

## ***Diwali: Coronavirus Edition - Anushree Rayarikar***



Every year, during the season of Autumn, the world begins to get more festive. The leaves change colors and begin to fall, and the world gets darker around 5pm; however, this does not stop us. When the world gets darker, we take it upon ourselves to light it back up with candles, lights, sparklers, and holiday festivities. As the Jewish prepare for Hanukkah and the Christians prepare for Christmas, Hindu holidays are already in full swing.

In August, we celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi with prayers and song, singing out the praise of Lord Ganesha. In October, we celebrate Navratri with colorful dresses, garba, and golu. Then in November comes the most beloved holiday: Diwali. Many days go by in celebrating with lights, firecrackers, and of course, delicious food.

This year, the holiday season has changed. The COVID-19 pandemic has turned the world upside-down, and in doing so has limited the way we celebrate our major holidays. No longer can we gather in huge gymnasiums and dance our hearts away to Nagada Sang Dhol and other garba music. Instead of getting together for huge Diwali parties, we have to limit our celebrations to small groups of family or a few close friends. The social aspect of our festival season has changed drastically. Though it is necessary to celebrate this way in order to preserve public health, it can be disheartening to remember this time last year, when we took for granted our grand Indian parties.

Although it is tough to remember what we once had, this can be seen as a bit of a blessing as well. This holiday season, take some time to remember what each holiday is truly about. These days we spend a lot of time celebrating our holidays with food, friends, and fun music and dance. Those aspects of the holidays are important, but this year we can also reconnect more deeply with the religious aspect. We can take the time to listen to stories about triumph of good over evil, and pray for better days to come.

Though we can no longer have grand parties, we can still cook up wonderful feasts with our family. My fondest memories of Diwali growing up revolved around the *faraal* that my aai makes each year. She always managed to make a great assortment of *faraal*, including *chakli*, *shankar paali*, *ladoo*, *chiwda*, and more, no matter how busy she was during this time of year. I remember crowding around the countertop in the kitchen, “helping” her as best as I could with my tiny, inexperienced hands. As the years went by, I became more and

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more skilled in the kitchen and began to truly help out. These moments of cooking together as a family were memories that I missed out on in the past couple of years, as I had been away at college. This year, due to classes being online, I am lucky enough to be able to enjoy this experience once more.

So, this Diwali, make sure to cherish what you have and celebrate in whichever way you're able to. This pandemic has caused lots of struggle, but I have learned one important lesson from it: never take what you have for granted. I wish you all a prosperous and joyous Diwali!




## *The Growing Disparity between First Generation Indian Immigrant Parents and their US-Born Children*

*By: Anish Khot*

The turn of the century marked a number of historic events, Y2K proved to be a myth, bluetooth was invented, and India marked the birth of its billionth citizen. With the world becoming ever smaller, a fire is sparked in many young adults to explore the far off horizon. And so, many Indians came to the United States of America: the land of the free and the home of the brave.

They came to study, to start a business, or to work in industry: all in an effort to provide a better and easier life for themselves and their families. But oftentimes, there is an acculturation gap between these new parents and their US-raised children. Acculturation is the process of conforming or adapting to a culture or society. It may take longer for Indian parents to accommodate to American culture, while their children may fit in with ease.

Some Indian-born parents tell their US-raised children of the struggles that they had to go through to reach the comfortable positions they are at now and not to take it for granted. While the hardships these parents have gone through may have been extreme, their children may go through a different set of hardships. Generally, Indian-born parents have gone through economic hardships while their US-born children may struggle with emotional or social trouble, and they may seem as a lesser burden because social instability is a fairly new concept the world is learning about. For example, parents may have had to get a job during their school years as a form of necessity while their children may need it to show prior work experience to colleges. Neither reason is lesser than the other, but one of them is widely understood while the latter could be confusing to some.



With technology being so widely available and integral in our daily lives, older generations may have had a hard time adapting to the newest iOS or new features on the computer. Children, with their ever-boundless curiosity, are able to inherently understand the changes of technology and acclimate on a whim. This gap in familiarity with technology provided the opportunity for the younger generation to teach an older generation something necessary to live in this modern world. Normally, adults are the ones meant to prepare children for the future, such as how to hold a spoon or tie their shoes. Today, being able to stand out in a hyper-connective world is just as important. Consequently, this younger generation (Generation Z and millennials) may have taken this difference in knowledge as a sign of being superior rather than being born at a different time, which may appear as arrogance to their parents. The way this different knowledge is expressed can also be seen as vanity.

This perceived hubris may also come from the difference in schooling that Indian parents had, compared with their children. In the American school system, independent thinking is emphasized and students are encouraged to search for a deeper meaning in what they read and what they see. Indian parents, however, were told to take what they saw at face value and listen instinctively to their elders. And when their children come home, they aren't able to switch their method of thinking to match their parents. Today's climate requires people to have an opinion on everything. And sometimes the opinions of parents and children clash, and Indian parents may see this as being disrespectful of their experiences and age; in truth, the child only has a different perspective, neither right nor wrong. But this contrast can and should be a learning point for both parents and children to evolve their understanding and respect for each other.

Society isn't a static phenomenon, but a dynamic entity subject to constant changes. The world you were raised in does not exist anymore. In all, there will always be differences between generations and cultures, but it should not stop us from being able to understand one another.



## *My Journey with the Elections – Om Savargaonkar*



Om Savargaonkar graduated from Rutgers University in May of this year with a degree in Political Science. He has been working in campaigns for the last three years, starting his career as an intern on Rep. Tom Malinowski's campaign in 2018. From June to July of 2018 he was an intern, and was then hired as a Field Organizer on the campaign in late July. In his capacity as Field Organizer, he ran field operations for the battleground county of Somerset, which helped flip the longtime Republican stronghold to Democrats after decades. The Congressman, only a candidate at the time, won the election in NJ-07 against an incumbent Republican who had been in office for ten years. After the 2018 campaign, during the summer of 2019, he had the opportunity to intern in Rep. Malinowski's office in Washington, D.C. where he gained experience in domestic policy issues such as transportation/infrastructure, and homeland security. Following Om's internship with Rep. Malinowski's office, the Congressman and his team asked him to come work on his re-election campaign in 2020, which was going to be one of the most competitive races in the country. In the Fall of 2019, Om worked as a Get Out The Vote Coordinator for a competitive New Jersey Assembly race and took on a role as the Deputy Field Director for the Congressman's re-election campaign in January of 2020. The first challenge was that the race was pitted against the New Jersey State Senate Minority Leader - Tom Kean, Jr. Being the son of a popular former governor, he had huge name recognition going into the campaign. National Republicans considered him their jackpot candidate to go up against the incumbent. After all finances were sorted, over \$10 million was raised and spent collectively amongst the two campaigns, and over \$6 million was poured in from outside groups/national party committees.

Political campaigns are demanding efforts to undertake. A typical campaign team consists of a Campaign Manager and three departments: Political/Events, Finance, and Field. The Campaign Manager oversees the campaign budget and works directly with the Democratic National Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in order to gain the resources needed to win a particular race. The Political/Events team handles poll watchers, candidate events throughout the course of the campaign, and election day war room challenges. The Finance team's job is to raise money for the course of the campaign, which begins the day after a candidate wins an election/announces to seek elected office. In especially close races, the Field team is arguably the most important, since its job is to build a team of organizers who recruit

and manage volunteers, who in turn make direct voter contact. A competitive campaign has about twenty full time staff, along with interns and fellows who provide direct help to each team.

Part of running a field program especially on a competitive campaign means in tough situations like the pandemic, one needs to find alternative ways to reach voters. As the campaign was built from the ground up, the team was only six staffers starting in January. Being the only field staffer on the ground, from January to March, Om ran a petition canvass program in which the Congressman received over 5,000 petition signatures to get on the ballot. This number was the most any House candidate in New Jersey had received. In March, when the pandemic forced everyone to work from home, the field side of the campaign was first to be impacted since all of the operations required contact with people and, as the name suggests, being in the “field”. Faced with a challenge, they quickly decided that reaching seniors who were hard hit by the pandemic to see how they were holding up was an effective way to provide help to this demographic that was feeling lonely at home, unable to get groceries, and having casework issues. Om set up a Neighborhood Check-in program that helped 10,000 seniors across NJ-07 get access to COVID-19 impacted resources such as testing center locations, and groceries. Fast forward to June, and Governor Murphy declared that the primary election will be entirely vote-by-mail in New Jersey, which meant that any Democrat or Republican in the state would be sent a vote-by-mail ballot to vote in the July election. The Congressman’s primary election was uncontested, so Om set his goal here to turnout as many Democrats to vote as possible. This was as a show of strength to the Republican opponent’s campaign. The Congressman ended up receiving over 25,000 more votes than the Republican opponent in the primary election.

Om’s role on the day to day was to manage the organizer team, and give them the resources to implement the plan that he and the Field Director had come up with. Volunteer relationships are key, as are party chair relationships. In order to effectively organize in a particular “turf” or area of a district/state, an organizer needs to be able to communicate effectively with volunteers, train, and develop close knit relationships in order for that volunteer to want to come back and make calls/knock on doors for a candidate.

In such high stakes campaigns, the Democratic National Committee, through it’s House of Representatives arm - the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, invests in races that they would want to keep blue, or flip blue. As the Deputy Field Director, Om worked with his Field Director to hire and train five field organizers, who would implement their field plan on the day to day by recruiting and training

volunteers to make phone calls. Since Democrats across the country, and the Biden campaign decided that due to the pandemic it was not in good spirit to knock on doors, the field team found that many people may get turned off if they implemented a door knocking field program. Om quickly worked to set up the back end of an all phones field plan, which included texts, and other relational means of reaching voters. This part of a campaign - after a primary and before closer to the election is the “Persuasion/Turnout” phase. The idea here is to reach as many voters who have been identified in a field plan to be persuadable voters, as well as reach those voters who may be supporting a candidate, in order to affirm their support.

Around August, New Jerseyans were notified that an all vote-by-mail election would occur in the fall, with limited in person voting due to the pandemic. The entire campaign team expected this, and worked to educate voters on how to vote-by-mail. In a normal election cycle, each campaign conducts a GOTV, or “Get Out The Vote” during the last four days before the election. This cycle, every campaign in New Jersey would start their GOTV programs almost a month and a half before election day, since vote-by-mail ballots were sent out starting September 19th. Om worked with his organizers day and night to ensure that their volunteers (the most out of any Congressional race in the country) could chase vote-by-mail ballots faster than their Republican opponent’s campaign. In essence, GOTV is a sprint to see which campaign can reach the most voters of each respective party, in order to get them to turn out to vote or in this case, get them to complete and return their ballot.

As the field program continued to grow, Om’s staff managed to recruit the most volunteers out of any congressional race in the country, and in turn, those volunteers ended up making the most voter contacts of any congressional race in the country by election day. The last four days before the election, most of the work had been done, and it was just about reaching any last minute voters who would drop their vote-by-mail ballot off, or vote in person by paper ballot. The Congressman ended up winning by just over 5,000 votes, and it took about two weeks after election day for all ballots to be counted. This is what we call a field margin in the campaign world.

Campaign field teams are the epitome of grassroots organizing. Every door knock, phone call, and text message that is sent out ends up being the difference in close races like this one. To put things into perspective, on the 2018 campaign that Om had been a Field Organizer on, the Congressman, who was only a candidate at the time, ended up winning by over 16,000 votes. This time, he won by 5,000 votes due to the Republican

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opponent's name recognition, and national political environment. Om and his Field Director's field program ended up helping the campaign over perform every toss-up House of Representatives race in the country, and helped keep the House of Representatives in Democratic control.

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## **Online Schooling during this Pandemic Siyona Pawar**



Are we all going to sit at home for the rest of our lives? And do our schooling without leaving our house? Yes, this is what the future is going to look like.

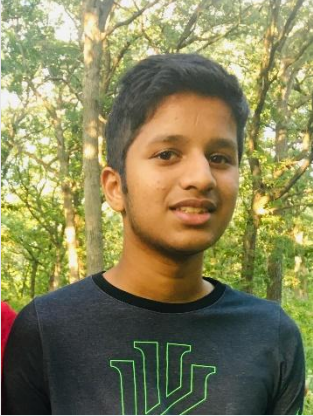
Since this pandemic has taken over, it seems that I'm going to miss all the fun that I used to have in school like, meeting my friends during recess, games we used to play together, and coming and going to school on the bus while talking to them.

But I know that this year is going to be different. We all are lucky we have this technology to help us continue our work and studies.

The best part of online schooling during this pandemic is that I can study at my comfort level without leaving my house and I can still meet and chat with my teachers and friends through google meet and email. Every day we still have to follow agendas and turn in homework in time. During Meets we can change our backgrounds into fun scenes and operate more fun features.

Surely, this pandemic has changed our lives but we can take this as an advantage, not a flaw. This virus has made us stronger, we are spending more time with our family, taking the courage to learn new things every day as we are accepting the challenge this has brought us.

## *How Colossal Dust Storms can Over Time Possibly mean the End of Our Planet* *By Krish Mehta*



Before we start, I would like everyone to know a little about me. My name is Krish Mehta, and I am a sophomore in high school. Despite the fact that this topic is somewhat theoretical and is way into the future, I find it interesting to learn the possible causes of how our planet expires.

As every second, minute, hour, day, month, and year passes, the condition of our beloved planet which we rely too much on gets worse and worse. Ultimately, despite how we feel, nothing can change the fact that one day, our planet will be a barren wasteland, with no teeming biological life. Now, since we have to embrace that fact, it is also important for us to know the possible causes of our planet's death.

Scientists have recently discovered a very possible reason for why the huge amount of water on Mars disappeared into nothing over billions of years. According to scientists, they think Mars used to have one or two oceans in its ancient life. Using NASA's Mars Atmosphere and Volatile EvolutioN spacecraft (MAVEN), scientists have discovered how colossal and robust summer dust storms can lift water above the Red Planet's hygropause- a cold layer in the Martian atmosphere that acts as a boundary to lower altitudes. Dust storms generally block heat and light, keeping them from pushing their way to the planet surface, so they instead warm the hygropause. This weakens it and lets more water escape the atmosphere. These storms on Mars can fling water to higher altitudes in the atmosphere than scientists previously thought, and this rapid process helped strip the Red Planet of its limited water supply, where hydrogen was then lost into space, draining its precious oceans.

Now similarly, even though Earth doesn't have as much dust as the Red Planet, over time, maybe billions of years more than what the process took for Mars, eventually, our planet will die out because of a combination of these dust storms and other factors, such as the wastage of water and global warming. On Mars, since it isn't fully proven yet, we can assume there were no intelligent life forms on the Red Planet, which made it so water couldn't physically be wasted like it is daily on our planet. On our planet, people leave the tap running and spill water every single day in every part of the world, which over time and in total wastes an absurd amount of water.

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Overall, there are multiple factors of our planet's death, and there will be an eternity of rapid adaptation and evolution committed by our successors. Huge dust storms can partially play a huge role, as they can over time do the same thing that happened to our neighboring Martian planet.