

from it?

Freedom, Fun, Future, Normalcy  
Is this too much to ask for?  
Does a child want a war?  
War, war, war... Who is waging war with whom, and why?

By: Ameyaa Gargasha  
Orchard Middle School, Solon, Ohio  
Age 11

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- Math
- Science
- Geography
- Computer Science
- Public Speaking

**WHEN:**  
6th & 7th April, 2024

**WHERE:**  
Leigh Hall, University of Akron

**MORE INFORMATION:**

Contact Name: Viji Vijay  
✉ [dvijay@aol.com](mailto:dvijay@aol.com)  
🌐 [www.northsouth.org](http://www.northsouth.org)

Registration



Donation



**SAVE THE DATE**

## Ugadi Celebration

**13th April 2024**

More details about the venue and timing will be published on our website [www.kasturikannadasangha.org](http://www.kasturikannadasangha.org)





### FICA Student Achievement Awards



Rohit Jain  
(1st Place)



Shreya Bangalore  
(1st Place)



Arya Babu  
(1st Place)



Ishita Mannar  
(2nd Place)



Nehal Jategoenkar  
(2nd Place)

### FICA Essay Writing Competition Winners



Rohit Jain  
(1st Place)



Siddharth Godbole  
(2nd Place)



Aryan Ghosh  
(3rd Place)



Ritu Mahna Recieved the  
Community Award



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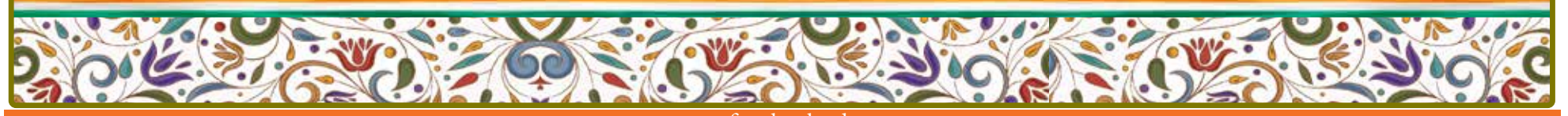
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**STORY 1-Bhuj, Kutch/Guj: 38 Students+2Teachers**  
Badada S.Trust-Int'l Partner @ Navchetan Andhjan Mandal



**STORY 2-Rajkot, Guj: 40 Students @ Mahila Vikas Griha**



# Medical Yatra 2024

**Story 2- Bhopal, MP: 30 Blind Students & Blind Professor R. Trivedi @ Arushi**



**HUMBLE APPEAL:**  
With your SUPPORT and enthusiasm, Oct 29-SUNDAY at Grand Gala FUND raising event, Medical YATRA set the GOAL of EMPOWERING 1,000 Blind Students. We are just short of 100. Will YOU join with us sponsoring:  
**20 Blind Students for \$ 3,600 OR**  
**10 Blind Students for \$1,800?**  
(Check made to: AIPND-Medical YATRA  
c/o Jaya Shah, MD, 6737 Wildwood Trail, MAYFIELD VILLAGE, oh. 44143 )

"More than at any other time, when I hold a beloved book in my hand my feelings flow full from me, my spirit is free." - Helen Keller (Blind & Deaf)

Medical YATRA Comm.  
Dr. Swarnalatha Meyyashagan, Dr. Jaya Shah, Dr. Murthy Vuppala, Dr. Mona Gupta, Saralja Kandalu, Ramesh Shah, Mevy Meyyashagan

**Medical YATRA 2024 is scheduled for Jan 22-Feb 2 in Chennai.**  
17 Physicians and 13 Volunteers (including 3 Medical students (with Travel scholarships) have registered.  
Dr. Swarnalatha Mevy-Chair is introducing Program for Elderly.

## FICA WORKSHOP

Things they never teach you in school to be successful in life."

By Dr.Gopal Nadkarni

FICA (Federation of Indian Community Associations) hosted a successful workshop on January 27, 2024. The event was attended by over 15 children with most of them being between the ages of 5 and 15. Several parents were in attendance as well! Mrs. Deepa Rao (EC FICA) hosted the event.

Dr Gopal Nadkarni (Faculty, University of Akron) was invited to conduct the workshop based on his passion for working with young adults in the community. He suggested that topic of the workshop focus not academic excellence that parents typically focus on but on shining a spotlight on other traits that are critical to developing successful life skills. Mrs. Mahima

Rao compered the workshop and co-taught a session that analyzed the results of a pre-workshop survey on personality/strength finder's quiz. The results of the quiz were highlighted by Mrs. Deepa Rao who clearly enunciated that no matter what our strengths and weaknesses are, we are able to change to the best version of ourselves through intentional goal setting and perseverance with the support of parents and elders.

The workshop got off to a great start by team building activities designed to allow the children to relax and feel comfortable in a new environment. After the initial excitement and energy buildup, a calming meditative and controlled breathing session to calm music set the mood for learning. The students were asked to introduce themselves and then Dr. Nadkarni held an interactive session where the student's explored concepts of what was taught in school vs. what was important in life. Every child was then given a chance to present to the group a short story from the Indian Classic Panchatantra and talk about the moral or key learning lessons that they felt was important. Every student was given a chance to participate, lead and interact with their stories and it showed clearly that today's children are aware of the key differences in what is important in life and what is needed to be successful. Many exhibited critical thinking skills, and so the workshop was mainly an exercise in reinforcement of key concepts that show that these critical skills (like trust, honesty, hard work, importance of friends etc.) can be developed in a cohort or group and much of the wisdom lies in ancient wisdom of the Indian Subcontinent. The refreshments served as an icebreaker, and it was exciting to see children participating so vigorously in the event. A video of the event has been posted on FICA YouTube as well.



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