



# RAYS OF OUR LIVES

[November 2015]



Diwali has always been a  
time for new beginnings,

Change is in

The Air

*A Letter From Your Outgoing  
Co-Presidents,  
Sarish Kasat and  
Roli Mandhana*

a fresh start with endless possibilities for the year ahead. As with any new year, whether it be this or the one celebrated in the Gregorian calendar, it's also a time to reflect on years past. This Diwali, as we sit and reflect on how far RAYS has come over the last 4 years of our co-presidency, we can't help but be proud of our accomplishments. No, this is not us giving ourselves a public pat on the back, it's more about giving the stronger, more cohesive community we've helped create a collective hug. RAYS as an organization has been around for quite some time, but the revitalized RAYS you see today, with regular Marwari Youth Reunions, fun programming at International Maheshwari Rajasthani Conventions, regional

events, and more only started when we met Kavita Pallod, Sweta Maheshwari, and Rohit Biyani at a convention in Washington, DC. We became friends and wanted to become better friends with all the other Marwaris too so we thought, why not resurrect RAYS?! We procured some funding and were able to host the first Marwari Youth Reunion in Austin, TX in 2011. We had no idea how big a part of our lives this would become over the next few years!

With around 30 attendees, we considered the first MYR a major success, and the passion we saw from the community of Marwari Youth drove us to continue and try to do more. Today we sit as an organization with immense support from the Maheshwari community in North America, active membership of over 150 people, a recent reunion with over 70 attendees, regular local chapter events, and expectations that this is only going to get bigger and better. Why did we continue for four years? We loved it. We loved the hours of Google Hangouts and planning with such talented individuals culminating in successful, meaningful events that made a lot of people smile, and of course fulfilled our goal of strengthening the community and connecting people with similar backgrounds and interests. RAYS became such a big part of our lives, a true passion project, that we couldn't risk it disappearing as it had in the past, so we kept at it until we could find people as passionate as we were to take care of it. And here we are!

Every organization needs turnover from time to time, new people to infuse new energy and new ideas, so we've decided to take a step back from our co-presidency and re-structure the organization in a way we think will be the most effective. So with mixed emotions, as our last acts as co-presidents, we'd like to do four things: 1) we'd like to thank Ankit Saraf and Kavita Pallod, who will be departing Executive Board entirely, for everything they've brought to this organization, Ankit for the last year, and Kavita from the very beginning. 2) We'd like to introduce Mohit Moondra (Community Chair) and Sarika Malani (Events Chair) as the two newest members of the Executive Board. Both are extremely qualified individuals -- we have high hopes! 3) We'd like to introduce current Executive Board member, Priya Malani Manchanda, as your new RAYS President! Priya has been an integral part of exec for the last two years, and we can't wait to see where she guides the organization! 4) Lastly, we'd like to say one more time that we love you all! Take it away, Priya!

**“Take it away,  
Priya!”**

# RAYS: A New Force Awakens

*A Letter from your new President,  
Priya Malani Manchanda*

I'm incredibly excited to be part of the future of RAYS as president - I have some big shoes to fill thanks to Roli and Sarish, but thankfully our reorganized Executive Board with a couple of new members is fantastic and ready to build upon what the alums have established! A little about me if we haven't met already: I'm a born-and-raised Texan (live in Dallas currently) and work at Raytheon as a Configuration Manager. I've been involved in RAYS committees since 2012, and on exec as the Events Chair for about 2 years. What keeps me coming back to RAYS and conventions is the instant bond that forms effortlessly between all of us, and I hope that our new exec board will continue to provide that to y'all! And my favorite thing about being Marwari is our embodiment of manuhaar - it just fits so well with southern hospitality! Looking forward to the great things to come and seeing y'all at IMRC 2016.



*Priya Malani Manchanda  
Dallas, TX*

## Introducing the new RAYS Executive Board

- President – Priya Malani Manchanda – Dallas, TX
- Vice President – Roli Mandhana – Chicago, IL
- Publicity Chair – Sarish Kasat – Chicago, IL
- Technology Chair – Prince Bhojwani – Los Angeles, CA
- Community Chair – Mohit Moondra – San Francisco, CA
- Events Chair – Sarika Malani – Champaign, IL

# Get to Know Your Newest Executive Board Members

## **Mohit Moondra**

Role: Community Chair

Location: San Francisco, CA

Occupation: Product Manager

Email: [mohit.moondra@gmail.com](mailto:mohit.moondra@gmail.com)

Mohit is a Product Manager working in SF for the next big startup. He is also known as the CPP or Chief Party Planner for the RAYS organization. He enjoys daal baati, bhangra, and deep house music. While helping lead the Community team he also spends his time attending MMNA/RAYS events searching for his Rajasthani princess...someday he will succeed. His favorite thing about being Marwari is being Marwari, because let's face it, we are pretty awesome.



## **Sarika Malani**

Role: Events Chair

Location: Champaign, IL

Occupation: Student

Email: [sarikamalani713@gmail.com](mailto:sarikamalani713@gmail.com)

Sarika Malani is a graduate student at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (UIUC) studying Energy engineering with concentrations in both Aerospace and Nuclear Engineering. If that line alone isn't enough to prove that the youngest exec member is a force to be reckoned with, know that Sarika can call on her 430 strong DKD sisterhood at any moment to lay you flat. Sarika's favorite thing about being Marwari is the excuse it gives her to be obsessed with Hum Saath Saath Hain, which she thinks is the greatest thing any Marwari has created since crushed dal baati (bring it sliced bread!).



# Get Involved in Planning IMRC 2016

Now that you've gotten to know the new RAYS Executive Board, join us in planning our next major event! The International Maheshwari Rajasthani Convention is taking place next summer July 1-4, 2016 in Stamford, CT. If you're interested in helping plan RAYS programming for convention, please visit <http://rays.mmna.org/imrcapp.html> to fill out the committee application. Even if you don't have the time to actively plan, we want to hear about what types of events you'd like to see at convention! Please visit <http://rays.mmna.org/feedback.html> and let us know what breakout sessions would interest you the most.

Remember that if you'd like to apply for a position on the RAYS Executive Board in the future, you need committee experience, so get involved now!



# Diwali Events Near You



**MMNA Chapters**

## Diwali Milan

**Details & Contact**

<b>NOV</b> <b>7</b>	<b>West Coast (S) Chapter</b> Turtle Rock Community Park Irvine CA 92603	Surendra Malu (949)396-9300
<b>NOV</b> <b>14</b>	<b>Mid-West Chapter</b> SV Temple Novi MI 48374	Keshavlal Rathi (586) 939-6152
<b>NOV</b> <b>14</b>	<b>South-West Chapter</b> Radha Krishna Temple Houston TX 77072	Arun Mundra (832)866-0130
<b>NOV</b> <b>14</b>	<b>New England Chapter</b> Priya Indian Cuisine Lowell MA 01851	Pushpa Heda (860) 688-7363
<b>NOV</b> <b>14</b>	<b>North-East Chapter</b> Royal Albert Palace Edison NJ 08837	Alok Modani (732) 361-4314
<b>NOV</b> <b>14</b>	<b>Mid-East Chapter</b> Bombay Tandoor Restaurant Vienna VA 22182	Chetna Taori (703) 742-0730
<b>NOV</b> <b>15</b>	<b>West Coast (N) Chapter</b> Seven Trees Community Center San Jose CA 95111	Vijayshri Choudhry (408) 794-1000
<b>NOV</b> <b>21</b>	<b>South East Chapter</b> The Hindu Temple of Florida Tampa FL 33624	Ashish Daga (813)623-6087 Rashmi Jakota (813)863-3048
<b>TBA</b>	<b>Canada Chapter</b> Rajesh Rathi (905) 794-7967	

Treat.

Yo.

Self.

*Manish Bidasaria*



## Gulab Jamun

### Jamun

- 1) Mix and homogenize 2.5 cups dry milk powder, 1 cup all-purpose flour, and 2 teaspoons baking powder.
- 2) Add 1/2 pint regular (not heavy) whipping cream.
- 3) Slowly add at most 1/4 cup water if necessary. Mix and smooth out batter.
- 4) Shape into 1-inch spheres eliminating creases (these aren't baatis so cracks are bad!)
- 5) Heat oil on low heat for about 5 minutes.
- 6) Add fissure-free spheres to oil, and wait until they rise off the base of the pot (typically less than 30 seconds) before increasing the heat to medium. Rotate consistently until red (or brown?). Argue vehemently about the color of the jamuns.
- 7) Remove and place \*outside\* of syrup to cool.
- 8) Wait for oil to cool down if there's a second batch.
- 9) Kick yourself for not working on syrup simultaneously because now you have to wait a little longer before stuffing your face.

### Syrup

- 1) Mix 3 cups sugar and 5 cups water. Heat on high until water boils. Reduce heat to medium and heat for another 5-10 minutes.
- 2) Add a couple drops of natural yellow food coloring.
- 3) Once syrup is truly syrupy as opposed to just hot water with lots of sugar, add jamuns to syrup. Make sure syrup is warm to avoid "seeds", i.e. a hardened center. If this happens anyway, increase temperature of syrup. If no seeds, but jamuns expand too much or get too soft, reduce temperature of syrup.

## Seva Spotlight:

Neha  
Gupta

As you may have noticed, we believe that seva, or service,

should be a major tenet of what RAYS stands for. Among the hundreds of other things that bind us as a community is our love of giving back. In each edition of RAYS of our Lives, we like to highlight a member of our community doing great things for the global community, so today we'd like to introduce you to Neha Gupta. Neha is a resident of Chicago working for PricewaterhouseCoopers in HR. With the company, she traveled to Belize City, Belize to work on "Project Belize". We caught up with Neha to learn more about her experience:

***RAYS:** We like to start with the standard question – what does seva mean to you?*

**Neha Gupta:** True seva is giving something of your own (time, energy, skills, money) to unselfishly, altruistically, and sustainably serve another individual's needs.

***RAYS:** Can you tell us about the how Project Belize started?*

**NG:** The majority of corporations these days are charged with a responsibility above and beyond providing employment and turning a profit. Our millennial generation seeks a culture of humanitarians, a sense of purpose, and a well-crafted experience; employment and salary is simply a side dish. As a Big 4 Professional Services firm, PwC has risen to that challenge. In fact, the inception of "Project Belize" took place 15 years ago, somewhat before the mass strategic trend toward social responsibility. PwC developed a special relationship with the country of Belize by working with the schools, the ministry, and the community to create a sustainable framework for these financial literacy lessons. Coming from Teach for America, I was looking to work for a company that prioritized youth education. When I heard about Project Belize, I applied to PwC (somewhat backwards)!

***“He said, ‘Miss I am extremely hungry, but I want to take this home to share with my mom and brothers.’ This kid was about 8 years old.”***

**RAYS:** *What exactly is Project Belize, and what is its goal?*

**NG:** Project Belize is essentially a week-long summer camp for kids (K-12) in Belize to teach them basic financial literacy – everything from saving and budgeting to starting their own business. PwC selects 200 professionals firm wide (out of 45,000) each year to travel to Belize and teach life and financial skills in the classrooms of Belize.

**RAYS:** *There are a lot of things, people, and places that need help in the world around us, why was this cause special to you?*

**NG:** As a 7th grade math teacher for two years in Teach for America, I learned that seva is most effective when both parties are fully committed to the exchange. Not surprisingly, middle schoolers in the U.S. were not too jazzed to make the most of my math lessons! The community in Belize is not only a population that is deeply afflicted with poverty, but it is also one that is thirsty for knowledge and ready to implement financial lessons immediately. English is the official language of the country, small business is the most common and prestigious occupation; so it is a project that just makes sense.

**RAYS:** *Can you describe your favorite or the most striking moment during your experience?*

**NG:** This was more of an eye-opening moment - The summer camp was a long, hot, day for the kids so our company provided lunch and drinks for all the kids and teachers. I gave one of the kids his meal and he closed it immediately. I asked him, “Aren’t you hungry?” He said, “Miss I am extremely hungry, but I want to take this home to share with my mom and brothers.” This kid was about 8 years old.

**RAYS:** *What kind of impact could you see from your work?*

**NG:** One of the things I love about working with classrooms and kids is you tend to get a lot of different characters and personalities. Kids are unabashed with their true thoughts and feelings and as a part of that, you may never know which kid you impacted and which one thing that really resonated with them. One of the girls in my Belizean classroom never spoke the whole week I was teaching, she just smiled a lot, and wrote her answers down. I could tell she was smart and always smiled and gave her encouragement. Her mom came in the last day and said, “Are you Miss Neha?” (each class had 5 teachers mind you), “Gizel has been talking about you nonstop, thank you for the excitement you have brought to my daughter’s life. She has been teaching me everything you teach her!”

**RAYS:** *What was your biggest takeaway?*

**NG:** My biggest takeaway is that if done correctly, seva should always feel entirely exhausting and exhilarating. In order to really get into a cause, you should be fully consumed by it. If you want to truly reap the benefits of “helping” someone, you have to fully extend every fiber of your being and expect to have nothing left of yourself at the end of the day. That’s when you gain a sense of purpose and true compassion.

**RAYS:** *Any final thoughts on your experience?*

**NG:** Even though it is nearly impossible to do this, remember that seva is entirely a two-way experience. No one party is on the “giving” side or the “receiving” side. It is simply an opportunity for both people’s lives/level of happiness to be improved. Moreover, it’s not ‘you’ helping ‘them,’ because the experience should change you both for the better (if done right).

**If you want to learn more, you can reach Neha at [nehag6@gmail.com](mailto:nehag6@gmail.com).**

*\*If you’d like to be featured in our next Seva Spotlight, email us at [rays@mmna.org](mailto:rays@mmna.org)\**

