

Konkani Express

January 2015



KONKANI EXPRESS



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Message from the HAAS President

Hello Everyone,

There is always a time to come and a time to say goodbye, As HAAS President I enjoyed every minute of planning and organising HAAS events. It gives me great pleasure in introducing our new committee along with the expanded, full fledged youth Committee. During our Diwali event one of our HAAS members asked, “Aunty, what is the secret behind HAAS success?” I pondered over it for a few days. The more I think about it only one answer comes to my mind. “Listen to your members”. Rule No:1—Listen to your members. Rule No: 2 – When in doubt refer to rule number 1.

With this I welcome the New Committee and wish each and everyone a very happy and prosperous New Year!

Truly

Maya Prabhu

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Welcoming the New Committee 2015/2016:

Sunil Shenoy: President



Sanat Nileshwar: Vice-president



Gurudath Kamath: Treasurer



Sheetal Sashital: Co- Secretary



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Surekha Pai: Co- Secretary



Meet your HAAS 2015-2016 Committee Members:

President: Sunil G. Shenoy

Sunil and his wife Sandhya live in Spring with their two children Sreesh and Sneha. Sreesh is a Senior in High School and Sneha has just started middle school. Sunil has been in the Houston area for the past 25+ years and works for a large IT Manufacturing and Services Company. Sunil has been involved with the Konkani community throughout and has been a HAAS member since its inception in 2002. Outside of work life, Sunil enjoys playing all kinds of sports, cycling, working out and traveling in addition to being involved with his kids' extra-curricular activities.

Vice-President: Sanat Nileshwar

Sanat Nileshwar resides in Sugar Land with his wife Vaishali. They have two children Alika and Samir, both of who are in college. Sanat has lived in the Houston area for the past 25 years and currently works for the largest US Food Service company. Before coming to the US, Sanat grew up in Mumbai. Sanat's interests include enjoying music, traveling and working out.

Treasurer: Gurudath Kamath

Gurudath (not to be confused by the famous actor Gurudutt but equally our own handsome Konkani) along with his wife Aarti and daughter Charani, moved to the U.S. in 2006 and currently

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reside in Katy. He is a Civil/Structural Engineer by profession, working for a consultancy firm serving the oil and gas industry. They have been a part of HAAS for about six years. Before coming to Houston, Guru has been involved with Konkani organizations and brings a wealth of experience on being on a committee to organize various events. Charani was most recently the Youth coordinator for HAAS and was instrumental in starting a HAAS initiated youth activity for Upaya in her high school last year.

Co-Secretary: Sheetal Sashital

Sheetal and her husband, Mahesh, moved to Houston in 2006 and have been part of HAAS since then. They have a 6 year old daughter, Sahana. Sheetal loves spending time with her family and with their family dog. She likes to run and spend time outdoors. Sheetal is very excited about being part of the committee for the next 2 years as she has always been involved with a "Konkani Association" all her life. She grew up in Hyderabad with a very close knit group of Konkani families (with whom she still keeps in touch) and hopes that Sahana experiences the same here in Houston.

Co-Secretary: Surekha Pai

Surekha and her husband Sudhir have been associated with HAAS since 2003. They have one daughter Serene Mahika, who is a 2nd grader at The Kinkaid School. Sudhir works for a large Oil & Gas company and has been in Houston since the early 1990s. Surekha worked for Enron & British Gas before getting married. She came to Houston in 2004 before moving to Dubai in Dec 2005 for 3 years and London in Oct 2008 for 3 yrs. before relocating back to Houston in Jan 2011. Houston is a second home after Mumbai for Surekha and her family. Attending many functions with HAAS has been a family tradition being away from home. Surekha has joined HAAS to help and be actively involved in carrying out various traditional and cultural activities that HAAS undertakes and make it a more fun place for all families to be associated with.



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A Message from your HAAS 2015-2016 Committee

Namaskaru Everyone:

If you are receiving and reading this Konkani Express newsletter, you should feel proud and privileged that you belong to a very elite close-knit group from India (or of Indian Origin) who have made it in the US and are fortunate to live a lifestyle better than a lot of people! We wanted to convey the thoughts and aspirations of the new HAAS committee and seek your support in advancing the worthwhile causes that we believe will help position Konkani as a force to reckon with, in not only within the overall Indian community, but also in the overall community that we live in.

The HAAS mission (as also mentioned on the ourHAAS.com website) is:

- To preserve and promote our culture, tradition and deep rooted heritage.
- To pass on the values and spirit of our culture to generations after us, and
- To provide an opportunity to network socially and professionally with other Amchigales.

In the structural engineering field, the basic principle is that no matter how strong the structure is, if the foundation is weak, the structure will not withstand and will crumble and collapse. This principle also applies for any family, organization, and for that matter any country. This jives closely with the core values of the HAAS organization.

As per the first mission statement, our deep rooted heritage, in other words, the foundation of our heritage should be maintained well so that our family, our culture, our tradition can be preserved.

The second mission statement is about passing the baton to the next generation which is none other than our children. Our youth are the back bone of our community. They have so much energy and spirit that they can overcome and conquer any obstacles. This is probably the single most important reason why the current committee as a group decided to run for the different positions. Everybody on the committee strongly felt the responsibility to be the liaison to ensure that the Konkani culture be maintained and transferred to the younger generation. To that extent, we are glad to let you know that we have expanded the youth coordinator position to a youth committee comprising of 3 members Ria Rao, Pooja Nayak, and Rohit Kamath who will serve as Youth President, Youth Secretary, and Youth Treasurer respectively.

The third mission statement is self-explanatory. All amchigales are like members of a close knit family. It will be difficult to invite everyone home and have a get together. So when we meet four times in a year for HAAS functions, it's like everyone is meeting and greeting our own family members.

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Konkanis are known for their culinary delicacies and sumptuous dishes and we pride ourselves in enjoying those whenever and wherever we meet, be it a casual or formal get-together, religious function or just a party! While there will definitely be an intention to ensure that we provide the most appropriate food fare for the HAAS functions, we sincerely wanted to change the mindset of how we can go the extra mile to accomplish our mission statements during HAAS and non-HAAS events and activities. While a lot of us, no doubt, might have some personal philanthropic initiatives (e.g. sending money to India for temples, ashrams, and the like), we need to also start thinking what else we can do as a close-knit group living in the Greater Houston Area - for the Community-at-Large that we live in. A lot of us came from India with deep and strong rooted principles that has bode us well in the areas of frugality, finance and culture. We need to expand our thinking beyond that and start giving in earnest - be it service, money, time, support - that can make or at least start to make a difference in the lives of the people who are less fortunate. We assure you that once you get involved, you will get the contentment and satisfaction of what true giving means. We are all busy with the various day to day responsibilities as well as the plethora of activities that we immerse ourselves and our family in; so the "giving" part really takes a back seat for many of us and we truly have to put in an effort to bring it to the forefront.

The charter of the HAAS 2015-2016 Committee is to make HAAS a youth oriented organization. Konkani kids should make full use of our family organization, including the numerous volunteering opportunities it offers, and reap benefits from it as a boost for their college resume. As most of you know, HAAS is a 501 (3) (c) non-profit religious organization as defined by the IRS code. In addition to conducting the regularly scheduled HAAS functions (Shri Satya Narayana Puja, Spring Picnic, Krishna Janmashtami and Diwali), we are also planning to organize youth driven activities in the coming years. So we expect every parent to make a note of this and encourage the kids to actively participate in HAAS functions and community events. Some of the youth-driven activities planned are:

- Meals on Wheels / Sandwich Seva / Food Bank Drives
- Service for Non-profit ministries / Field-Trips
- Recognition of graduating and high achieving youth
- Donation to deserving causes in US and India
- Walkathon to benefit charities
- Discourses/Discussions on relevant topics led by Adults/Youth during Monthly bhajans.
- For those couples and families who have adult children or are "empty nesters", you will be our backbone to drive these initiatives with the extensive knowledge and experience you bring to the table. We are excited about the coming years and so are our youth committee members. Our success solely lies on each and every member contributing as a group and we sincerely hope we can count on your unconditional support to achieve our goals. We encourage each and every one of you to communicate with us and bring forth

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your ideas, energy, support and how you will participate with us so that we can attain success as a group.

Dhanyavadu and Devo Baro Karo,

Your HAAS 2015-2016 Committee

The Youth Board:

President: Ria Rao:



Hi, everyone! My name is Ria Rao, I am a senior at Seven Lakes High School in Katy, and I am extremely honored to be a part of the HAAS Youth Committee. Throughout high school I have been a part of the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) organization, the Youth Development Leadership Program of Houston (YLDP) and an officer for the Robotics Team. My hobbies include dance, scrap booking, and piano & through these extra-curricular activities, I have learned valuable skills that I can bring to the table. For example, dance has taught me endurance while FBLA & YLDP have helped me gain public speaking skills. Also, this organization, like all, needs a dash of creativity and outside thinking which scrap booking and robotics have taught me. Next year, I plan to apply these skills in college where I'll be studying Engineering.

As for my goals in HAAS, I plan to follow through with the activities started by the previous Youth Coordinators as well as formulate my own. For example, the former Youth Coordinator, Charani Kamath, brought the organization Upaya to our high school where we volunteer to raise money for the less fortunate in India and invest in the businesses they hope to start up. She was first exposed to Upaya through HAAS and she created the organization at school which I am now the President of. I hope to broaden the scope of the people we inform and involve our HAAS community in Upaya fundraisers started through the school. Finally, some goals I have to get the youth more involved include new games at the picnics, community service projects, and a tutoring program where older students could mentor and help out the younger children.. I hope to implement

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these goals in the next few years and will work to reach the expectations set for this position. I'm looking forward to a great term!

Secretary: Pooja Nayak



My fellow HAAS members, it is with great honor that I, Pooja Nayak, am able to represent the youth of our beloved HAAS association by being the youth secretary for this next year. I am 16 years of age and the daughter of Pandurang and Jayanthi Nayak. I am looking forward to being a part of this amazing committee and i am excited to see what we can accomplish as a team to better HAAS for all of its members!

Treasurer: Rohit Kamath



Namaskaru! My name is Rohit Kamath and I'm excited to be a member of the next HAAS committee. I was born and raised in Houston. Along with my parents, Ramesh and Aparna Kamath, and younger sister, Uma, we have been fortunate enough to have such an active Konkani community where we live. I'm 15 years old and a freshman at Obra D. Tompkins High School in Katy. As a youth committee member, my two main goals are to promote Konkani culture, and to increase the involvement of the Konkani youth in HAAS. I look forward to serving my local Konkani community and sincerely thank you for this opportunity.

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Keeping Up with the Konkani:
Namita Kamath MCN, RD, LD



Namita Kamath MCN, RD, LD is currently a Pediatric Clinical Dietitian at Texas Children's Hospital, Houston, Texas. She was Research coordinator at Baylor College of Medicine before joining Dietetic Intern, Masters in Clinical Nutrition Coordinated Program at UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas. Her expertise includes Nutritional education, Nutritional counseling, weight Management and Diabetic Education. Junior Correspondent Ms. Neha Bhat of Katy Texas brings us this forthright interview.

1. What training is needed to become a dietitian?

Accredited education program either a bachelors or masters. Bachelors take four years while masters takes 2 more years. Usually followed by a 1 year internship program followed by the National RD Exam.

2. What are the strong points of a typical Konkani diet?

Mostly plant based and vegetarian. It is low fat with no heavy curries.

3. What are its weaknesses?

Mostly simple carbs like rice. We usually have bigger portions than we require. There are also not enough proteins especially if you only get it from small things like dal.

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4. What changes can we incorporate to make the Konkani diet more nutritious?

We should incorporate complex carbs like brown rice or par boiled rice. It is healthier and fills you up quicker and does not give a blood sugar spike. When we take seconds we should go for the upkari and avoid more rice.

5. Can we actually trick our minds to make us seem full?

Definitely. If we use a smaller plate and fill it up it will makes us seem full more quickly. And by using a smaller plate, naturally the portion sizes will become smaller.

6. How can we ward off diabetes through diet?

Portion size should be changed to smaller sizes and by adding exercise to our daily lives. It does not have to be high amounts just 15 minutes at a time is a good start. We should eat more complex carbs and less starch.

7. What are the dangers of embracing a western diet?

Portion size, high calories, deep fired food, and preservatives are some dangers.

8. How can we be healthy while using the western diet?

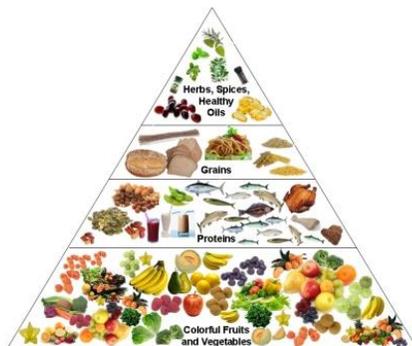
Eat more at home and eat out once a week as a treat. If you do need to eat out, eat smaller portions, kids' meals, or smaller entrees. Make sure to add fruit and salads as well.

9. Do you help in formulating individual diets?

Yes. I am responsible for creating meal plans and making sure that the kids that come get the right nutrition and exercise required. I especially deal with diabetic patients. I make sure their blood sugar is under control.

I hope this is what you were hoping for. Thanking you for asking me too interview her I had a lot of fun. Please let me know if I can help with anything else.

----- Neha Bhat, Katy. Texas



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ROYAL RAJASTHAN: A Memorable Visit!



A visit to Rajasthan is an awe-inspiring journey through Moghul monuments and Rajput forts and palaces with a sprinkling of divine temples, all steeped in centuries old history!! I hope to give you a glimpse of what awaits you. There are a lot of tours of the golden triangle of Delhi, Agra & Jaipur but to cover the highlights of Rajasthan, ideally you need at least 8-10 days. You have to fly to Delhi and then on to Jaipur either by plane or car to start the Rajasthan trip. It is a good idea to hire a reputable car & driver from Delhi and keep him for the entire journey. Of course there are lots of tours on offer but if you have 3-4 people in your group, it is well worth it to do a personalized tour. Our recommendation is given below. He was very professional and informative. He was trustworthy because my cousin's in-laws use his services

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all the time. Only drawback, he is not very fluent in English but several foreign tourists have been his clients.

Bhag Singh

Mobile: 9958954924; 9212024463

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All our hotel bookings were done online thru Expedia or Agoda after researching reviews on trip advisor and checking google maps for the proximity of things to the hotel locations. They all turned out great except the one in Jaisalmer. It is best to get personal recommendations from friends & family.

Notes:

1. Entrance fees at all monuments are significantly more for NRI's and foreigners. Most of them also charge for using a camera and/or video camera.
2. Every monument including temples, have huge numbers of "so-called" government approved guides who pester you to no end. It is best to avoid them. Instead, opt for audio tours wherever they offer them. They give correct information and guide you thru the sights with numbered signs.
3. Shopping was not on our agenda but Jaipur and Jodhpur are great for shopping.
4. Best time to go is November thru February. Nights get very cold. Nothing is centrally heated. Hotels give extra blankets and small electric heaters which, for safety reasons should not be kept on during the night. We used thermal underclothes at night.
5. Also, pack enough clothes for all the days (especially underclothes). Clothes do not dry unless you stay somewhere for 2 days and are able to hang clothes in the sun. Sadly with the one bag rule, that leaves no room for shopping!!
6. Dress conservatively so as not to stand out as a "foreigner" and consequently become a target for cheating and scams. Unfortunately, that is the sad part with so many people trying to make a living.

The following itinerary makes a circuit and brings you back to Jaipur from where you can fly to other major cities in India.

Jaipur: Being the tourist capital of Rajasthan, it has many American chain hotels.

Things to see: Amber Fort, Jantar Mantar, Hawa Mahal

Places to eat: The Royal Treat on the main road into Jaipur; Choki Dhani is famous for a taste of Rajasthan culture & food.

Ajmer: If you have time, it is worth a trip to this city. The hotels are not going to be as nice as the ones in Jaipur.

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Things to see: Pushkar, less than an hour's drive from Ajmer has the only Brahma temple in India and a Ranganathji temple where you can witness a beautiful aarti similar to Tirupati! Also, Ajmer has a recently built gorgeous Shirdi Saibaba Temple and a Shiva temple. The murti is carved out of a single stone with Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh, Karthikeya and all their "vahana's" together. Only one of its kind in India. Absolutely gorgeous. Also, Lake Ana Sagar is a beautiful place for a stroll.

Udaipur: Drive via fabulous Chittorgarh. History will come alive! You will have to leave Ajmer very early, see Chittorgarh and arrive late at Udaipur.

For accommodation there is the super luxurious and pricey Lake Palace or for a reasonable option there are several converted havelis with views of the lake and rooftop restaurants. Some of them even cook your food to order (no ghee or fried stuff).

Things to see: Jagdish temple – it is a treat to wake up to "Jai Jagdish Hare" at dawn.

City Palace is fabulous – allow all day and do the audio tour.

Don't miss the evening program at Bagore Ki Haveli – all kinds of traditional Rajasthani dances in an old haveli. Go half hour early for best seats.

Sahelion Ki Bari – beautiful gardens

I recommend that you add a couple more days here to visit Kumbhalgarh about 2 hours away and also visit Mt. Abu.

Jodhpur: On the way to Jodhpur, definitely do a side trip to see Ranakpur Jain temple. It is absolutely fabulous. There are 1446 stone carved pillars, no two are alike. The place has an aura that makes you want to just stay there and meditate.

Accommodation: Again, there are several chain hotels but we had tried a home stay at Jagat Villas at 25 Rai ka Bagh run by Mr. & Mrs. Devender Singh.

Tel: +91 291 2513131; mobile +91 9929706962

The lady is related to the Maharaja and inherited the haveli and converted it to a B & B recently. They made us feel at home and even cooked dinner when we arrived late at night.

It was a different experience with very basic but more than adequate facilities; very reasonable at \$40 including food.

Things to see: Umali Bhavan, Mehrengarh Fort with beautiful vistas of the "blue" city, Jaswant Thada

I highly recommend this side trip on Jodhpur-Jaisalmer Highway to Manvar Resort & Desert Camp

Phone +91 2928 218911 or +91 9414070491 or +91 9414129767

We stayed in a deluxe tent – ultimate luxury! Lovely place to relax in the middle of the desert. A little expensive at \$250/night inclusive of lovely dinner, entertainment, breakfast but well worth it for one night! This was the first such resort but now several have cropped up. Don't know how good the others are but this one came highly recommended and met our expectations.

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Jaisalmer – Famous for being the last big city near the Pakistan border.

Accommodation: The fort is a Living Fort and supposedly has havelis now being run as hotels. Because of the poor sanitation around the fort, several areas are quite filthy but a reliable guide should be able to show you the key areas.

Places to see: Gadhisar lake, Patwon Ki haveli (absolutely beautiful), Bada Bagh (out of the city but worth a visit), Kuldhara old village (don't waste your time, it's a tourist trap), Sam Sand dunes sunset camel ride into Thar Desert (lovely but too many tourists have ruined it with litter) In hindsight, we would skip Jaisalmer if not for the lure of the Thar Desert.

From Jaisalmer, you have a long drive back to Jaipur for your onward flights. Alternatively you could drive back to Udaipur and fly from there but there are fewer flights.

In conclusion, this was a wonderful vacation and for me it brought alive the history learnt in school and a sense of pride for what Rajasthan has to offer visually & spiritually!

■ Jyoti Nayak , Houston, Texas

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

The HAAS Committee announces:

Thanks for all the help in the past two years!

Best Wishes always to the entire HAAS Family!



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KALE “SANNA POLO”

*Konkani Creativity & Cooking
Corner*



1 cup Rice Flour
 ¼ Cup Toor Dal soaked in water
 ¼ tsp tamarind
 Red Chilies 8 or to taste
 Salt to taste
 3 Medium Kale Leaves
 Pinch of Hing
 2 tablespoons coconut

1. Grind Toor Dhal, red chilies, tamarind and coconut with just enough water to dosa batter consistency.
2. Add salt, Hing and chopped Kale Leaves
3. On a hot grid, smear oil and spread the mixture in the shape of a small dosa and cover with a lid
4. Once cooked on one side, turn sanna polo one side to other side and allow to cook till done on both sides adding oil to grid as necessary
5. Serve while hot and enjoy!

--- Shanthi R. Pai, Houston, Texas

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HAAS has been formed to provide a common meeting ground for the Amchigeles residing in and around the Greater Houston area.

Our mission is to

- Preserve and promote our culture, tradition and deep rooted heritage.
- Confer the values and spirit of our culture to generations after us, and
- Provide an opportunity to network socially and professionally with other Amchigeles.

Also, if you have any specific concerns or goals you would like addresses, we hope to hear from you as well!

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Have you checked out our website?
www.ourhaas.com

Houston Area Amchigele Samaj

www.ourhaas.com

HAAS has been created to preserve and promote our culture so that we can pass it on to future generations.

We would like to hear from you on how we can help our organization have greater impact.

If you have any new ideas to encourage youth involvement or any service opportunities for our organization– we would love to hear from you.