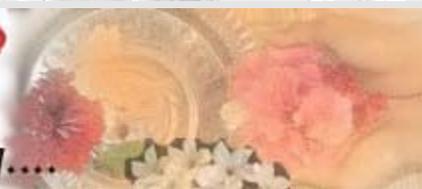


Samarpan



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ICAMN - Indian Cultural Association Of Minnesota icamn.org

President's Note

Quarterly Newsletter – Winter 2021

Dear Community Members,

Namaste and Happy New Year! We hope this message finds you, and your family and friends safe and well. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose unprecedented challenges, we want you to know that ICAM is committed to keeping the community safe. There is no dearth of misinformation being disseminated, and ICAM is investing time and resources by organizing events and/or sharing updated information to address this matter.

In 2021 we partnered with various organizations to encourage everyone in the community to get vaccinated. But the pandemic is not over yet, and we need to continue our efforts in 2022, as well.

Despite the challenges this pandemic has posed, 2021 proved to be a successful year for ICAM. We received many positive comments and responses from performers and community members for “Virtual Diwali,” and other cultural activities and events. We continue to make great strides towards strengthening our community connections and collaborations with partners.

2022 is already shaping up to be a busy year. Along with organizing key cultural events, we are planning to upgrade our technology and communication tools. To kick off the year we are hosting a virtual health event on Feb 6th, which will include a session on COVID-19 vaccination for children (details included on the next page). I'd also like to take this opportunity to introduce the new health committee lead, Dr. Seema Kumar, who is a physician at Mayo Clinic and has lived in Rochester for the last 25 years.

We will continue our search for enthusiastic individuals to join and help us. If you are interested, please reach out to me, or anyone on the ICAM team as we welcome your ideas and suggestions on how we might better serve the community.

Thank you to the board, volunteers, and community members for your continuous support. Please visit our website, icamn.org and subscribe to our mailing list for more information and to become an ICAM member. A gentle reminder for existing members: it's time to renew your membership for 2022.

In closing, I'd like to express my deep gratitude to our community and to ICAM for all their efforts in keeping the community safe. Moving forward, let's reflect the strength and resilience of our people by continuing to work together and make a difference!

Best wishes,
Ajay Singh



Have a story for Samarpan? We welcome your submissions, including but not limited to

- First-person accounts, experiences, stories, essays
- Expert findings, reports on relevant topics
- Opinions, newsworthy insights
- Contributions are welcome from all, especially students and seniors

Guidelines for submission:

Articles must be original; they cannot have appeared elsewhere—in any form—in print or online.

All articles are rigorously edited and fact-checked, so it's important to include sources (in hyperlinks in the text or in parentheses).

We will work to verify the facts in your article, but as the writer, you bear the ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of your work.

Writers are expected to take care to avoid political or workplace-related issues and any conflict of interest.

Include your contact information and a brief author bio: 30-50 words





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Color Me Brown

By Natasha Sohni

Color Me Brown

As a young girl of color surrounded by predominantly white spaces, I was constantly shown that light skin tones and straight hair were more attractive features than darker skin tones and curly or textured hair. I remember spending days yearning for my skin to be even a shade lighter and growing annoyed with my hair. I was teased for the dark hair on my arms and legs because body hair could not be seen on my white peers. Every tween girl was straightening her hair for hours before coming to school every day, and the message that boys only liked girls with straight hair spread like wildfire. I wanted a flat iron so desperately because I felt as though I were already losing in other respects: my shoulders were too broad from competitive swimming, my nose was too large, my hair was too thick for a hair tie, and I had brown skin.

In addition to the unhealthy beauty standards that continue to plague the media even now, young girls of color must overcome insecurities based on their skin tones and dark hair. Racism in predominantly white countries, such as the United States, is one issue, but importance exists in acknowledging the blatant colorism practiced in India. As stated previously, interacting with some of my white peers provided little relief, but the advertisements for Fair & Lovely that I would see on the television screen during my visits to India did not help either. I am sure that colonization and the power structures that resulted from it have some influence on why fairness is redeemed, but the lack of action in dismantling this view is harmful. I was constantly comparing myself to even my friends of color who had lighter skin than I did because of this, and through the conversations that I have had with many of my South Asian friends as we have grown older, I realized that we all had these insecurities when we were younger.

We shifted our perceptions of beauty and culture to accommodate our white counterparts and internalized the racism that prompted us to do so. At a certain point, one gives into the pressure to fit a mold that makes everyone else feel comfortable and the microaggressions just fly over their head. On occasion, I asked my white friends in high school about how they perceived me when we met. Did my brown skin and Indianness stand out to them the most? As much as they said that they noticed details of my personality above all else, I could sense that these physical and cultural differences were aspects that they would never understand. This does not have to be a barrier, but for a teenage girl, it can certainly feel like one.

Becoming an adult and building more diverse community in college were the early steps in deconstructing the perceptions that I had of myself. I met so many friends, white and nonwhite, who had genuine intentions and embraced every aspect of a person wholly. I placed myself in more spaces of color and we bonded over our experiences within predominantly white institutions. We also realized how greatly the tables had turned. Suddenly, every sorority girl wanted to be as tan as possible, and all of my friends were telling me how much they loved my thick, curly hair and dark eyebrows. I noticed how much I glowed during the summertime, and I never had to worry about sunburns. Throughout high school and even more so in college, I started using products that worked for my hair, and the moments during which I yearned for my hair to be straight slipped away from me.

I wish that I could give my younger self a hug and tell her that her brown skin and dark hair are assets. The little girl who felt insecure in her skin is unrecognizable now. I have always been proud of my heritage, but I did not know how to wear it confidently when met with classes and extracurricular activities where everyone looked similar, and I stood out from them. Of course, I still find myself in predominantly white spaces given my career and location, but I now view these aspects of my identity as my superpowers. I care less about how I am perceived and more about the messages that young girls of color receive when they watch a show or scroll through social media. Most children of color have been bullied based on their skin tones at some point in their lives and while eradicating this is a feat within itself, we should embrace the responsibility of empowering these kids when they are in these situations in the meantime. Consistently being surrounded by light skinned or white individuals has a greater impact on a growing child's psyche than one expects, and while we cannot always help this, we can push them to internalize pride for their brown skin and culture. cclcl

I urge readers to reflect on the racism and colorism that they have unintentionally internalized and unpack these views as soon as they are able. The experiences that I have outlined here are similar to those of many other individuals who were raised in predominantly white countries, and we are finally at a point in which we can change this narrative.





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ICAM Updates

By ICAM health committee

Hello friends!

We hope that you and your loved ones are staying well in the midst of the pandemic. The last couple of years have been challenging and we have been inundated with information, some of which might be misleading and confusing. One of our committee's missions is to provide accurate and updated information about common health challenges to members of our community.

The next ICAM health seminar will be held virtually on Sun. February 6, from 3:00 p.m. to 5 p.m. We have invited nationally recognized experts to present the most updated information on three relevant health topics—

Dr. Rana Chakraborty, Professor of Pediatrics will be sharing his knowledge on COVID-19 vaccination in children.

Dr. Richa Sood, Associate Professor of Medicine will be reviewing facts and myths regarding menopause.

Dr. Bhanuprakash Kolla, Associate Professor of Psychiatry will be discussing depression in relation to the South Asian population.

The schedule is as follows:

3: 00 – 3:15 pm Opening Remarks

3:15-3:45 pm COVID-19 Vaccination & Your Child: Balancing the Risks against the Letters of the Greek Alphabet!

3:45-4:15 p.m. Menopause – Facts & Myths

4:15-4:45 pm Depression—A Common and Treatable Illness: A South Asian Perspective

4:45- 5:00 pm Q&A and Open Discussions

The event will be hosted on zoom.us (Meeting ID: 976 660 2626; Passcode: ICAM2022), and we sincerely hope to see you there. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions as well as your feedback.

Best wishes,

Seema Kumar

On behalf of the ICAM health committee.

