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# Scottish Association of Marathi Regional Art and Traditions (SAMRAT) Annual General Meeting

## President's Report 2025

As the President of SAMRAT, it is my privilege to present this annual report highlighting our activities over the past year (2025) and what we have achieved as a committee and community. This report highlights our ongoing commitment to celebrating Marathi festivals and promoting Marathi culture, with the help and support of the community.

### **2025 Review**

This is the second reporting year for this committee which has been one of the busiest years for SAMRAT so far. I will provide an update on the year gone by in this section.

In this year, we have had to undergo a change in the committee with Ninad Hardikar having to leave the Committee member position as he had to travel back to India. We then carried out the co-opting process as per the constitution, with Rohan Gite joining the team as a Committee member just before SGF. I would like to welcome Rohan to the team.

I would like to officially thank Ninad for his hard work and contribution as a member of the Executive Committee. It was unfortunate that he had to leave just a few weeks before SGF, especially since his contribution leading up to the festival was significant. SGF10 would not have been the same without his help.

### **Highlights of events in 2025:**

**MAKAR SANKRANT:** Like every year we started the new year with the Makar Sankrant event which was well attended by our community. In addition to the usual activities related to sankrant, our cooking competition with sankrant theme was especially popular and the delicacies prepared were very innovative and delicious.

We also used the event to kickstart SGF10 and gain momentum for it, SGF10 logo was unveiled during this event.

**GUDHI PADWA** - Marathi New Year was welcomed in this event. As always this was a ticketed event with SAMRAT subsidising some of the food costs. SGF10 themed photo booth and quiz were the event highlights that were received very well by the community. We continued to promote SGF10 and build enthusiasm for it through this event.

**BBQ 2025** - We had to go back to Vogrie Country Park this year due to the unavailability of Roseburn Park. The attendance at BBQ was slightly on the lower side this year but those who attended enjoyed the fair weather and activities that were planned. We continued with the raffle that we started last year and managed to raise a good amount of money for SAMRAT, thanks to all the business supporters of our community.

### **EDINBURGH CARNIVAL**

This was a first for SAMRAT and it was an amazing afternoon to showcase dhol tasha, lezim and marathi folk dance in Princes Street Gardens in the centre of Edinburgh. Participation in this event was a way for SAMRAT to use this platform to promote SGF10 and bring our music and culture to other communities in Edinburgh. Our pathaks were warmly received by the attendees and at one point dhol tasha continued to perform beyond the allocated time due to public demand!

As a result of this participation, we have built connections with Edinburgh Carnival organisers and it would be something that we could build on, if the future committees and the community in general would like to.

**SGF10/Mauli Paduka darshan** - And now we come to the biggest event of last year and one of the biggest events organised by SAMRAT so far. Details about income, expenses and details of the event will be discussed within the Secretary and Treasurer's reports.

SGF10 was a 5 day extravaganza of worship, culture, display and music. Each day was celebrated uniquely with themes ranging from varkari, Shivaji maharaj, marathi folk and culture and of course culminating with our pathaks and procession. Some key highlights of this year:

- Decorations - A large scale fort display with a meghdambari completely built by the community with no external help. In addition the photo booth, stage decorations and entrance decorations gave a festive look and cheer to the venue. This was a challenging undertaking that took significant effort and

commitment from many. The 'killa dekhava' became a subject of many Instagram photos!

- Mauli paduka - Led engagement with SVRTUK to bring Vitthal paduka to Scotland for the first time and to SAMRAT's event specifically. Bringing paduka into the venue with a traditional dindi, with dance, song and devotion was a sight to behold and one to experience. Everyone's enthusiasm and devotion to put this together just with a few practice sessions was humbling to see. We had paduka for 3 evenings of the 5 days and many people got an opportunity to take darshan as a result.
- Cultural - Multiple days, multiple themes and multiple high quality programmes! Varkari theme on the first day which ended with vithhal gajar in the hall, stirring 'Aamhi Gad Boltoy' performance, brilliant dances/songs/skits by our talented community throughout the 5 days, amazing marathi/modern themed fashion show done for the first time, Ex-Presidents and this committee's flash mob and performances from outside our community. It was packed 5 days of cultural feast that was not possible without significant planning, preparation and practices for many weeks before the event but it was all worth it, especially when marathi culture was showcased with so much pride.
- Food - community cooking was the highlight for this year to which many responded so enthusiastically. Making 1000+ modak, and food for all attendees on one of the evenings was such a community bonding initiative and both were enjoyed by many with some great feedback. We introduced non-marathi stalls this year (Khana Khazana) along with our annual Anand mela. Overall, this year during the 5 days we successfully managed to have a mix of restaurant sponsored free food, community cooked free food and stalls to purchase food. Food is such a big part of any Indian event and getting it organised and managed for 5 days is no mean feat so another feather in the cap for the community.
- Sponsorship - As always the community was generous with vargani contributions and we successfully managed to get good corporate/small business sponsorships as well. However, this year we are hugely thankful to members of our community who have silently sponsored multiple things be it refreshments, prasad on different days, items required for decorations and procession, bappa's murti and more. These are silent contributors and I wanted to recognise their contributions on record.
- Pathaks and procession - a new beautiful palakhi and bigger bappa's murti brought grandeur to the procession. Our dhol tasha, zanj and lezim pathaks practised hard for weeks giving up their time for many weekends to put up an energising, colourful and vibrant show. We took feedback from the community and had only two performance windows this year during the procession. This

year we also took a new route through the main road and to a new visarjan spot which was also well received by many.

Overall, a huge amount of work went into organising 5 days of SGF10 and I would like to acknowledge the community's enthusiastic participation and support on various fronts mentioned above. Heartfelt thanks to each and every one who helped the committee in executing the plans, to bring a 'plan on paper' to life needs many ideas and hands and hence this would not have been possible without our wonderful community's support.

As a committee we feel that SGF10 was befitting for a 10th year celebration and we hope the community feels the same.

### **SAMIR CHOUGHULE SHOW**

We got an opportunity to host 'Maharashtrachi Hasyajatra' fame actor Samir Choughule's one man show, 'Samya Samya Maifilit mazhya' in Edinburgh in November. Due to demand from some members and an enthusiastic response to our poll, we decided to go ahead with it. Along with the community in Edinburgh, the show was attended by few people from Glasgow and Aberdeen and it was overall a great success. Simple comedy and laughter during dark winter days was welcome by many. However, to be able to bring such shows to Edinburgh on an ongoing basis will require more of the community to back such events to make it financially viable.

### **2026 Events**

In 2026 after Gudhi Padwa this committee's term will come to an end. Gudhi Padwa is planned for 29th of March and details will be announced soon.

This being the last AGM of this committee, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all SAMRAT members whose contributions over the last two years have helped make all our events successful. I would also like to thank my committee for their hard work, dedication and support, it has been an absolute pleasure to lead this committee. In conclusion, I will reiterate what I did last year. We are a small community organisation in terms of number of members, yet we continue to punch above our weight with the number of events we organise through the year, with SGF particularly being more complex than any other. So we should all be rightly proud of what we are doing as a community to keep our marathi culture and traditions alive and continue to support SAMRAT to flourish and grow.

Thank you!