



Miss Indian Michigan 2023 Judges



Chaula Thacker is a lifelong student of the classical and folk dances of India. Her Gurus include Shri Shrinivasan Shenoy, a disciple of Acharya Parvatikumar; Shri K. Ramaiah and Padmashri late Shreemati Bala Saraswati, “Queen of *Abhinaya* or Expression”.

Chaula is the artistic director of Nadanta as well as the founder of the Chauladevi Institute of Dance and Yoga where for over 42 years she is teaching Classical, Creative and Folk dances as well as Yoga, Meditation and Ayurveda. She currently has over 100 students in southeastern Michigan. She works as a visiting and teaching artist at UMS University of Musical Society. She had been a faculty member at CCS and has also taught dance courses/master classes at the Wayne State University, Oakland University and Marygrove College. She has worked with many different Public and Private schools for their multicultural activities. She is involved with coaching Olympic ice dancing teams for their various competitions since 1995. She also works as a dance and movement therapist for special need people. She is a recipient of project Grant for Nadanta, Inc. from Michigan Council for the Arts and cultural affairs -MCACA and National Endowment of the arts NEA for last 34 years.

Chaula Thacker is an accomplished choreographer and dancer; having performed for audiences in India, United States, Canada, Former Soviet Union, Denmark, Spain, (Bali) Indonesia, and Australia. Her cultural contributions have been recognized by numerous Indian communities and other organizations including Michigan Legislature, IRS (Internal Revenue Service), INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), Army Corps of Engineers and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). She has well over 100 awards for choreography, costume design, direction and performance from many of the most prestigious folk dance competitions on three continents. Her choreography and direction were instrumental in making Nadanta-Foga & Fogana National Champions for several years. She has presented her dances to television audiences in India and the United States. She was an advisor to All India Radio for youth programs. In 2006, Chaula directed Super Bowl XL multicultural show “Nations in Rhythm Detroit!”

Other than rigorous training and degree in Bharat Natyam, Chaula has studied North Indian and Carnatic style of South Indian classical music. She has studied Ballet for 12 years. Chaula is a Certified Instructor of Yoga, Ayurveda and Meditation. She has conducted numerous Yoga and Silent Retreats, in US and India. She is a Reiki Master and offers Reiki treatments.

Chaula is dedicated to the preservation, promotion and enhancement of Indian dance traditions

in all of their many.



Milan P. Gandhi was born and raised in metro Detroit, attending Detroit Country Day School and The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering and Applied Mathematics.

As the leader of Business Development and Strategic Partnerships for Med-Share, Mr. Gandhi has made a name for himself as a tenacious marketer and tireless networker. He has been able to drive sales of his family owned Mobile Diagnostic Imaging business through alignment with key Physician Networks and Independent Medical Groups. Today, Med-Share enjoys a 40+ year track record of strong customer service and tailored service delivery methods. In addition to strong growth in the core Diagnostic Imaging space, Mr. Gandhi is currently focused on the Medical Practice Management division of the

operation. By partnering with individual physicians and physician groups to make their practices more profitable, his simple, yet effective model of managing the operations and revenue cycle of the medical practices makes it an attractive alternative for physicians seeking relief from day-to-day operational responsibilities.

Mr. Gandhi serves on the Board of Directors for the National Small Business Association. He is also a Past Chairman of the Board of the Small Business Association (SBAM) as well as a current member the SBAM Political Action Committee Board.

He was an advisor and member of the Finance Committee for Governor Whitmer's campaign in 2018 and 2022.

He served as a member of the Michigan Economic Recovery Council(MERC) advising Governor Whitmer on Michigan's COVID response with respect to business and employment policy.

He also serves with pleasure as a Board Member of Reliance HMO Insurance Company, the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce, the Council of Ethnic Chambers of Commerce and Leaders for Kids benefiting Children's Hospital of



Ajmal Zaheer Ahmad is a motion picture director based in Michigan. His last feature film “My Soul To Keep” has won over fifty awards at film festivals across the nation including numerous best picture and best director wins. He is the founder and current CEO of Exxodus Pictures and is currently working on a new superhero adventure “Crestar and the Knight Stallion”. The trailer for Crestar has gotten over three million views across various platforms and a comic book series set in the same universe is releasing worldwide July 19, 2023. Check out the trailer below.

<https://youtu.be/xKJIWNmXJdY>



Hema Rachmel, many people call her mother India because she is born and brought up in India and helps anyone and everyone who is in need. She is truly one of the person who goes extra miles to help people 24*7*365.

She is the member & volunteer of Maharashtra Mandal of Detroit from 30+ years and A2MM for 10+ years. Currently serve on the Board of MMD, DIA, DIWA, PALAV, MICS, INDIA HUB, NCAIA, Indian American Legislative Day Planning Committee, Lansing and many more. For the last 30 years, she has been whole heartedly involved in Community Service and Voluntarism. She was greatly involved and played significant role in helping people during COVID 19 pandemic of 2+ years across the globe

included but not limited to providing grocery and food to stranded international students, sending human remains to India from North America, arranged funerals on Zoom and in person, helped immigrants in resolving there immigration issues, created GOFUND fundraising for many, medical admissions for COVID, Cancer patients, conducted 15+ high number vaccine drives, provided prescription or medicines from India or from local doctors and pharmacies. Recently, she was actively involved in Ukraine student’s rescue mission (almost 2,500 students along with local organizations, Consulate officers and Indian airline authorities), emergency visas for India or support to students or transport of Oxygen concentrators and Ventilators during the peak of Delta variant.



Savita Monroe is a highly accomplished individual who has made significant contributions in various fields. Holding the prestigious title of Elite Michigan North America, she achieved the remarkable feat of being the third Runner Up in the National Pageant competition, where she also received the People's Choice and Best Gown awards. Alongside her pageant success, Savita is the Co-Owner of Perfect Brow Threading Spa and Wellness, an innovative beauty salon in Farmington Hills, MI. Notably, it is the first-ever salon to incorporate Yoga studios within its premises, reflecting her mission to promote beauty both inside and out.

Prior to her venture in the beauty and wellness industry, Savita held the position of Senior Vice President of Product Development and was a valued member of the executive leadership team at The Geneva Watch Group, headquartered in New York. In this role, she spearheaded the product development stage gates and successfully created numerous in-house brands for prominent retailers such as Target, Walmart, Kmart, and Nordstrom. Additionally, Savita managed a talented creative team and held a sales executive role for the renowned retailer, Target. Her global travels allowed her to identify opportunities and develop products tailored to specific countries and markets.

Before her tenure as Senior Vice President, Savita served as a buyer for the esteemed fashion retail chain, Winkelman's. During this time, she excelled in various buyer roles, specializing in accessories, woven and knits. She played an integral role in the creation of successful private (in-house) label brands, overseeing the entire process from concept and design to production.

Driven by her passion for beauty and wellness, Savita pursued certifications as a Barre and Yoga RYT 200, RYCT instructor, as well as becoming a licensed Esthetician. Leveraging her expertise, she now teaches Yoga classes both online and in her own studio, and also at the South Lyon Adult Community Center. Furthermore, she conducts Yoga sessions for corporations committed to their employees' well-being.

In recognition of her exceptional entrepreneurial endeavors, Perfect Brow Spa and Wellness was honored with the Small Business Impact Award from the Farmington Chamber in 2019. Additionally, their outstanding performance earned them a position in the top 20% out of 4,000 entries in the Go Global awards.

In addition to her professional achievements, Savita is deeply committed to giving back to her community through her charitable work. She is the founder and President of the Detroit Indian Women's Association (DIWA), a nonprofit organization that empowers women. Alongside her dedicated board, Savita and her board of directors has received the esteemed Michigan Hero Award as well as a special Tribute for IFW. from the Governor of Michigan for their impactful work. She also serves on the boards of Michigan Indian Community Services, MPowerAll, and is an auxiliary board member for the Lacasa Healing Center. Through these roles, Savita continues to make a positive difference in the lives of others.



Shweta Shah was born in Ahmedabad, India and grew up in Stony Brook, New York. She is a graduate of Trinity College with a degree in Child Psychology and a Masters in Education through the University of Phoenix. When Shweta first moved to Michigan, she was a teacher at Cranbrook Schools.

Shweta and her husband, Akshay, are the owners of a group of companies within the travel industry - a consolidator, Sky Bird Travel; an IT software company, JRT; a tour company, Sky Vacations; and the more popularly known retail arm, Jaya Travel & Tours. After having her three daughters, Aanya, Chaiya, and Shreya, Shweta moved into working with the family businesses assisting in Marketing, Airline Relations, and Business Development.

During the COVID lockdown, Shweta and Akshay started another group of companies called Allavance which include Business Services, Insurance, IT Solutions, Interior Construction and a Landscape company. Currently, Shweta is the CEO of Allavance Landscape & Design and Allavance Interior Construction.

Giving back to the community has always been important to Shweta and she has been participating in community service work since middle school. Currently, Shweta is the President of the Michigan branch of the Jaya Charitable Foundation, a nonprofit which was started by Akshay's parents, Arvin and Jaya Shah, in 2001. The Jaya Charitable Foundation's mission is to improve the human condition.

In her free time, Shweta loves to read, dance, watch movies, travel, and spend time with family, friends, and their two dogs, Oscar and Felix.



Mina Patel Sooch is a serial CEO, entrepreneur, venture capitalist, and strategist with close to 30 years of pharmaceutical and biotech experience. She has co-founded over 10 clinical stage biotech companies and venture/angel funds including Ocuphire, Gemphire, ProNAi, Apjohn Ventures, and Tara Ventures. Mina has successfully led the raise of hundreds of millions of dollars for these healthcare companies, which included three successful IPOs (private to Nasdaq publicly listed), multiple partnerships to large global pharma companies, and several drugs/devices approved by the FDA now on the market. The areas of unmet medical

need include ophthalmology, cardiovascular, cancer, kidney and liver disease, and neurology. Earlier in her career before moving back to Michigan in 2000, Ms. Sooch served as a global account manager at Monitor Group, a top-tier global strategy consulting firm based in Boston where she worked on the multi-billion Pharmacia & Upjohn merger in 1995 and later co-led the launch of the Corporate Finance group, specializing in M&A, valuations, and merger integration. Ms. Sooch has served on the boards of more than 15 private, public, and nonprofit firms, and has been the recipient of numerous awards, including being named one of the Deal Makers of the year in 2016 by Crain's Detroit Business and Entrepreneur of the Year® by MVCA. Ms. Sooch currently serves on the board of Priority Health, the 2nd largest healthcare plan in Michigan and part of Corewell Health. Ms. Sooch received an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a B.S. summa cum laude in Chemical Engineering from Wayne State University in Michigan.

She lives in West Bloomfield and has 2 beautiful children now in their 20s – Alex and Amanda Sooch and enjoys sports including golf, tennis, pickleball, running, boating, paddleboarding, and snow skiing as well as all things Marvel and Harry Potter and Tom Brady



Valerie is a talented 26-year-old hairstylist who works full-time at Chemistry Salon in Berkley, Michigan. She has always had a passion for hairstyling and has honed her skills over the years, working at one of the most sought after hair salons in the area. In addition to her work at the salon, Valerie has been crowned Miss Michigan Petite 2023 and will compete for the USA title at the national pageant in Milwaukee this August.

Valerie's success in the pageant world has opened up new doors for her, including a walk in New York Fashion Week and features in IT MODEL & Gladys Magazine. Her hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed, and she has become a role model for young women aspiring to succeed in the beauty industry. Standing at only 5ft tall, she sees her heights as an advantage, using it to stand out and be remembered.

Valerie is a shining example of how hard work, passion, and kindness can help us achieve our dreams and make a difference in the world. At night she volunteers as a crisis counselor with Crisis Text Line. Her passion for helping others doesn't end there. Not only does she go on weekly walks picking up litter in her neighborhood but she also loves crafting and works with Cards For Hospitalized Kids, Color a Smile, Love for Our Elders, and more. She has won Berkley Michigans Humanitarian of the year award and has received presidential service awards from the white house. “



Khushi Patel is 20 years old, studying pre-med at the University of Central Florida. She is an aspiring model and actor, former winner of Miss India Worldwide 2022, social media content creator with experience in New York Fashion Week, commercial modeling, and professional runway. Along with this Khushi has committed over 300 hours in volunteer care at pediatric and family hospitals, and is the former VP of the Active Minds Mental Health Association. Her long term goals include attending med school while making her acting in Bollywood dreams come true.



Jieyu Wang Alatchanian

Jieyu is an Asian-Pacific American Media & Fashion Influencer in Michigan. Founder of D Asian Media, CAO of 168 Group, former federal employee.

She is passionate about education, fashion and culture. She started a media group in Michigan that is dedicated to local Asian culture and lifestyle in 2015, D Asian Media (www.dasianmedia.com) which produces the Michigan Asian Live Channel, Paradise Eve.- Fashion event, and the Asian Taste - Food Fest, among several other community events. She also serves as the Director of Communications for Miss America Origination - Miss Oakland County. the regional director of the Miss International Fashion And Travel Pageant, the founder of the Miss & Mrs. Michigan Chinese Pageant, Media and Tech Director of Michigan Fashion Week

Jieyu has also owned the Detroit Chinese Radio and TV Network (www.dchineseradio.com) since 2016, producing weekly local news and entertainment shows in Mandarin and Cantonese languages. Sunday Mandarin show on 88.1FM.



Neha Patel is a Senior consultant at a global H&B consulting firm. She has over 25 years of experience. She is a wife and mother of two adult children and a recent COVID addition dog named Roxy. Neha enjoys yoga, golf, hiking, biking and travel. Her most recent trip she travelled to Iceland where she was able to enjoy the great outdoors and some really challenging hiking trails. She and her husband have travelled to 49 states and are actively looking for an opportunity to check off the last remaining state. She is a former Miss India from Toledo 1987, making a brief appearance on the Today show, and a second runner up to International Festival Queen pageant.

Neha is involved in her community of West Bloomfield for many years. She has served on the Woodlands Board and currently serves on the Township Tax Review board and also ran for the Township Clerk position. In addition to raising two successful kids, she mentors high school and college students in many topics from college application preparation to career development and interviewing tips.



Raksha Dave is a classically trained teacher in Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Manipuri and a wide variety of Folk dances. She started Nartan Dance Academy in 1986, where a wide variety of dances are incorporated and taught. Here she nurtures her passion for creating fusion dances and dance dramas. Apart from her rich dance background she is a skilled writer and poet. She has written 15 dance dramas and many timeless songs for her dance productions. She has judged countless dance competitions worldwide. Since her conception of

Nartan Dance academy she has trained thousands in a variety of Indian dances. Raksha's relentless focus and drive for perfection and commitment has nurtured many young adults to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Her drive has created a legacy and a cultural bridge between India and America. Her choreography has won countless titles across interstate and national competitions, she continues to be the leading light for Indian culture in Detroit Michigan.



Meet Rekha Nair, State Director for Miss India Ohio, a remarkable woman who embodies the true essence of an empowered mom, a successful women entrepreneur, and a catalyst for change. With her unwavering passion, resilience, and dedication, she is making a significant impact. She also organizes South Asian Wedding Show Columbus which has been a huge success. She also owns a brand called Reign By Rekha which aims to bring a fusion collection of Indian clothing in an affordable range.

Balancing Motherhood and Entrepreneurship: Rekha is a shining example of how women can gracefully juggle the responsibilities of motherhood while pursuing their entrepreneurial dreams. She has demonstrated that being a mom doesn't limit one's ability to achieve professional success but rather enhances their strength, creativity, and determination. **Inspiring Others:** Rekha's accomplishments and dedication serve as an inspiration to aspiring women entrepreneurs. Through her story, she motivates others to believe in their abilities, overcome challenges, and pursue

their passions fearlessly. She is a beacon of hope and a role model for women who strive to make a difference.



Radhika is a Senior Technology Sales Leader with 21 years of extensive experience in cloud sales leadership and business management leading high-performing teams at tech giants like IBM, Microsoft and Oracle. She was recently named No 1 In Top 10 women in Manufacturing by the UK publication Manufacturing Global. She has an MBA in Strategy from the prestigious University of Michigan-Ross Business School and has been featured on several leadership and technology podcasts. She is a

renowned Community leader serving on the Boards of 4 nonprofits: MAI Family Services, MICS, Palav and Interfaith Leadership Council of Metro Detroit. She is a 4-time National Beauty Pageant winner and has been most recently crowned:
Ms Michigan North America 2020
Ms North America People's Choice and 4th Runners up 2020
Mrs Michigan USA, 2021 and
Mrs USA 2nd Runner Up 2021

Besides being a well-respected Industry thought leader, keynote speaker, career/pageant coach, she is an active ambassador/advocate for DEI, women empowerment, and STEM education.