



# Konkani Express

## April 2018

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# Message from the President

Greetings everyone,

It is already 3 months into 2018 and as always the year was kicked off with the auspicious event of Sri Satynarayana Puja which incidentally also marks the annual HAAS graduation ceremony for the Konkani senior students. It is also the first event of our second term. As you all know Sheila, Akhila, Aparna, Archana and I, along with our youth members Samhitha, Neha and Mallika, started our term as your HAAS committee in January 2017 and as we start 2018, we have a lot to reminisce and thank everyone for.

Some of the highlights:

- Introduction of PayPal
- Re-introduced the Newsletter
- Setup International Student Discount
- Purchase of new equipment
- Organized a fundraiser to support Harvey Victims
- Finalized the vision and mission statement
- Updated the HAAS Website
- Facilitated distribution of Charity donations by HAAS members

As we considered how we can continue to support HAAS and find ways to surprise and delight the members, our focus turned to the Konkani's of tomorrow – our HAAS Youth who will be the driving force of HAAS in the future. We would like to see the HAAS continue to flourish for generations to come. This is only possible with active participation from more of our youth that I would define as anyone in the age group of 16-35. Please encourage your kids and friends that are of this age group to frequent our events. If not interested in attending, I would still love to hear feedback on what we can do differently to make them feel a sense of belonging in the community. They can reach out to me at [jn777\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:jn777_2000@yahoo.com)

As always, these events are not successful without all your participation and support and we look forward to seeing you all at our next event in April "HAAS Picnic with a Twist" which is planned for Saturday April 28<sup>th</sup>.

So why do we do all of this? To give the Konkani community a place to bond, promote the Konkani talent, keep our culture alive and meet and make lifelong friends. And we cannot do it without all your support and participation and we request each and every one of you to spread the word and introduce HAAS to all your friends and families.

Sincerely,  
Jayanthi Nayak

# Amchi Achievements

This month, we are featuring **Namrata Sirur Singh** – daughter of Gauri and Kumar Sirur and wife to Gagan Singh. While she started in a very ‘conventional’ career path, life took an interesting turn – read on to find out more about this talented young lady...

**Can you share a bit about your background – where did you go to college, what did you major in, hobbies, etc**

I've had an interesting career path. I did my undergrad in Hotel Management at the University of Guelph (Canada) and moved to Houston after to work as a Food & Beverage Assistant Manager at a Hilton. After that, I worked in pricing for Sysco, which is where I first learned about Supply Chain. At that point, I knew I wanted a way to climb the corporate ladder faster and an MBA seemed to be the best way to do that. So I attended U of H for an MBA in Supply Chain and got a job as a Supply Chain Analyst at Schlumberger right out of school. So I finally got that fancy job I'd always wanted ... except I was miserable. So 2.5 years later, I quit my job to finally pursue a career I was actually interested in. I took a solo trip to Paris, did a lot of soul-searching and research, and moved to Austin to work for a social media startup.

Unfortunately, I had to move back to Houston the next year for personal reasons. My best friend, Pavi, had just gotten laid off at the same time. So here we were, both unemployed but feeling an odd sense of comfort knowing that we were in this together. We wanted to provide that same sense of comfort and community to others who were unemployed but hiding it like a shameful secret. So we started a YouTube channel called [The 9to5 MisFits](#) to tackle the stigma by starting an honest conversation about our journey. We talked about the emotional, financial pitfalls, how to overcome them, and how to get back into the workforce or start a business. Of course, neither of us had a background in video production so we learned everything from scratch. I'm an information junkie and have always loved to write, so I did all the research and scripting while my partner learned the ins and outs of camera work and editing. A year and a half later, we'd put out 100 videos and people started to take notice and hire us to make videos for them.

Side Stuff:

-I've danced all my life and have been teaching Bollywood dance on the side through Rhythm India for the last 4 years

-If Top Chef ever called me to be their next host, I'd drop everything and go! I'm a rabid foodie.

### **What do you do today?**

Today, [The 9to5 MisFits](#) continues to be a two-woman show. We create YouTube videos, [podcasts](#), and blogs. We also produce [explainer videos](#) as well as personal branding videos for corporate clients, small businesses, and individuals.

### **What are the steps you took to get there?**

I didn't really have a background in video production and had very little experience in social media prior to starting The 9to5 MisFits. I also knew nothing about running a business and lacked a network of entrepreneurs who could mentor me. So I taught myself through innumerable online courses, books, podcasts, videos, etc, and still continue to do so. I also approached small businesses to let me handle their social media for free or a small fee so I could "practice" the stuff I was learning. Another thing was joining organizations and attending networking events where I could meet people in digital media or business to build my network.

### **What obstacles, if any, did you encounter and overcome?**

One of the biggest hurdles came early on when I had just quit Schlumberger. I thought I'd find my passion and have this fabulous new job that I'd love in 3 months ... easy peasy. But in reality, I didn't know what I would do next and I started to panic when that next job was nowhere on the horizon. It's more a mental battle than anything, and at times like these, it's easy to feel stuck and do counter-productive things like binge-watch Netflix all day. So I hired a life coach to get myself out of the funk. It sounds really frou-frou, and I know as South Asians, we don't really discuss mental health. But having an objective 3rd party to just talk to and help shift my way of thinking was a real game-changer.

### **What are some of your accomplishments and what do you consider your greatest accomplishment?**

I don't think I've had any huge accomplishments yet, but I'd say getting my first paying client was pretty exciting. We weren't even considering video services as a revenue source initially, but someone who'd seen our videos on Facebook reached out and asked if we were for hire. We immediately rushed out and bought better equipment and showed up the next week to make her a video. She's now a regular client.

Other than that, it was pretty awesome to be covered on [Girlboss](#) and the [Hpodcast](#).

### **What advice do you have for those young adults on choosing an 'unconventional' career path?**

One of the hardest things about doing something unconventional is not having enough people who've done it before that can guide you. But they do exist somewhere, so do your research and find the experts in your field - what's their secret sauce, how did they get to where they are today, and what lessons can you apply to your own life? Put in the hard work, be open to taking risks, and be adaptable. Oh, and don't lose hope. :)

# Recipe Corner

## **Methi Sanna Khotto (Spicy Idly)**

Ingredients:

1 cup rice

½ cup moong or toor dhal

1 bunch of methi leaves

¾ cup grated coconut

10-15 red chilies (roasted)

Tamarind – marble size

Salt to taste

Hing or onion

Directions:

Soak rice and dhal separately for 2-3 hours.

Wash and chop the methi leaves

Cut the onion into small, fine pieces

Grind the coconut, red chilies, and tamarind in a blender with some water and the dhal to make a thick paste. At the end, add the rice and grind to a fine consistency. Transfer the thick paste into a container. To this, add the chopped methi leaves, onions or ½ teaspoon hing. Mix Well

Grease the idly plate, add the mixture and steam for 15-20 minutes. Sanna Kotto is now ready to eat!

Variations – break the idly's into small pieces – add some oil to a pan and add some smashed garlic and chopped onions and saute until brown. Add the idly pieces and heat on low flame for 5 minutes.

***Recipe submitted by Mrs. Shanthi Pai***



# What's Been Happening?

The auspicious event of Sri Satya Narayana Puja on Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Sugarland Community Center not only marked the commencement of HAAS 2018 events, it also celebrated the successes of our graduating high school seniors.



Greeted by the beautiful décor of the majestic elephants and the Diya's by Lord Satynarayana's side and the lights in the background it was a sight to behold and everyone walking in was appropriately mesmerized.

The event was started promptly at 10am with light refreshments accompanied by Tea and Coffee. HAAS members came in beautifully dressed in colorful and traditional outfits adding to the color and vibrancy of the event.

Dr. Ramakrishna once again graciously obliged us and performed the puja at the event. As always he did a wonderful job explaining the meaning behind each mantra and provided the students with the deeper understanding of the importance and history of this auspicious puja.

Our graduating seniors, Samhitha Bhat, Divya Shasithal, Rohit Kamath and Nikhil Baliga, participated in the puja this year seeking the blessings of Lord Satya Narayana. Asha and Sudhir Kamath also performed the puja. At the end of the puja, each of the graduates stood before the audience and introduced themselves. It was amazing to hear about their amazing accomplishments at this very young age. We are very proud to have them represent our community as they head out to college this summer and represent themselves and this community.



# Save the Dates

## *Haas Picnic*



Saturday, April 28th

10am

Woodsland Park  
Community Center

## *Janmashtami*



August 25<sup>th</sup>

## *Diwali*



November 10<sup>th</sup>



# Senior Spotlight-Poem

## Amma Means Mother

The lamp you carried from the smallness of your home in India where you raised my aunt, uncle, and my mother to the vast land of America of which you now call your home – Amma means mother

You never let this lamp flicker, you poured all your oil into it and from the love in your heart – Amma means mother

From the rude remarks you have encountered about the rich melanin in your skin to the times you were told to go back to your country, you only held your chin up a little higher in the air alongside this strong flame – Amma means mother

From learning the English Language in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and going through high school being taught in a language you didn't even speak, you persevered for yourself and your future, you sat by this gas lamp and studied for hours on end – Amma means mother

From the high waters you sailed with my grandfather wed at the mere age of 22 you watched this light start to flicker with the pressure of the sea air – Amma means mother

From all the sea-sickening journeys you took around the world with your beloved to when you were made fun of “that dot on your forehead” and after a couple of weeks on the ocean it became bearable and the flame you possessed had roared into a fire – Amma means mother

We call you Amma because we observed our very own mother calling you this and name stuck – Amma means mother

You've been made fun of for eating with your hands, a custom so common to you  
You've been made fun of for wearing your hair in a long dark plait and wearing your sari with its long pallu

You've been made fun of by your own aunts for not having pale skin like your siblings and mother

And still...

This lamp that's been lit is still burning,

Like the butter you spend hours churning,

Your canvas was white and smooth

For you did not let the racist, the sexist, the nonbelievers blow out your flame

Instead you birthed three babies, one being my mother

and planted an ember in them, you told them not to smother

That ember has ignited into the fire they have passed on to your grandchildren, to me – You'll always be my Amma

and Amma means Mother

Poem by Mallika Nagarkatti about her  
Grandmother, Padmini Bijoor

# Our Traditions

## Ram Navami- March 25<sup>th</sup>

Celebrations for Ram Navami begin on Gudi Padwa where people gather and chant Lord Rama's name. On the 9<sup>th</sup> day, which symbolizes the arrival of Lord Vishnu's seventh avatar Lord Rama, devotees commence the celebration with a puja and aarti. During the puja, Lord Rama is placed in a cradle to symbolize his birth. The festivities continue into the evening with a chariot festival, 'Ratha Yathra', with beautifully decorated 'rathas'. Some Indian communities celebrate it as the wedding anniversary, 'Kalyanam Utsavam', of Lord Rama and Sita.



## Hanuman Jayanti- March 31<sup>st</sup>

Hanuman Jayanti celebrates the birth of Lord Hanuman. On this auspicious day, devotees of Lord Hanuman seek his protection and blessings by performing a puja and abhishekam. People also chant the Hanuman chalisa as it is believed to have the ability to conquer the evil spirits and provide peace to the mind. Devotees apply the sindoor tilak to their foreheads from the idol of Lord Hanuman, which is typically reddish orange in color to symbolize the Vanara community. A popular Konkani tradition is to make fried delicacies such as *vada* and *ambado* to eat and enjoy.



# HAAS Information

**HAAS** – a community for the Amchigeles residing in and around the Greater Houston area.

## **Our mission:**

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

For more details, refer our website at [www.ourhaas.com](http://www.ourhaas.com)

## **2018 Membership Details**

Single person - \$15

Family of two - \$25

Each additional member to a family (child, youth, or adult) - \$5

### Committee:

**Jayanthi Nayak:**

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