

# THE 3<sup>RD</sup> GLOBAL **AUTISM** CONVENTION



## Autism in the Global South: **Culture, Community, and Neurodiversity**




21<sup>st</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2026

St. John's Auditorium, St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences,  
John Nagar, Koramangala, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560034, India

**CONTACT US**

 080 2206 5964

 [gac.jan2026@gmail.com](mailto:gac.jan2026@gmail.com)



## WELCOME MESSAGE BY THE CONFERENCE CHAIR

**Dear Colleagues and Friends,**

**It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Global Autism Convention 2026, an international gathering focused on “Autism in the Global South: Culture, Community, and Neurodiversity”. This third edition builds on the foundation laid in 2011 and 2018 and aims to be a vibrant platform for dialogue, learning, and action across cultures and contexts.**

**This year, we especially highlight the voices and innovations emerging from low and middle-income countries, where the need for inclusive, sustainable, and culturally grounded approaches is urgent. As professionals, self-advocates, families, and policymakers, we each bring essential pieces to the puzzle of meaningful autism support.**

**On behalf of the organising team, I extend heartfelt thanks to our institutional partners, collaborating NGOs, sponsors, and every participant contributing to this global conversation. Let this be not just a conference, but a collective step toward systems that respect and celebrate neurodiversity.**

**Warm regards,  
Dr. Vijaya Raman**



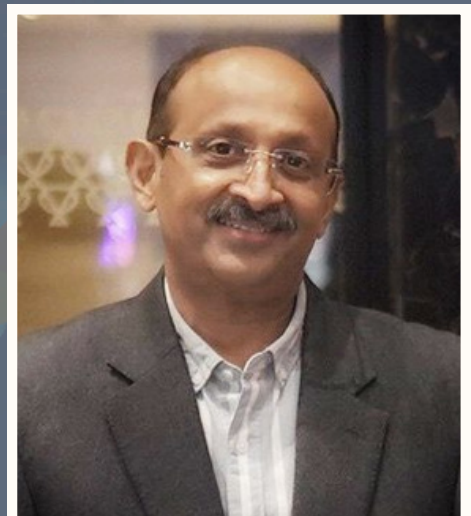
# ABOUT THE GLOBAL AUTISM CONVENTION (GAC)



The Global Autism Convention is a collaborative platform that brings together clinicians, educators, families, self-advocates, and policy leaders to explore autism through a lens of neurodiversity, equity, and cultural relevance, especially in low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The 1<sup>st</sup> GAC was held from May 19–21, 2011 at the NIMHANS Convention Centre, Bengaluru. It was jointly organised by the Rotary Club Bangalore West, ASHA, St. John's Medical College Hospital, and other autism-related organisations. It highlighted ground-level interventions and led to the proposal of a national autism professionals' network.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> GAC was conceptualized and led by Dr. M.V. Ashok, the founding Head of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit and CAREADD at St. John's Medical College Hospital in 2018. It marked a landmark moment for inclusive, community-rooted autism dialogue in India, bringing together national and international voices to center lived experiences and collaborative care.



**Dr. M. V. Ashok**

The upcoming third edition of GAC continues to expand the conversation across the Global South, and championing inclusion, neurodiversity, and culturally responsive care.



## ROOTED IN VISION, COMMITTED TO CARE



### CENTRE FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH AND EXCELLENCE IN AUTISM AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS (CAREADD)



**CAREADD at St. John's Medical College Hospital was envisioned by Dr. M.V. Ashok to provide holistic, culturally sensitive care for children, adolescents, and adults on the autism spectrum. It offers diagnostic assessments, early intervention, parent-mediated programs, life skills training, and support for co-occurring conditions. CAREADD is closely linked to the COMDEALL Early Intervention Centre and serves one of the largest cohorts of autistic children and youth in the region, combining clinical care with research and community engagement.**

### CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY UNIT, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY, SJMCH



**The Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit, established in 1994 by Dr. M.V. Ashok, delivers comprehensive mental health services for children and adolescents. It runs outpatient and inpatient care, and specialized clinics for autism, adolescent health, trauma, and eating disorders. The unit offers an RGUHS-recognized Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and trains students across disciplines. Its work integrates clinical care, academic training, and policy-driven research, reflecting a long-standing commitment to inclusive and developmentally informed mental health services.**





## Shristi Special Academy

## ALFAA - Assisted Living For Autistic Adults

## Bubbles Centre for Autism



# PARTNERING ORGANISATIONS



## Spastics Society of Karnataka (SSK)

Spastics Society of Karnataka (SSK) is a pioneering NGO dedicated to the comprehensive welfare of children and young adults with developmental disabilities. With a profound impact on over 6000 students and their families every year, SSK is steadfast in their mission to support those with cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual and learning disabilities, language disorders, and other developmental conditions.



## Autism Society of India

Autism Society of India was founded by a team of parents and professionals in May 2006, with more than 800 members across India. Advocacy for the inclusion of Autism as a disability in the PWD Act of 1995 is the major goal of Autism Society of India. The aim of the Autism Society of India is to function as a National body for concerted action on all matters relating to persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families.



## Ishanya India Foundation (IIF)

Ishanya India Foundation is an organisation for rehabilitation and empowerment of persons with disabilities established in the year 2015. IIF operates out of 3 verticals - Education, Livelihood and Capacity Building. IIF follows a strength-based model that fosters agency, workplace competencies, and skills in individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities, enabling them to become independent and empowered.





# REGISTRATION FEE STRUCTURE

Category	Early Bird (by Nov 1 <sup>st</sup> )	Regular (Nov 2 <sup>nd</sup> – Jan 20 <sup>th</sup> )	On-Spot (Jan 21 <sup>th</sup> - Jan 25 <sup>th</sup> )
Professionals (SAARC including India)	₹8,850	₹11,800	₹17,700
Students / Trainees	₹5,900	₹9,440	₹11,800
NGO Representatives	₹7,080	₹9,440	₹14,160
Above 65	Free	₹1,770	₹3,540
International Delegates (Students)	\$236	\$354	\$472
International Delegates (Professionals)	\$472	\$708	\$944
Parents/ Self- Advocates/ Special Educators	₹4,720	₹5,900	₹7,080
Group Registration	A 50% discount is applicable for group registrations of 10 or more participants		

## NOTE:

- All fees are inclusive of 18% GST
- “Professionals” includes psychiatrists, psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, paediatricians, social workers, and other clinicians.
- Fees apply for the entire conference.





# SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Global Autism Convention 2026 brings together leading experts, practitioners, and community voices to explore autism through the lens of neurodiversity, culture, and inclusion in the Global South.

## KEYNOTE LECTURES

Keynote Lectures by internationally recognized experts in autism research, clinical practice, and community engagement, offering diverse global and regional perspectives.

## WORKSHOPS

Workshops on AAC, trauma-informed care, eating concerns, co-occurring conditions, emotional regulation, assessments, and life skills.

## SYMPOSIUMS

Symposiums on inclusive education, gender diversity, comorbidities, neuromodulation, creative therapies, digital safety, and workforce inclusion.

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) on school inclusion, parenting, transition to adulthood, and mental health of professionals.

## PRE-CONFERENCE WEBINARS

Pre-conference Webinars on innovation, storytelling, and lessons from GAC 2018.

## ORAL & E-POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Oral and E-Poster Presentations showcasing research, community practice, and lived experience.

## KEY SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

Details and submission guidelines for all events will be released in the second announcement.





# COMPETITIONS & COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

**GAC 2026 is more than a conference. It is a space for participation, creativity, and cross-sector collaboration.**

## **NEURODIVERSITY ESSAY & CREATIVE EXPRESSION COMPETITION**

School and college  
students

## **DESIGN FOR INCLUSION AWARD**

Interdisciplinary  
teams developing  
accessible tools &  
innovations

## **FLASH MENTORING WORKSHOP**

Early-career  
professionals and  
students

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD**

NGOs & grassroots  
organisations working in  
LMICs

**Cash prizes and certificates will  
be awarded.**

**Submission guidelines and  
details for all competitions will  
be released in the second  
announcement.**



# TRAVEL AWARDS AND GLOBAL PARTICIPATION



**To support equitable participation, 10 Travel Awards will be offered.**

## **7 NATIONAL TRAVEL AWARDS**

for delegates within India

## **3 INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AWARDS**

for delegates from low & middle-income countries

**Open to early-career professionals, students, and self-advocates with meaningful contributions to the field.**

**Application details and eligibility criteria will be shared in the Second Announcement.**



# ADVISORS

## DR. SHOBA SRINATH

*Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist (retired), NIMHANS*

## DR. SWARNAREKHA BHAT

*Professor & Head - Neonatology (retired), SJMCH*

## DR. LONNIE ZWAIGENBAUM

*Director - Autism Research Center, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Alberta, Canada.*

## DR. PRATHIBHA KARANTH

*Founder Director & Managing Trustee, Com-DEALL Trust, India*

## DR. DOMINIC MISQUITH

*Professor - Community Health (retired), SJMCH*

## DR. DENIS XAVIER

*Professor - Pharmacology, SJMCH*

## DR. RAJESH SAGAR

*Professor - Psychiatry, AIIMS, New Delhi*

# PATRONS

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## DR. GEORGE D'SOUZA

*Dean,  
St. John's Medical College*

## DR. TONY D. S. RAJ

*Dean,  
St. John's Research Institute*



# ORGANISING COMMITTEE



**DR. VIJAYA RAMAN**

**Organising Chair Person**

*Professor & Head - Clinical  
Psychology Head - CAREADD,  
SJMCH*

**DR. SUHAS CHANDRAN**

**Co-Chair**

*Associate Professor & Head - Child &  
Adolescent Psychiatry Unit, Department of  
Psychiatry, SJMCH*

**MS. JAYASHREE RAMESH**

**Treasurer**

*Director - ASHA (Academy for Severe  
Handicaps & Autism)*

**DR. JOHNSON PRADEEP**

*Professor & Head - Psychiatry,  
SJMCH*

**MS. RUBY SINGH**

*Director - ALFAA  
(Assisted Living For Autistic Adults)*

**DR. BINU KURIEN**

*Professor - Paediatric Orthopaedics,  
SJMCH*

**DR. PRIYA SREEDARAN**

*Professor - Psychiatry,  
SJMCH*

**DR. S. MEERA**

*Associate Professor -  
Speech Pathology & Audiology, NIMHANS*

**DR. DEEPTHI SHANBHAG**

*Professor - Community Health,  
SJMCH*

**DR. VANITHA S. RAO**

*Consultant- Neurocognition and Special  
Education, CAREADD*

**DR. ARUNA KORLIMARLA**

*Principal Scientist - Sri Shankara Cancer  
Foundation*

**DR. KEERTHANA T**

*Asst. Professor - Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
Unit, Department of Psychiatry, SJMCH*





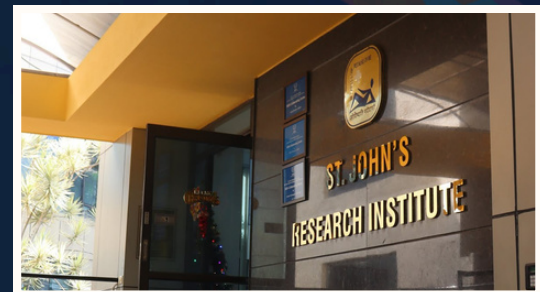
# ABOUT SJNAHS THE HOST INSTITUTE

St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences (SJNAHS) is a self-financing private Institution. St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru established in 1963 by the CBCI with the aim of training healthcare personnel committed to serving the poor in the margins, was dedicated as a memorial of the XXXVIII International Eucharistic Congress held in Bombay in 1964 and named after St. John the Baptist, the Patron of Pope John XXIII, who was an ardent supporter of this initiative of the Catholic Church in India.

**SJNAHS consists of:**

- A Medical College - counted as one of the best in the nation.
- A state of the art Hospital with 1350 beds for all medical and surgical departments including super-specialty departments.
- A top-class College of Nursing.
- A Research Institute - the first in a medical school - with the most modern facilities including a Biorepository and An Institute of Health Care Management and Paramedical Studies.

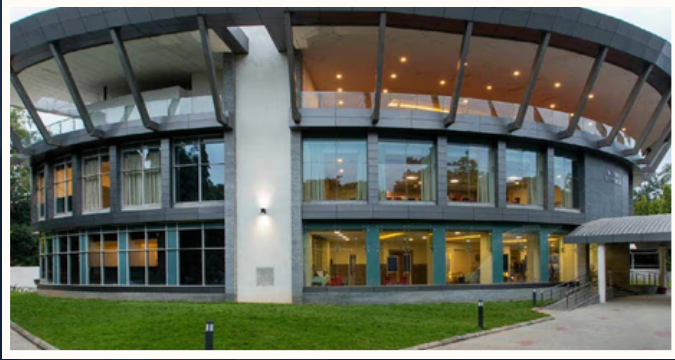
Spread over 132 acres of verdant campus in the salubrious climate of the Garden City of Bengaluru, this institution stands testimony to the purpose for which it was established.





# ABOUT ST. JOHN'S AUDITORIUM

## THE VENUE



**St. John's Auditorium is located within the prestigious St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences campus in Koramangala, Bengaluru. With a seating capacity of 900, a floating capacity of 1,000-1,500, and dining facilities for up to 400 guests, the auditorium is well-suited for large-scale events such as conferences, performances, and formal gatherings. Known for its excellent acoustics, modern AV setup, and comfortable ambience, it offers a professional yet welcoming environment. Its central location and ample parking make it easily accessible for attendees from across the city. Workshops will be held in multiple halls/ auditoriums across the campus.**





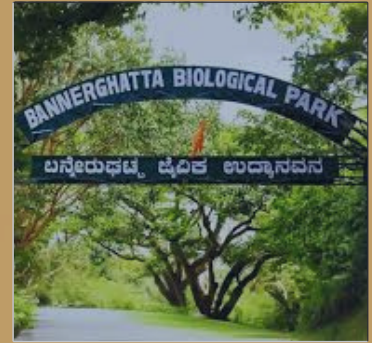
# PLACES TO VISIT IN BENGALURU GARDEN CITY OF INDIA



Lal Bagh Botanical Garden



Vidhana Soudha



Bannerghatta  
National Park



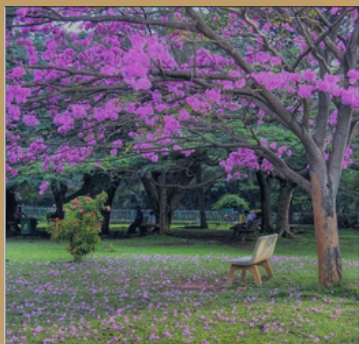
Commercial Street



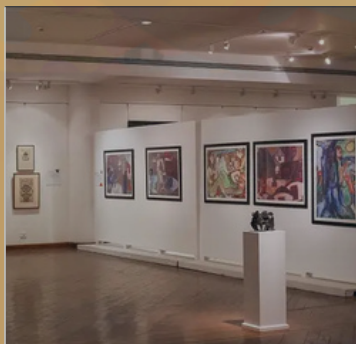
Wonderla Amusement Park



UB City



Cubbon Park



National Gallery of  
Modern Art



Bengaluru Palace

