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Presents



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Dear Friends and Esteemed Guests,

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the Akshaya Patra Foundation USA to all attendees of our remarkable Namaste! 2023 India Festival and Concert Gala fund raiser.

Namaste! 2023 is more than just a social Indian event; it is a celebration of the rich tapestry of culture, tradition, and community that unites us. As we come together for this special occasion, we find ourselves amid a diverse and lively community that shares a common vision of positively impacting the world.

The Akshaya Patra Foundation USA takes immense pride in supporting initiatives that promote social well-being, education, and community development. Our food recovery program in the US focuses on rescuing edible food that would otherwise go to waste and distributing it to those in need, addressing both food waste and food insecurity simultaneously. In India, our efforts leverage scale, technology, and government partnership to provide a hot mid-day meal to 2.2 million children every school day at the incredible cost of \$20 per child for the entire school year. This mid-day meal is pivotal in encouraging parents of underprivileged children to prioritize their education over work, as it often represents their only daily sustenance.

I welcome our esteemed Mayor Rex Hardin, whose support and facilitation have added grace and significance to this occasion.

I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Akshaya Patra family of supporters and volunteers. Their unwavering dedication and hard work behind the scenes have made bringing "Namaste!" to you possible.

Lastly, let us take a moment to recognize the strength of our community. Through your collective efforts and dedication, we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of those in need. Together, we can create a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.



Once again, a warm welcome to Namaste! May this event be a source of inspiration, joy, and unity for us all.

Sincerely,
Navin Goel
CEO, The Akshaya Patra Foundation USA

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Namaste 2023: A Celebration of Indian Culture in South Florida

Akshaya Patra is thrilled to announce the return of Namaste! 2023 to South Florida, and it promises to be bigger and more entertaining than ever before. Building on the success of Namaste! 2022, our inaugural event that attracted 10,000 visitors, this year's celebration is set to surpass all expectations.

Namaste! 2022 was an incredible journey into the heart of Indian culture, with non-stop music and dance performances that captivated attendees. It was a vibrant exploration of India's diversity, showcasing the rich tapestry of the nation's cultural heritage and the four major religions originating from India. Alongside these captivating performances, visitors were treated to an array of delectable Indian cuisine and had the opportunity to shop for treasures from every corner of India. Once again, Akshaya Patra is partnering with Sanjay Chandran of Florida Fine Arts to produce both the Namaste Festival and the Fundraiser Gala.

The founders of the South Florida Chapters of Akshaya Patra, Venkat Maddineni, Meena and Raj Rajgopal, had a conversation with Raj Shah and Dr. Narendra Maheshwari, Board Advisor to the chapter, along with Sanjay Chandran, to discuss the incredible success of Namaste! 2022 and the vision for this year's event.

Expanding Cultural Horizons

Namaste! aims to bridge cultures by exposing the rich heritage of India to both Indians and local residents. In 2022, 38% of attendees were locals from diverse backgrounds,

including white, Hispanic, Asian, and African American communities. Moreover, attendees flocked not only from South Florida but from across the United States, with 15% traveling from outside Florida. The event demonstrated the seamless blending of Indian culture with other cultural facets, enriching the broader community.

A key objective of Namaste was to showcase India's vast diversity. Visitors, including children and locals, had the opportunity to appreciate the unique cultural identities of various Indian states, such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra, Telangana, Punjab, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Kashmir. This exploration was made possible through arts, crafts, clothing, food, historical landmarks, and interactions with natives eager to share their heritage.

One of the artists performing at Namaste expressed, "It's a moment of great joy and pride to showcase Indian Classical Dance on such a grand platform. We had a myriad of Bollywood, folk, and classical dances, not to mention the rich diversity of Indian music. It's beautiful."

Community leaders from various religious institutions, including the South Florida Hindu Temple, BAPS Mandir, Jain Temple, Buddhist Temple, and the Gurudwara, played a pivotal role in supporting and



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promoting the event, showcasing the teachings of their respective faiths and encouraging their communities to participate.

Reaching Beyond Borders

While engaging the Indian community is relatively straightforward given the multitude of cultural events in South Florida, reaching local residents presented its own set of challenges. To overcome this, Akshaya Patra collaborated with the City of Pompano Beach and the Visit Lauderdale Bureau, both of which enthusiastically provided marketing support through their extensive channels. To further remove barriers, the event was made free for all, with complimentary parking.

An Event That Transformed Lives

The success of Namaste was palpable not only to the attendees but also to the vendors who came from across the United States. Mehendi

artists secured wedding bookings, boutiques saw unprecedented demand from Indians and non-Indians alike, and food vendors were deeply grateful for the opportunity to be present.

Akshaya Patra's Mission

Another primary objective of the Namaste event was to raise awareness of Akshaya Patra's mission. This organization, which originated in Bangalore, India in 2000, began by delivering meals to 1,500 students in local government schools. This initiative was launched with the goal of addressing child hunger and promoting education, and it immediately yielded positive results. School attendance increased, and students exhibited improved health and academic performance.

Over the years, Akshaya Patra has expanded its reach, operating 67 kitchens in 15 states and 2 union territories in India. The organization's mission is clear: "No child should be deprived of education because of hunger." By providing hot, nutritious meals to over 2 million children across India for a full school year at an astonishingly low cost of about \$20 per child, Akshaya Patra helps children focus on their education and pursue brighter futures.

The Namaste Festival of 2022 inspired over 300 donors to attend a unique fusion music and dance concert and fundraiser for Akshaya Patra. Led by Sanjay Chandran and

Radha Kotamraju, the event raised enough funds to feed over 20,000 children. Today, the name Akshaya Patra resonates more widely in South Florida, thanks to the 10,000 attendees and the half a million Floridians touched by Namaste.

Namaste 2023: An Experience Not to Miss

The Namaste! Festival on December 2, 2023, promises to be an immersive experience, featuring over 400 performers and 100 booths and exhibits showcasing Indian arts, crafts, and foods. Admission is free for a limited time, with registration available at www.namastefl.com. The festival will be followed by the Namaste! Concert on December 3rd at the indoor Pompano Beach Cultural Center. This lively event will blend Indian and world music genres, featuring popular and original compositions, and serve as a fundraiser for Akshaya Patra.

Namaste! 2023 is the result of a true team effort, with hundreds of dancers, musicians, and Namaste champions putting in hours of practice for a noble cause. You can also contribute to this meaningful endeavor by sponsoring a table at the Namaste Concert on December 3rd. Contact us at namastefevent@gmail.com to find out how you can get involved.



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Essence of Akshaya Patra



Our Mission

To feed 3 million children by 2025

Our Vision

No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger

Our Purpose

To provide wholesome and nutritious meals on every school day to children, thereby contributing to address classroom hunger, promote education, and develop confident citizens for the nation

Our Program

The Akshaya Patra Foundation started implementing the mid-day meal initiative in the year 2000. What started with 1,500 children in five Government schools of Bengaluru, Karnataka, has now evolved into an efficient program with over 2 million beneficiaries across 15 states and 2 Union territories.

Our Initiatives

- Mid-day Meal Program
- Anganwadi Feeding
- Breakfast Program
- Scholarship Program
- Model school Program
- Digital Education
- Food Rescue & Recovery Program in the US

A Successful Public-Private Partnership

Akshaya Patra implements the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in partnership with the Government of India, State Governments, and U.T Administrations. Additionally, corporate houses and individual donors extend their generous support to our cause, helping us achieve the full potential of this program.

A synergy of various entities coming together for a common goal has made this Public-Private Partnership an effective model



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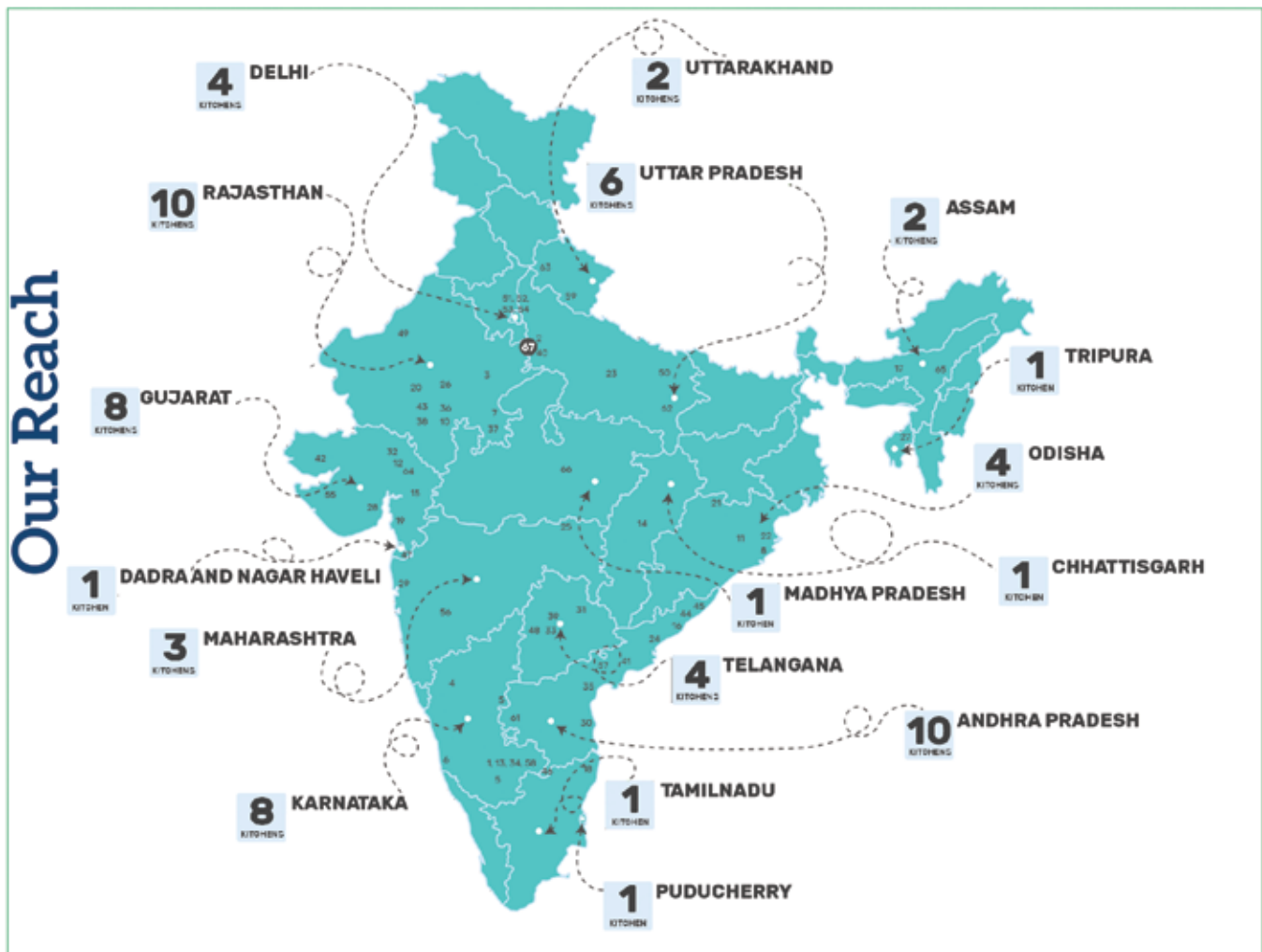
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Making Every Meal Count

The Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Program continues to be a transformative program that places the well-being of children at its core. This program has been a potent intervention in addressing classroom hunger and providing vital nutrition support to school-going children. As an implementing partner of the MDM Program, Akshaya Patra has been instrumental in contributing to the Government's flagship program by operating across 15 states and 2 union territories.

The MDM Program has been a key incentive for children to attend school and receive a proper education. Through our operations, we have been able to ensure that children are not only receiving nutritious meals but also an opportunity to grow and develop their full potential. Our efforts have been directed towards achieving our vision of ensuring that no child is deprived of education due to hunger.

Akshaya Patra's operational efficiency and scalability have enabled us to serve millions of children across the country. Our state-of-the-art kitchens and robust supply chain management have helped us in providing hygienic and nutritious meals to children. Our focus on innovation and technology has also helped us continuously improve our operations and expand our reach.



We are committed to our mission of serving more children and expanding our footprint across the country. With the continued support of our donors, partners, and stakeholders, we remain confident that we can achieve our vision of a hunger-free India, one meal at a time.

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Nutrition- Our Focus

Akshaya Patra's Contribution to a Child's Growth and Development through its Balanced, Nutritious, Hot, and Safe Meals

Akshaya Patra firmly believes that proper nutrition plays a crucial role in enhancing lifelong learning capacities and human productivity. It is widely acknowledged that investing in child nutrition is an effective way to promote human development. The organization has been working tirelessly to achieve this goal through its Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Programme, which provides hot, safe, tasty, and nutritious meals to children. The programme ensures food and nutrition security for children by striving to provide at least one-third of the daily Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of nutrients, which are vital for their sustainable growth and development.

Akshaya Patra recognizes schools as an ideal platform for delivering nutrition and driving holistic community development initiatives. The school ecosystem presents a unique opportunity for integrated knowledge delivery in various domains, including nutrition, education, health, good eating habits, personal hygiene, community development, community empowerment, and environmental sustainability. To strengthen its impact, the organization has embedded its research findings into the mainstream feeding programme.

At the heart of Akshaya Patra's menu design is a commitment to nutritional compliance. The organization takes all necessary measures to ensure that the menu adheres to the nutrition compliance norms of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. The Foundation's standardized recipes are focused on essential nutrients that promote the overall development of children.



The Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Program ensures menu diversity by incorporating a wide range of locally available seasonal vegetables and ingredients. The program is designed to provide a combination of flavorful food items and quality nutrients to the children. To avoid menu fatigue, a cyclic approach is used, taking into account local food preferences and seasonal food availability.

The menu planning is carefully done to ensure regional suitability by considering local food preferences. Regular feedback obtained from children, parents, and teachers is used to evaluate the relevance of food items. This helps in maintaining regional suitability and adhering to local food habits. For instance, the Karnataka menu comprises local favorites such as bisibelebath, lemon rice, and pulliyogre, while dal khichdi and thepla are part of the menu in Gujarat. Similarly, in Odisha, dalma is a significant part of the menu to align with local acceptability.

To enhance taste, Akshaya Patra uses locally procured fresh spices and condiments. The menu provides a variety of flavors through a range of spices, condiments, vegetables, and staple groups. The menu is designed to make food choices interesting, add different tastes and textures, and ensure local acceptance.

As part of its nutrition initiatives, Akshaya Patra's menu works as a catalyst to provide complete nutrition for the significant biological and cognitive changes that children undergo during various stages of growth. The organization also strives to support schools in creating and maintaining an environment that fosters the optimum development of children, communities, and the school itself.





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Sustainable Development Goals



The Akshaya Patra Foundation, through its systematic efforts, is constantly evolving. It is moving towards the 2030 Agenda for global sustainable development set by the United Nations. The organization is aligning its overall strategic approach towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Alongside contributing to SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, SDG 4 – Quality Education, and SDG 5 – Gender Equality through the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Program, Akshaya Patra is meticulously designing and implementing its upcoming interventions to contribute towards many more SDGs. Akshaya Patra envisions achieving this using an integrated approach that operates through a convergence of programs and initiatives. A few such initiatives are its National Endeavour for School Transformation, including the school rejuvenation program, Giving Every Dream a Chance, a skill-building program for MDM workers, women, and the youth, community feeding, and youth involvement.



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Exploring the Akshaya Patra Kitchens

In the heart of Akshaya Patra's mission lies the beating pulse of its operations - the Akshaya Patra kitchens. These kitchens are the engines driving the transformative journey of providing millions of children with nutritious meals, every single day. Akshaya Patra's kitchens are meticulously designed hubs of efficiency, where chefs and volunteers come together to create meals that not only fill stomachs but also fuel dreams.

How They Work?

The Akshaya Patra kitchens operate on a massive scale, strategically located to ensure that no child is left hungry. With state-of-the-art equipment and stringent quality standards, these kitchens are designed for maximum efficiency. From chopping vegetables to packaging meals, every step is a testament to precision and dedication. The sheer volume of meals prepared daily is inspiring, yet the kitchens are a testament to the organization's commitment to quality. The meals are not just about sustenance; they are a carefully crafted blend of nutrition and taste, meeting the dietary needs of growing children.

What do they do?

The primary mission of the Akshaya Patra kitchens is to provide mid-day meals to school children. By doing so, they address not only the immediate concern of hunger but also contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty through education. These kitchens are the backbone of Akshaya Patra's vision to ensure that no child is deprived of education due to hunger. The kitchens are not just about cooking; they are about making a difference. The meals prepared are a lifeline for many children, offering them the nutritional support they need to thrive in school and beyond. It's a powerful example of how something as fundamental as a meal can be a catalyst for change.

Check Out The Kitchens

While the Akshaya Patra kitchens are not open for public tours due to the scale and sensitivity of their operations, the organization values transparency. Regular updates, reports, and documentaries provide a glimpse into the kitchens' workings, showcasing the dedication and precision that goes into every meal. If you're passionate about Akshaya Patra's mission, there are various ways to get involved.

Whether through volunteering, fundraising, or advocating for the cause, you can be a part of the incredible journey that begins in these kitchens and extends to the hearts and minds of millions of children. In the kitchens of Akshaya Patra, every stir of the ladle is a promise, every aroma a testament to a brighter, hunger-free future. While you might not step into the kitchens physically, you can certainly join the movement and witness the impact of your support on the faces of those whose lives are touched by the meals prepared with love and purpose.

With Best Wishes



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of the Namaste Festival**

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Our Kitchen Staff



Here, each one of us works together as a team. I really like that. What makes us happier is that the food is getting supplied to the children. We believe that we are contributing something to society with all our capabilities through Akshaya Patra. And we serve them as long as we are capable of with all the determination. We take utmost care of necessary and precautionary measures as the food is for children. We maintain cleanliness around and within us so that the food that we are providing within the proper timeframe is hygienic and safe to consume.

-Shilpa

Kitchen Staff, Bangalore kitchen

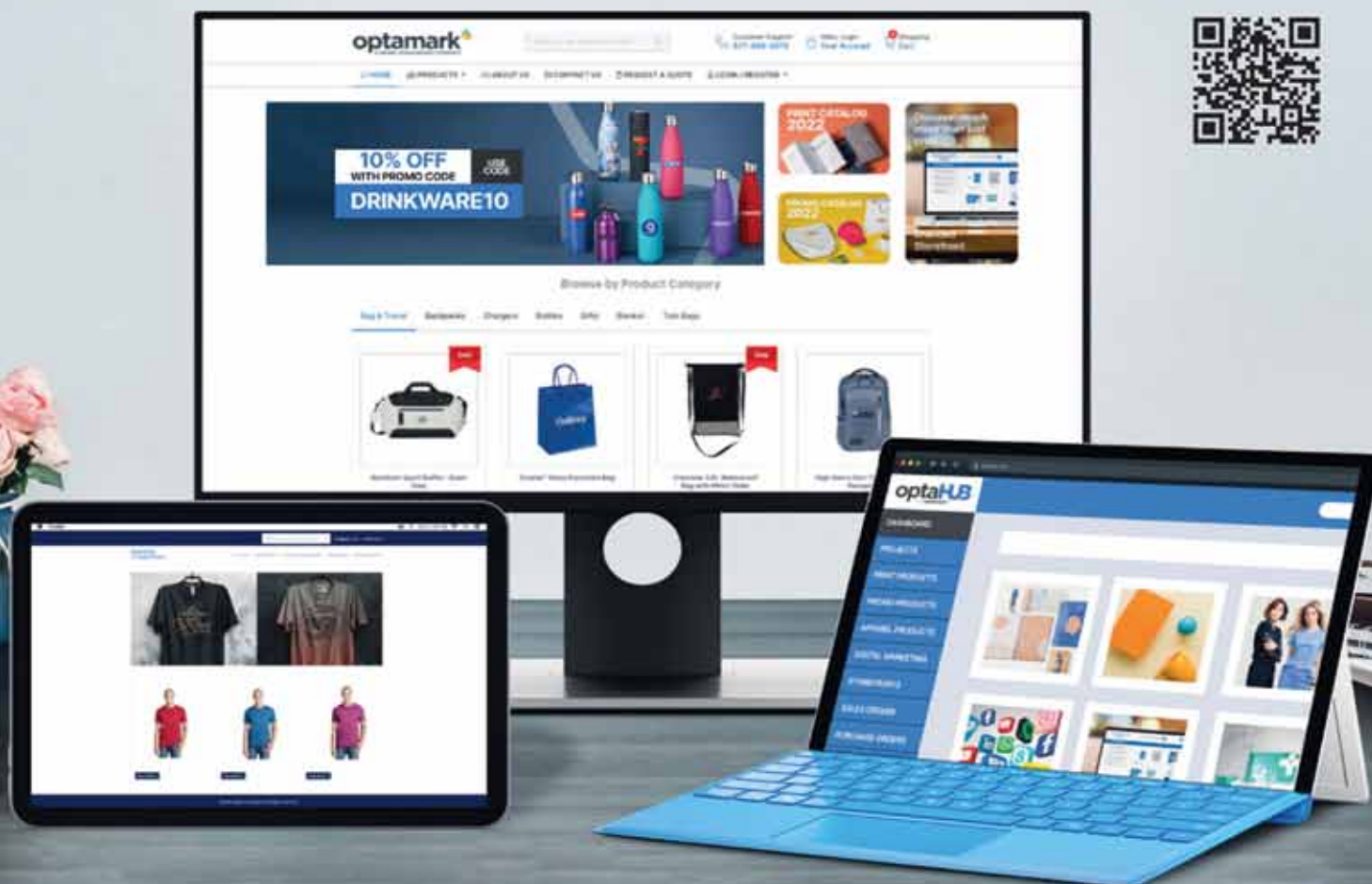
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Fortifying Meals with Micronutrients



The Akshaya Patra Foundation's school feeding program has made innovative strides to address nutritional deficiencies among beneficiaries. One of the leading concerns is micronutrient deficiencies, which are a major cause of malnourishment. Surprisingly, high-calorie diets can also contribute to these deficiencies, which can have adverse effects on various aspects of children's health. For instance, iron deficiencies can impact cognitive functions, while zinc and vitamin A deficiencies can affect immunity. To combat these issues, fortifying foods with added vitamins and minerals is essential to maintain and improve nutritional quality. The inclusion of fortified foods in a regular diet is critical to preventing and correcting nutritional deficiencies within a population.

In 2016, Akshaya Patra launched the Rice Fortification program to provide fortified rice with the prescribed quantities of micronutrients such as iron, vitamin A, B1, B3, B6, B9, and B12. Rice from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) is processed in a blending mixer machine with an emulsified mix of FSSAI-specified micronutrient powders, which is then blended with rice kernel and rice powder to make fortified rice. The Foundation has implemented a standard operational procedure (SOP) for its centralized kitchen to process the fortified rice, assess suppliers, and quality parameters and set testing protocols to ensure the safety and quality of fortified rice for the mid-day meal program. The Rice Fortification program has been introduced in several cities in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat. Similarly, fortified wheat flour is being used in Rajasthan and Gujarat state-level kitchens with 100% compliance. Akshaya Patra also uses fortified oils and double-fortified salt to improve the nutritional quality of the meals served to children.



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I like working at Akshaya Patra because I also have children and this food goes to them as well. Although there is a lot of work, we don't feel much pressure. I enjoy working here. We send mid-day meals [to schools] with a lot of care. We consider these children our own. They like the food and appreciate it. The more they appreciate, the more it motivates us.

Sunita Sinha

Kitchen Staff, Akshaya Patra- Guwahati

WE CONSIDER THESE CHILDREN OUR OWN. THEY LIKE THE FOOD AND APPRECIATE IT. THE MORE THEY APPRECIATE, THE MORE IT MOTIVATES US.



Our students like Akshaya Patra food a lot. Even their parents and guardians vouch for it. Some students bring tiffin from home but most of them have Akshaya Patra [mid-day] meals here. They are satisfied with the food and tell their parents. You can see that their health has improved a lot due to the meal. As I said earlier, they like the mid-day meal a lot.

They eat stomach-full.

Badaruddin Ahmed

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Program Details - Namaste 2023

Performance Type	Group Name	Description
Yoga Workshop	Radhika Patil	Radhika Patil, a certified Yoga instructor will conduct a Isha Yoga workshop.
Bollywood - Singing	Suganth Kannan	Suganth Kannan, past winner of South Florida Idol singing competition who is also an expert in Sanatana will be singing a Bollywood song.
Bollywood - Dance	Shimmering Pearls	Team Shimmering Pearls will be performing Bollywood Dance choreographed by Anusha Musalamadugu.
Bharatanatyam	NatyaMarga Dance	NatyaMarga dancers will present a Bharathanatyam dance dedicated to the Devi titled "Shyamale Meenakshi" choreographed by Madhavi Menon.
Bharatanatyam	NatyaMarga Dance	Students of Madhavi Menon's NatyaMarga Dance will present a Surdas Composition choreographed by Smt. Geeta Chandran.
Bharatanatyam	NatyaMarga Dance	NatyaMarga dancers will present a Tillana choreographed by Smt. Geeta Chandran.
Tollywood Dance	Little Sparklers	Team Little Sparklers lead by Ramya Ramgirwar will dance dance their hearts out to Tollywood songs from the state of Andhra and Telangana.
Tamil Movie Song Violin Performance	Arjun and Ameya	Arjun and Ameya Jayaraj will present a violin performance for Tamil song "Mukala Mukabula".
Tollywood Dance	Dancing Divas	Dancing Divas will transport you to the hearts of India with this enchanting South Indian folk-pop song choreographed by Jyoshna Gudaru.
Bollywood fusion	The Rhythm Dance group	The Rhythm dance group will bring the essence of Bollywood through their graceful expression and electrifying choreography by Sanchari Sarkar.
Mashup (bollywood and toollywood)	Twinkling Stars	Twinkling stars dancing to mashup of bollywood and Tollywood songs. Choreographed by Ramya Ramgirwar.
Bollywood Dance	Bollywood Dhamaka	Divine BEATZ lead by Jagruti Hirani ready to present Bollywood dhamaka dance to rock the stage by our little stars.
Gujarati Traditional Raas	Dance Rhythms	Bhairavi Pandya's team will present a traditional Raas dance from the state of Gujarat.
Chenda (Drums) Performance	Srutilaya Melam of Florida	Mohan Narayanan's Sruthilaya Melam of Florida is thrilled to present a captivating performance of Chenda Melam, a traditional percussion art from the state of Kerala.
Bollywood Dance	Bumblebees	These budding performers masterfully blend traditional Indian rhythms with modern flair choreographed by Sanchari Sarkar.
Felicitation	Felicitation - Mayor's Address + Anthem	Pompano Beach Mayor's speech and lighting of lamp ceremony.
Music Medleys	Sunshine Vibes	Sunshine Vibes, Florida Fine Arts founded by Sanjay Chandran - a unique music ensemble that blends musical innovation with cultural fusion - is back again to showcase great music with two new compositions!
Fusion - Dance	The High Steppers	Reshma Thummadi's team High steppers will be dancing to medley of songs dedicated to goddess Meenakshi.
Remix Folk Dance	Desi Patakha	Desi Pataka will blow your mind away for this beat of folk music choreographed by Sheli Chakraborty.
Bhojpuri folk music - Karaoke	Folk Music by Shuchita Rao	Hindustani vocalist Shuchita Rao will sing Bhojpuri folk song from the state of Bihar with her team.
Bharathanatyam or mohini attam	Nritya school of indian dance and music	Nritya School of Indian dance and music lead by Hema Sharma will present a Bharathanatyam dance originated from the state of Tamil Nadu.
Classical music - Vocal	Kalaadhaanam	The students of Kalaadhaanam will present a Ganesha sloka and one Geetham in the Raga Malahari.
Bharathanatyam	Jayani Rajan	Bharathanatyam dance by Jayani Rajan's team for a composition on lord Vishnu and his incarnation.
Carnatic Music - Instrumental	Jhanvi & Rishab	Perfect blend of South and North Indian instruments presentation by Jhanvi Subramanian on Venna and Rishab Iyer on Tabla.
Cinematic Fusion Dance	Nrithya Nakshathram Kids	Nrithya Nakshathram will present a beautiful cinematic fusion dance to Indian songs choreographed by Rakhesha Dhiwakar.
Fusion - Dance	Nritya school of indian dance and music	Dheemta is a fusion of Bharathanatyam and Kollattam choreographed by Hema Sharma.
Fusion - Dance	Coral Springs Dancing Stars	Coral Springs Dancing Stars will perform Kollywood Dance from the state of Tamil Nadu.
Bollywood Fusion	Bolly Boyz	Aarushi Bavdekar's team of Bollyboyz will perform fusion dance to a medley of Bollywood songs. Sheli's Dance Academy will present a remix version of intricate lavani dance.

Program Details - Namaste 2023

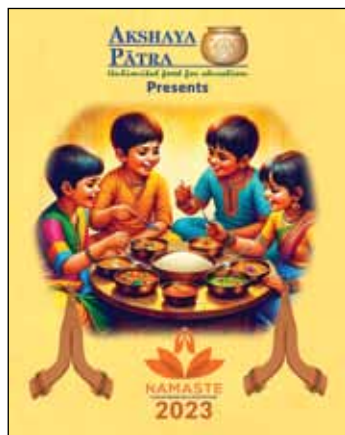
Performance Type	Group Name	Description
Remix Lavni Dance	Desi Girls	Sheli's Dance Academy will present a remix version of intricate lavani dance.
Kuchipudi - Classical Dance	Avlokitha Kuchipudi Nrithyalayam	Reshma Thummadi's team will present a Kuchipudi dance which is one of the classical dance style emerged from Andhra Pradesh / Telangana.
Fusion - Dance	Nritya school of indian dance and music	Ranjana Mala is an instrumental piece choreographed in Bharathanatyam style by Hema Sharma.
Bollywood Dance	Kahini Kids	Kahini's kids will perform for a medley of Bollywood songs choreographed by Kahini Chandriani.
Bollywood Fusion Dance	Nach Bollywood Style Team Dhamal	Nach Bollywood Style team is doing a Bollywood fusion dance choreographed by Amishi Patel.
Garba - Dance	Nach Bollywood Style Garba Goris	Group of young teenagers who love Garba and have embarked on the Garba journey with Nach Bollywood Style.
Cinematic Fusion	Nrithya Nakshathram	Rakhesha's Nrithya Nakshatram's team will perform a cinematic fusion dance.
Kathak - Classical Dance	Students of Nrityangan kathak school	The students of Nrityangan kathak school will be performing kathak dance on the semi classical Bollywood music choreographed by Shivani Lakkad.
Classical music - Veenai & Vocal	Kalaadhaanam	Students of Kalaadhaanam will present few composition on Veena and Vocal and classically trained by Kavitha Jayaraman.
Bollywood Dance	Nach Bollywood Style Little Stars	Group of tiny dancers from Nach Bollywood style, lead by Amishi Patel, who love to have fun while dancing their hearts out.
Bollywood Dance	Bollywood Fusion	Team lead by Shivani Lakkad will be performing the semi classical and Marathi folk fusion dance on popular Bollywood numbers
Folk band - Instrumental	Guru Garjana dhol Tasha group	The Guru Garjana Dhol Tasha group in South Florida's Dhol Tasha Pathak is here to promote a healthy mind, body, and soul through traditional Indian drumming.
Garba - Dance	Nach Bollywood Style Tampa Fest Team	Nach Bollywood style team will present you Garba, a traditional dance style from the state of Gujarat choreographed by Amishi Patel.
Bollywood Dance	Palm Beach Rockers	Palm Beach Rockers team lead by Deepa Iyer will perform a Bollywood dance medley.
Bhangra Funk	Kahini Dance Company	Kahini dance company team will present a Bhangra dance hailed from the state of Punjab. This dance is choreographed by Kahini Chandriani.
Sambalpuri Folk dance	Bellissima	Bellissima is performing Sambalpuri folk dance originated from the state of Odisha which has unique music and dance moves.
Dance Workshop	Kahini Dance Company	Join us for a unique experience of Interactive Bollywood dance workshop by Kahini Chandriani where every we turn every audience to a dancer.
Bollywood Fusion Dance	Nach Bollywood Style Adults	Nach Bollywood style team lead by Amishi Patel have come from Nadiya par to show off their dance moves and colorful jhumkas for this Bollywood songs.
Garba - Dance	South Florida Dance Divas	South Florida Dance Divas will perform a Garba dance from the state of Gujarat.
Bollywood Dance	Khiladis	Our Khiladis bring to you a complete Bollywood entertainer that will take you on a nostalgic trip through some of Bollywood's most loved dance numbers choreographed by Taarika Sagar.
Bharatanatyam	Shataaganaa by Nritya Surabhi School of dance	Students of Nritya Surabhi School of dance presenting a collaborative geometrical presentation of pure Bharata Nataym dance.
Garba - Dance	Nara Bollywood Dance Academy	Nara Bollywood Dance Academy lead by Narayani Maharaj will perform a Garba dance from the state of Gujarat.
Fusion - Dance	South Florida Hoppers	The South Florida Hoppers, a talented high school team is here to provide a power packed performance and theatrical live experience to audience today. This dance is choreographed by Prakash Sugumaran.
Indian contemporary Dance & Bollywood	Masakali	A vibrant kaleidoscopic presentation that is sure to keep you excited with its dynamic movements and elegant poses choreographed by Taarika Sagar.
Classical fusion dance	Team Dancerholics	Natya Drishyam School of Dance presents a thematic presentation of classical fusion dance choreographed by Meera Ramanathan.
Folk Dance	Maratha Warriors	Aparna Matange's Maratha Warriors will perform a folk dance originated from the state of Maharashtra, India.

Youth Ambassador Submissions for Namaste 2023 Book Cover Design

Akshaya Patra Youth Ambassadors are given a task of designing the Namaste book cover and they have done a tremendous job in such a short notice. We commend the efforts made by our youth ambassador team. Please join us in congratulating our winners and the other contestants who provided these amazing designs.

Akshaya Patra, South Florida Chapter Team.

Winner



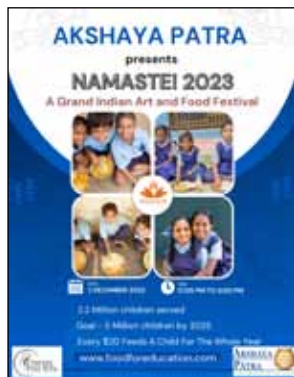
AASHVIK GARIMELLA

I am a 14 year old Freshman at American Heritage. I enjoy coding, gaming and hard rock/metal music as an avid guitar player. On our multiple journeys to India and various places in the US allowed us to see the impact of giving to the life of children. I thank Akshaya Patra for that and happy to be part of the journey.

YASHIKA GARIMELLA

I am a 16 year old Junior at American Heritage. I enjoy writing, everything about law, public policy, technology, and investigative journalism. I am an avid debater of topics relevant and part of today's public discourse. I pride myself in taking active participation in community events. My hobbies include reading, music, art and swimming. I was introduced to Akshaya Patra by my parents and saw first hand the impact on the lives of children they serve.

SANA VIKAS



My name is Sana Vikas and I am a 14 year old freshman at American Heritage Schools. Art and music has always been my passion. As an Akshaya Patra youth ambassador, I love that I can put art to good use and help the community

as well with multiple art projects and selling them so we can donate all the profit to feed kids who need the most.

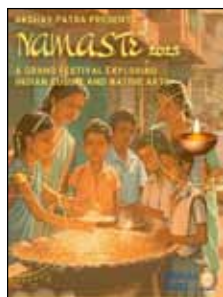
SAANVI INDUKURI



Saanvi Indukuri is a 13 year old youth ambassador at Akshaya Patra. She enjoys spending her time designing and making art. Her other hobbies include Kuchipudi, violin, yoga and poetry, all

of which she has put years of effort into. Saanvi constantly works to give back to her community in any way she can.

NIKASH CHANDRA



I am Nikash Chandra, a 14 year old freshman at Cypress Bay High School in Weston, Florida. I am an Akshaya Patra Youth Ambassador. Art and Public speaking have been my passion for a long time. I love to apply art in many ways to impact my community and the people around me.

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Testimonials



Najmin Saikia

Class VIII, FA Saikia Girls High School, Guwahati

"There are a lot of poor people in our village. They don't get proper medical help because they don't have money. That's why I want to become a nurse and serve them."

Daniel G Momin

Class III, 45 No. Manik Nagar LPS, Guwahati

When we went to Akshaya Patra's kitchen, we saw huge machines to make rotis, cut vegetables, etc. The people working there were wearing a hairnet and gloves. They told us they wear these things to ensure that the food is not contaminated.



Jasmin Ara Saikia

Class VIII, FA Saikia Girls High School, Guwahati

"I want to become a doctor. I want to serve poor people. I have noticed that poor people do not get the best medical care because of their financial circumstances. I want to provide them proper treatment."



Nur Semim Sultana

Class IV, FA Saikia Girls High School, Guwahati

"I want to become an IPS officer when I grow up because I want to serve the country. I have seen on TV that many girls become IPS officers. I also want to become like them. My father is always supportive of me. He says that I'll achieve my dream."





Akshaya Patra wishes to thank the following leaders for their untiring support in ensuring the Gala is a resounding success.

- Sanjay and Sapna Chandran
- Pradip and Nisha Gosalia
- Dr Kavitha Kanuri
- Dr Narendra and Preeti Maheshwari
- Mr. Rahul and Bina Merchant
- Nimi Motwani
- Dilip Nersian
- Govindraaj Rangaswamy
- Raj and Aruna Shah
- Dr Chander Shaykher

YA / Student Volunteers

Sanjana Balla
Neel Begur
Akshay Bekkary
Lahari Challa
Samarth Chandra
Inika Chemuru
Nethra Chittiprol
Aashvik Garimella
Yashika Garimella
Akanksha Jakkepally
Snehin Jarubula
Anirudh Neelamraju
Abhijay Neelamraju
Arjun Vadlamudi
Sana Vikas
Shriyans Yarlagadda

Adult Volunteers

Grisell Almonte	Meera Kari
Vinod Balla	Aruna Konduri
Anjali Balla	Jyotsna Polavarapu
Jagan Bekkary	Narsi Pulukuri
Yangsi Boppana	Parimala Rajan
Prasanna Dasari	Hemali Rathod
Manuel DeLaRosa	Alka Sapat
Roopa Duggirala	Lakshmi Vadlamudi
Apeksha Hanmattekar	Venkat Vadlamudi
Archana Jakkidi	Anirudh Venkat
Deepika Joginipalli	Shailendra Vikas
Papiya Kakani	Arathi Yadla
Ashritha Kallem	Sailaja Yellisetty
Girish Kanchum	

EMCEE Volunteers

Anjana Andapally	Saanvi Indukuri	Avinash Nair
Nethra Chittiprol	Gia Kakani	Vernica Pulukuri
Neel Dhuruva	Sathvik Maddineni	Tanvi Sama
Vinisha Gurudu		



Dhanesh

Class IX Std. Student

I like having food at the school every afternoon. The rice and sambar is very tasty as well as healthy. It feels like as if I am having food from hotel.



Bhavani

Class VIII Std. student

Hot milk and a hot meal are served in school. I like payasam very much because they make it very tasty. All the food that comes from Akshaya Patra is very good and everybody should eat and taste it. I wasn't to become a photographer because I like taking photographs of nature very much. I also like to show them to everyone





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by Hema Pradhyumnan

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Empowering Tomorrow: The Crucial Role of Youth Ambassadors in Akshaya Patra's Mission

In the heart of every social movement lies the passion and energy of the youth. Akshaya Patra, a beacon in the fight against child hunger, recognizes the vital role that young individuals play in transforming awareness into action. The Youth Ambassadors of Akshaya Patra are one of our drivers behind a movement that seeks to ensure no child goes to bed hungry.

Unveiling Akshaya Patra's Impact:

Akshaya Patra has been a steadfast advocate for eradicating child hunger by providing nutritious mid-day meals to school children across India. With a mission to nourish both the body and mind, the organization has made significant strides in breaking the cycle of poverty through education.

The Catalysts for Change:

Youth Ambassadors are the dynamic advocates who bring the mission of Akshaya Patra to the forefront. Their role extends beyond raising awareness; they are the voices that inspire action, uniting communities in the shared belief that every child deserves a chance for a better future.



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Empowering Tomorrow: The Crucial Role of Youth Ambassadors in Akshaya Patra's Mission

The Voices of Tomorrow:

What sets Youth Ambassadors apart is their unique perspective and commitment to making a difference. In a world filled with challenges, they offer fresh ideas, boundless energy, and an unwavering belief in the power of collective action. Not only are the youth ambassadors helping make a difference they themselves are also improving as leaders, creative thinkers, and much more.

"Being apart of AP has allowed to me to be more involved with my Indian culture, and being a youth ambassador has allowed me to give back to my community and really be proud of my origin. I've been able to take initiative and teach others about Akshaya Patra and how they can help, which has helped me gain leadership skills that I will have with me for the rest of my life. Helping to feed the school children in India has really broadened my understanding of the various issues going on in India that the media doesn't call attention to, and I think that as Akshaya Patra continues to grow, more and more children will be fed each day!"

-Gia (YA for 11 months)

Youth Ambassadors in Action:

These young advocates channel their enthusiasm into tangible initiatives, events, and projects that resonate with their peers and communities. From fundraising campaigns to awareness drives, they are the architects of change, demonstrating that age is no barrier to making a meaningful impact.

"Last year I was apart of our first ever Namaste event. As a YA, Akshaya Patra gave me the opportunity to help give back to those in India and raise awareness about the organization. I've been a YA in Akshaya Patra for almost 4 years now and I can safely say that no one has ever looked down on kids like me for being too young. We are always given great opportunities to make new experiences and have fun. Akshaya Patra always tries to empower children and that is exactly what they achieved with their YA's "

-Vedith (YA for 4 years)



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Empowering Tomorrow: The Crucial Role of Youth Ambassadors in Akshaya Patra's Mission

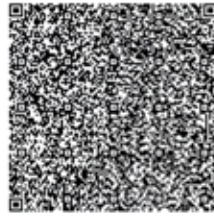
How You Can Join the Movement:

If you're inspired by the Youth Ambassadors and want to contribute to Akshaya Patra's mission, there are numerous ways to get involved. Whether through volunteering, fundraising, or spreading awareness, every effort counts in creating a hunger-free world for children. If your child is interested in becoming one then help them apply through the Akshaya Patra website under "Our Youth" and scroll and click Apply Now.

"I joined the Young Ambassadors at first because I thought it was just a cool organization where I can help kids my age and younger across the world. But then I figured out it actually does a lot more than I thought and how being a YA I can do so much more. On top of that I have met so many awesome people, and it's made me way more caring. It's wild to think that the cost of my Chick-fil-A order could actually help feed a kid for a whole year! I encourage other kids to join and be a part of this team. It might seem scary at first but in the end you will also love what you do"

-Sanjana (YA for 1 year)







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Empowering Tomorrow: The Crucial Role of Youth Ambassadors in Akshaya Patra's Mission

Final Words:

The role of Youth Ambassadors in Akshaya Patra is not just about today; it's about shaping a better tomorrow. Their passion, dedication, and innovative spirit exemplify the transformative power that a committed group of young individuals can have on society.

"As a former YA who is now still an active participant in this organization. Akshaya Patra not only made me aware of a key issue occurring in India but has empowered me to create a positive change, even when I was just 14 years old. Five years later, I've come to recognize that Akshaya Patra not only provided me with a platform to address ongoing challenges but also instilled in me a sense of purpose and agency. Reflecting upon this journey, I realize that my contributions went beyond aiding children in India; I have also learned valuable lessons that have accompanied me into my college endeavors and continue to shape my everyday life. Thanks to Akshaya Patra, I attribute my proficiency in presenting myself professionally and seamlessly transitioning into a leadership role when required. This organization has played a pivotal role for helping me build/strengthen not only these skills but also numerous others that I now confidently possess."

- Anjali (Former YA of 5 years)

Join the movement. Become a Youth Ambassador. Empower change.



**The Gujarati Society of Central Florida wishes
Akshaya Patra a Grand Success for Namaste!
2023 and for their Fund Raiser Gala.**

**We strongly support Akshaya Patra
mission of**

**“No child should be deprived
of education because of hunger”**



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Contact

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EIN: 01-0574950

www.APUSA.org

**Congratulations to the South Florida
Akshaya Patra team for organizing and
hosting a successful Akshaya Patra
Namaste event!**

It was great being part of this journey.

**Shylaja, Shekar, Rohith,
Shruthi Reddy family**



भारत INDIA

VOLUME 1
PEOPLE | PLACES | HISTORY | CULTURE



IMAGES AND TEXT BY

Sam Mehta

BOOK NOT FOR SALE

भारत INDIA VOLUME 1

A Journey Through India's Soul: A Twin Volume Epic That Will Make You Fall In Love All Over Again

If you love India, Sam Mehta's twin volume masterpiece—"India: People, Places, History, Culture" belong at the center of your coffee table. These twin volumes are not just books; they are an expedition, an experience, and a visual odyssey all rolled into one.

The first thing that strikes you, as you might expect from an India focused coffee table book is, of course, the photography. These photographs are nothing short of hypnotic. Each page bursts with vivid colors and intricate details—from the golden sunsets of Rajasthan to the lush landscapes of Kerala. India's beauty is often overwhelming, and these photographs capture

her beauty perfectly. The perspective makes each photograph more than just a snapshot; they are narratives telling stories of time, history, and the soul of a civilization.

While the photographs steal the show, the text is by no means a secondary element. The research behind the history of India and its cultural diversity is so comprehensive that it can easily serve as a scholarly resource. The writing is eloquent yet accessible, covering complex topics like the Harappan Civilization, the Mughal era, and even the socio-political nuances of modern-day India.

**Congratulations to the leadership
team, performers and
volunteers of Akshaya Patra
South Florida Chapter!**



Florida's Warmest Welcome

भारत | INDIA

VOLUME 1

PEOPLE | PLACES | HISTORY | CULTURE

भारत | INDIA | VOLUME 1



IMAGES AND TEXT BY

Sam Mehta

The books don't just stop at popular tourist spots. While they do justice to the Taj Mahal and the backwaters of Kerala, they also take you to the lesser-known corners of India. From dilapidated temples lost in the thick forests to bustling bazaars and vegetable markets that have stood unchanged for hundreds of years, it's a journey that even most Indians have not undertaken.

One cannot talk about India without mentioning its people, and the books do this beautifully. It paints a vivid tapestry of India's diverse people, capturing the emotion in the eyes of a Sufi devotee, the pride in the stride of a Rajasthani tribesman, and the peace and tranquility of a Kerala backwater boatman. It's as if the soul of an entire subcontinent has been condensed into a few hundred pages.

This twin-set is not just another coffee table book. It's a manifestation of India's spirit, captured through lens and text. These are the kind of books that you don't just leaf through; you dwell on each page, soaking in the story it tells. They are an emotional, intellectual, and visual treat that offer a panoramic spectacle of a land steeped in diversity and history.

To say that "India: People, Places, History, Culture" Volumes 1 and 2 are must-haves is an understatement. These are not books; they are tickets to a journey you will never forget, even if you've never set foot in India. Acquire these books, not for the awe-inspiring photography or the brilliant narrative alone, but for the priceless journey they offer—a journey through India's soul.

Sanjay Kamlani

Nimi Motwani

With best wishes from

*Nimi Motwani, Jay Motwani and
Lata Shintre*

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*Kiritkumar Smart was an engineer, brahmin, and
a businessman who promoted the knowledge behind Hinduism.
He promoted the fact that through knowledge and
prayer one can find peace and success.*

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BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham: A Monument Born of Devotion

In the heart of Robbinsville, New Jersey, a monumental cultural and spiritual marvel has emerged, transcending both time and expectations. The BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham, a Hindu temple, represents the pinnacle of devotion, craftsmanship, and unity. This awe-inspiring endeavor, spanning over a decade in the making, is not merely a place of worship; it is a symbol of peace, spiritual enlightenment, and a testament to the power of collective dedication. In this article, we will embark on a captivating journey to explore the grandeur of Akshardham, unveil the tapestry of Hindu culture it embodies,

and understand its profound impact on the community.

A Monument Born of Devotion: The Birth of Akshardham

The BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham, nestled on 185 acres of pristine land in Robbinsville, New Jersey, is an architectural marvel that represents the power of collective devotion. Over 12,500 dedicated volunteers from around the world came together to bring this dream to life, dedicating their time and effort to this monumental project.

This grand undertaking, culminating in the grand opening ceremony on October 8, 2023, stands

as a testament to the unwavering commitment and selfless service of its builders. It is not just a temple; it is a labor of love, meticulously crafted over twelve years.

Envisioning Hindu Culture: The Essence of Akshardham

Akshardham encapsulates the very essence of Hindu culture. It is a repository of over 10,000 sacred images, 151 intricately carved Indian musical instruments, and representations of 108 traditional Indian dance forms. The temple even houses water sourced from over 300 holy Indian rivers and all 50 states in the U.S.

These elements are not mere decorations but serve as a reflection of the profound spiritual and cultural heritage that Hinduism embodies. They showcase the dedication and devotion of the volunteers who transformed a barren landscape into a spiritual and cultural oasis.

A Haven for All: A Place for All

While Akshardham is a place of worship, it goes beyond religious boundaries. It functions as a vibrant center for cultural, educational, and community activities. The temple's mission is to promote unity, peace, and spirituality, making it a place where people of all backgrounds can find inspiration and solace.

Kanu Patel, the CEO of BAPS, describes Akshardham as a "labor of love" that represents unwavering dedication and selfless service. It embodies the vision of spiritual leaders, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj and His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, who envisioned it as a haven for all seekers of spiritual and cultural enrichment.

A Cultural Spectacle: A Cultural Extravaganza

The grand opening of Akshardham was not just a ceremony; it was a cultural extravaganza. Leading up to the event, a diverse array of programs and performances showcased

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India's rich heritage, echoing the Hindu principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "The world is one family." These events brought together guests from across the United States and around the world, emphasizing the temple's inclusivity.

Akshardham is envisioned as a place for meditation, reflection, and spiritual enrichment. It serves as a bridge between cultures, offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Hindu traditions while welcoming people of all faiths and walks of life.

Unity Beyond Boundaries: A Testament to Unity

Robbinsville Mayor David Fried recognized the positive impact of BAPS on the community. Initiatives like Days of Giving and the Blood Donation Drive, which collected enough blood to save more than 10,000 lives, demonstrate BAPS' dedication to the town. With the opening of Akshardham, the town of Robbinsville anticipates further strengthening its partnership with BAPS and embracing the cultural enrichment and diversity it offers.

The temple stands as a powerful symbol of unity, bringing together diverse communities and fostering mutual understanding. It's not just a place of worship but a cultural and spiritual epicenter where people can find common ground and celebrate their shared humanity.

A Grand Celebration: Inaugural Festivities

The inaugural festivities leading up to the grand opening ceremony began on September 30, creating a buzz of excitement and anticipation. These celebrations culminated in the grand dedication ceremony on October 8, 2023. It was a once-in-a-millennium cultural program, a testament to the enduring legacy that Akshardham represents.

For those who couldn't be physically present, the live broadcasts allowed them to witness the magic



of Akshardham from afar. This technological bridge brought people together from different corners of the world, uniting them in their admiration for this architectural marvel.

Architectural Marvel: The Beauty of Akshardham

Akshardham's architectural grandeur is nothing short of spectacular. It boasts dimensions that awe and inspire: 255 feet in length, 345 feet in width, and 191 feet in height. The temple features one main shrine, twelve sub-shrines, nine shikhars (spire-like structures), and nine pyramidal shikhars. Perhaps most notably, it houses the largest elliptical dome of traditional stone architecture ever constructed, showcasing the incredible craftsmanship of its builders.

The intricate details of Akshardham's architectural design not only serve as a testament to



human creativity but also as a symbol of cultural preservation and spiritual significance.

The Stones of Akshardham: A Global Journey

The construction of Akshardham involved a meticulous selection of materials. Nearly 2 million cubic feet of stone were sourced from different corners of the world, each carrying its unique history and significance. Limestone from Bulgaria and Turkey, marble from Greece, Turkey, and Italy, granite from India and China, sandstone from India, and decorative stones from Europe, Asia, and Latin America all found their place in this architectural marvel.

These stones represent a global journey, each with its own story and symbolism. They contribute not only to the structural integrity of Akshardham but also to its cultural richness.

The Sacred Waters: Symbolism and Significance

At the heart of Akshardham lies the Brahma Kund, a traditional Indian stepwell. What makes it truly special is the water it holds. Collected from over 300 bodies of water around the world, including the holy rivers of India and all 50 states of the U.S., it symbolizes the unity of humanity through the sacred element of water.

Core Volunteers



Raj Rajgopal



Venkat Maddineni



Meena Rajgopal



Narendra Maheshwari



Raj Shah



Sanjay Chandran



Gajalakshmi Gnanasekaran



Deepa V Iyer



Karush Jaggi



Haritha Jillelamudi



Sam Kannan



Sapna Natarajan



Chandra Neelamraju



Hema Pradhyumnan



Ketan Rajput



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It delves into the symbolism of water in Hindu culture and its significance in the context of Akshardham. It explores the intricate process of collecting and incorporating these sacred waters into the temple's design.

Sustainability at Its Core: A Green Oasis

Akshardham is not only a symbol of cultural preservation but also a beacon of sustainability. It incorporates environmentally responsible practices, including a solar panel farm, the use of fly ash concrete mix, and the planting of over 2 million trees worldwide in the past few decades. These initiatives reflect BAPS' commitment to environmental stewardship and align with the broader global efforts to address climate change.

This chapter examines the sustainability practices implemented in the construction and operation of Akshardham, highlighting their significance in the context of today's environmental challenges.

A Cultural Marvel for Generations to Come

In the heart of Robbinsville, the BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham stands as a beacon of cultural preservation, spiritual enlightenment,



and unity. Its grandeur is a testament to the devotion and selfless service of thousands of volunteers who dedicated their time and effort to bring this dream to life.

Akshardham is not merely a temple; it is a cultural marvel that transcends religious boundaries. It welcomes people from all walks of life, inviting them to explore the rich tapestry of Hindu culture and spirituality. The temple's architecture, with its intricate details and use of diverse stones, showcases human creativity at its finest.

Moreover, Akshardham embodies sustainability, aligning with global efforts to address environmental

challenges. It serves as a reminder that cultural preservation and environmental stewardship can go hand in hand.

Concluding the celebratory program, Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings drew upon the wonder and simplicity of what has been accomplished through vision and dedication. "The creation of BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham in Robbinsville was the divine resolution of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Whoever comes here to Akshardham will experience its splendor, divinity, and peace. By spending fifteen minutes daily reflecting on what we have attained spiritually, everything is captured within this.

As Akshardham opens its doors to visitors, it offers an opportunity to experience the fusion of culture, spirituality, and architectural brilliance. It is a gift to future generations, a place where they can connect with the past, find solace in the present, and envision a harmonious future.

In a world marked by divisions, Akshardham reminds us that unity, peace, and cultural enrichment are attainable through dedication, selfless service, and a shared appreciation for the beauty of diversity. It is, without a doubt, America's new cultural jewel, destined to shine for generations to come.





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