

Interview with Dr. Shainaz Landge

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Dr. Reyes TCLD 423I Fall 2026



“We have to be more inclusive and more aware of what people are going through rather than immediately judging them.”

COMMUNITY STORY

Dr. Shainaz Landge

Dr. Shainaz Landge is originally from Maharashtra, India. Because her father was a police inspector, she moved around Maharashtra five or six times growing up. She considers Pune, the “Oxford of India,” her hometown, while her family village is in southern Maharashtra near Karnataka. After earning her master’s degree and working at a national chemical laboratory in India, Dr. Landge moved to the United States to pursue her PhD after her husband was accepted into a PhD program. She has lived in Michigan, Boston, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Georgia and has now lived in Georgia for about 16 years. She works in the Department of Biochemistry, Chemistry, and Physics and values her relationships with her students. Her experiences across India and the United States have shaped her understanding of culture, community, and belonging. She emphasized the importance of being open to others’ experiences and avoiding judgment based on what is familiar to us.

“India is known for community. India is known for diversity. India’s known for people being together.”



The sand-and-stone pattern piece Dr. Landge keeps in her office and uses as a calming activity with students.

WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

One of the biggest things we learned was the importance of not immediately judging something that is unfamiliar. Dr. Landge’s experiences reminded us that what seems “normal” to one person may be completely unfamiliar to someone else. Community Archives could be meaningful for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Instead of only learning about cultures from a textbook, students could see real people and real experiences represented in the classroom.

ORAL HISTORY

REFERENCES

Britannica. (2020). Maharashtra | Capital, Map, Population, & Government | Britannica. In Encyclopædia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Maharashtra>
(S. Landge, personal communication, September 2026)

REFLECTION: FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Landge brings knowledge from growing up in Maharashtra, India, including Indian traditions, food, festivals, religious diversity, and strong extended-family connections. Her experiences moving throughout India and the United States have also given her adaptability and cross-cultural understanding. As a professor, she uses these experiences to connect with and support her students, creating a welcoming environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their experiences.