

## OSA 2024 Awards

### Distinguished Odia Award 2024

DR. AJAYA K MOHANTY



Dr. Mohanty is an internationally recognized technology executive with 30 plus years of experience at IBM and Deloitte. He has a PhD in Theoretical Physics from the University of Maryland, College Park. He graduated from in BJB College (I.Sc.), Ravenshaw College (B.Sc. Physics – Hons) and Utkal University, Vani Vihar (PG).

He is the first Odia to head a strategic IBM executive position in Southeast Asia in education and scientific research. Under its mandate, he established the first IBM Development Center in Odisha in Bhubaneswar in 1999. Through his relentless effort for IT & ITES development in Odisha, several multinational IT companies (Such-as: Deloitte, PwC, IBM and others) have made entry into Odisha.

He was the Associate Chair and Advisory Board Member for India's Mega Science Projects such as India Neutrino observatory, and the National Supercomputing Mission.

Dr. Mohanty initiated the very first Shared University Research Grant program by IBM in Asia Pacific, with grants to IISc, Bangalore, IIT Delhi and Kharagpur for parallel computing research work, in weather and climate modeling. He spearheaded the effort from IBM for the very first Petaflop supercomputers to be acquired by Indian Meteorological Department in early 2000s, enabling reliable cyclone and monsoon prediction in India. Dr. Mohanty has been co-chair & steering committee member of HPC-Asia Conferences; hosted HPC Asia conferences in Bangalore, Taiwan, Tokyo and Beijing. He pioneered the adaption of HPC technology in Asia, in India, China, Thailand and Singapore

Dr. Mohanty is the author-and coauthor of over 35 research papers and publications and has several US patents to his credit.

In collaboration with Prof. Durga Misra, Dr. Mohanty has initiated a series of global webinars on climate change and the role of technologies, since July 2022.

OSA convention attendance in 1979, 1988, 1995, 2005, 2009, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022...  
Co-Chair – OSA Public Library Initiative 2017-2023, OSA Public Library Development Seminar – 2016-2022  
Co-Chair – OSA Higher Education Committee 2019-2023, OSA Higher Education Seminar. – 2018-2023  
Co- Chair - Odisha Development Seminar - 2018 & 2019

#### **Awards & recognitions:**

- Deloitte Outstanding Performance Award for Delivery Excellence 2011, 2012
- IBM CEO Invention Achievement Award 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998
- IBM Corporate One Hundred Percent Club Winner 2004-2005
- IBM Corporate Senior VP
- Award for LLNL-ASCI Blue Gene System Acceptance 2006: one of the the highest recognitions by IBM
- In recognition of his achievements in the field of information technology and innovation, Prabasi Odia Samanna was conferred on Dr. Ajaya K Mohanty in 2017 by the President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, and Union Petroleum Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan.

## Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das Memorial Award 2024



### DR. DEBENDRA DAS

Dr. Debendra Kumar Das lives in Fairbanks, Alaska, where he is Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Alaska. Hailing from Kendrapara in Odisha, he obtained his bachelor's in science degree in Mechanical Engineering from REC Rourkela, in 1972 (Best Graduate). He obtained his master's and PhD degrees from Brown University and the University of Rhode Island respectively.

Dr. Das is the founding board member of Northern Alaska American Society of Mechanical Engineers (NAK-ASME) and has held various leadership positions of ASME including Chair.

Prof. Debendra Das is a board member & past President of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), Fairbanks chapter, Alaska. Has helped in fund raising for support of families affected by mental illness and in creating awareness on the taboo topic. He has authored articles on how to cope with the hardship of mental illness among families, relatives, and friends for the readers of the OSA journal.

Dr. Das has provided decades-long outstanding humanitarian and philanthropic services to the under privileged sections of society and needy students at various levels of education. Korua Kanyashram and orphanage are located about 20 miles from Kendrapara town. For the last twenty years the Banchanidhi Das and Srimati Devi Trust created by Prof. Das has provided financial help to these two residential facilities for poor boys and girls, destitute and mentally ill women.

He has been involved with Lutheran Mahila Samity and its sister organization Nibedita Ashram in Kujanga area since 1992 by providing financial support to augment supply of their study materials, clothing, food and housing improvement. Dr. Das also helps provide clothing & other supplies to an orphanage in Gunupur, Rayagada district and clothing and educational materials to tribal children in the peripheral villages near Damanjodi, Koraput district.

The tribal families of Biribati & Patharapada Basti these laborers had come from their native villages from Mayurbhanj district during construction of Paradip expressway in the 1960s and have since settled there. They dwell in slums and have not assimilated with the locals. Prof. Das has been visiting them regularly and enquiring and helping with their well-being, providing clothing and other accessories.



Municipality Blind School & Muka & Badhira School, are two government institutions located near Kendrapara in the villages of Gopa and Kajala. The family trust set up by Prof. Das has been helping these schools since their inception. Although there is government support, the trust provides financial help to the school to meet the government support shortfall, in addition to providing nutritious lunches.

Since the last 15 years the Banchanidhi Das and Srimati Das Trust awards annual scholarships to undergraduate students in rural colleges in Kendrapara. Every year, 6 to 10 students per college from about 60 rural campuses, primarily from the Kendrapara area, are recommended by their faculty members to the Trust board; about 80% of nominations received are for women. In 2024 alone about 400 students received these scholarships.

**Scholarships/endowments enabled by Dr. Das:**

- Dr. Debendra Das was instrumental in establishing two Endowment Chairs (one in Electrical Engineering and the other in Metallurgical Engineering Department) in NIT Rourkela to enhance research at his alma mater which included financial contribution. He conducted a fund-raising campaign to donate books in the 1990s to the erstwhile REC Rourkela library.
- Prof. Das has worked to set up scholarships for economically weaker students through fundraising through his batchmates and NIT Rourkela Overseas Alumni Association (NITROAA). A total of about 100 deserving students have been recipients of these scholarships and are awarded every semester with the collected funds. Prof. Das has established two scholarships in the memory of his parents and wife by donating \$25,000 for each scholarship.
- Dr. Das has established Graduate Fellowship Endowment for Ph.D. students from low per capita income countries of the world at his alma mater, Brown University.
- He has also established two Graduate Fellowships at his alma mater, University of Rhode Island - one in English Literature and the other in Mechanical Engineering.
- He has also established scholarships at University of Alaska Fairbanks, 3 undergraduate (UG) and one graduate (G) scholarships: UG Visual Arts, UG Mechanical engineering, UG Alaska Native Student and G scholarship related to mental illness.
- Dr. Das has also funded two undergraduate scholarships at the alma mater of his late wife Katherine (Kate), Rhode Island College: one in English Literature and the other in journalism at their College Newspaper, Anchor.

Prof. Das loves and admires Odia culture; he has been an OSA member since 1973 when he was a student at RI and became a Patron member since the 1990s. He has attended about 30 OSA conventions and volunteered when called upon. He has regularly contributed to the OSA journal, authoring articles on charitable public services in Odisha and mental illness.

His friends describe him as “compassionate and unassuming.” They speak of him traveling to India every year for various charitable endeavors and urge him to “spend some money on himself and travel by business class, so that he can live longer and do more for other people”

## **Arun Das Memorial Kalashree Award 2024**



**MRS. DIPTI MALLIK**

Dipti's YouTube and FB Page

<https://youtu.be/v0dRQuwnYVw>

<https://www.youtube.com/@nrityataraodissi3608>

Dipti holds a master's degree in Odissi dance from the Pracheen Kala Kendra, Chandigarh. She received Junior & Senior dance scholarships from the Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Govt of India. She is a Grade-A artist at Doordarshan Kendra, BBSR. Her dance journey began under the guidance of Guru Ramani Ranjan Jena and Guru Raghunath Dutta, both Odissi maestros, recipients of the Sangeet Natak Award and disciples of Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra.

Dipti holds MCA & MA in economics degrees from Ravenshaw College. She is a teacher at John Green Elementary school in Dublin, CA. Dipti also teaches Odissi and semiclassical dance in middle and elementary schools in the city of Dublin through the school district's after-school program.

Dipti is the founder and artistic director of Nrityatara School of Odissi Dance. Under her guidance, many students have completed their Odissi *mancha prabesh*. She teaches the ancient dance form Mahari, semi-classical, and Indian folk dances in addition to Odissi. Dipti is a certified Odissi examiner for Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal, Mumbai, & Pracheen Kala Kendra, Chandigarh. She serves as a visiting professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz in the Anthropology department.

Dipti has been instrumental in promoting Odissi dance form across various places & different communities in the USA like Bengali, Telegu, Tamil, UP, Irish, Chinese. She has choreographed and performed in cultural events to integrate the South Asian community and showcase diversity. She has served in the City Art and Culture in Park Commission in Dublin. She has also collaborated with the Dublin Rotary and Dublin Christian Community, senior care to promote dance & culture.

She has participated in multiple OSA conventions as a participant, performer, cultural lead and teacher of student participants. Dipti served as OSACAL President from 2021-23. During Dipti's leadership OSACAL organized multiple in-person & virtual events including new events such as Nuakhai; many OSACAL events were sold-out. She brought together members of the community to showcase their talents, grew OSA membership, invited & promoted several artists from India. As chapter president, she successfully brought the 2022 OSA convention to California after 12 years. This convention was a big event in terms of finance and number of attendees. In addition to other leadership roles at the convention she organized & choreographed various events as the cultural lead.

Dipti resides in Dublin with her husband who is also an active community volunteer and their two sons. Dipti has instilled a love for Odissi music and culture in both her sons. She is also a board member of Chakradhar Mallik Foundation which promotes Odia cuisine in North America and beyond.

Charity is an important part of Dipti's life. Through Nrityatara, Dipti organizes charity events in senior care centers in the bay area where they teach Odissi to seniors and conducts sandwich seva & clothing drives for the homeless. The school has adopted two blind students and supports their education. Dipti taught free online classes during the pandemic for school children and teaches special needs kids in Dublin.

#### **Awards & recognitions:**

- Nrityatara School of Dance recognized by the Consul General of India, San Francisco in 2019
- Best choreographer award by SEWA international
- Best teacher by SSP, Milpitas 2018
- NRITYA NIPUNA AWARD 2019
- Awarded bay area gurus by HCCC, Livermore CA
- Women's empowerment award by Dance Dill Se 2019
- Kalidas award by HCCC, Livermore 2019
- Best school recognition award for Nrityatara by Dublin Mayor in 2019 & 2021-22
- Best dance teacher by Dublin middle school for multiple years
- Best service award 2024 by Milpitas Mayor
- Dipti's Mahari dance group has won numerous awards and been recognized by CM Odisha
- Mahari group also won the Rang de Basanti (folk dance festival) by the Namah Foundation
- Best school award 2022 by Alamanda County Supervisor
- City recognition award 2021-22 for by Dublin Mayor
- Selected as a dance instructor for the 2024 summer & fall sessions in the Dublin City Center



## Subrina Biswal Award for Academic Excellence 2024



### MR. TEJAS PATNAIK

<https://www.youngchangemakers.net/tejas>

Mr. Tejas Patnaik is the 2024 valedictorian (Rank 1 out of 730) at Bolingbrook High School (BHS), IL. Tejas has gained admission into many top-notch schools including IVYs with a perfect GPA, near perfect SAT, and almost perfect AP scores. He has chosen to join the Harvard College class of 2028. He will be studying “Computer Science with Natural Language Processing emphasis and use Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to bring about a positive change in the world.”

Tejas has been the Associate Director/ Marketing Head for AI Youth Innovation Council since March 2021. His research accomplishments with Argonne National Laboratory are noteworthy. Tejas co-founded a Robotics club at his high school while he was still in middle school (Brooks, Bolingbrook). His middle school team was regional & state champions. He was invited, along with his HS team, to attend the World VEX Robotics Championships (2022, Dallas). He won Student Ambassador for the VEX world of 2022. His team, Fox Valley Robotics was also invited to World VEX Robotics Championships (2024, Dallas, Apr 25-28) through regional/State qualifications.

Tejas is the co-founder of Young Changemakers of North-South. During COVID, he worked to reduce the digital divide by crowdfunding campaigns as part of the Young Changemakers national team. This work generated about \$110K funding with additional company matching funds which was utilized to supply Chromebooks and digital devices to underserved kids, nationally (800 devices, 8-10 schools spread across 7-8 States in US). Non-profit organization Ashoka mentored Tejas to be a young changemaker in the community: <https://www.ashoka.org/en-us/story/trisha-and-tejas-changemaker-journey>

Tejas has worked with OSA as a volunteer and performed in local OSA activities, fundraisers, festivals and OSA conventions. He has participated in Odia learning, in Odia speech & vocabulary competition at OSA chapter and conventions and in Business Speech competitions in OSA conventions.

Tejas has been learning to play the Tabla in the style of Banaras Gharana since 2013 at the Jugalbandi Academy of Tabla and Kathak Dance. He has received Junior Diploma in Tabla (Level-2, 2017, Prayag Sangeet Samiti, Allahabad in cooperation with ANILA SINHA Foundation. Tejas has composed and performed music at various locations in the Chicago area. He has performed Group Tabla Jugalbandi at Elmhurst College as World Music Series Celebrations (2016). Tejas has completed 5-10 levels of the Illinois State Music Teacher Association AIM Certification Exam on the Piano, trained by Wheaton College since 2014. He is a student of Indian Classical Singing at the Manjusha Sangeet Academy.

Tejas is also an accomplished Chess player at BHS and is on the Varsity golf team as well as the Varsity tennis team. Tejas is the Vice President of finances at SkillsUSA and part of DECA, CTE club.

#### **Awards & Recognitions:**

- Awarded the Presidential Service Gold Medal from the 46th US President and a White House commendation letter (2022, Joe Biden) for community service
- Bagged Bolingbrook High School (BHS) Academic Top 20 Award for 4-years in row
- IL State Scholar Certificate (IL Student Assistance Commission, 2024) & Certificate of Achievement, (VVSD board)
- National Merit Scholarship Program (Outstanding Performance, 2022 for SAT)

- Inducted into National English Honor Society (BHS), National Honor Society (BHS, 2021), National Junior Honor Society (Brooks Middle School, 2018).
- Selected National Junior Honor Society (NJHS, 2020, Brooks)
- Awarded AP Scholarship (2020, 2022), AP scholar award with Honors (2021), and AP Scholar with distinction (2022-2023) from Valley View School District and College Board.
- International Academic Competitions (IAC)
  - National Sports and Entertainment Bee 2020 - 3rd Place
  - Qualified & participated for National History Bee, Academic Bee, Geography Bee
  - Qualified for National Science Bee, US History & Political Science Bees in 2024 in Arlington, VA
- North South Foundation
  - Qualified for the National Science Bee and Essay Writing Competitions (2023)
  - Qualified for the Senior Science Bee National Finals at MIT (2019)
- Awarded many 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place finisher regional awards from North South Foundations (NSF) to qualify for the National Finals
- Recognized as Argonne Exemplary Student Researcher Program student for 4-years (2020-2024)
- Completed Physics Program and awarded recognition from Fermi Laboratory, Batavia, IL (12/2019)
- Awarded Best design Trophy for EV3 Robot design in NASA 50th Anniversary Apollo Moon Landing Robotic Competition, Naperville, IL (07/20/2019)
- SkillsUSA State Championship (Indianapolis, 3rd place in Electronics Technology, IN, Apr 2023)
- Received Best VEX VRC Design Award for best Robotic design Processes (Team 355S) and documented in Engineering Design Notebook (Great Lakes VEX VRC Regional Tournament #1, Batavia, 2023)
- Recognized as “Pandemic Heroes of North South” for community work during COVID-19 timeframe
- Won VEX VRC High School Robotics Regional Champion-2022 (1st Place, Great Lakes Tournaments)
- Won the Best UNESCO Position Paper Award, Model UN Conference (Benedictine University, 2020)
- Won 1<sup>st</sup> prize at Tabla (Percussion) Performance at International Indian Icon Competition, Chicago
- Bagged Scholastic Bowl Freshman/Sophomore Rising Star Award (BHS, 2020-21)
- Brooks Middle School, Bolingbrook, IL, Valedictorian, 2020 (05/21, 4.0/4.0), Brooks Middle School Outstanding Character Award (2020)
- First Lego League (FLL) State Qualification (2020, Elgin Community College, Qualification after 18 years)
- 1<sup>st</sup> prize in Indian Classical Music (solo and duet singing), Subrina Biswal Competitions for Performing Arts as part of OSA conventions (2018, 2019), and 3rd Prize in Percussion Instrument Tabla (2023). Won prizes in Odissi, Champu & Chhanda Music Competitions (Tabla) in OSA convention (Chicago, 2023)
- State Finalist in Entrepreneurship Competition at DECA, CTE
- AT BHS, Chess Team
  - Achieved All-Conference 3 consecutive years in a row
  - Undefeated Freshman Year, - 3-time State Qualifier



## Youth Volunteer Award 2024

### MR. ANISH MOHANTY



[www.anishmohanty.com](http://www.anishmohanty.com)

Mr. Anish Mohanty majored in Information Systems & Business Analytics at the Loyola Marymount University where he was also Senator At-Large on Associated Student Government. He has also been a Tedex speaker on “how the purpose of knowledge is not for academic success, but for people to educate themselves to allow innovation to thrive...” His current experience includes...

- Communications Director at Gen Z for Change
- Communications Coordinator for Asm. Liz Ortega
- Elected Delegate to the California Democratic Party
- Steering Committee Member for Working Families Party
- Board Member at Project Super Bloom PAC
- Arts & Culture Commissioner for Union City, CA
- Sister Cities Committee Member for Union City, CA

In Anish’s own words, “At the age of 16, a transformative journey to Odisha, India revealed my life’s mission: to advocate tirelessly for marginalized communities. I visited Adruta, a foster home, where I encountered children whose resilience in the face of dire circumstances inspired me profoundly. Motivated to make a difference, I produced a documentary, which raised awareness and also facilitated substantial fundraising - over \$100K, enabling the construction of better facilities for these children.

This early experience solidified my commitment to social justice, guiding my subsequent endeavors in various advocacy and digital campaign roles. As Communications Director at Gen Z for Change, I developed content and strategies that highlighted issues affecting underrepresented groups, engaging a global audience in meaningful dialogues and action towards equity and justice.

I have produced digital content for U.S. Senator Ed Markey, California Treasurer Fiona Ma, CA Senator Aisha Wahab, Assemblymember Liz Ortega, LA Mayor Karen Bass, the Working Families Party, and others. In California, I further extended my activism with the Working Families Party, organizing and supporting candidates who champion the causes of those left behind by conventional politics. My work included close collaborations with historical candidates, including efforts that led to the election of the first Afghan American woman to public office in the U.S. and advocating for the first Black woman to serve as District Attorney in Alameda County.

Through my experiences, I have facilitated and witnessed transformative change. I have used education, digital media, and robust advocacy to champion the cause of justice and equality. Each project, campaign, and role I have taken on embodies my deep-seated commitment to uplift those who are marginalized and to mobilize others toward a collective effort for a better, more just world.”

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**We thank OSA EC for trusting us with the responsibility of managing the OSA Awards 2024 nomination & judging process. We thank all the nominators for submitting many worthy and inspiring nominations for the different award categories. Our gratitude to all the anonymous, uncredited judges for their time and effort to shift through details of multiple accomplished candidate profiles to select this year’s winners. Congratulations to the OSA 2024 Award winners!**

**OSA Awards Committee 2024**  
**Chair-Prachee Behera, Akshay Ray, Deepak Sahoo**