

2017

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Auckland Malayali Samajam
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2017-2018

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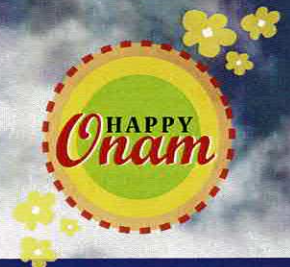
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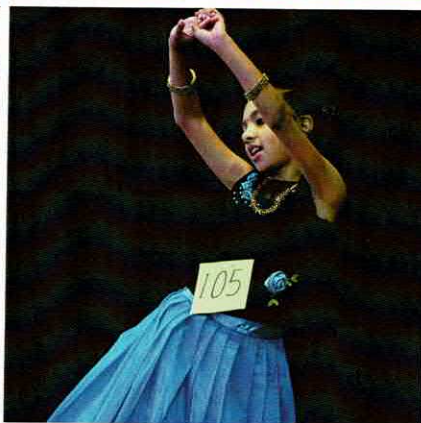
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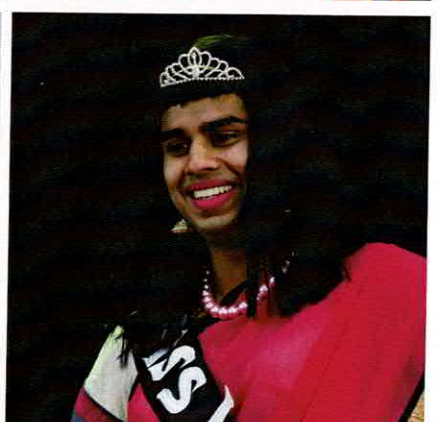
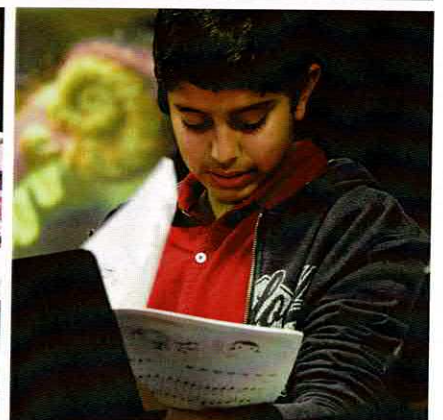


YOUTH FESTIVAL

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YOUTH FESTIVAL Darpanam 2017



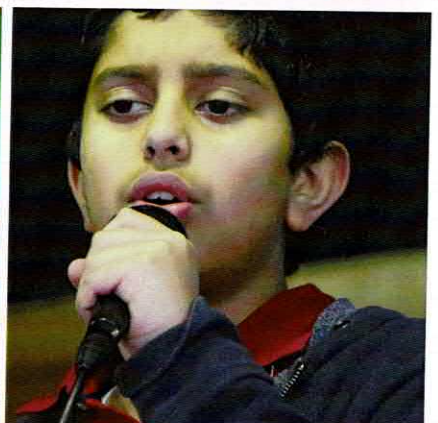
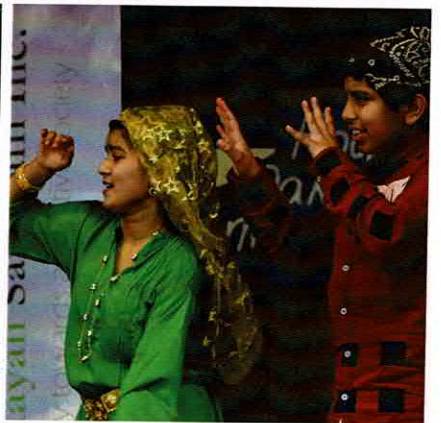
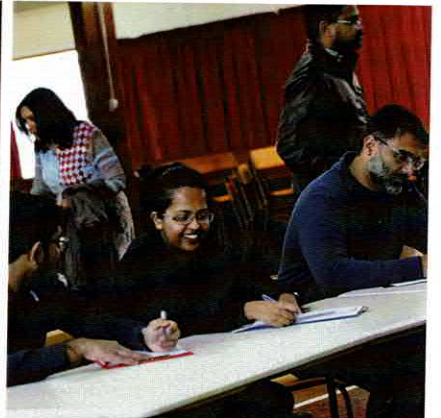
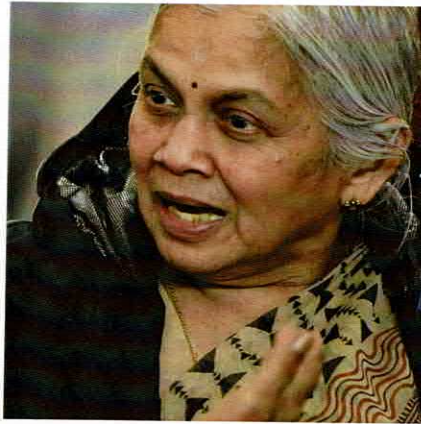


YOUTH FESTIVAL

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Priyanca Rdhakrishnan at AMS's Ponnonam

I have done most of my work advocating for gender equity - equitable access to resources and opportunities for women and girls. More specifically, my focus has been on addressing domestic and sexual violence in New Zealand. I worked with Shakti Community Council Inc., which is a National Refuge Organisation that provides domestic violence intervention support to women of Asian, African and Middle Eastern origin, for about six years. I worked directly with women who were victim/survivors of abuse and supported them to access their rights in New Zealand. I also worked with the organisation to lobby government for legislative and policy change based on the experiences of the women we supported and was the organisation's national media spokesperson. There is a lot more than needs to be done to address the needs of women, especially ethnic women, experiencing domestic violence. We need to start with funding them adequately. Currently, Shakti's refuge in Wellington has been declined government funding for no good reason and faces closure. That refuge was established a few years ago following the domestic violence murders of two migrant women. Shakti provides a vital service and organisations like those must be well-supported.

Being a Malayali, would you able to share us with your background?

I was born in India and brought up in Singapore by Malayali parents who were (and still are) very proud of our roots. I was taught to speak Malayalam and grew up listening to Swathi Thirunal, Yesudas and learning Carnatic music myself. My father is originally from Parur - from Matavana Parambu, which is also the

tharavad of well-known writer and freedom fighter, Kesari Balakrishna Pillai. My mother's tharavadu is Ezhuvath, Chittoor. My maternal great grandfather was Dr CR Krishna Pillai, who was a medical doctor, literary enthusiast, Secretary of the Transport Workers' Union and active in the Aikya Kerala movement, which led to the formation of the state of Kerala. Being Malayali is an integral part of my identity. However, over the years I stopped speaking as much Malayalam as I should have and I regret that. It means that today I am very supportive of organisations like the Auckland Malayali Samajam that provide language classes and encourage our youth to stay in touch with their mother tongue. There is so much that makes me proud to be Malayali - our history of political participation and reputation for religious harmony, our unique culture, arts and music that are so beautiful, Kerala cuisine that is unparalleled (and our various Payasams in particular!), we are the land of Ayurveda and our mother tongue is literally music to the ears. There is so much more that unites us as Malayalis in New Zealand than that which divides.

We all do carry our own memories as a migrant to New Zealand. being a migrant, how do you feel now being represented for migrants?

Migration is never easy. Some have it easier, and many have it much harder than I have. I grew up in a loving family with parents who were hard-working and made sure that my sister and I had everything we needed. While we weren't spoiled, we had a comfortable life. In my twenties, I wanted to step out of my comfort zone, move to a country where I

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