

# THE LOTUS

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



January 2025 - March 2025 Special Edition - Woman's Day/Mother's Day

Since 1967

## INSIDE

FICA Matters.....  
pgs 1-5

Community News.....  
pgs 4 - 16

Please email us at:  
[Lotus.ficacleveland@gmail.com](mailto:Lotus.ficacleveland@gmail.com)

Sign up to receive  
The Lotus in your inbox at:

<http://www.ficacleveland.org/fica/lotusPage.html>

Or email us at:

[lotus.ficacleveland@gmail.com](mailto:lotus.ficacleveland@gmail.com)

## FICA's Republic Day Celebration 2025



Held at Signature of Solon Country Club on February 1st, 2025, at 6 PM. The program began with a meet and greet, followed by a Republic Day address by Dr. Naveen Uli. Mrs. Sravanthi Vallampati and Mr. Amit Jain hosted the evening. The talk was followed by the American National Anthem and Indian

National Anthem sung by the father-daughter duo Mr. Lalith Subramanian and Ms. Medha Lalit. They also sang Vande Mataram. Past Presidents of FICA, Executive Committee Members, and the Board of Trustees of FICA gathered at the podium during the National Anthem. Mr. Sudarshan Sathe gave an inaugural speech. Mr. Sudarshan Sathe is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Federation of India's Community Associations, FICA. Sudarshan Sathe'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 Project Love Values-in-Action board, which aims to end school bullying. In 2024, he was inducted into the Cleveland International Hall of Fame that permanently recognizes those individuals who have made a valuable and lasting contribution to the multicultural city of Cleveland and inspiring a new generation of leaders. Past Presidents of FICA were honored for their service to FICA. The past Presidents of FICA are Mr. Asim Dutta, Mrs. Mona Alag, Dr. Chandra Haria, Mrs. Sujata Lakhe Barnard, Mrs. Ritu Mahna, Mr. Venky Venkatesh, Mr. Anjan Ghosh, Late Vijaya Emani, Late Surinder Kampani, Mr. Lal Jagetia, Mr. Monte Ahuja, Mr. Satish Parikh, Mr. Raj Pillai, Mr. Guru Bhandari, Mr. Ajay Taneja, Mr. Sunil Chand, Mr. T L Bhargava, Mr. Bal Paranjpe, and Mr. Shashi Shah.

### The guests for the evening were

1. Solon Mayor Mr. Ed Kraus
2. Angela Shute-Woodson, Senior Advisor Community and Government Affairs, Director of Community Relations, Office of the Mayor Justin M. Bibb
3. State Rep. Tristan Rader (D-Lakewood) was sworn into the 136th Ohio General Assembly. Rep. Rader will begin his first term in the legislature, serving the people of Cleveland's West Side and Lakewood at the Ohio Statehouse. 4. Rep. Rader is a dedicated advocate for sustainability, economic justice, and social equity. His journey into public service began with grassroots activism and a deep commitment to addressing systemic barriers faced by Ohioans. From his early work at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, where he connected thousands to critical resources and successfully lobbied for increased state funding, to his tenure on Lakewood City Council, he has always focused on meeting



community needs through bold innovative strategies.

4. Mr. Niraj Antani having been first elected to the Ohio House at age 23, and elected to the Ohio Senate at age 29, he was the youngest currently serving member of the Senate. He is the first Indian American State Senator in Ohio history.

### Evening Entertainment

1. \*Nritya Samarpana\* presented by Aaryaa More Nandita Srikumar Smriti Anand Sneha Upadhyayula Disciples of Guru Sujatha Srinivasan Artistic Director, Shri Kalaa Mandir Center for Indian Performing Arts
2. Music Concert by Raga and Rhythms

### Award Ceremony:

#### FICA Student Award Winners

##### 1. Radha Pareek/Beachwood High School

High School Senior: Aspiring Physician & Policy Advocate  
Compassionate senior at Beachwood High School with a passion for public health and policy advocacy. National Merit Finalist for highest academic excellence.

##### 2. Karina Krishnan/ Beachwood High School

She conducts research in biomedical engineering at Case Western Reserve University on statistical models for rectal cancer treatment, utilizing advanced coding and data analysis techniques.

##### 3. Shreya Dharaiya / Twinsburg High School

Class of 2025 Member of National Honors Society Member of Spanish National Honors Society

##### 4. All-Rounder FICA Award Aarya More- Solon High



Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
CLEVELAND,  
OHIO  
PERMIT NO.  
1051

FEDERATION OF INDIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

PO BOX 39474  
Solon OH 44139  
United States

Or Current Resident





## FICASTAFF

### Administration Board of Trustees

Sudarshan R. Sathe (Chairperson)  
chairman.ficacleveland@gmail.com

Rupesh Raina (Vice Chairperson)  
vicechairperson.ficacleveland@gmail.com

Swathi Desai (Secretary)  
botsecretary.ficacleveland@gmail.com

### Members

Guniya Bafna  
Dinesh Bafna  
Purshottam Punwani  
Sathish Mahna  
Rajesh Sharma  
Dharminder Kampani

### Executive Board

Shekhar Ganore (President)  
president.ficacleveland@gmail.com  
Ameet Bathiya (Vice President)  
vicepresident.ficacleveland@gmail.com  
Keyuri Hazarnis (Secretary)  
secretary.ficacleveland@gmail.com  
Hemant Kanodia (Treasurer)  
treasurer.ficacleveland@gmail.com  
Abhijeet Runwal (Co-Treasurer)  
Ritu Mahna (Past President)  
Deepa Rao  
(Social Media Coordinator)

### Officers

Amit Jain  
Naveen Uli  
Manish Ishwar  
Somnath Roy  
Parul Bafna  
Jay Mendpara

### LOTUS

Deepa Rao (Editor in Chief)  
Lotus.ficacleveland@gmail.com

Sangita Bafna (Managing Editor)  
Dr Naveen Ulli (Managing Editor)  
Mahima Rao (Managing Editor)  
Anika Rao (Youth Editor)

Design and Layout  
Santosh Bhandari

### Publisher

The Federation of India Community Associations (FICA)

### Project Seva

Utkarsh Hazaris - Chair

### Helping Hands

Swati Sathe - Chair  
Swati.sathe90@gmail.com

### India Cultural Garden

Hira Rane - Chair  
Icg.ficacleveland@gmail.com

### Shiksha Daan

Sanjay Garg - Chair  
sangarg@aol.com

# CTND.. FICA's Republic Day Celebration 2025

## School

A junior at Solon High School, who is an exceptional and well-rounded student deserving of the prestigious FICA Student Award for extraordinary performance across fields. Aaryaa is an outstanding individual with a diverse range of talents, achievements, and qualities that set her apart from her peers. Her intellectual abilities, combined with her kindness, leadership, and empathy, make her an ideal candidate for this recognition.

## Unsung Hero Awards

Each of our awardees tonight has not only showcased their immense talents as individuals and teachers, but they have dedicated their energies to bringing communities together through music and dance and rising to give back on every occasion. Having earned credentials from celebrated universities, and learned under the tutelage of renowned gurus, they continue to brighten our cultural scene in Cleveland and beyond making us all ever so proud of our rich heritage.

## First Awardee: Mrs.Antara Datta

Antara Datta is a visionary artist, educator, and cultural leader. As founder and artistic director of Anga Kala Kathak Academy, she has spearheaded the preservation and popularization of Kathak, a traditional Indian classical dance form, since 2010. With branches in Ohio, Washington, and Pennsylvania, the academy upholds the rich legacy of the Lucknow Gharana style.

As President of Arts Without Borders, a 501(c)(3) organization, Antara champions diversity, inclusivity, and social impact through the arts. The organization fosters cross-cultural collaborations, hosts events featuring renowned artists, and promotes community outreach and awareness about social issues through the powerful medium of dance.

## Second Awardee: Mr. Lalit Subramanian

Lalit Subramanian is an accomplished vocalist and percussionist in Carnatic and Hindustani music. A Sangeet Visharad, Lalit has been a Yuvavani artist with AIR. A soloist and a collaborator with eminent artists of other genres such as Indian Classical Dance, Jazz etc., and as a performer and composer, Lalit has performed at notable venues like the Kennedy Center, American Dance Festival, Krannert Center, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana, and Sabhas in India.

Lalit has been propagating all these art forms at his music school Madhuralaya by teaching aspiring students in Northeast Ohio and other cities and showcasing them on several prestigious stages.



## Third Awardee: Mrs.Sujatha Srinivasan

Sujatha Srinivasan is a globally renowned Bharatanatyam dancer, choreographer, and educator, celebrated for her expertise and innovation in North America. Sujatha's contributions have been recognized with the Cleveland Arts Prize Martha Joseph Award in 2022 and the 2024 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for Choreography, along with the 2024 Lifetime Achievement Ohio

Heritage Fellowship Award. She also holds titles such as Nrithya Seva Mani, Nritya Ratnakara, and Sambrama Puraskar.

Founder of Shree Kalaa Mandir, Guru Sujatha strives to balance presenting traditional repertoire and offering new choreography with concepts and themes infused with relevance and originality thus preserving and perpetuating Bharatanatyam in all its classical rigor whilst steering it to nurture cultural conversation through dance.

## Fourth Awardee: Mrs.Sudha Totapally

Smt. Sudha Kiranmayi Totapally is an accomplished classical dancer, teacher, and choreographer in the Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam dance forms. Guru Sudha is the founder of Nartanam Dance Academy which offers young enthusiasts a place to cultivate their passion for the arts, refine skills, and blossom into elegant, imaginative dancers.

Every year, several of her students undertake diploma examinations administered by Silicon Andhra University, consistently achieving distinctions and high honors. Mrs. Totapally, regards dance as a profound medium for expressing the depths of human emotion, akin to the language of the soul.

The award ceremony was followed by a sumptuous dinner and dance to the tunes of DJ.



## Indian Associations/Organizations in the Greater Cleveland Area

Agarwal Samaj of North America (ASONA)  
Vibhav Agarwalla  
Vick.Agarwalla@Gmail.com

AIPNO Association of Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio  
Palak Shroff - 7164744836

Association of Asian Indian Women in Ohio (AAIWO)  
Deepa Rao  
aaiwocleveland@gmail.com

Bengali Cultural Society  
Kausatav Banerjee - 3304753968

Cleveland Moms 4 Moms  
Vidhya Ramachandran

Info@clevelandmoms4moms.org

Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA Cleveland)  
Rakesh Ranjan  
rranjan@charakresearch.com

Ekal Abhiyan  
Vikas Jain - Vikasjain365@yahoo.com

ICAGA (Indian Community of Akron)  
Akash Gupta - 3305924260

Isha Foundation  
Ram Appana - appana0213@gmail.com

Jain Society  
Sangita Bafna - 216-906-9064

Kasturi Kannada Sangha  
Mamatha Girish  
25kasturi@gmail.com

Kerala Association of Ohio  
Vishin Joe - president@kaoh.org

Marwari Association of Ohio  
Amit Jagetia  
sumanbansal8@gmail.com

North East Ohio Marathi Mandal  
Utkarsha Hazaris  
president@neomm.org

Northeast Ohio Women in Tech  
Swati Venkataraman  
clevelandohioneowit@gmail.com

North East Ohio Telugu Association  
Madhu Majji - 7696661744

Northeast Ohio Tamil Sangam  
Vidya Prakash BalaKrishnan  
2168560943

Sewa International  
Anil Kumar Singh  
Cleveland@sewausea.org

Tamil Nadu Foundation USA, North East Ohio Chapter  
Venkatesh Harikrishnan  
Northeastohio@tnfusa.org

The Odisha Society of the Americas, Ohio Chapter  
Deepak Sahoo - sahoodk@gmail.com

Gujarati Samaj of Greater Cleveland  
Yogita Mitesh Patel  
president.gsgc2025@gmail.com

Swami Narayan Temple  
Rakesh Patel - 4406675943

Cleveland State University Indian Student Association  
Surabh - 2167133865

Case Western State University Indian Student Association  
Amala Penumaka  
http://community.case.edu/uia/contact-us





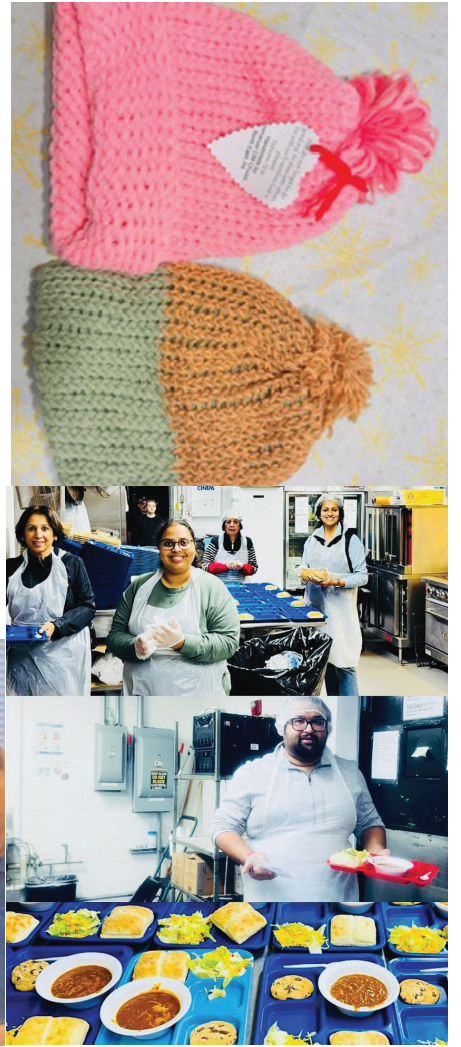
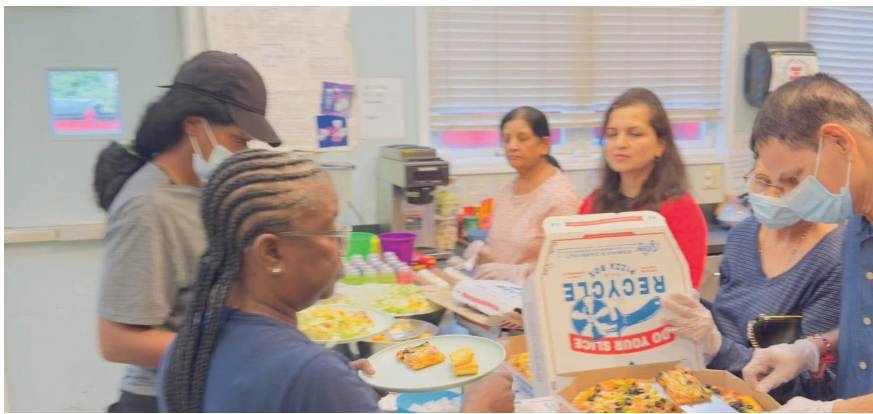
## PROJECT SEVA

Project Seva distributed winter caps, new blankets and hygiene (care) packages plus serve the meal to Homeless humans on Friday, December 6th, 2024 to WSCC homeless shelter on W.32 and Lorain Road.

On behalf of FICA/ Project seva, we have donated blankets, caps and hygiene packages to WSCC shelter homes. Ms. Veronica has accepted the listed items. She mentioned that they will distribute all these items to needy humans during this Christmas time. Also, we were honored to serve meals to Moriah House( WSCC shelter for 14 families). Minaxiben Munjapara, Harsha Rane and Pragna ( my wife) help us to support this humanitarian task. Also, NFIA ( National Federation of India Associations ) provided some donations to support this task.- Mr. Satish Parikh.

November is the month of giving! The Project Seva Team had the privilege of serving our annual holiday dinner at the men's shelter. Seva is a Sanskrit word meaning "selfless service", reminding us to give without expecting anything in return. It's a beautiful reminder to show gratitude and share joy with others. This holiday season, let's commit to spreading kindness and making a difference in someone's life.

"One random act of kindness can spark another. Let's be the spark that lights up the season for others" - says Gauri Masurekar.



## FICA Community Meeting 2025

By Keyuri Hazarnis

**\*\*Community Leaders Unite to Strengthen Cultural Bonds and Charitable Efforts\*\***

On March 2, 2025, leaders from over a dozen community organizations gathered in Cleveland for a collaborative summit aimed at strengthening cultural ties, supporting charitable missions, and empowering the next generation. Hosted by the Federation of Indian Community Associations (FICA), the meeting showcased a unified vision of collective action and inclusive community service.

The meeting underscored a deep commitment to service. Helping Hands announced its Aangan Initiative for seniors, while Project Seva detailed its monthly meal programs and winter distribution of essential supplies. Sewa International highlighted its international relief efforts,

including aid for Indian students in Ukraine and medical camps in India.

Odissa Society and FICA's Project Seva presented a joint initiative to provide food for shelters, and AAIWO reaffirmed its support for children with different

abilities through non-profit partnerships. Organizations such as ICAGA, Kerala Association, Gujarati Samaj, and North East Marathi Mandal shared their flagship events for 2025, including Holi, Diwali, Garba, Family Fun Nights, and landmark celebrations like the 50-Year Marathi Convention. India Cultural Garden and Kasturi Kannada Sangha emphasized their ongoing cultural enrichment efforts, from artist showcases to youth engagement. COHNA shared updates on its Hindu



advocacy activities and proposed collaborative meet and greet sessions.

A major focus of the summit was on supporting students and young professionals. Plans were introduced to launch job opportunity pools, host career fairs, and partner with universities like CSU and Case Western for internships and mentorship programs. Engage Cleveland was mentioned as a strategic partner for job listings and networking. FICA encouraged all community organizations to participate in one another's events, promoting unity and shared representation.

The formation of a core committee for the "India Building" initiative was approved. The goal is to create a circle of 1,000 contributors to drive long-term community projects. Other initiatives include workshops on medical and insurance literacy, better communication through the Lotus newsletter, and a yearly orientation meeting for all community representatives.

The meeting concluded with a call for unity, transparency, and proactive involvement. With every president of a sister organization automatically becoming a FICA board member, the stage is set for a new era of cooperation and impact. As Cleveland's Indian community continues to grow, the March 2025 community leaders meeting is a testament to its unwavering spirit of collaboration, compassion, and cultural pride.







## FICA TIMELINE

By Deepa Rao

Northeast Ohio boasts of over 25,000 Asian Indians. Many of them are entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers, professors and scientists. Some own gas stations and others own hotels/motels. It is estimated that a very high number of hotel/motel owners in the Cleveland area are Indians. The advent of the age of information technology brought another wave of Asian Indians to the U.S. And the tide continues. The following is a summary of ICC and FICA history.

**The History of ICC and FICA (Referenced by Old edition of The Lotus October 2016- Compiled by Late Paramjit Singh)**

The India Association of Cleveland was formed in 1964 with Mr. Sharma as its first President. Mayors Ralph Locher and Carl Stokes were present at various celebrations

The Lotus, the Indian community newspaper, was first published in 1967. The prime movers were Dr. Raju Chidambaram, Greg Travassos, and P.K. Saham, to name a few, and Pamela Rebello was the Editor.

ICC - As the Indian community grew in the early '70s, the idea of having an India House was born, which culminated in the purchase of the India Community Center in 1978 and Cleveland became the first major city in the United States to have an India Community Center. In 2003 it received The Ohio Historical Marker.

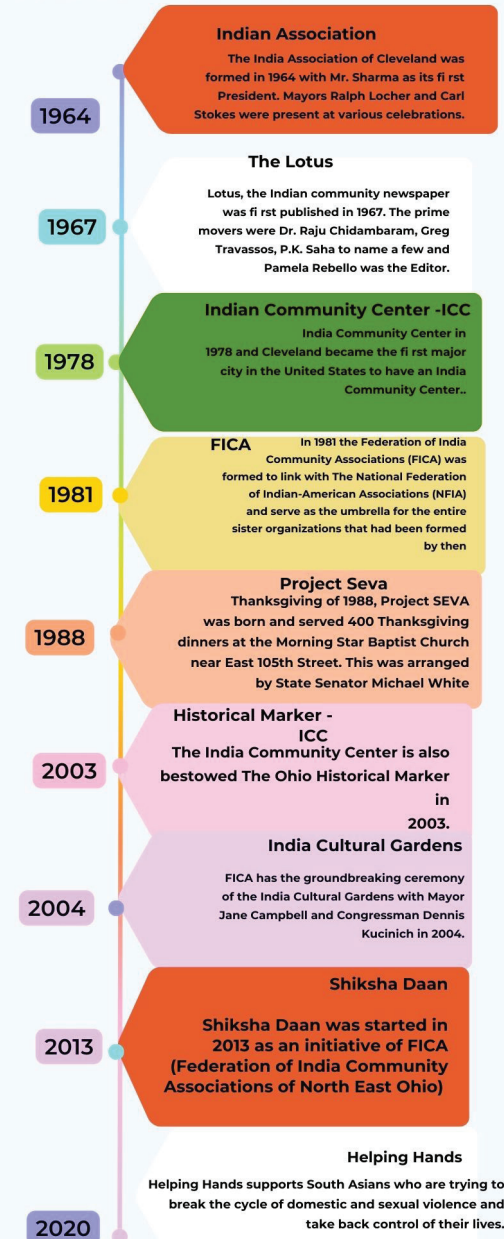
FICA - In 1981 the Federation of India Community Associations (FICA) was formed to link with The National Federation of Indian-American Associations (NFIA) and serve as the umbrella for the entire sister organizations that had been formed by then.

**Project Seva** - Thanksgiving of 1988, Project SEVA was born and served 400 Thanksgiving Dinners at the Morning Star Baptist Church near East 105th Street. This was arranged by State Senator Michael White. The concept and experience of Project SEVA were presented to the National Federation of Indian-American Association (NFIA) board, and it was adopted by NFIA to be promoted nationally. It is estimated that nationally, on Thanksgiving week, we serve about 125,000 meals and also distribute blankets to the homeless. Presently, we serve about 6,000 meals every month at St. Colman Catholic Church, MorningStar Baptist Church and Hopewell Baptist Missionary Church, and the India Community Center. Project SEVA also has a program called "Indian-Americans for the American-Indians", providing them with healthcare education, diabetes testing, and a pantry program. The Indian community raised over \$300,000 for families of those who were victims of September 11, 2001. We have raised funds for the Tsunami and Katrina. Currently, Project SEVA serves 125,000 pounds of food and distributes about 1,500 blankets to the homeless and needy. Around Christmas, Project SEVA volunteers take pictures of kids with Mr. & Mrs. Santa Claus; print them right away, so the kids can take them home.

ICG - FICA has the groundbreaking ceremony of the India Cultural Gardens with Mayor Jane Campbell and Congressman Dennis Kucinich in 2004. Soil from India is added to the American Legion Peace Garden crypt, where soil from all the nations represented in the Cultural Gardens can be found. Installation of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in the India Cultural Garden on October 1, 2006. It is the first Gandhi statue in Ohio. The second phase of the Garden was completed by October 2, 2007, which is Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. This is the premier location in the world that has the tallest Gandhi statue on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

**Shiksha Daan** - started in 2013 as an initiative of FICA (Federation of India Community Associations of North East Ohio) to increase the Indian community's involvement with the education and development of underprivileged youth in Greater Cleveland. Shiksha Daan has its virtual tutoring program for children from low-income families. We also partner with various youth education and development organizations in Cleveland to have members of the Indian community serve as tutors/mentors in their spaces.

## FICA Timeline



**Helping Hands** - 2020 Helping Hands supports South Asians who are trying to break the cycle of domestic and sexual violence 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 and 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.

## National Federation of Indian Associations

NFIA is a national Organization, and most of the local Indian organizations in the USA are members of NFIA. FICA is a proud member of NFIA. NFIA handles items related to the national level plus has a scholarship program. Seven students from the Cleveland area received the scholarship in the Year 2024. NFIA also arranged the Congressional Luncheon, Whitehouse briefing and meeting with the Indian Embassy at Washington DC.

NFIA has deep roots in NE Ohio. Together, NFIA and FICA hosted a couple of conventions in Cleveland. Paramjit and Mona Alag ji were prominent members of NFIA. In 2005/6, FICA/NFIA organized the convention under the co-convenors Mrs. Usha Ahuja and Satis Parikh.

We have used a portion of the income for the India Cultural Garden/ Gandhiji statue. Early 80s, with help from the Late Mr. Indra Shah, Attorney, FICA drafted the constitution and By-laws of NFIA. NFIA is looking at FICA to play an active role at NFIA. That is one of the reasons they have elected two delegates from FICA for the executive positions for the year 2025 NFIA board. Together, we will bring the glory back to northeast Ohio. Looking for your support to achieve the goals. Satish Parikh, Past President, FICA

For the 2025 NFIA Board (National Federation of Indian American Associations).

1. Satish Parikh (ex-FICA president) has been elected as an Executive Vice President.
2. FICA president Mr. Shekhar Ganore has been nominated /elected as a Regional VP for the Great Lakes region.

NFIA is a wide Indian organization throughout the USA

<https://nfiaweb.org/>

Congratulations! Mr. Satish Parikh and Mr. Shekhar Ganore







## FICA NEWS



## Neighborhood Media Foundation

Mayor Justin M. Bibb's February 13th 2025 roundtable with Cleveland community media (broadcast live on WOVI 95.9 FM) convened by Neighborhood Media Foundation. Mrs. Mahima Rao managing Editor of The Lotus attended the roundtable.

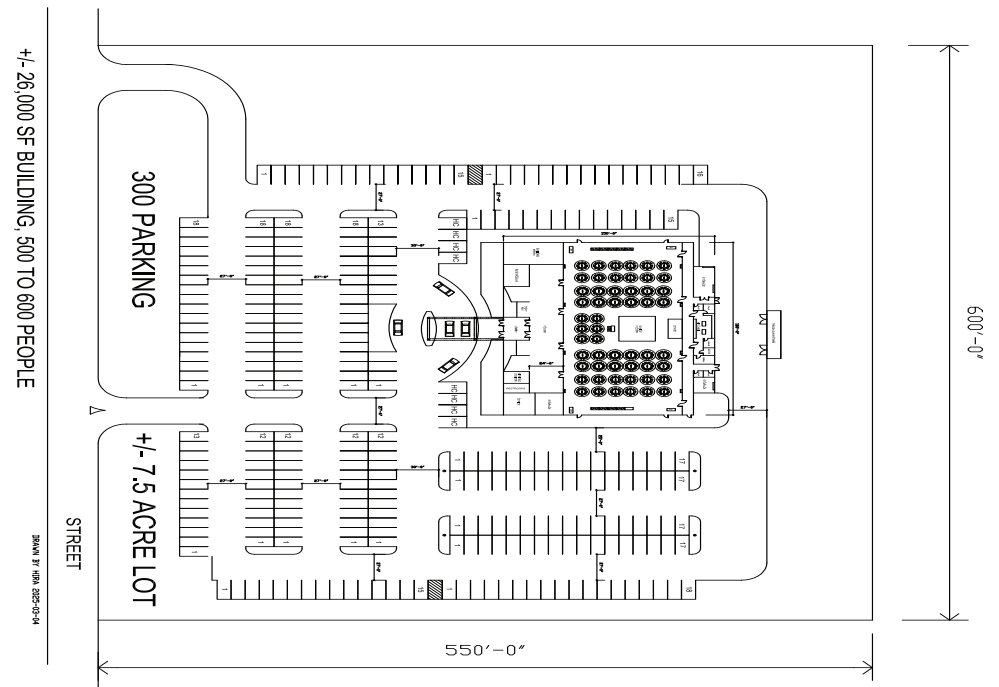
## Global Cleveland

Shekhar Ganore, President of the Cleveland Federation Of India Community Association (@FICACleveland) spoke with Global Cleveland's Global Rising International Leadership Class. Mr. Ganore spoke with Global Cleveland's international cohort about the importance of trying

new things, pursuing opportunities, continuing to learn, and surrounding yourself with community.

## FICA ICC Building

Mr. Hira Rane is proposing approx. 7.5 acre or larger piece of land with zoning which will allow us to build an assembly building. A building of approx. 26,000 sf should serve the purpose in phase 1 development. Car parking for 300 cars is currently shown in this scheme.



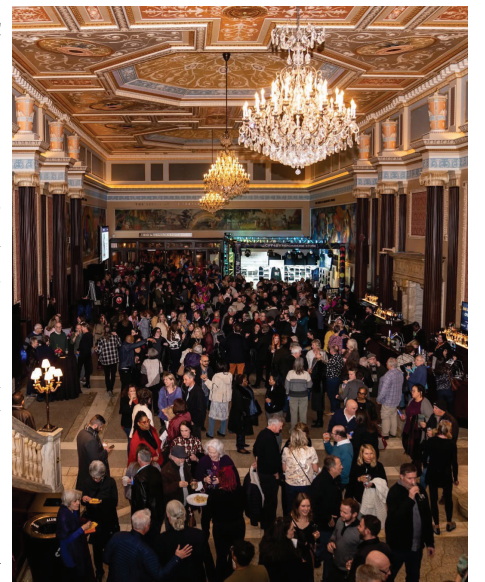
## CIFF 49 Lights Up Cleveland's Theater District with Global Cinema



Downtown Cleveland's historic Theater District is pulsating with cinematic fervor as the 49th Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF49) unfolds. The grand Connor Palace, a beacon of architectural and opulent elegance, hosted the opening night, drawing media and community partners like The LOTUS.

The festival commenced with networking amidst the Public Theater's opulent ambiance, followed by the screening of Amy Landecker's directorial debut, "For Worse." This sharp comedy, starring Landecker, captures a divorced mother's chaotic wedding experience with her Gen Z date. CIFF49 presents a curated selection of 104 feature films and 198 shorts, chosen from over 3,500 global submissions spanning 60 countries. Each film underwent rigorous evaluation, ensuring a diverse and thought-provoking program. The festival's audience, a reflection of Cleveland's rich community, welcomes cinephiles of all ages.

Highlighting global talent, the festival showcases diverse perspectives. FICA, particularly encouraging Indian-origin filmmakers, sponsors Karan Kandhari's "Sister Midnight," a 110-minute feature. Running until April 5th, CIFF49 offers an unparalleled opportunity to explore global cinema. The festival fosters dialogue and discovery, inviting attendees to delve into various genres and filmmaking styles. Whether in person or online, CIFF49 provides a unique cinematic experience. Discover more at [www.clevelandfilm.org](http://www.clevelandfilm.org).



Shuddh Desi Radio in association with FICA present

# GLOBAL MUSICAL ICON

Season 7 CLEVELAND, OH

REGISTRATIONS OPEN

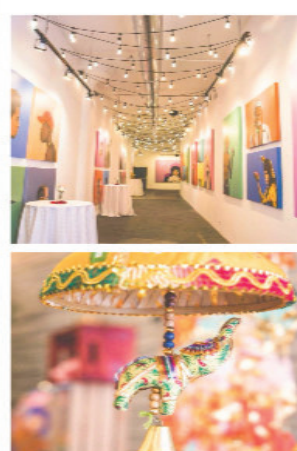
Public Choice Round (Virtual): April 7th  
Judges Round (Virtual): May 1st  
Finale (In-Person): May 17th

Venue: Sari Feldman Auditorium, 2111 Snow Road, Parma, OH 44134

Talent Categories:  
Voice (Hindi/Regional), Voice (English), Dance, Musical Instruments, Public Speaking (Open for all age groups).

Deepta: (216) 239- 0191, Shekhar: (216) 798- 2327, Andy: 615 371 5487 Of Shalini: 615 200 7716

Let Us Handle Your marketing



## Dream Catcher Events

You dream, We create







## North East Ohio Marathi Mandal (NEOMM)

North East Ohio Marathi Mandal is celebrating their Golden Jubilee (50 years) in 2025. We are proud to be awarded to host Bruhan Maharashtra Mandals Maitree Melava in Cleveland, Ohio, at Severance Hall.

Block your seats for the 3 Day extravaganza in Cleveland on **June 13, 14, & 15, 2025**

### Key Highlights

1. 8 Programs presented by talented artists from North America
2. Tribute to the famous classical singer \*Late Jitendra Abhisheki\* by \*ahesh Kale and Shaunak Abhisheki\*
3. A Mehfil of songs, poetry, and stories by \*Dr. Saleel Kulkarni, Prashanth Damale, Sankarshan Karade, Nihira Joshi\*
4. Famous Bollywood singer \*SHAAN LIVE IN CONCERT\*
5. 5 delicious Maharashtrian meals (\*B-L-D on Saturday and B-L on Sunday\*) included.
6. 4 Dhol-Tasha-Lezim Pathaks are coming together for a roaring face-off
7. Dazzling Opening Ceremony and Grand Closing Ceremony
8. Vendor Expo with local vendors and vendors from India.

Only \$250 for Adults, Kids below 13 FREE, Youth (13-18) \$150\*

Discounted hotels for attendees.

Don't wait any longer;

Register Your Tickets Now !!!!

<https://bmmcle2025melava.org/event-registration/>

For any questions, email [contact@bmmcle2025melava.org](mailto:contact@bmmcle2025melava.org)



# 3 Days of Marathi Extravaganza

## BMM 2025

### Maitree-Melava

### @Cleveland, Ohio

### June 13-15

Scan Me for More Details

**Preferred Seating**

**Only \$250**

**Location: Severance Hall**

Music, Drama, Poetry, Delicious Maharashtrian Food, Vendor Expo, Friends, and Lots of Fun !!!

**Highlights**

Star-studded lineup performing at world renowned Severance Hall  
The Best of North America Talent Show and Mandal programming!  
Grand Opening Ceremony  
The Biggest Dhol-Tasha performance in the region  
Friends and family sit together  
1 adult (18+) ticket includes 1 **FREE** child (below 13) ticket | Children (14-17) pay \$150  
Priority Access to nearest hotels | Negotiated hotel rates  
3 meals, 2 breakfasts, tea/coffee snack stations  
Prestigious banquet dinner with artists, sponsors, and donors (available for purchase)

<https://bmmcle2025melava.org>

Contact: Utkarsha Hazarnis, NEOMM President (216) 502-8784  
Tanmayee Dixit, BMM Melava Convener (216) 926-426

## Dancing Through Life: Mastering the Art of Balance – Sudha Kiranmayi Totapally

By Mahima Rao

Balancing a thriving IT career with an equally flourishing passion for dance may seem unattainable, but Sudha Kiranmayi Totapally makes it look effortless. The recent FICA Unsung Hero Awardee, an accomplished classical dancer, devoted teacher, and successful IT professional who exemplifies the harmony of art and practicality. “I wear many hats,” Sudha says with a warm smile. “I’m a mother, a passionate teacher, and a lifelong learner. But above all, I am a dancer. My ‘pehchan,’ or my spirit, my identity, is dance—a gift from my father.”

Raised in a family deeply rooted in the arts, Sudha’s journey began at the tender age of four. Her father, a drama artist, her mother a violin player, and her grandfather, a radio performer, ensured that performance and storytelling were ingrained in her upbringing. Recognizing her innate rhythm, her father enrolled her in formal training, beginning with Kuchipudi under Vidushi Madhu Nirmala and later transitioning to Bharatanatyam under Vidushi Lakshmi Badampudi. Her training continued with Dr. Anuradha Jonnalagadda Tadekamalla at the Central University of Hyderabad, shaping her into a well-rounded artist. Sudha’s passion was undeniable. She dreamed of performing worldwide and opening a dance school in India, but life had other plans. In 1999, after completing her master’s in Performing Arts and an MBA, she moved to the United States. The first five years were a period of adjustment, navigating a new culture, family responsibilities, and a professional career. Dance, which had once been her daily rhythm, took a backseat but never left her soul.

In 2003, Sudha found her way back to dance, starting with small classes in Boston. When she moved to Cleveland, she built Nartam Academy of Dance, a thriving institution where she nurtures a new generation of dancers. Her extensive training under Sangeet Natak Akademi awardees Dr. Kala Krishna and Pasumarthi Sri Ramalinga Sastry, along with special mentorship from Padma Bhushan Kalanidhi Narayanan and Kuchipudi legend Dr. Vempati Chinna Satyam, laid the foundation for her distinctive teaching approach.

Teaching in the U.S. came with its own challenges. “Here, children have



so many extracurricular activities. Consistency can be difficult,” Sudha explains. “I also have to bridge a cultural gap—helping students connect with the stories, mythology, and traditions embedded in classical dance.” She realized early on that her role was not just to teach steps but to instill a deep understanding and appreciation for art forms. Patience and adaptability became her guiding principles. “I create a space where students feel safe to express themselves without fear. Dance here isn’t just about technique; it’s about cultivating a connection to one’s roots.”

Sudha tailors her choreography to each dancer’s strengths, ensuring that students feel connected to their performances. Her productions often take the form of dance dramas, where storytelling is at the heart of every piece. “Whether it’s a Ramayana adaptation or a contemporary narrative, I want my audience to leave with a sense of learning and emotional connection.”

While she upholds the purity of traditional compositions, she also adapts classical movements to keep students engaged. Her approach is student-centric, allowing for individuality while

maintaining discipline. “I don’t impose strict boundaries,” she says. “Instead, I encourage students to explore and make the dance their own while staying within the traditional framework.”

Teaching predominantly female students, Sudha believes in nurturing both cultural values and individuality. Her classes are delightful experiences. She gracefully deconstructs each piece, demonstrating intricate hand gestures, body movements, and expressions. With an encouraging and patient demeanor, she fosters confidence, helping students understand the depth and intention behind every movement.

One of her signature pieces is Kuchipudi’s ‘Tarangam,’ where dancers perform on a brass plate, holding a lit lamp on the head along with lit lamps on both hands, a feat that leaves audiences in awe. “Many people don’t realize the intense training required to achieve this level of expertise and delicate balance.

CNTD...





## Dancing Through Life: Mastering the Art of Balance – Sudha Kiranmayi Totapally

CNTD...It's true for both forms of dance Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam. Each has its own challenges and demands equal dedication and practice," she says.

Beyond performance and teaching, Sudha is involved in the behind-the-scenes aspects of dance. She collaborates with musicians in India, commissioning original compositions for her productions. "Sourcing music is both a joy and a challenge," she shares. "Collaboration isn't always easy, some artists hesitate to share original work. But I believe the more we share, the stronger our community becomes." Technology, too, plays a dual role in her world. While it helps bridge distances, she cautions against over-reliance on recorded videos. "Classical dance isn't just about copying movements; it's about internalizing them. Muscle memory and immersive learning are essential."

For young dancers and their parents, Sudha offers sage advice: "Let passion grow organically. Avoid over-scheduling and allow children the space to fall in love with the art. Mastery requires patience, dedication, and joy. Art isn't a race; it's a journey." She also emphasizes that dance should not be

treated like an academic subject or a competition. "Many parents here see extracurriculars as achievements to check off a list, but dance is different—it's a way of life, a form of self-expression that evolves over time".

Her belief in trusting the process extends to her teaching style. "The first six months with a student aren't about perfecting technique; they're about building trust. I don't believe in fear-based learning. Students need to feel safe and confident in their artistic expression."

Today, Sudha continues to balance multiple roles: a QA Lead at AmTrust Financial, a devoted teacher, a performer, a wife, and a mother. "It's not always easy, but dance gives me energy and clarity. My father taught me to honor my talents, and my husband's support has been invaluable, even when it meant navigating cultural expectations."

As she continues to perform, teach, and inspire, Sudha stands as a testament to how art can transcend borders and generations. "Ultimately, dance has shaped who I am," she reflects. "It has taught me resilience, creativity, and empathy. Through each performance and every student I teach, I hope to keep this tradition alive, honoring the past while inspiring the future."

## Touching Lives and Uplifting Communities, an inspirational leader- Dr. Mona Gupta!

By Mahima Rao



Dr. Mona Gupta is a rare blend of professional excellence, compassionate care, and dedicated community service. As the Director of Supportive Palliative Oncology at University Hospitals and an Associate Professor at Case Western Reserve University, she is a beacon of hope for patients facing serious diagnoses. However, her commitment to healing began long before the accolades.

Dr. Gupta's journey started with a childhood dream of helping others. Trained initially in anesthesia in India, she later transitioned to internal medicine, geriatrics, and ultimately palliative oncology. "Each step brought me closer to supporting patients during life's most challenging times," she shares.

Her approach centers on empathy and human connection. "Patients may not remember every medical detail, but they remember how you made them feel," she says. Palliative care, often

misunderstood, is not about giving up but enhancing quality of life. Dr. Gupta emphasizes holistic care, weaving Eastern and Western practice-mindfulness, integrative therapies, and medical treatments into her work.

Leadership, for Dr. Gupta, is a responsibility. It's about uplifting others and creating impact. As President of the Women Faculty at the School of Medicine, she introduced peer coaching to empower women in academia. "I believe in emotional intelligence and continuous growth," she says.

Outside the hospital, Dr. Gupta is a devoted mother who candidly acknowledges the balancing act of career and family. "My younger son once told me he hopes to be a leader like me, and that made every sacrifice worthwhile," she reflects.

Community service remains her core value. From mentoring young physicians to launching medical education for faculty and trainees for her alma mater Lady Hardinge Medical College to establishing palliative care fellowship for nurses and doctors in India via Indo-American Cancer Association to launching a local chapter of Akshay Patra, which feeds underprivileged children in India, Dr. Gupta's outreach is far-reaching.

"True fulfillment comes from serving others," she says. As Women's Day nears, Dr. Gupta reminds all of us of the power of purpose, compassion, and community. She is a beacon of inspiration to one and all who thrive on her core principles of trust, gratitude, and courage.

## Parul Bafna - Entrepreneur



KUMON MATH AND READING  
CENTER OF AVON  
37309 Harvest Ave, Avon, OH 44011  
sbafna@ikumon.com

I was born in Gwalior, India, where I spent a significant portion of my childhood. Attending Scindia School provided me with a solid academic foundation and introduced me to various extracurricular activities, which fostered my passion for teaching.

Throughout my high school years, my dedication to education deepened, inspiring me to pursue a career as a

teacher. In the early 1990s, my family relocated to Indonesia due to my father's work, where I had the opportunity to immerse myself in a new culture and educational environment while completing my further studies and earning my bachelor's degree in literature. This transition broadened my horizons and enriched my understanding of diverse pedagogical approaches, reinforcing my commitment to teaching.

In 2002, I got married and moved to the United States, marking another significant transition in my life. The initial years were challenging, but I engaged as a volunteer and substitute teacher in New Jersey schools where my children were enrolled. This experience not only familiarized me with the U.S. education system but also enabled me to support not only my own children but others in their academic journeys as well.

My entrepreneurial journey is driven by a profound passion for education and a desire to transform traditional teaching methods. Inspired by the linear approach of the Kumon philosophy, I am committed to creating an environment where students can achieve academic excellence through perseverance and practice.

This vision led me to establish my Kumon Center, where I focus on fostering independent learning. Currently, I have the honor of guiding over 70 students on their unique paths to success, tailoring instruction to meet their individual needs. Each day presents a chance to inspire these young learners, and witnessing their growth in confidence and skill is incredibly rewarding.

Through personalized learning programs, I strive to instill a lifelong love for learning and to equip students with essential skills that extend beyond the classroom. My entrepreneurial approach not only allows me to pursue my passion but also enables me to make a significant impact in my community, cultivating the next generation of learners and leaders.





## Getting Accustomed to the U.S. as an Immigrant

By George Hamilton

If you're a new immigrant, welcome! Moving to a new country can seem overwhelming, especially one as big as the United States. FICA Cleveland shares some ways to get accustomed to your new community and keep in touch with those you love back home.

### Visit Local Markets and Restaurants

If you're looking for a taste of home in the United States, you're probably in luck. Most major cities and even many small towns have ethnic food offerings at their local markets and restaurants. Many of these shops and stores have signs in the native language as well as workers who are fluent in it. Beyond picking up some familiar groceries or enjoying your favorite meal, these places can be great for connecting with others from your home country. You might also consider these businesses if you're seeking employment opportunities.

### Tour Museums and Points of Interest

The United States is full of historical sites and other attractions. Many local museums have free and reduced-price tickets available throughout the year, and your local public library can be helpful in finding resources, offering recommendations on must-see destinations in your area. Museum or event admission is often a perk associated with a library card. You can also travel to popular points of interest around your state to explore your new home.

### Finding Employment

Even when you move to the United States, supporting your family back home is probably still a top priority. The United States offers many employment opportunities, especially for immigrants and those from diverse backgrounds. With the rise of remote work and digital job platforms,



it's now easier than ever to find flexible jobs that fit your skills. In fact, demand for bilingual workers has more than doubled since 2015, according to one study by the New American Economy.

### Starting a Business

However, you might want to start your own business, especially if you can provide a niche product, skill, or service. It allows you to turn your passion into a profitable venture while meeting the needs of a specific market. Look into various business **grants available specifically for immigrant entrepreneurs**.

Operating your own business is a great way to save money for your family and contribute to the local economy. Plus, being your own boss gives you the flexibility to create a work-life balance that suits your lifestyle.

### Join Cultural Associations and Organizations

These types of groups, such as FICA Cleveland, are designed to connect individuals of the same ethnic background and create spaces of belonging and acceptance. They offer opportunities to share experiences, traditions, and cultural celebrations, fostering a sense of community. Beyond letting you meet new people, they can also be useful in helping you stay in touch with your loved ones back home. Individuals in these groups can help you set up a Facebook account or WhatsApp group to contact your family abroad, making it easier to maintain close connections despite the distance.

### Enjoy Your New Home

Getting connected in your community is an important part of embracing your new identity as an American. Don't be afraid to get out there and start exploring all the United States has to offer.



**अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हिंदी समिति का २२ वाँ द्विवार्षिक अधिवेशन**  
**22nd Biennial International Hindi Association Convention 2025**  
 May 2nd and 3rd 2025

Hosted by: Northeast Ohio Chapter of IHA, Cleveland, Ohio  
 आतिथ्य : अंतर्राष्ट्रीय हिंदी समिति की उत्तर पूर्वी ओहायो शाखा, क्लीवलैंड, ओहायो

Convention Theme 2025  
 "New Generation, Hindi, and Culture in the Digital Age."  
 अधिवेशन का मूल विषय  
 "नव पीढ़ी, डिजिटल युग में हिंदी और संस्कृति।"

Session 2 & 3 VENUE: QUALITY INN & SUITES, 4742 Brecksville Rd, Richfield, OH 44286  
 Session 1 VENUE: Highland High School, 4150 Ridge Rd, Medina, OH 44256

Reserve for \$89.99/night (1 king or 2 double beds/room accommodating up to 4).  
 Call Quality Inn at (330) 659-6151, mention 'IHA Convention' to reserve.

IHA invites you to enjoy, participate and learn through creative, educational, and entertaining events: Kavi Sammelan; Cultural program; Workshops in breakout sessions; Networking; Lunch and Dinner.

Please Support IHA Convention with your sponsorships at Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Levels  
 Contact: Dr. Shobha Khandelwal (330)421-6638 | Ashwani Bhardwaj (216)926-7890

www.hindi.org, www.iha-neohio.com, e-mail: ihaconvention@gmail.com



**Abhinav Shukla**  
(Humor)



**Archana Panda**  
(Lyricist)



**Indra Awasthi**  
(Satirist)

**Session 1**  
 Date: May 2nd, 2025 (Friday)  
 Time: 6 PM to 10.30 PM  
 Activities: Dinner, Inauguration, Cultural Program, Chapter Presentation

**Session 2**  
 Date: May 3rd, 2025 (Saturday)  
 Time: 9 AM to 4 PM  
 Activities: Educational Seminars focusing on our theme. Lunch and snacks will be provided.

**Session 3**  
 Date: May 3rd, 2025 (Saturday)  
 Time: 6 PM to 10.30 PM  
 Activities: Dinner, Welcome and Chief Guest's Address and Grand Hasya Kavi Sammelan

**Registration Link:**  
<https://bit.ly/4iChb7k>



For Registration Tickets and Sponsorships, Please contact us

Dr. Rakesh Ranjan (216)870-4375  
 Dr. Shail Jain (330)421-7528  
 Dr. Somnath Roy (440)897-9053  
 Dr. Prakash Chand (440)864-2123

Anurag Gupta (858)257-8985  
 Renu Chadda (216)544-7285  
 Kiran Khaitan (330)622-1377



**Ekal Musical Fundraiser**



**SAMANVITHA SHARMA**



**BISHAKH JYOTI**



**JIGNESH PATEL**  
KEY BOARD



**KARAN PAVAR**  
DRUMS



**BHAVYA VORA**  
TAGLA



**JITENDRA SALAT**  
OCTAPAD

**Super Talented Musicians from India - JIGNESH PATEL And Group**

**Tickets : \$ 50 , \$ 35**

**Saturday, April 19**

**Independence Middle School, 6111 Archwood Rd, Independence, OH**

Buy tickets and/or donate by scanning the QR code or visit  
<https://www.ekal.org/us/event/sur-se-Cleveland-chapter>

**Social & Dinner : 4:45 PM**  
 Dinner from Biryani Hut (Westlake)

**Musical program : 6 PM Onwards**



**For more information:**

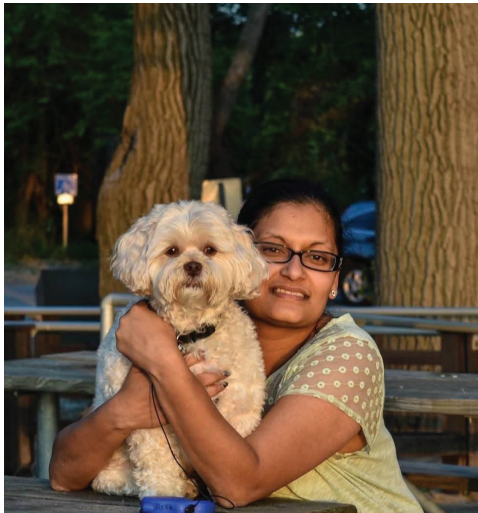
Swati Sathe 440-796-5950  
 Vikas Jain 440-539-9652  
 Rupesh Raina 216-401-7894  
 Saleem Chowdhry 607-434-8669  
 Haresh Aswani 440-879-8085

Ritu Mahna 216-577-3210  
 Ramesh Pandya 440-336-3420  
 Piya Roy 440-749-9265  
 Sunil Desai 216-374-7853  
 Mital Rathod 330-523-0396





## Anulekha Mohanty-Federal Reserve Bank



**Anulekha Mohanty is a senior vice president in the Supervision, Credit Risk, and Statistics (SCS) Department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland.**

Anulekha Mohanty is a senior vice president in the Supervision, Credit Risk, and Statistics (SCS) Department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland.

### **Deepa Rao: Tell me about yourself**

Hi. My name is Anulekha. I was born in Puri, India, and came to the US when I was six. Being an only child with most of my relatives in India, my nuclear family and my long-time trusted friends are quite important

to me. I am a midwesterner at heart, having lived in Ohio for nearly 34 years, and I am an Illini and Golden Flashes graduate. I am a Cleveland west-sider as well as an explorer, traveller, foodie, wine enthusiast, singer, creative soul, and a dog lover! I also enjoy the arts, particularly Broadway musicals and Bollywood movies, and music. Personally and professionally, I am a believer in continuous learning, a positive mindset, listening before speaking, quality over quantity, putting in my 120%, and giving back for the greater good. Further, I am passionate about community organizations focused on girl child education, cancer/ Alzheimer's research, and financial literacy/independence.

### **Deepa Rao: Any childhood memories?**

Growing up, one of my most fondest memories were the roadtrips with my parents. Whether planned or impromptu, it taught me the value of family time and open conversations, enjoying the ride and meandering as it wasn't just about "reaching the destination", created my love for exploring new places and listening to Bollywood music, and ultimately was what helped my Mom identify that I had a hidden talent of singing. When visiting India, some of my favorite memories were listening to my grandparents' stories, visiting Puri Beach, sitting outside the Lakshmi Mandir at the Jagannath Temple watching the monkeys play, and, no doubt, the amazing foods and clothing!

### **Deepa Rao: Journey to the Fed**

My journey to the Cleveland Fed was an amazing find! Through my undergrad classes I knew that the Fed played a key role in setting US monetary policy; however, I didn't realize the breadth of its importance until I met my professor at Kent State who was a prior researcher at the St. Louis Fed, interacted with a now colleague who was at the university career fair, and I actually walked in the Cleveland Fed doors 22 years ago. So, what does the Fed do...it has the responsibility to promote financial stability, ensure our banks and other financial institutions operate safely and soundly, support the nation's payment system to run smoothly behind the scenes, promote consumer protection and community development, and conduct monetary policy. What has kept me there is the people, the collegial and collaborative atmosphere, the depth of learning and opportunities available both locally and across the Federal Reserve System, the public service mission, and a sense of purpose. If you want to know more about what the Cleveland Fed does, check out [www.clevelandfed.org](http://www.clevelandfed.org).

### **Deepa Rao: Any tips to the younger generation?**

Based on my own life learnings, the 5 tips I would give the younger generation include the following:

- \* Believe in yourself, be authentic to you, don't be afraid to try something new or different, and don't give up when things don't go as planned. Life is not always perfect, but it's always what you make it. So make it count, make it memorable, don't let anyone steal your happiness, and create your legacy.
- \* Pursue a career that resonates with your core values, gives you a sense of purpose, and is something that you enjoy.
- \* Chart your own path in life, even if it's a bit unconventional. It leads you to greater self discovery, resilience, and ultimately a fulfilling and authentic existence.
- \* Don't lose sight of your roots, where you come from, or your family. It's our heritage, family, and experiences that make us unique and who we are.
- \* Live it up! Be present. Experience and enjoy every moment in this adventure called life!

## Swati Venkatraman - Signet Jewelers



### **Director of Product Management (Flexible Fulfillment and Connected Commerce) Signet Jewelers**

#### **Deepa Rao: Tell me something about yourself and your childhood.**

Born and raised in Mumbai, I thrived in the city's rich cultural diversity. Drawn to literature at a young age, I began reading Enid Blyton at the age of six and quickly progressed to O. Henry and Charles Dickens as a teenager, a passion that has carried through the adult years.. I also began writing poetry and short stories early on, with many of my works being published in children's magazines in the late 90s. In addition, I actively

participated in speech and debate competitions, representing my school at both regional and state levels.

With Mumbai's vibrant mix of cultures, I developed a natural aptitude for picking up new languages. Today, I am fluent in five Indian languages and understand seven.

I moved to Pune to pursue engineering, where I fell in love with the city's art, culture, and cinema. I frequently visited Bal Gandharva Mandir to watch Marathi plays and immersed myself in the literary works of Pu La Deshpande. A firm believer in the transformative power of education, I led several community development projects focused on women's education under the IEEE Student Branch.

#### **Deepa Rao: Tell me something about your career**

After receiving my Bachelor's degree in engineering, I worked as a Supply Chain Analyst at Cummins India Limited. Always passionate about

pursuing higher education in the U.S., I moved to Cleveland to complete my Master's in Engineering Management from Case Western Reserve University, and since then, Cleveland has been my home. I graduated in 2009, at the peak of the U.S. economic turmoil, but was able to secure a job as a Supply Chain Analyst with Jacobs Engineering in Charleston, WV.

My first foray into tech came as a Business Analyst with a marketing SaaS company called BrandMuscle. I quickly mastered the art of translating complex business requirements for technical teams. My ability to bridge the gap between business and technology allowed me to wear many hats at BrandMuscle, eventually landing me the leader of the E-commerce Business Analysis group role at Signet Jewelers.

Since then, I have held numerous leadership positions at Signet. I am currently the Director of Digital Product Management, overseeing Signet's multi-billion-dollar post-purchase, delivery, and pickup portfolio. Additionally, I am a member of WIRL ( Women In Retail Leadership), an exclusive community of women executives at leading retailers and brands.

#### **Deepa Rao: Hobbies and Volunteering**

I am in my element when I am writing. I love crafting poetry, stories, or literally anything. I have a deep passion for writing in both Hindi and English. An ardent lover of various forms of Indian music, I am currently learning Carnatic classical vocal music. I am also passionate about the transformative power of education and continue to lead NEOWIT (NorthEast Ohio Women in Tech), an organization focused on providing resources, networking, and education for women in tech in the NEO region. Additionally, I offer pro bono product management services for startup companies. I also participate in POC panels, advocating for the advancement of women and people of color in various fields





## Sahithya Wintrich, founder of CHUTNI PUNCH

**Deepa Rao: Tell me something about yourself and your childhood.**

When Sahithya Wintrich, founder of CHUTNI PUNCH, thinks of her childhood in Bengaluru, India, her most vivid memories are of food. She fondly remembers buying spices from burlap sacks at corner shops, choosing the perfect mango at open-air markets, and savoring freshly fried fritters and chai while huddled against the monsoon rains. She also thinks of a homemade seasoning powder called chutney pudi (powder) that her family puts on everything. Whether sprinkled on rice for a quick flavor hit or mixed with oil to make an easy dip, chutney pudi was the secret ingredient of her childhood. The meals changed, but the need to add bursts of Indian flavor to her food did not.

Years later, as she raised her family in the USA, she introduced her children to the Indian flavors of her youth. "I sprinkled these spice powders on my family's plates at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. That's when it hit me. The chutney pudis of my childhood were versatile enough to add depth and flavor to any food. And... KAPOW! CHUTNI PUNCH! was born!" she said.

Unlike the widely known chutneys, which are condiment sauces, chutney pudis are precooked, shelf-stable blends of lentils, seeds, and spices that easily add a burst of flavor and a punch of spice to anything, anytime of the day. The best part is that you need ZERO cooking skills!

The CHUTNI PUNCH seasoning line is oil, gluten and dairy free and novel in that it extends the concept of a South Indian pudi with non-traditional ingredients and flavors to create a versatile new kind of seasoning.

**Deepa Rao: Tell me about your career /entrepreneur's journey**

Sahithya Wintrich was born in India, has lived in the Caribbean, and moved to Cleveland, Ohio, for her undergraduate studies 25 years ago. She currently resides in Shaker Heights, Ohio, with her husband and children. In her journey of learning and becoming, Sahithya has done and been many things.

As a software developer, she has worked for area Fortune 500 companies and coached teams to build better software. As a biomedical engineer,



she did stem cell research to help create a solution for people suffering from heart disease. As an entrepreneur, Sahithya has launched three different ventures. While she stayed home with her newborn daughter, she launched a mobile event-finding app. In response to the PPE shortage during the pandemic, she developed and tested a consumer filtered mask that filtered out 99% percent of the coronavirus. As the restrictions of the pandemic began to ease out, she spent a year developing and testing Chutni Punch, a line of seasoning powders that make adding flavors she grew up in South India easy, healthy, and fun to anything and everything. Sahithya launched Chutni Punch in May 2022 at local farmers' markets and now sells the seasoning powders on her website and in local specialty shops and grocery stores.

The CHUTNI PUNCH line comes in three versatile and tasty blends: Super Sesame, Spicy Peanut, and Savory Chana.

Savory Chana is robust, earthy, and brings a depth of umami with roasted chickpeas, savory mushrooms, and coconut

Super Sesame is warm, zesty and a ticket to bold

flavor with golden flax, nutty sesame seeds, garlic

Spicy Peanut has a spicy, nutty kick with the richness of toasted peanuts, cumin, and garlic.

Sahithya believes that "Good food" is about more than just taste. It's about doing right by her customers, employees, communities, and the world around her. CHUTNI PUNCH! is made from only real ingredients, sourced as locally and sustainably as possible, from producers who feel the same way about people and the planet as she does.

She also strives to ensure that the packaging she uses for CHUTNI PUNCH is sustainable and recyclable. Everything from recycled cardboard and paper labels to sealing shrink bands that are made from biodegradable cellulose.

**Deepa Rao: Tell me about your volunteering and hobbies.**

Sahithya Wintrich is part of several cultural organizations in Cleveland including Kasturi Kannada, Cleveland Moms, Les Dames Cleveland, Wonder Women in Food.

**Howard Hanna**  
Real Estate Services

**BUYING OR SELLING,  
Let's work together!**

Selling Cle with Santosh

Scan below  
QR CODE  
to find your  
Home Value

Santosh Bhandari  
REALTOR®  
440-360-0927  
santoshbhandari@HowardHanna.com

SM TEAM

LIVETREE ENTERTAINMENT ATMA Vision  
Crafting Unforgettable Experiences

**Cleveland, OH**  
May 09, 2025, 7:30 PM  
**Nordonia High School,**  
8006 S Bedford Rd, Macedonia, OH 44056

aiyyo  
**SO mini THINGS!**  
with Shraddha Jain  
A STAND-UP SHOW

SCAN ME Tickets at [sominithings.com](https://sominithings.com)





## Bharat Kumar IFUSA Founder & President Executive Producer

By Deepa Rao



**Tell me something about yourself, your family, and your childhood**

I was born in Unjha, Gujarat, and lived most of my childhood in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, before migrating to the USA in the early '80s. I have been a "Cleveland Indians" fan since migrating to the USA. I graduated from Cleveland State University with a degree in computer science and completed my MBA in 2010. I am married to my wonderful life partner, Veena, a Pharmacist. I have two children. My daughter, Puja (Doctor of Pharmacy), is married and lives in Tampa, FL. My son Nandish, who is married, is a

graduate of Ohio State University in Finance & Accounting. **Nandish is a music producer and lives in LA. He was nominated for a Grammy in 2023 and 2024. He won his 1st Grammy this year by producing a song for Chris Brown.**

Being an artist, I understand how important the value of art, culture, and music plays in our lives and the communities we live in.. I am very passionate about promoting Indian culture and integrating it with other cultures. I have been involved with many NEO Indian Community Organizations, including FICA, Gujarati Samaj, NEOMM, ICAGA, NEOTA, NEOTS, Kasturi Kannada Association, Kerala Association, Julia De Burgos, Ukrainian Organization, and many more, and a life member of local organizations.

My wife and I took early retirement in 2024 and now are dedicating our lives to promote our culture and encourage the young generation to become good community ambassadors.

**Tell me about India Fest USA. When did you start it? How did you get the idea to start this?**

India Fest USA (IFUSA), with the mission of "Bridging Cultures, Generations & Communities", was conceptualized and started by a few like-minded people with the intent of "Giving Back to the Community"

we live in by utilizing our talent and passion. The first IFUSA was held in 2010 in the City of Independence by working closely with the City Officials & Administrations. Over the years, IFUSA has grown to be one of the finest premium events in NEO, attended by thousands of people from Ohio communities. Today, IFUSA is a volunteer-based organization supported by diverse Board Members, Executive Committee Members, Community Volunteers, and Youth Leaders.

With the mission of "Bridging Cultures, Generations, & Communities", IFUSA family

is expanding programs and developing other initiatives to engage not only Indian Communities but other non-Indian organizations who are passionate and believe in our mission and vision.

**Apart from India Fest USA, you are a good singer too. Tell me about your singing hobby.**

Singing is my passion, hobby, and lifeline. My devotional music album was released a few years back. I continue to connect with new artists and recording opportunities when I visit India. We have like-minded and passionate singers in NEO who meet frequently, providing a platform for new artists. My motto in life is "Live Life Musically". When it comes to creativity, Art & Music have no boundaries. It touches people of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

**Cleveland is growing with the Indian Population. Are you planning on doing any other cultural fest apart from India Fest USA in the coming future?**

We will continue to use IFUSA platform to expand our mission of "Bridging Cultures, Generations, & Community" and develop programs to engage NEO communities. We will continue to organize and support arts & culture related events and partner with other NEO to celebrate major festivals. IFUSA is a well recognized organization by NEO communities & local media outlets. IFUSA has been collaborating and featured on many local media, including WKYC, WEWS, FOX8.

**Tell me about your career and any other hobbies you are interested in.**

After graduating from CSU, I have worked with many financial institutions in NEO, including Society, Key, Third Federal, National City, and PNC, - holding senior level positions utilizing my professional and academic expertise.

I spend a good amount of time every week in a recording studio to follow my musical passion. I love cooking all kinds of cuisines. My wife and I love to travel and explore nature locally & internationally. I love to volunteer and support local organizations in promoting arts and music related events and education activities.



**Immigration** **امیگریشن**

**குடியேற்றம்** **இமீგრேஷன்** **आप्रवासन** **ಇಮಿಗ್ರೇಷನ್**

**MARGARET W. WONG & ASSOCIATES LLC**  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

**Tending to All Your Immigration & Criminal Law Needs**

**Best Lawyers**  
**BEST LAW FIRMS**  
**USNEWS**

**AV**  
**AV PREEMINENT**  
**RATED LAWYERS**

**Fighting for immigrants since 1978.**

Margaret W. Wong & Associates, a leading immigration law services firm with over 200 years of combined experience, has represented thousands of employers & individuals around the world since 1978. We tailor solutions to your particular immigration needs. We fight for the best results with innovative strategies. We guide our clients through complex immigration law that requires prompt and professional responses.

Green Cards • Permanent Residency • Non-Immigrant Visas • Immigrant Visas  
EB-5 Immigrant Investor • Employment Based • Marriage Cases  
Visas & Labor Certification • Employment Authorization • Court Proceedings  
Removal & Deportation • Exclusion & Asylum • Criminal Alien Issues  
601A Waiver • Citizenship & Naturalization • BIA Appeals • Federal Litigation

**216-566-9908** **info@imwong.com** **www.imwong.com**

**MWW Immigration Center**  
3150 Chester Avenue • Cleveland, Ohio 44114  
**Atlanta • Chicago • Cleveland • Columbus**  
**Memphis • Minneapolis • Nashville • New York • Raleigh**

**ATRIUM**  
MEDICAL GROUP, INC.  
COMMITMENT TO CONTINUITY OF CARE

Atrium Medical Group, Inc. is a proud supporter of FICA of NEO!

**Ranjit Tamaskar, M.D. – President**

**Syed Ashraf, M.D.**

**Dharmesh Mehta, M.D.**

**Harbhajan Parmar, M.D.**

Serving Lake and Cuyahoga County with a Commitment to Continuity of Care with offices located at:

36100 Euclid Ave - Suite 350  
Willoughby, OH 44094

6555 Wilson Mills Rd - Suite 103D  
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

99 Northline Cir - Suite 99  
Euclid, OH 44119

5966 Heisley Rd - Suite 104  
Mentor, OH 44060

For Willoughby, Euclid and Mentor Offices - Ph: 440-946-8300





## FIFTH (5th) MOBILITY CAMP & SMART Glasses for Blind Students

By DR. RAMESH SHAH

### AIPNO-MEDICAL YATRA opening 'doors' for physically challenged!

Mobility Camp was organized by the Gandevi Taluka Seva Trust (GTST), Gandevi, and the Gandevi Seva Samaj of North America, with support from the Cloud Labs Community Center of Gandevi, the Association of Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio (AIPNO), and the Mangla Prem Trust of Bardoli.

Many people are disabled as a consequence of mental, physical, and sensory impairment. Very often, the lives of disabled people are hampered by physical and social barriers in our society, and hence, they face segregation or live debased lives. GTST and GSS of North America and the AIPNO organized Mobility Camps in Gandevi in February 2018, 2020, 2022, 2023, & 2024 to help physically handicapped people who were suffering due to mobility impairment. These people were either amputees or suffering from polio or stroke. We gave them mobility equipment such as artificial limbs (Jaipur leg & modular legs), calipers, wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, or four-legged sticks to make their lives easier and bring smiles to their faces. All 72 patients were contacted after 3 months for follow-up, and their response was overwhelming.

Many people left out during these mobility camps were inquiring about the next camp. GTST organized a diagnostic mobility camp on Sunday, November 17th, 2024. The distribution

The distribution and fittings of the mobility equipment event were organized on Sunday, January 5th, 2025. Diagnostic Mobility Camp was specifically for the measurement of Modular Type-High Tech leg prostheses, and advanced hand prostheses and evaluation of mobility equipment such as wheelchairs, tricycles, walkers, and crutches.

One young couple, both suffering from polio, received calipers and tricycles, bringing smiles to their faces. Despite their happiness, both families initially rejected their marriage, and the couple had to leave home. They needed support for rehabilitation, and we assisted them in starting a flower shop and a sewing business. They are now doing very well and are self-sufficient.

### Smart Glasses for Individuals with Low Vision and Blindness:

GTST received smart glasses, equipped with artificial intelligence, from AIPNO-MEDICAL YATRA to assist low-vision and blind patients in improving their mobility and enhancing their ability to read and study. This equipment is designed to work with a smartphone. We distributed these smart glasses to four patients with total vision loss, along with smartphones. With this technology, they can read and navigate their surroundings with much greater ease. The hope and smiles on their faces are truly inspiring.

## PB and Strawberry Milkshake

By SUSHMA LOHIT



PB & strawberry jelly milkshake made with Ice cream, Strawberry and topped with S jelly! Tastes so delicious!

- Ice cream – ½ cup (can use banana if you don't have ice cream)
- Strawberry – 5

- Milk – ¼ cup
  - Peanut butter – 1 Tbsp
  - Strawberry Jam – 1 Tbsp, some for topping
  - Salt pinch
- Blend all ingredients until thick and creamy. Top it with whipped cream, strawberries, and jelly.
- Stay Healthy and Stay Safe



2026

For Preventing  
Cervical Cancer In India

Recruiting Physicians & Medical Professionals

For going to Indore, MP, India  
From January 14th to 25th, 2026

Registration Fee \$450 ( For 10 days L/B/D & Lodging)

\$1000 Travel Scholarship for Residents



- ✓ Rotary Club of Indore
- ✓ Indore Galaxy
- ✓ Indore Ahilya
- ✓ Indore Valley
- ✓ Roberts Nursing Home
- ✓ AIPNO, USA

Cervical Cancer is Preventable

Early detection is the best protection against cervical cancer



www.ficacleveland.org

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO

# 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## Celebration

### AIPNO GLOBAL-MEDICAL YATRA

**Invited Guests**  
**Monte Ahuja-Ahuja Foundation**  
**Dr. Rupesh Raina-BOT Chair**

**ON SUNDAY, MAY 18TH, 2025 FROM 5 TO 8 PM**  
 Highland Hts. community center 5827, Highland Rd. Highland Hts. 44143

<b>SUGGESTED DONATION</b> \$25/EACH \$180/TABLE OF 8	<b>Agenda</b> 25 yrs. Accomplishments <i>Special Programs for</i> <i>Blinds, Amputees, and Women</i> Followed by Dinner
--	---

**CONTACT FOR RESERVATIONS**  
 Dr. Suresh (216)-798-5360  
 Dr. Gidwani (571)-830-4333  
 Dr. Sudha Kalepu (440)-785-1594  
 Mr. Ramesh Shah (216)-716-0333  
<https://www.aipno.org> [rameshcleveland@gmail.com](mailto:rameshcleveland@gmail.com)

SREE VENKATESWARA TEMPLE OF CLEVELAND  
 Richfield, Ohio  
 Prathama (1st) Pushkarotsavam

## MAHA KUMBHABHISHEKAM

May 28th - June 1st, 2025

Maha Kumbhabhishekam is a sacred Vedic and Agamic ritual performed every 12 years to re-energize and reconsecrate a Hindu temple and its deities. As prescribed in the Agama Shastras, this ceremony restores and amplifies the deities' divine presence (Sannidhyam) through Vedic chants, homams, and the ritualistic pouring of sanctified water (Abhishekam) from sacred Kalashas onto the temple's Vimanam, Rajagopuram, and Deities, invoking divine grace and auspiciousness. Maha Kumbhabhishekam ensures the temple remains a spiritually vibrant and sanctified space where devotees seek blessings, inner peace, and spiritual elevation. Through Santhalpa (devotional intent), Pujas, Homams, and Sevams, devotees can offer prayers, receive divine grace, and be part of this sacred milestone for our temple.

### BENEFACTOR SPONSORSHIPS

HERITAGE \$25,000	GRAND \$10,000	PATRON \$5,000	HONORARY \$1,116
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Puja Sponsorships on all five days and Maha Prasadam</li> <li>Rajagopuram and Vimanam Kumbhabhishekam</li> <li>Souvenir full-page ad on inside covers and the first pages</li> <li>Heritage level devotee gifts of Kalasam, Precious Coin, and Vasthrams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Puja Sponsorships on all five days and Maha Prasadam</li> <li>Rajagopuram and Vimanam Kumbhabhishekam</li> <li>One full-page ad in the Souvenir</li> <li>Grand level devotee gifts of Kalasam, Precious Coin, and Vasthrams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Puja Sponsorships on all five days and Maha Prasadam</li> <li>Rajagopuram and Vimanam Kumbhabhishekam</li> <li>One half-page ad in the Souvenir</li> <li>Patron level devotee gifts of Kalasam, Precious Coin, and Vasthrams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pushkarotsavam Puja for five days and Maha Prasadam</li> <li>Santhalpam for five days</li> <li>Carrying Mangala Draugam on the first day</li> <li>Honorary level Commemorative Coin</li> </ul>

Kalasams for sponsorships received after April 16th will be delivered after Kumbhabhishekam

### OTHER SPONSORSHIPS

Pujas	Flowers & Garlands	Souvenir Sponsorships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One day puja - \$15/Session</li> <li>Sudharshana Homam - \$251</li> <li>Kalyanotsavam - \$251</li> <li>Draugam - \$50/Session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All five days - \$5,001</li> <li>One day - \$1,001</li> <li>Per session - \$501</li> <li>Annamadam - \$1,116</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full page Ad - \$1,001</li> <li>Half page Ad - \$501</li> <li>Quarter page Ad - \$250</li> </ul>

Sponsorship above \$1000 include : • Pushkarotsavam Puja for five days and Maha Prasadam • Santhalpam for five days.

Make checks payable to Sree Venkateswara Temple - 4406 Brecksville Road, Richfield, Ohio 44126  
 330-659-0080 <http://www.baligiusa.org> [info@baligiusa.org](mailto:info@baligiusa.org)





## Annual AAIWO Children's Day December 2024 By Dr.Chaya Swamy

Annual AAIWO Children's Day December 2024 By Dr.Chaya Swamy AAIWO Board of Director

Children's Day is an annual celebration to promote understanding of INDIAN culture

held in Cleveland by AAIWO, open to the public, and organized with the help of local libraries, volunteers, donors, and a grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. This event is an excellent opportunity for children of all cultures, ages 2-16, to learn and understand their own needs and for children with special needs and their talents, bringing an awareness to the families and the community about INDIAN culture. The President of AAIWO, Deepa Rao, with the help of other members of AAIWO, parents, teachers, and especially children, presented a beautiful program in the Parma Public Library last year. This program featured children's talents in art, music, dance, and public speaking. Special efforts were made by dance teachers (gurus) who demonstrated to their students the different forms of classical Indian dance, its history, footwork, expressions, and theme. Children also had a speech competition, in which they covered the topic, "The Pros and Cons of Social Media". A drawing and painting competition was also a part of the program. The children also performed a Bollywood dance and a tableau. The children, teachers, volunteers, and parents did a fantastic job orchestrating this event. The hallmark of the program was that all children walked home beaming with a trophy and a certificate. We urge children to participate this year for a fun-filled learning experience. Thank you from the AAIWO BOARD members.



Thank you to all the judges for evaluating the Essays.

### Essay Winners High School

- 1 Aashritha Niranjan
- 2 Sushanth Adiga

### Essay Winners Middle School

- 1 Laya Viswanath
- 2 Shrestha Shastry
- 3 Anvi Panchal

### Winners in Public Speaking High School

1. Aarya More
2. Sushanth Adiga

### Middle School

1. Nakul Patil
2. Yashvardha

### Elementary

1. Sanchi Bahl

### Winners Science Quiz High School

1. Shrividya Regadamilli
2. Sushanth Adiga

### Middle School

1. Kshitij Ravikumara
2. Shrestha Shastry
3. Aaroh More

### Awards Ceremony

Dr.Chaya Swamy AAIWO Service Award 2024

Shreya Bangalore – AAIWO Student Award 2024

Anika Rao – AAIWO Volunteer Award 2024

## This year, we have Kids with Disabilities Talent Day on August 10th at Sari Feldman Auditorium at 1.00 PM.

The results of each category are as follows –

### Middle School Drawing Winners

- 1 Shrestha Shastry
- 2 Yashavardha
- 3 Anika Rao

### Primary School Drawing

1. Saanchi Bahl
- 2 Tharunika P
- 3 Saanvi Niranjan

### The essay Competition Judges were:

Dr.Gopal Nadkarni

Dr.Naveen Uli

Mr. Shashi Yadavalli

Mrs.Ela Kulkarni

Mrs. Brinda Rao

The Judges followed the RUBRIC, there are four areas (understanding of the topic, original thinking, effectiveness in presenting, and literary style, grammar, and spelling)



## Beauty Tip

By ABHI SANTOSH

### Fenugreek (Methi) Seed Paste:

Fenugreek is rich in antioxidants and helps rejuvenate the skin while reducing blemishes and dark spots.

- Soak a tablespoon of fenugreek seeds overnight, then grind them into a paste the next morning. Apply this paste to your face for 15 minutes before rinsing off with lukewarm water. It will help

nourish your skin and add a natural glow.



**PREMIER**  
Development Partners

CLEVELAND'S PREMIER  
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER

Premier Development Partners | [premierdevelop.com](http://premierdevelop.com) | 216.341.1200





## Exploring Cultural Diffusion: How Hindu Philosophy and Culture Shaped American Society

Beachwood, OH – On Tuesday, January 14, the Beachwood High School Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Affinity Club hosted an extraordinary community event titled “Exploring Cultural Diffusion: How Hindu Philosophy and Culture Influenced and Shaped American Society.” Held in the BHS Auditorium from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., the program celebrated the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti with an insightful exploration of cultural exchange.



Led by senior Radha Pareek, the AAPI Executive Leader and event organizer, students delivered compelling presentations tracing the profound influence of Hindu philosophy on American culture from the 1800s to the present. The program showcased how Hindu principles have shaped iconic aspects of American culture, from the transcendentalist movement to yoga, music, and scientific innovation. Students highlighted the impact of Hindu thought on figures such as transcendentalist thinkers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the global yoga movement, and even the artistic evolution of the Beatles.

Pareek opened the evening with a heartfelt speech inspired by Philip Goldberg’s book *American Veda*. Quoting the author’s claim that “America is a nation of yogis,” she explained that this concept transcends yoga studios or pop culture. Instead, she emphasized how Sanatana Dharma—the eternal quest for truth at the heart of Hindu philosophy—resonates deeply with America’s spirit of individualism and exploration. “Many of us are yogis,” Pareek said, “even if we’re learning these principles for the first time today.”

Radha elaborated on the inclusive and non-dogmatic essence of Sanatana Dharma, describing it as a philosophy that encourages individuals to seek their own paths to truth while recognizing the oneness within all existence. She credited her social studies teachers for fostering a Socratic approach that inspired her research into this often-overlooked aspect of American history.

Pareek traced the journey of Hindu thought in America, beginning with

the 19th-century transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau, who found inspiration in the Bhagavad Gita. She also highlighted Swami Vivekananda’s transformative 1893 speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago and its far-reaching influence. The 20th century brought further contributions through figures like Paramahansa Yogananda, whose *Autobiography of a Yogi* inspired writers such as J.D. Salinger and the Beatles, whose 1967 visit to India popularized

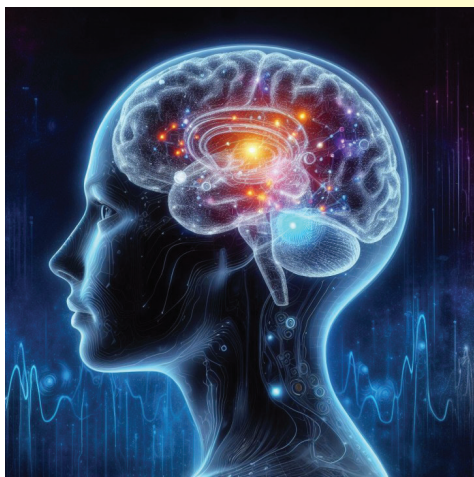
meditation and Vedic science in the West.

Another AAPI Club member, Srishti Itchychanda, presented the richness of Indian art and culture, particularly dance and music, and their influence on American society. The audience was introduced to Narsi Mehta’s 15th-century poem *Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye*, a beloved hymn adopted by Mahatma Gandhi as part of daily prayers at the Sabarmati Ashram. The program concluded with a collective singing of this prayer, paying homage to the victims of ongoing global conflicts and the California wildfires.

A key feature of the evening was the Darshana Exhibition, a traveling showcase offering a vivid overview of Hindu civilization. The exhibition, created by Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA (HSS), featured well-researched displays on topics such as science, architecture, philosophy, mathematics, and Ayurveda. AAPI Club students presented each poster to visitors, illuminating the multifaceted contributions of Hindu thought to humanity and fostering awareness of the Hindu culture’s global impact.

Attendees were captivated by the rich narrative of cultural diffusion presented by the students. To enhance the cultural experience, students greeted guests with Namaste and donned traditional Indian attire. Through engaging discussions and presentations, the AAPI Club demonstrated how the amalgamation of Eastern and Western philosophies has contributed to a more inclusive, enlightened, and peaceful world.

The evening left participants inspired to explore the connections between diverse cultures and the shared ideals that unite humanity.



Beachwood, OH – On Tuesday, January 14, the Beachwood High School Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Affinity Club hosted an extraordinary community event titled “Exploring Cultural Diffusion: How Hindu Philosophy and Culture Influenced and Shaped American Society.” Held in the BHS Auditorium from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., the program celebrated the auspicious occasion of

Makar Sankranti with an insightful exploration of cultural exchange.

Led by senior Radha Pareek, the AAPI Executive Leader and event organizer, students delivered compelling presentations tracing the profound influence of Hindu philosophy on American culture from the 1800s to the present. The program showcased how Hindu principles have shaped iconic aspects of American culture, from the transcendentalist movement to yoga, music, and scientific innovation. Students highlighted the impact of Hindu thought on figures such as transcendentalist thinkers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, the global yoga movement, and even the artistic evolution of the Beatles.

Pareek opened the evening with a heartfelt speech inspired by Philip Goldberg’s book *American Veda*. Quoting the author’s claim that “America is a nation of yogis,” she explained that this concept transcends yoga studios or pop culture. Instead, she emphasized how Sanatana Dharma—the eternal quest for truth at the heart of Hindu philosophy—resonates deeply with America’s spirit of individualism and exploration. “Many of us are yogis,” Pareek said, “even if we’re learning these principles for the first time today.”

Radha elaborated on the inclusive and non-dogmatic essence of Sanatana Dharma, describing it as a philosophy that encourages individuals to seek their own paths to truth while recognizing the oneness within all existence. She credited her social studies teachers for fostering a Socratic approach

## Social Media Creates Dopamine Addiction

By DR. RAKESH RANJAN

that inspired her research into this often-overlooked aspect of American history.

Pareek traced the journey of Hindu thought in America, beginning with the 19th-century transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau, who found inspiration in the Bhagavad Gita. She also highlighted Swami Vivekananda’s transformative 1893 speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago and its far-reaching influence. The 20th century brought further contributions through figures like Paramahansa Yogananda, whose *Autobiography of a Yogi* inspired writers such as J.D. Salinger and the Beatles, whose 1967 visit to India popularized meditation and Vedic science in the West.

Another AAPI Club member, Srishti Itchychanda, presented the richness of Indian art and culture, particularly dance and music, and their influence on American society. The audience was introduced to Narsi Mehta’s 15th-century poem *Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye*, a beloved hymn adopted by Mahatma Gandhi as part of daily prayers at the Sabarmati Ashram. The program concluded with a collective singing of this prayer, paying homage to the victims of ongoing global conflicts and the California wildfires.

A key feature of the evening was the Darshana Exhibition, a traveling showcase offering a vivid overview of Hindu civilization. The exhibition, created by Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA (HSS), featured well-researched displays on topics such as science, architecture, philosophy, mathematics, and Ayurveda. AAPI Club students presented each poster to visitors, illuminating the multifaceted contributions of Hindu thought to humanity and fostering awareness of the Hindu culture’s global impact.

Attendees were captivated by the rich narrative of cultural diffusion presented by the students. To enhance the cultural experience, students greeted guests with Namaste and donned traditional Indian attire. Through engaging discussions and presentations, the AAPI Club demonstrated how the amalgamation of Eastern and Western philosophies has contributed to a more inclusive, enlightened, and peaceful world.

The evening left participants inspired to explore the connections between diverse cultures and the shared ideals that unite humanity.





## Personal Growth Series

BY SRAVANTHI VALLAMPATI



## Episode 5 (March 2025) – The Magic of Words

## The Effective Communicator

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

In the last four episodes, we have covered what public speaking is, how we can organize our material for a conversation/speech/presentation, the power of an authentic voice, and the role of body language in how messages are delivered and received. Words are the lifeblood of our messages. Words have meaning. Words matter.

They have the power to fuel our imagination, shape our reality, and influence our attitude and behavior and that of others around us. At every juncture of our lives, we are privy to how words play out - to hurt or heal, to build or break, to heighten or humble. Knowing this obligates us to pay attention to what we say and how, yet, we seldom fully harness the power of words intentionally.

In a world where our brains are challenged to accomplish as much as possible as quickly as possible, reliance on quick takes, generalizations, and oversimplifications seems like a proven, popular path to follow. Purpose-built communication, like speaking at a seminar or writing for a journal, has carefully curated content. It relies on research and expert input to appeal to wider, focused audiences, but what about everyday, interpersonal communication? If an emoji or a scrunched-up tweet can provide a welcome outlet for the cognitive load you are experiencing, why deliberate on words, you may ask? And, yes, you are right. While quick retorts and smart responses have their place, they are not what we discuss when we talk about the transformative power of words - the magic that can help us relate, awaken something deep, desirable, and delightful.

Words and the ideas they convey are received by our audience. They create in our audience's minds the capacity to think, act, and believe. As you read the tips below, note that the power is not in the weight of the word, which by itself is welcome if you are gifted with rich vocabulary, but in the value of it.

- Adopt a positive tone. Evoke hope, provide direction - try 'that must have

been difficult', 'I believe in you', 'you are not alone', 'we got this', etc.

- Use vocabulary the audience is familiar with and can relate to - think about what you would say in a family setting vs to a fourth grade class vs at a community gala.

- Leverage sensory descriptors like seeing, hearing, touching, and tasting are impactful. (Ex: 'I was heartbroken when I heard him say his last meal was two days ago.' or 'Thank you for your advice. I needed to hear that.')

- Employ inclusive words to show respect, avoid stereotyping, and condone exclusivity - avoid phrases like 'you people', 'those women', 'these immigrants', etc. Be mindful of age, gender, culture, and other differences.

- Show curiosity - try 'Tell me more', 'I am curious to know', 'I learnt something new today', etc.

- Balance new information with implicit knowledge - information overload is real. Focus on the purpose of your message - What exactly do you wish your audience to take away?

- Energize with a story or a personal experience - you never know the impact your personal story can have. Pivot to the situation to relate, not to turn the spotlight onto you.

- Repeat and restate - try 'Let me summarize what I said/heard', 'this is what I heard, is that right?', 'could you please confirm?', etc.

- Listen to understand - actively listen to understand, not respond. Once you have all the information and insight, formulate a response if you must. Be genuine.

Remember that we use words to collate messages that matter and convey ideas that impact. We intend for the audience to receive them in a way that aligns with our purpose, which hinges on the words we choose and the tone we adopt.

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>



Capture Timeless Moments  
With Our Video Photography

Krishna Video & Photography  
216-408-1028

Share your event with live  
streaming on youtube

# 16TH ANNUAL CLEVELAND ASIAN FESTIVAL

May 17 - 18, 2025  
Saturday & Sunday 11AM - 7 PM

AsiaTown  
E. 27th & Payne Ave,  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Free Admission  
Free Parking  
No Pets

[www.ClevelandAsianFestival.org](http://www.ClevelandAsianFestival.org)

ASIAN CUISINE - CULTURAL PERFORMANCES - ASIAN POP DANCE COMPETITION  
 MARTIAL ARTS - TRIVIA CHALLENGE - HEALTH SCREENINGS (INSIDE ASIA PLAZA)  
 WORLD MARKETPLACE - COSPLAY - FOOD COMPETITION  
 "COLORS OF ASIA" FASHION SHOW





Mosaic Healthcare Advisors

# ARE YOU TURNING 65?

## New to MEDICARE?

What is the Difference  
between Original  
Medicare and Medicare  
Advantage?



When do I Enroll?

What is Medicare  
Part A, B, C, D?



CONTACT  
**SEJAL PATEL**  
**303-517-0074**

**EDUCATION - GUIDANCE - SUPPORT**



SCAN THE QR CODE TO  
SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT  
FLUENT IN GUJARATI AND HINDI

**"YOUR TRUSTED  
GUIDE TO MEDICARE"**

