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Editor's Note

Samarpan's editorial team is pleased to share the fourth quarter newsletter of 2023 with our readers.

We are looking forward to publishing new contributions from our readers. Thank you!!

Newsletter Team

Subhankar Bhattacharya | Abhinga Dutta | Unni Gopinathan | Jyothi Gubili | Ram Kadirvel | Nisha Kurup | Alka Mehra | Anu Nair | Priya Sampathkumar | Ajay Singh | Namrata Tomer

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President's Message

Dear Community Members,

Namaste, I wish you a Happy New Year. Hope you had a great Diwali celebration, a joyful Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas with your friends and family.

This year Diwali cultural event, at the Mayo Civic Center, was a tremendous success. The varied talent displayed by the community was enjoyable for all, attended by a record number of 570 people. This is the first time in the history of Rochester where we had to close sales of tickets as we were going over the capacity, otherwise, we would have easily passed 600+. Thanks to the people who attended the event, our Emcees, Performers, Sponsors, and support from the Hindu Samaj Temple. Special thanks to our volunteers for working diligently behind the scenes to make this event successful. This event was also attended by a few important chief guests. Our Rochester Mayor Kim Norton welcomed everyone and issued a proclamation to declare Nov 11th as Diwali, the Festival of Lights Cultural Program Day. MN House of Representative, Tina Liebling lighted the lamp to start the program. Finally, MN secretary of state came and awarded a very prestigious Medallion National award to ICAM for services to the community. It was a huge honor to receive this award on behalf of the board. This is a recognition of all the volunteers for their hard work, which includes Indian community & our partners for the support.

ICAM is continuing to march towards our vision to serve the community in the Indian culture and education. Garba event on October 21st, 2023, at Century High School was another immense success with about 250 in attendance. We have applied for a Cultural Expression Grant from the MN State of Arts for potential funding to support us in bringing famous singing artists from India to take this Garba event to the next level. We are looking for other grant opportunities to serve our community. Recently we have also applied for Civic Engagement grant for the Minnesota Democracy Expansion Fund, this is to help educate and promote people for the 2024 general elections.

ICAM also plans to complete the election process by the end of this year. We want to continue to run this organization professionally; we always look for feedback; please contact any of our board members on how we can grow further.

In the end, I always want to thank our board members, volunteers, and community members for your continued support, this organization cannot run without you. Please visit our website, icamn.org and subscribe to our mailing list for more information and to become an ICAM member for 2024. The membership fee is a small amount to support our organization, in return you are getting many benefits.

Best wishes,
Ajay Singh, President, ICAM Board





Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon presented the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Medallion Award to ICAM. The award recognizes ICAM's innovative and successful efforts to expand voter education and participation. It was presented to ICAM president Ajay Singh who accepted this on behalf of the board during the Diwali Cultural Event.

Since Last Newsletter

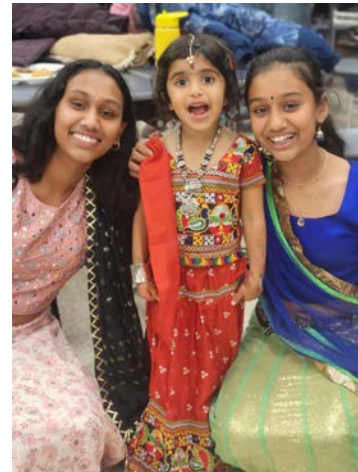
Garba Night Vidya Iyer

The Indian Cultural Association of MN celebrated Navratri by hosting a Garba night on Saturday, October 21st, at Century High School. The fun-filled musical evening was attended by approximately 200 people who enjoyed dancing to timeless garba beats while enjoying sweets and snacks served at the event.

Garba is a form of folk dance that originated in the Indian state of Gujarat. The dance form originated in the villages of Gujarat, where it was (and continues to be) performed in communal gathering spaces in the center of the village with the entire community participating and performing the dance in a huge circle. As with many Indian social events, Garba also has religious significance.

Garba is performed during Navratri, meaning "nine nights," and is the Hindu festival dedicated to Goddess Durga—the feminine form of divinity and her nine forms. This festival is observed in many ways, each unique to the region of India in which it is celebrated. In Gujarat, it is observed with nine nights of dancing as a form of reverence and worship. Starting in the evening, men and women dance late into the night. Many people also fast or observe a special diet with restricted foods during these nine days and nights.

Garba is a dance that honors, worships, and celebrates the feminine form of divinity. The word "garba" comes from the Sanskrit word garbha, meaning "womb." Traditionally, the dance is performed by women in a circle around a clay lantern with a light inside, called a garbha deep ("womb lamp"). The garbha deep has a symbolic significance where the lantern itself is a symbol of the body, within whom divinity (in the form of the Goddess or Devi) resides. Garba is danced around this symbol to honor the fact that all humans have the divine energy of Devi within them. Today, it is common to have images of Durga at the center of the circle instead of the garbha deep.



Garba is performed in a circle, sometimes concentric circles when there are many people. In Hinduism, time is cyclical. As the cycle of time revolves, from birth to life to death to rebirth, the only thing constant is the Goddess, an unmoving symbol in the midst of all this unending and infinite movement. The dance symbolizes that God, represented in feminine form in this case, is the only thing that remains unchanging in a constantly changing universe.

As garba is part of a religious practice, the dance is performed barefoot, signifying respect for the earth and another way to connect with Devi

Nowadays, Garba is also performed during nonreligious social events such as weddings and parties.

**A Glimpse into ICAM's Annual Garba Night Event in October 2023!
Big shoutout to Tyler Aug for his exceptional event coverage and video editing**





Navratri Nisha Kurup

Navaratri is a nine-night celebration of the Feminine Divine that occurs four times a year — the fall celebrations being the most widely known. Some traditions honor the nine manifestations of Goddess Durga, while others celebrate the three goddesses (Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati) with three days dedicated to each. This is a time to recognize the role of the loving, compassionate, and gentle - yet sometimes powerful and fierce - feminine energy in our lives.

In Rochester, Navaratri is observed every year with devotion and festivity. The beauty of being in another country is that we become part of the traditions and festivities of people from different parts of the world. The Indian community in Rochester is small, but always ready to embrace diverse tradition and culture. The Durga puja hosted by the Bengali community, the Garba dance celebration from Gujarat or the Golu display from the South Indian tradition are all celebrated together with a lot of enthusiasm.

Golu, also known as Bommai Kolu, Bommala Kolu or Bombe Habba is the artistic display of dolls and figurines on multiple steps, of usually 3, 5, 7, 9, or 11 tiers. Some of the homes of families from the southern states of India display these colorfully decorated dolls during the nine days of Navaratri. Every year, after summer, the dolls come down from the attic and are carefully dusted off, white or colorful fabric placed on the display steps, and then, one by one, the dolls of Gods, Goddesses, people and saints arranged. Huts, village wells, parks, mountains, forests, animals and even a whole village scene is crafted. The arrangement is done with a lot of creativity and aesthetics. The Golu display is interactive and demonstrates religious stories, the history of villages, towns, and stories of great personalities. It showcases various forms of folk and classical art and depicts concepts from philosophy. Rangoli or patterns with colored powder, sand and fine stones are artfully drawn; musical performances are conducted; savories and sweets are prepared. Golu guests, usually women and children, visit each home in the evenings, in a Golu hopping spree during these nine days.

The Navratri season brings great deal of happiness as it is a time to come together, celebrate as a community and feel grateful for our family and friends. These festivities together with the diverse traditions and rituals weaves a community that is vibrant and resilient.

Resource: <https://www.hinduamerican.org/> and information shared by community members





Durga Puja



Puja Dey

Durga Puja is the biggest religious festival in Sanatan (Hindu) religious society. Every year people celebrate this festival with the hope of joy and happiness, making an acceptance that their life will be fulfilled with health and wealth. The Durga Puja was celebrated in different places in the United States from the 20th to the 23rd of October 2023. The Cultural Association of Bengalees in Rochester (CABERI), Minnesota, organized Durga Puja-2023 in the Hindu Samaj temple, and it was filled with lots of events. The entire temple was crowded with about 100 people who came together to celebrate this festival- "Durga Puja" from different parts of Rochester city. Durga Puja is a ten-day festival of which the last five are the most significant. This festival was preceded by Mahalaya, which is believed to mark the

start of Durga's journey to her parental home and the festival ends on the tenth day (Vijaya Dashami). On the day of Mahalaya, Our Durga puja was started and all the members of the temple and CABERI were involved with their greatest interest to do this Durga puja successfully. By arranging all Puja-related commodities, every person got the opportunity to arrange this event depending on their circumstances.

Our celebration was divided into five parts in arranging as called as Shashti, Saptami, Ashtami, Navami, and last part was Vijaya Dashami. Celebrations begin on the sixth day (Shashti), a significant day of the festival, on which the goddess is welcomed with rituals. On the day of Shashti, Durga Puja started at 6.30 pm evening and finished at 8:00 pm, and the Anointing ritual "Adhivasa" was completed on the same day. On the seventh (Saptami), eighth (Ashtami), and ninth (Navami) days, the goddess, along with Lakshmi, Saraswati, Ganesh, and Kartikeya, were worshiped together for two days 21st and 22nd of October, by taking part in Pushpanjali rituals to offer water, food and flowers. The Sandhi puja was performed by the offering of 108 lotuses and lighting of 108 lamps, and this forty-eight-minute-long ritual was completed by our priest. We enjoyed the dance ritual "Dhunuchi naach and dhuno pora" with dhunuchi, dhaks, dhols during aarati. We prepared delicious food and enjoyed the food sitting with the community together in the temple.

The celebration ended with Vijaya Dashami and Sindoor khela. More than 15 families were joined together, making prayers, wishing for a blissful life, and smearing each other with sindoor. The festival days passed too fast, and this socio-religious event gives us inspiration for living a joyful life with the hope of next year's grand celebrations together.

ICAM Diwali Cultural Event - A Joyous Celebration! **Shyamala Bhat**

Diwali or Deepavali is the festival of lights for people of Indian origin – across all states, regions, and religions. It is a time of the year that brings joy and festivities to all of India and all Indians worldwide. ICAM sponsored and coordinated a fantastic cultural celebration in Rochester, Minnesota on Nov 11th, 2023 with an evening of dance, music, and delicious food. This event was held at the Mayo Civic Center and attended by over 500 people from the larger Rochester community.

The Mayor of Rochester Kim Norton inaugurated the event by lighting the lamp and reading the Proclamation declaring November 11th Diwali, the Festival of Lights Cultural Program Day.

This event is truly a celebration for the people and by the people of our vibrant community. A kaleidoscope of 44 delightful cultural performances in the form of dance and music from all age groups was a treat to watch and enjoy. Traditional dance forms such as the Kerala Thiruvathirakali, Kathak-inspired dance, Bharatanatyam, Jathi Swaram, and Thodayam pieces alongside the folksy and filmy numbers like the Tamizh Kuthu, Disco dance, Bollywood Moves, and Punjabi Kudis dance were all a big hit with the audience. Vocal and instrumental music performances by our very own talented singers rendered songs from all regions of the Indian subcontinent left the Civic Center resounding with classical and film songs in many Indian languages. Listening to the evergreen "Mile Sur Mera Tumhara" song was very nostalgic for all Indians who grew up listening to this song promoting a diverse yet united India. It was also delightful to watch children of all age groups perform on stage with cheerful encouragement from the audience.

ICAM is the proud recipient of the 2023 National Association of Secretaries of State's National Medallion award for excellence in Outreach and civic engagement. Minnesota Secretary of State Mr. Steve Simon presented the award in person to ICAM's president Mr. Ajay Singh at the Diwali event. Congratulations ICAM and keep up the good work!

The Diwali event was catered by the Mayo Civic Center. A delicious Indian buffet dinner was served.

We sincerely thank all the artists and volunteers for their enthusiasm, engagement, and efforts in

making the 2023 Diwali cultural celebrations a successful and fun event. Until next year - Dhanyavaad, Nandri, Dhonnobaad, Dhanyavadagalu, Dhanyavadagalu, Nanni, Aabar.. !





Thanksgiving Celebrations

Thanksgiving moments with Momitha Rakshit's Family: A Feast of Gratitude and Joy!





Youth Scape

Journey with STEM

Sreyoli Bhattacharya (Junior of John Marshal High School)

Ever since I can remember, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) have played a significant role in my life. From my early childhood days, I was always fascinated by how the games on my iPad worked. In the third grade, my father took me to my first coding workshop where I was introduced to the possibilities of technology and math. Two years later, I was trying to build my own creations on the school's robotics and math team. Recently, I received the Target Epic Award for my involvement in STEM, an honorable recognition given to twenty-five high school girls in the state. These initial activities built the foundation for my journey in STEM, which has continued to this day as the field continues to evolve and I along with it.



My interest in STEM broadened as I entered my teenage years. I became involved in the math league at my school and learned about the annual Technovation coding competition from a friend. Together our team worked hard to get our app, which offers resources for mental health, to the semifinals. Building an app to support the community gave me a lot of opportunities to expand my knowledge in a field I was starting to love, in addition to teaching me that STEM could be used to help others.

In my high school years, I was introduced to more advantages to participate in various STEM-related competitions and events, such as Science Olympiad and the Regional STEM Fair. Through these experiences, I was able to meet people who were passionate about innovation and connect with like-minded people in the larger STEM application community. Attending these events opened my eyes to the incredible range of study STEM offered, placing second at Science Olympiad in Experimental Design and advancing to the State Science Fair on the topic of bioengineering. I was motivated to go beyond what I had previously believed was possible.

Now as I get ready to enter the next chapter of my life with college, I keep up with the most recent developments and trends as I continue on my STEM journey. I participate in online courses and seek continual education to keep my skills present and sharp. To share ideas and stay motivated, I actively collaborate with peers and mentors, always staying encouraged for what's next to come.

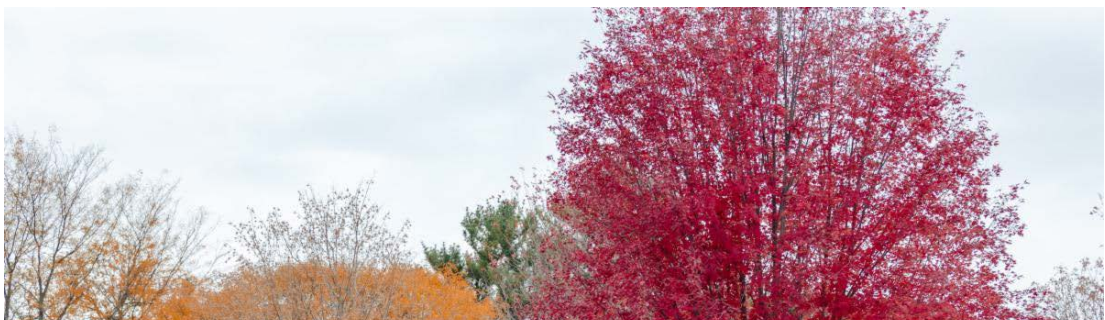


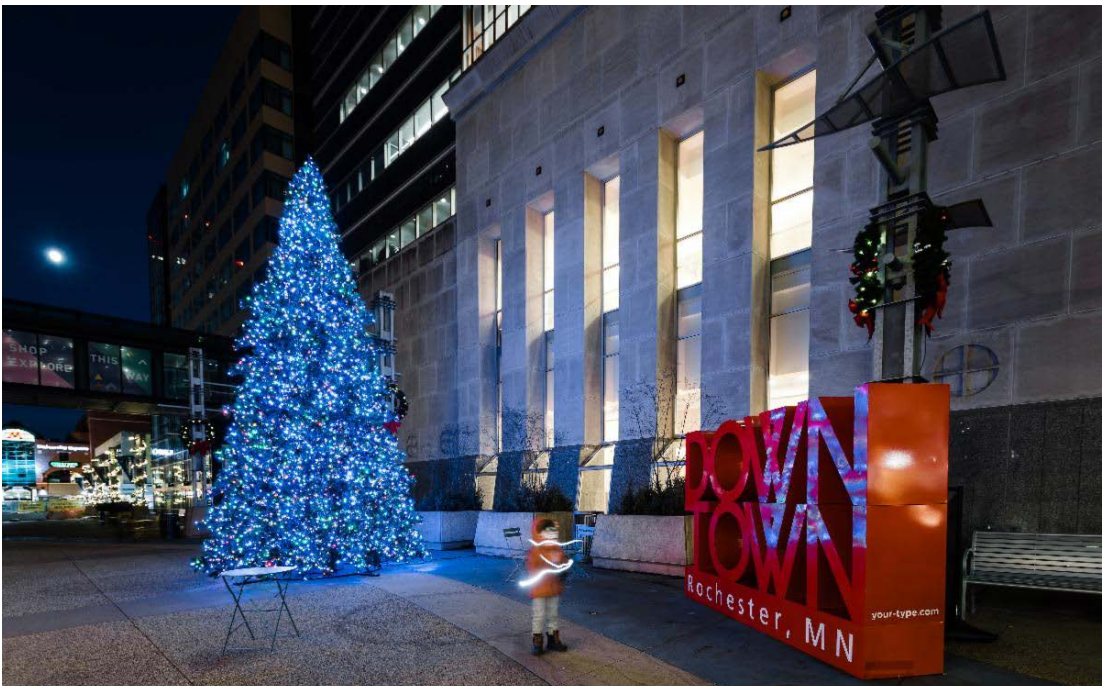
Congratulations to **Anushka Kollengode** for receiving the Indian Association of Minnesota (IAM) Student Scholarship Award in recognition of her Outstanding Entrepreneurial Leadership!

Rochester Through My Lens

Capturing the magnificent hues of fall and its memorable events through the lens of **Bharath Wootla**, where the brilliance of foliage meets unforgettable moments.







Recipes

Paan Ke Ladoo

Ajay Singh

Diwali is my favorite festival and most definitely the favorite time of the year. As preparation for Diwali, in our home, we make different types of sweets and savories. Paan ke Ladoo is one of my favorite sweets.

Paan is an Indian mouth freshener, and digestive made from betel leaves. You can make ladoos out of this and can enjoy this after dinner/lunch or during Chai time.

INGREDIENTS NEEDED:

- 1 cup + 2 tablespoons desiccated coconut unsweetened
- 1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk
- 4 paan leaves also known as betel leaves (from any Indian grocery store)
- 4-5 teaspoons gulkand also known as rose petal preserve (from India or from any Indian grocery store)
- 1 teaspoon ghee also known as clarified butter
- Nuts (optional) Green food color (optional)



TO PREPARE PAAN KE LADOOS:

- Chop the betel leaves. To a food processor, add chopped paan leaves and condensed milk. Pulse till both are well combined. Set aside.
- Heat ghee in a pan on medium heat. Once ghee is hot, add desiccated coconut and roast for 2-3 minutes on medium-low heat. Add the condensed milk – paan mixture and stir to combine. You may add few drops of green food color.
- Cook for another 2 minutes on low heat until the mixture will thicken. Remove from heat and let the mixture cool down a bit.
- Grease your hands with little ghee, take small portion from the coconut mixture, flatten it and add 1/2-1 teaspoon of gulkand in the center. Bring the edges together and roll to form a ladoo. Roll the prepared ladoo in desiccated coconut. Ladoos are ready to be served.

The ladoos can be stored in the refrigerator and enjoyed later. Paan Ke Ladoos can be boxed in beautiful gift boxes for your friends and family. This is a great dessert to prepare for your holiday season. If you do, share with contact@icamn.org some of your pictures and we will post them in our upcoming Samarpan.

Cartoon of the quarter

Unni Gopinathan



Have you considered becoming an ICAM member?

Check out <http://icamn.org/membership> to learn about the amazing benefits you can enjoy!



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