

M71 JUNE 2014

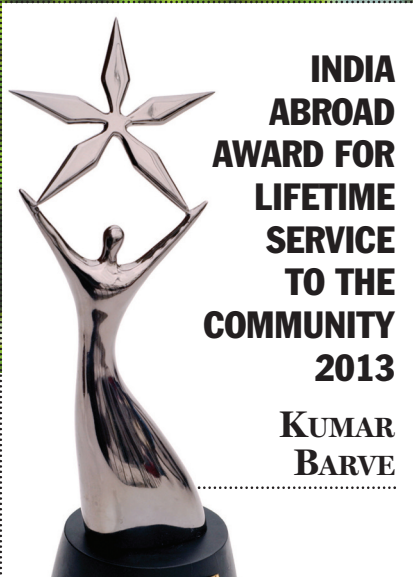
INDIA ABROAD PERSON OF THE YEAR 2013

Presented by

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COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE



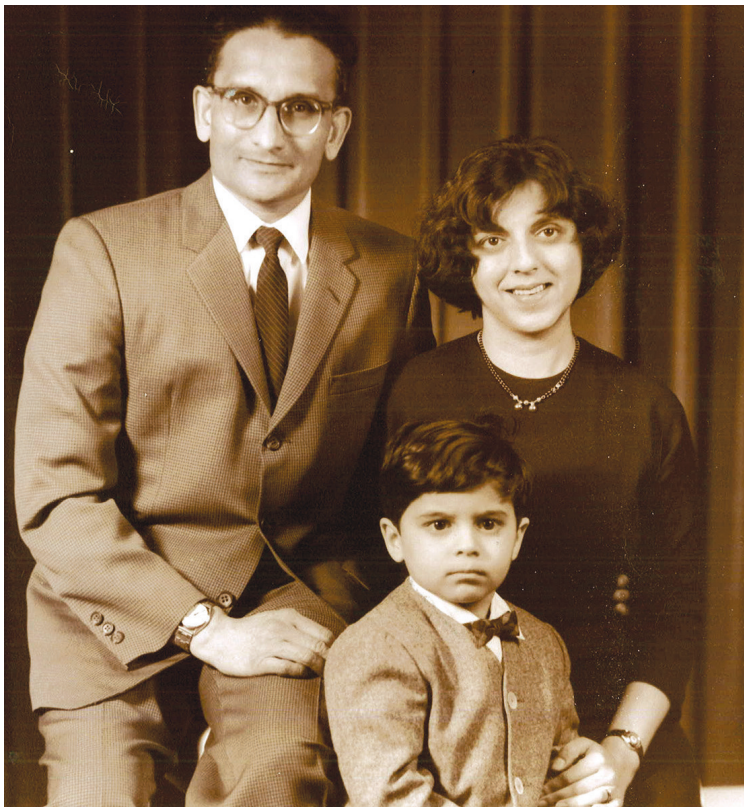
# A PARADIGM OF SERVICE





# 'They felt it was impossible for somebody with a name like Kumar Prabhakar Barve to win an election'

But not only did he become the first Indian-American state legislator, he is also now the longest serving Indian-American lawmaker. **Kumar Barve**, winner of the **India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community 2013**, in conversation with **Aziz Haniffa**



Kumar Barve with his father, the late Prabhakar Raghunath Barve, who hailed from Tarapur, Maharashtra, and his mother, Neera Barve, now 88, who has lived in the US since childhood.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE



Kumar Barve's mother's family, circa 1927. The lawmaker's grandfather Shankar L Gokhale, sitting left, who came to the US in 1911 to work with GE, and grandmother Uma, sitting right, with Kumar's mother Neera (on her father's lap) and her twin Sudhakar (on his mother's lap). Also in the picture are Kumar Barve's uncle Madhu, and aunts Sharayu Gokhale and Mohak.

**K**umar Prabhakar Barve, 55, born in Schenectady, New York, is today the dean of Indian-American legislators, being first elected to the Maryland House of Delegates in 1990. Ever since he has been a shoo-in to the state's District 17 in Montgomery County — which has a population of over 110,000 and incorporates the cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg, the major high tech centers in Maryland.

He was the first Indian American to be elected to a state legislature and 24 years later is the longest-serving Indian-American lawmaker. He perhaps has the record for the number of legislative awards he has won for introducing and successfully enacting some landmark legislation affecting the lives of millions of Marylanders — from health care to high tech and being instrumental in the creation of the Technology Development Corporation in Maryland.

Barve's father, the late Prabhakar Raghunath Barve, who hailed from Tarapur, Maharashtra, left India just after Independence and went to England where he was an

architect and got a job with the Ministry of Works, renovating bombed out facilities from World War II in London.

His mother, Neera Barve, 88, who now lives in an assisted living facility, had joined her father Shankar Lakshman Gokhale — who had first come to the US in 1911 — and mother, years after along with her siblings.

Barve's maternal grandfather had come to the US as a research scientist for GE, and lived in Schenectady, after a teaching career and serving as principal of the Holkar Science College in Madhya Pradesh.

His grandfather, Kumar Barve says, had first gone to Edinburgh, Scotland, where "he ran into Charles Proteus Steinmetz (*an electrical engineering pioneer*), who was chief science officer at GE, who invited him to go to Schenectady for work for the GE facility there."

His parents first met in England, says Barve, adding, "it wasn't exactly an arranged marriage, but was sort of because she was introduced to my dad

## HONOR ROLL

### INDIA ABROAD AWARD FOR LIFETIME SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

**Joy Cherian (2007)**  
Founder, Indian American Forum for Political Education  
**Sreedhar Menon (2009)**  
Philanthropist

**Manavi, Sakhi, Apna Ghar and Maitri (2010)**  
For being a refuge for South Asian women facing domestic abuse and for empowering those women

**Thomas Abraham (2011)**  
Founder, GOPIO

**Sambhu Banik (2012)**  
Pioneering Community Leader

### Kumar Barve

For being the first Indian-American state legislator; for his innumerable contributions to public service; for being a political pioneer and role model.



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by family members and then decided to get married."

The wedding ceremony was performed by his maternal grandfather in Schenectady as Barve quips, "He was apparently the only Brahmin around!"

"Then my mom moved back to London and lived there for about a year, till she became pregnant. Then they (*his parents*) decided that I should be born in the US because I'd have more opportunities in the US, and she moved back here."

Barve, an only child, says, "Papa had to stay in England, wrapping up his affairs and didn't come to the US till early 1959. I was then four months old."

"My father, when he first came to this country, found work in Reading, Pennsylvania, as an architect and then eventually found work in DC and eventually, again, he got a job with the Veterans Administration. We moved to the Washington, DC suburbs because the school system was good in Montgomery County, and I went to elementary, junior high (*Tacoma Park Junior High*) and high school (*Paint Branch High School*), all in Montgomery County."

His father worked for VA for 24 years before retiring while his mother worked for the India Supply Mission — an appendage of the Indian embassy.

The Barve residence, unlike most Indian-American homes of that time, was politically active and aware — Barve joked that his father would have "appreciated the date he died (September 30, 2011) because it was the last year of the federal fiscal year — so when Kumar chose politics as a career, his parents were very supportive.

The longtime Maryland lawmaker shares his life story.

**I**t's been nearly 30 years, in 1986, since you met Lalit Gadhia and told him of your intent to run for the Maryland State Assembly from Montgomery County and asked for his support and to introduce you to the Maryland Democratic political establishment. What brought about this decision?

I've always wanted to run for office. I was involved in student government. And, unlike most Indian parents, my parents encouraged me to be involved in activities like student government. Most Indian Americans in the '60s and '70s looked down upon their kids getting involved in sports or civic stuff or student government. My parents weren't like that.

**So, it was just a natural evolution for you?**

Yes. In fact, the first campaign I worked on was in 1974, when I was in the 10th grade, for a guy running for the House of Delegates — Bob Hacken. We knocked on doors and did all the things you do in campaigns, and ironically, when I won in 1990, he was in his 80s and he called me up



COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE

Kumar Barve's parents encouraged him to be involved in activities like student government at a time when most Indian Americans looked down upon their kids getting involved in it. The first campaign he worked on was in 1974, as a 10th grader.

to congratulate me and invited me to have lunch.

**What made you so interested in politics to the extent you began to volunteer in a campaign at such a young age?**

We always talked about politics at home. Again, unlike Indians at the time, they always voted in elections. My father was sponsored for citizenship by the Veterans Administration... I remember following the Nixon-Humphrey election in 1968 as a 10 year old.

**Besides being the first-ever Indian-American state legislator, you are also now the longest-serving Indian-American lawmaker. How does it feel to be 'The Dean' or 'The Godfather' among Indian-American legislators?**

It's great. But I wish there were more of us...

Ramesh Kapur — he gave me my first big campaign contribution, a check of \$500; I'd never seen a check that big at the time — said, listen Kumar, the only thing I want is, when you win, I want you to travel around the country, talking to young Indian-American kids to encourage them to run for political office.

So, I won, and I said, you know Ramesh, I don't have any money to travel, but if you can pay my expenses, I will go anywhere. Pretty soon, within the first three years of my being elected, pretty much any Indian-American organization would fly me out to one place or another. So, I would go to all these places and one was kind of funny.

I went to an Indian student association meeting where I was going to speak. But before I spoke, there was a seminar about political involvement. So, they had this NYU professor standing up and the whole basis of his speech was how

it would be completely impossible for Hindus and Muslims to win elections in the United States.

I sat there quietly listening to him and the few students who knew who I was, were looking at me, but I told them don't say anything. When he said, are there any questions, I raised my hand and he called on me first, and I said, 'Hi, my name is Kumar Prabhakar Barve, and I was just recently elected to the Maryland House of Delegates in a district that is predominantly white and African American, and there are almost no Asians whatsoever.'

I just sat down and let the silence just settle in.

**I guess the next person to run after you, but that was years later, was Satveer Chaudhary from Minnesota, who was elected a state Senator, but after serving a couple of terms lost his seat.**

That's right, and when he first decided to run, I sat down and talked to him, and if I remember correctly, he actually came to my town house in Gaithersburg and I just laid out all my sheets and how I pounded the doors, how I put up signs... the whole way I did the campaign.

He had a fairly decent, extensive background in political organizing himself with the unions at the time. So, he was pretty up to speed. But I emphasized to him the

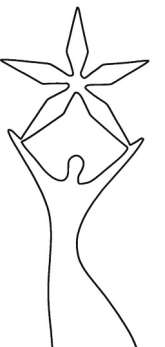
knocking on doors, and since then, I've talked to a lot of people.

It was neat, having Sam Arora, who was a volunteer on my campaign, run for office. It was also really neat having three South Asian elected members of our legislature (*himself, Arora and Aruna Miller*), which Governor (*Martin*) O'Malley bragged about everywhere he went, particularly at Indian-American events. It was a positive experience for me.

One of the problems now is that so many Indian Americans are too successful in their professions and business to take time out to really campaign — it's really hard for anybody. But I think, more and more, you are going to see more people (*Indian Americans*) elected. When I started, most Indians felt it was an impossibility for somebody who looks like me with a name like Kumar Prabhakar Barve, to win an election.

**Years after your election, and re-election after re-election to the state legislature, we've had Bobby Jindal run for Congress and win and then go on and give a second gubernatorial shot and be elected Governor of Louisiana. We also had another Republican, Nikki Haley win her gubernatorial race in South Carolina.**

**How come a veteran like you never made a run for the US Congress, which many**



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**Indian Americans and South Asian Americans who have supported you through the years have been eagerly encouraging you to do?**

A lot of these races are like musical chairs — when the music stops, you have to put your butt on an open seat, and the last time an opportunity arose was 2002. That was when I was trying to get (*then Maryland Governor*) Parris Glendening to draw up a Congressional district that would take half of Montgomery County and go into western Maryland. I was going to run for that seat.

And the other seat, Chris Van Hollen and Mark Shriver, were going to run against each other. Now, I have to tell you in that race between Chris Van Hollen and Mark Shriver, there wasn't enough oxygen in that tent for me.

Back in those days, I couldn't have raised a million dollars. Today, I can.

The irony is, now we have this district, which is similar to what I wanted Parris to draw up and there was a rumor that Congressman John Delaney, who is a Democrat, was thinking of running for Governor.

If he had, I'd be running for Congress right now — I'd be running for that seat. So, a lot of that has to do with opportunity.

Bobby Jindal ran for governor and lost and then ran for Congress and then after a term-and-a-half, ran for governor again because he was in a unique position of being the head of the health department of Louisiana, which was one of the rottenest in America and he really straightened it out.

He has political skills. He was then able to get the support of the then Republican governor, and he didn't quite make it the first time. But the thing is, a lot of this is opportunity and (*Hurricane*) Katrina took down the governor (*Democrat Kathleen Blanco*) because Blanco was seen as being ineffective at that time, which I believe was an unfair characterization, but that's the way it worked out.

**But on the other hand, it is more important — and perhaps makes more sense — to be an influential state lawmaker than be a first-time junior US Congressman, who for all intents and purposes has not much clout and unless he or she has gotten an important committee assignment like in Ways and Means or Government Appropriations, probably wouldn't ever be heard?**

Of course, it absolutely makes a whole lot of more sense. Right now, the fiscal leadership in the state of Maryland is made up of nine people, and I am one of those nine people.

You have the Governor, you have four people on the House side and four people on the Senate side, which means on the House side, it's the Speaker and three people and I am one of those three. On the Senate side, the Senate president and three of his top people.

So, whenever a difficult decision has to be made on the finances of the state, I am in the room, and often times, I



Kumar Barve considers his work towards the Patient Access Act, the Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act, the Technology Development Corporation of Maryland, the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, and the Renewable Energy Portfolio some of his most important work in the state of Maryland.

COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE

am the only accountant in the room. So, a lot of times they turn their head and say, 'What do you think makes sense?' I've had a real input into helping to run the finances of the state of Maryland — and it's a successfully run state.

**To rewind, since you spoke of how Ramesh Kapur gave you your first big campaign contribution, who were some of your early supporters in the Indian-American community?**

I hate to say this, but it is such a small list, it's easy to keep track of them.

Lalit Gadhia; Dr Suresh C Gupta, who later became the head of the Physicians Regulatory Board; and, of course, Ramesh Kapur, Krishna Srinivasa, down in Georgia; and there were others like Dr Sambhu Banik, who was an early supporter even though he was a Republican, and Dr Joy Cherian, a great guy and a big supporter of mine too.

But, in this area, most Indian Americans were very dubious... I mean, if they lived in the district, for most part, they voted, but not all of them. They were very dubious and it was a sort of act of faith when Suresh Gupta made the decision to get the medical board of the Prince George's County Medical Society, of which he was the president, give me a \$500 check.

It was such an act of faith because I can imagine him going into a bunch of Prince George's doctors saying we got to elect this guy in Rockville and them saying, but he's in Montgomery County. But Suresh went to bat for me and he was one of those early supporters, along with the handful of others I mentioned.

**I find that you never rest on your laurels. Here I am interviewing you in Annapolis and you are between your campaigning and door knocking for your primary that's coming up just a few days after our India Abroad Person of the Year awards event.**

**Why is it that you still do all of this sustained campaigning when you've always been re-elected for the past two decades so comfortably? Is it because it's something that you can't just take for granted?**

One of my favorite books is *Warrior Politics* by Robert Kaplan where he talks about some of the most important ancient virtues in politics and one of them is just working hard, in addition to the virtues of loyalty, not just taking things for granted because that's how you lose elections. But not only that, if you take things for granted, you don't deserve to win the election.

Let me tell you something. I bet you, if I went into a coma today and re-emerged on the 25th (*June*), I'll probably win. But if I start taking these things for granted, I don't think I deserve to be in elective office.

I really believe that to be entitled to this office, you have to work for it, just as a matter of virtue.

**How integral is grass-roots activism, which is something I believe you consider even more important than the fundraising efforts, etc?**

Absolutely central, but that's the problem that in American politics it's no longer important with respect to fundraising. Fundraising now has become an activity which is divorced from actual politics. I mean, there are two campaigns — there is the fundraising campaign and there is the grass-roots

campaign.

Maybe, there was a time in American politics, where the two were closely linked. There was a time in politics, when most of the money you got, you got from business-people who lived in or near the district in which you lived. Now, especially in Congress, there is no connection between where the money comes from and where the votes come from, and that's a real problem today in American politics.

**What would you say have been some of the most important legislative proposals that you've introduced and have been enacted into law?**

Number one, in 1995, the Patient Access Act, which was the first serious law in America to regulate HMOs (*health maintenance organizations*) and to basically guarantee that you could see the doctor of your choice — that the HMO couldn't put a gag rule on your physician and that you have the ability to have greater choice. HMOs fought it furiously, but we passed the law and it was copied by about 30 other states.

The next bill was the Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act, which was a very complicated consumer protection electronic commerce law, which I introduced when I was chair of the Science and Technology Subcommittee — and Anthony Brown, the Lieutenant Governor of Maryland, who is running for Governor now, was one of the top two people who helped me write that law.

Then there was the Technology Development Corporation of Maryland, which has kind of become the prototype of how you use a quasi-development entity to encourage high technology business development.

And, most recently in 2009, I passed the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, which is



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one of the toughest greenhouse laws on the books anywhere. The only place, where it is more strict is California.

Then also, although it is not legislation, I was also the motive force behind the Renewable Energy Portfolio, which basically says that at the end of the day 20 percent of all electricity sold in Maryland has to be from a renewable source. That's a good way to reduce greenhouse gases without having to regulate every device in state. It's simpler to require that 20 percent of the electrons come from renewable sources.

**How would you say these pieces of legislation have helped your constituents, including the large Indian-American constituency today in Montgomery County of doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, IT people, small business-people, etc, and how, more generally, have you been an asset to the Indian-American community?**

Actually, it's very easy serving my Indian-American constituents because they are middle to upper middle class, and my non-Indian-American constituents are also middle to upper middle class. So, when I strengthen the school system, when I strengthen the university system in Maryland, the interests of Indian Americans and non-Indian Americans coincide very, very clearly.

Of course, Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus in America have been subjected to discrimination at times, and when 9/11 occurred, I was able to get on the phone to Doug Duncan, who was then County Executive and say, mosques and gurdwaras need police protection. There's nothing wrong with the police agencies, but they don't want to be stretched too thin and they said if something happens, we'll be there to help you.

I explained to Doug Duncan that we can't wait for something to happen — the mosques and gurdwaras need police protection now. And Duncan called up the police and said, yes, we are going to do it and we are going to do it now. There were no incidents in Montgomery County.

I like to use that as an example of why its important for Indian Americans to be in elected office because more than a campaign contributor, more than a business person, an elected official has the ability to pick up the phone and call a colleague.

I strongly believe that there has to be a South Asian in every state legislature in America that has a South Asian population. There has to be 10 or 15 members in Congress or two or three US Senators because you need people at the table.

Indians, because of India, I believe have a very warped view of what's important in politics — they see it as all money, money, money. Of course, money is important, but having your people at the table is much more important.

**You've always been a mentor to Indian Americans who've run for local, state and even national office and Ami Bera is a great example, as have the likes of Sam Arora, Aruna Miller. Why do you believe being a mentor is integral to the community if it wants to be politically empowered?**



Kumar Barve flanked by fellow Maryland delegates Aruna Miller and Sam Arora. He has supported and mentored both of them just as he supported Indian Americans running for office elsewhere in the country.

COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE

If you look at American history, we are atypical. I know there are a lot of working class and poor South Asians, but for the most part, we came here as middle class and upper middle class people, and rather than going into our own ghettos, where we had to build our own political identity, we went into the suburbs and spread out.

It is a feature of American civilization that decisions are made in legislative bodies — I mean, if you live in India, or China, or Africa or Europe, there are ancient, cultural mechanisms for decision making. America has none of those; we have elected legislatures. You either are a member of it and you have a say or you are not a member of it and you have no say — it's as simple as that.

So, I believe that Indian Americans should contribute to people in office, but there's nothing more important than contributing to Indian Americans and getting Indian Americans and South Asian Americans — I should say South Asian Americans and not say just Indian Americans, and I include Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankans, Nepalis — elected.

The point I am making is just as I wouldn't deserve to be in office if I didn't work hard at it, if our community doesn't support people like (*US Congressman*) Ami Bera, we won't deserve to have somebody in Congress — it will be as simple as that.

It won't be just a matter of losing; it will be losing because we didn't deserve to win.

**You've also put your money where your mouth is and always sent a campaign contribution to all Indian Americans who run for office, from the likes of Bera to Swati Dandekar,**

**and everyone else? Why do you believe it's important to do so?**

Yes, the ones who I believe are worthy of it. There was a time when I would contribute to all of them, but I have to be a little more discriminating now. It's important because we have to show them that we are there for them and even a small contribution from a guy like me who's been in office for several years, could be a source of such encouragement and that kind of a boost is just so important.

**What has been your sort of *raison d'être* when it comes to being House Majority Leader?**

It's my job to make sure that we have a majority of votes on the floor when we have to pass a piece of legislation. It's my job to get the votes, working with my whip, and win the floor fight — that's it. I am a mechanic.

**So, that means negotiating, compromising, working with the other side, etc?**

It's everything from making compromises to getting votes, standing on the floor and making the argument — it's a soup to nuts thing. It's all about convincing 71 votes to be with the Speaker.

**You were also instrumental in getting a Hindu chaplain for the first time to deliver the invocation at the convening of the General Assembly a few years ago? Why was it so important to you to do so? Was it simply symbolism or did it go beyond symbolism?**



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# ‘He had the whole package. I was instantly attracted to him’

He is a politician; she is a judge. But Maureen Quinn and Kumar Barve make it work. She shares what keeps them going with **Aziz Haniffa**

**M**aureen Quinn, a Maryland judge and a commissioner on the Maryland Workers' Compensation Commission, says it was a love of politics in all of its facets that instantly attracted her to Kumar Barve after they first met.

“We met in 1998, when I was a practicing lawyer, doing a little bit of lobbying and we had a mutual friend, Michael Gordon, and we met through him at a political fundraiser, and we clicked immediately,” she says.

Quinn, an alumnus of American University in Washington, DC and Temple University's School of Law in Philadelphia, engaged in private practice as an attorney from 1987 to 2002, establishing her own law firm in 1995 where her primary focus was on general civil litigation. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of Maryland University College, teaching business ethics.

Asked what it was about Barve that made her not only one of his most ardent supporters but also marry him six years later, she says, laughing, “He had the whole package. I was instantly attracted to him. He has a very beautiful voice, he is very smart, but not in an arrogant way, and funny as hell. So, you know, a lot of it really is just chemistry.”

“The Indian part of him is also so attractive and I’ve just come to love that more and more over the years,” she adds. “Indian people are so peaceable and patient, and I’ve learnt



Kumar Barve with wife Maureen Quinn.

COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE

so much from him. I am an aspiring vegetarian now, and there are so many things about him and India and Indians I’ve learnt through him and I’ve tried to bring as much of it

into my own life.”

Quinn acknowledges that both of them being political junkies was catalytic for their relationship: “Absolutely, yes, yes. I am very political — I can talk politics, breakfast, lunch and dinner and so, yes, that made it a very easy fit for both of us personality-wise. I see a lot of (*political*) spouses, who truly despise politics. They don’t want to talk about it, they don’t want to go to anything, and I thought that’s unfortunate. I had been helping Parris Glendening (*former Maryland governor*) raise money among women lawyers and so, I was becoming really active at the state level, right about the time I met Kumar.”

Quinn does not campaign with Barve although she may attend fundraising dinners and other events with him, because they have to be scrupulously cautious that there is no perception of a conflict of interest.

“I am somewhat limited in my ability to do that because of my judgeship,” she says. “It’s not flatly prohibited, but it can raise questions about impartiality and so on, and so, I appear at things and all that as his wife, but that’s the extent of it. Of course, I love to sit and talk strategy at a breakfast table or anywhere else, but in terms of being out there campaigning or doing any kind of fundraising for him, I don’t do that.”

Asked how supportive Barve is in terms of the work she does vis-à-vis women and children who are victims of rape, and domestic abuse or if he is similarly limited, she says, “Yes, he’s limited too, and it’s actually kind of funny because we are both little rock stars in our world, and when he comes with me to events where I am the judge and all the lawyers are flocking to me, he loves that.”

But Quinn says her husband doesn’t accept campaign contributions from lawyers who have practiced before her “and that’s another way we try to make sure we are scrupulous in not giving any perception at all of a conflict of interest. I don’t use my position to help him raise money, because if I want to, they’ll all be giving him money. We are much more scrupulous than most people are.” ■

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## ‘They felt it was impossible for somebody with a name like Kumar Prabhakar Barve to win an election’

It is symbolism, but to me it’s important that everybody be included and that we are part of that. You have to have a seat at the table and that’s the way America works. To say, we are American — that’s the bottom line. And, people want to see that by the way.

This isn’t like some other countries. Here, people accept and understand that differences of prayer, culture, etc are all part of being American — that’s the way Americans behave. If you are not prepared to do that, then you don’t deserve to be listened to.

A lot of people will say you have to work hard to achieve an end, but you also have to work hard to deserve the end. So, this kind of symbolism is also important because there’s no substitute to having your own people at the table and it helps in the sense of a broader acceptance.

**So, in a sense, this was also a way of getting it across that we are here, Indian Americans have arrived and here’s a part of that culture and heritage?**

Here’s the thing. If you want to influence the President of the United States, there is

no better way to do that than to have a member of Congress as your advocate, because while most members of Congress meet the President only once or twice, they all have a vote. So, if Ami Bera calls up President Obama’s White House and says I have an issue that has to do with my community, President Obama and his staff have to respect that. They just can’t blow him off. It’s true. But to get the attention of a President you have to raise hundreds of thousands, millions of dollars. To get the attention of a Congressman, not that much

money, or you can be a volunteer on his or her campaign, or you can be a prominent person in their district. There is no substitute for having the ear of a member of Congress or of the State legislature or of the County Council, because if you make them into an advocate, then people up the line have to respect that.

If your objective is to influence American policy with a campaign contribution, you are going to fail because American public policy is determined by so many different authors that on your very best day, you can get 20 percent accomplished of what you set out to accomplish, and to do that, you have to have a really good advocate, whether in the Congress, the state assembly or the county or city council depending on the policy. ■



# ‘Pioneer, trailblazer, are all fitting descriptions of Kumar Barve’

US Congressman Christopher Van Hollen, Jr tells **Aziz Haniffa** about Kumar Barve’s contribution to Maryland over the past two decades

United States Congressman Christopher ‘Chris’ Van Hollen, Jr, who served with Kumar Barve in the Maryland State legislature before being elected to the US House of Representatives in 2002 and remains a close friend of the longest-serving Indian American lawmaker, believes Barve’s leadership and contributions to Montgomery County and the state have been invaluable.

“Kumar and I first met as part of a small group of younger Democrats. Kumar was one of the founders of our group called MCDAC — Montgomery County Democratic Activists Club — and it was a group that was formed, again, by younger Democrats (*as a forum for new ideas in the Montgomery County and the Maryland Democratic Party*),” said Van Hollen. “That’s when we first met, in the late ‘80s and then we both decided to run for the state legislature in 1990. And then we found ourselves sitting next to each other in the Maryland General Assembly.”

The Karachi-born, Kodaikanal International School (in south India)-educated Van Hollen, son of the late diplomats Ambassador Christopher Van Hollen and Eliza Van Hollen, who did several stints in South Asia, would often joke that he’d spent more time in South Asia and India than Barve.

“I would say, ‘Only in America could you have two people sitting next to each other in the General Assembly, where one person who was not Indian American had spent more time in India than the person of Indian-American descent. We worked very closely together and built up an even closer friendship than had preceded our election to the General Assembly.’”

Van Hollen is now the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee, erstwhile chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, one of the most influential Democratic lawmakers, a close confidant of House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, and considered a potential future Presidential candidate.

When informed of the constant refrain by the Indian-American community that Barve should have also been a US Congressman or US Senator, he said, “The community should know the tremendous difference that Kumar is making in the Maryland General Assembly as the Democratic Leader. He has made his mark as a great Maryland leader and legislator and it’s important that people pay attention to the important difference he’s making in the lives of millions of Marylanders.”

“Of course, he’s also served as a great role model for other aspiring Indian-American public servants as well as those



Kumar Barve on the floor at the Maryland House of Delegates. US Congressman Christopher Van Hollen, Jr (not pictured) says the community should know the tremendous difference that Kumar is making as a legislator in Maryland.

legislation that established the Technology Development Corporation and that has been part of Maryland’s successful effort to encourage more technology investment and development.”

Besides being the first-ever Indian American state legislator and the longest-serving Indian-American lawmaker, Van Hollen said Barve was also personally aware of the number of young Indian Americans desirous of running for public office and those who had run and won and others who’d come close to winning Congressional elections, and informed him of these potential candidates, particularly when he (Van Hollen) was the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

“So, pioneer, trailblazer, are all fitting descriptions of Kumar, because like I said and have seen, he’s had a huge impact in several ways — he’s a role model, a mentor, and he’s well-respected from both political parties from Maryland and around the country,” Van Hollen said.

“Again, if you look at his record, you find somebody who’s made a huge difference. The fact that he’s the longest-serving Indian American legislator is testament to the confidence that people of Maryland have in his leadership skills.”

“Ever since I got to know him, I also have a sense of his deep caring about people — and that’s what drives him in terms of legislation.

His view is that everybody has the potential to contribute in our community and he wants to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to realize their full potential. That’s why he’s focused on these issues and he’s been such a leader.”

Van Hollen spoke of how during their times in Annapolis, “we had opportunities to get together many times — one-on-one and in smaller groups — and share our experiences and really get to know the personal side of Kumar Barve.”

“Kumar has a great sense of humor as everybody knows,” he added. “That’s one of his trademarks. He’s always got a quip and a tremendous sense of repartee. So, we always did have a back and forth with Kumar.”

“Kumar is somebody who does inspire others in many ways to public service and obviously, he has a special role within the Indian-American community. But, I also think it’s important to emphasize that he’s a role model to the entire community with his leadership efforts. Kumar is a star in the state of Maryland. He’s been an important role model to Indian Americans and others nationally. We are all very proud of his accomplishments and I am so glad that *India Abroad* has made the perfect choice for this award.”



COURTESY: FACEBOOK.COM/KUMARBARVE

beyond the Indian-American community... in Montgomery County. He’s really been a pioneer and a trailblazer in terms of breaking down some of the barriers that were there. It’s important for people to understand that he’s made and continues to make his mark in a very unique way and in a very important way.”

Barve, Van Hollen said, had introduced some landmark pieces of legislation and pushed for them to be enacted “that has impacted positively the lives of all Marylanders, including Indian Americans. He has been recognized as one of the key leaders on health-care legislation, and legislation dealing with science and technology, and you can imagine how this has had such a positive impact on even the large number of Indian-American health-care professionals and information technology and other high technology professionals and entrepreneurs in Montgomery County and Maryland, especially the high tech I-270 corridor. You can just look around Montgomery County and Maryland and see the huge impact that Kumar Barve has made.”

“For example,” he added, “He was the sponsor of



Maryland Governor Martin O Malley, left, pays attention to Kumar Barve's view point at a climate change summit last year.



COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE

# ‘When he rises to speak, everyone listens’

From the Governor to legislators, Maryland’s lawmakers share their admiration for Kumar Barve with  
**Aziz Haniffa**

**M**aryland Governor Martin O’Malley and Kumar Barve’s colleagues in the state legislature in effusive encomiums spoke of him as “a dear friend,” to “one of my closest confidantes” and “mentor” to making “being Indian American relevant.”

O’Malley, in an exclusive message prepared for *India Abroad*, called Barve “a colleague and dear friend.”

“As our first Indian-American state legislator and the longest serving, Kumar is a paradigm of public service,” he said. “Over the last two decades, Kumar has dedicated his life to making Maryland a better place to live, work and play, all while mentoring the rising generations of new leaders coming up through the legislature here in Annapolis.”

Barve, the Governor said, had been instrumental in helping Maryland reduce crime to 30-year levels, and thanked the legislator for his support towards “the record investments we have made together in our public schools to make them the best in America,” and his work to improve the health of the bay and strengthen the state’s relationship with India.”

“And for all that you’ve done in our state as a leader, as an entrepreneur and innovator,” he said, “the people of Maryland are thankful as well.”

For Barve’s leadership, he added, “Maryland is a safe and better place.”

**M**ichael Busch, Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, told *India Abroad*, “Kumar has been one of my closest confidantes throughout my time as Speaker. He brings an important voice to the House of Delegates leadership team, both from the perspective of a leader in the Indian-American community and a leader in Montgomery County.”

“His natural ability to quickly understand an issue — both from the political and substantive policy perspective — have earned him the confidence of the House Democratic Caucus and the entire House of Delegates.”

Busch highlighted Kumar’s work as a member of the Ways & Means Committee: “Kumar can always dissect complex tax policies. I rely on him during debates of the most important issues facing us and his ability to communicate with legislators and the general public is second to

none.”

**S**am Arora, a colleague of Barve’s in the General Assembly, said, “I have had the privilege to have Kumar as a mentor, a friend, and most recently as a colleague in the Maryland House of Delegates.”

He first met Barve about 12 years ago, when he participated in the Washington Leadership Program, which provides scholarships for Indian-American college students interning on Capitol Hill, and was one of *India Abroad* founder and former publisher Gopal Raju’s pet projects.

“When he spoke to our class of interns,” Arora recalled, “I was impressed by his combination of intelligence, experience, and approachability. After his talk, I introduced myself and told him I was embarking upon a career in public service. He invited me to help out on his 2002 re-election campaign, where I began to see glimpses of Kumar’s passion for public service, uncommon candor, and his wonderful sense of humor.”

“I think I once heard Kumar shift topics between the philosophy of America’s Founding Fathers, Lok Sabha politics, his hairline, and *Seinfeld*, all in one conversation.”

“Over the intervening years, through successes and trials,” Arora added, “we would get together. He offered counsel and encouragement on my life and career, and in later years I would try to do the same. It has been such a joy to see him rise to Majority Leader and — even more impressively — convince Maureen to marry him. While he was pretty happy about the former, it was the latter that has made him far happier.”

When Arora thought about running for the Maryland House in 2009, it was natural that he would seek Kumar’s advice. “Though some in Maryland political circles told me that I didn’t have the right connections — or, according to

some, the right skin color — to win,” he recalled, “Kumar said, unequivocally and repeatedly, ‘You can and will win this.’”

“The day after my victory, he called me to congratulate me and to remind me of that he told me so. I look forward to returning the favor the day after he wins a seat in Congress.”

As a colleague in the House of Delegates — or having “Kumar as a *bhaiyaa* (brother)-in-arms” — Arora finds him charismatic, “orating deftly and wryly at crucial moments of complex legislative debate.” He considers it a privilege to have worked with him and watched him: “When he rises to speak, everyone listens.”

“It is not merely that Kumar was the first Indian-American state legislator that merits his recognition as the (*winner of the*) India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community — it is his body of work as an outstanding legislator and his efforts to help more Indian Americans achieve the same.”

**A**runa Miller, another colleague of Barve’s in the state legislature, described how his election to Maryland’s state assembly made India and Indian Americans relevant with an analogy.

“In the 1960s, The Beatles visited India and almost overnight, the world came to know India’s music and philosophy,” she said. “The Beatles made being an Indian cool. Thirty years later, Kumar Barve became the first Indian American in the nation to be elected to a state legislature, and Kumar made being an Indian American relevant.”

“Kumar,” Miller said, “paved the way for



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# 'Over and above all my expectations'

Lalit Gadhia speaks to **Aziz Haniffa** from the unique perspective of being Kumar Barve's first supporter

In the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, Lalit Gadhia, a Baltimore, Maryland, attorney, was a leading Democratic Party activist with significant influence with the political establishment in the state, particularly the African-American community and the likes of Parren Mitchell, Judge Joseph Howard and others, with whom he was actively involved in civil rights issues.

Gadhia was one of the key players in the winning campaigns of Mitchell, the first African American from Maryland to be elected to the United States Congress, and Howard, the first African American elected to the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City — as it was known then.

He was also close to the likes of Governor Donald Schaefer and then County Executive of Prince George's County Parris Glendening, who would later go on to be elected Governor and in whose administration Gadhia would serve.

In 1984, Gadhia also founded an organization called STEP-IN (Society of Technologists, Entrepreneurs and Professional from India), and under the auspices of this group invited almost every significant player in Maryland, both elected and appointed, to interact with the Indian community and hear of their concerns and issues.

Gadhia was a rainmaker and the first person Kumar Barve contacted in 1986, when he wanted to get politically involved after he had graduated from Georgetown University with a bachelor's degree in accounting and had

just started working, but was evidently bitten, and bitten hard by the public service bug.

In an interview with *India Abroad*, Gadhia recalled how at an event at the Hindu temple in Montgomery County in 1986, Barve, having researched Gadhia's influence, had introduced himself and told him that he wanted to get involved in the political process.

After giving Barve a few pointers, Gadhia recalled two years passed before Barve called him and said he wanted to run for the Maryland House of Delegates from District 17 in Montgomery County and asked if he would help him.

"I told him to come down to Baltimore so that we could talk about it, because I generally like to support people after I talk to them and make an assessment that they have some political strengths going in," Gadhia said. "So he came down to Baltimore and we sat down for a couple of hours and I sought out his political strengths because you can't build on anything unless you have a very base level of involvement in local issues."

Recalling this meeting and always acknowledging that Gadhia was the first person he had gone to for support when he decided to run for political office, Barve told *India Abroad*, "Lalit really grilled me for over two hours to make sure I had the wherewithal to make a viable run for office."

"When I was convinced, he had been involved in local issues — from schools to roads to all of those issues that form the core of constituents concerns — and that he also had the zeal and dedication to pursue public office and that he was willing to do the leg work, because to me it's important to do door-to-door leg work," Gadhia recalled, "I decided to support him as much as I could."

"For the next two years, we started structuring and working on it and in 1990, after this very important two-year head-start, Kumar was prepared for his run for office."

Once Kumar won the primary, Gadhia arranged for him to meet Governor Schaefer, Senator Harry McGuirk and

the other key players and arranged fundraisers for him.

"Harry, a state Senator, was a very important player in the state legislature and the right hand man to Governor Schaefer and I took Kumar to the state House to meet with them, so that he would know how to go about doing things," he said. "Harry was a master at that and he and I were good friends and he was also from Baltimore, and all of this helped Kumar to win the general election in November 1990."

The rest, it could be argued was history, as Barve became the first Indian American to be elected to a state legislature and just four years after being elected and re-elected, went on to become chair of the Montgomery County delegation to the General Assembly and then become House Majority Leader in 2002.

When asked about some disappointment among Barve's ardent supporters about him not having made a run for the US Congress years ago, Gadhia said, "Kumar and I have talked about this over the years. But every time, Kumar and I looked at the possibilities, the scenario didn't look good because there were already people who had declared they were running with substantial amounts of money and so, had a huge financial advantage. They were either very wealthy people or they were coming with so much support from very wealthy donors that would not be easy to overcome."

"We have to make that assessment every time — and we have been looking at this for quite some time — but we haven't found the right opening."

But, he argued, Barve, now as Majority Leader, "has so much seniority, so much clout in the House, there is no point giving that up unless you have a really good opportunity to move up."

Barve, he added, "has come through so beautifully and achieved and contributed so much over and above all of my expectations." ■

## 'When he rises to speak, everyone listens'

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Indian Americans in the political area where our voices could be heard. As the Majority Leader in the Maryland House of Delegates, he has been the lead speaker during floor debates on some of the most contentious issues. His voice, advocacy and leadership helped advance progressive policies for the people of Maryland, and we all owe a debt of gratitude to Kumar."

Miller serves with Barve on the Ways and Means Committee and is thankful for his

"guidance, leadership and friendship," and admires his ability "to reach across the aisle and work with member of the opposite party."

"He is an effective leader who is highly respected."

She also referred to Barve's sartorial elegance: "Kumar is a man who has not forgotten about the little things in life that matter — like the pocket square. He knows that it's more important to mix than match, that one must perfect the flat fold and because of this, he is one of the best-dressed legislators in the Maryland General Assembly. That fuchsia tie... a minor detail with major impact." ■



COURTESY: KUMAR BARVE

Kumar Barve, second from right, joins Maryland Governor Martin O Malley, third from right, as part of a trade mission to India, which met Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, second from left.



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INDIA ABROAD PERSON OF THE YEAR 2013

# 'He possessed a vast reservoir of political prowess to lift the Indian-American community'

Indian-American community leaders, who have been politically active, reminisce about Kumar Barve with  
**Aziz Haniffa**

## DR SURESH C GUPTA

I am delighted to learn that Kumar has been chosen to receive the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community Service, because I can't think of anyone more deserving for all he's done for the community since he was first elected in 1990.

Ever since he was elected the first Indian American to any state assembly and re-elected several times over he has made all of us Indian Americans in Maryland and all across the country proud and vindicated the faith we had in him when he first declared his intent to run for office in Montgomery County where I live.

I first met Kumar at a fundraiser for him in 1990 and after hearing him speak and spell out his vision for Montgomery County, I was so impressed by his vision and energy that I was able to convince the Prince George's Medical PAC (*political action committee*) to cut him a large check at a time when it was very difficult to raise money.

Soon after his election, he attended my inauguration ball when I became the first Indian American elected president of the Prince Georges County Medical Society, attended by Maryland State Senators, Delegates and County Executives, and I was so proud to introduce him as the first Indian-American legislator in the state of Maryland and any state in the US.

It did not take Kumar long to deliver on his promises. I had just been appointed by then Maryland Governor Donald Schaffer, as the first international medical graduate to Maryland's Board of Physicians, when I requested him to introduce a bill to maintain the post graduate training requirements for a Maryland medical license for US medical graduates and international medical graduates to one year (*to counter the proposal introduced by Maryland in concert with the Maryland Board of Physicians to increase post-graduate training requirements for international graduates from one to three years*).

When then US Senator from Maryland Paul Sarbanes wanted to meet the Indian-American community after his first official visit to India, I was happy to learn that



From left, Maureen Quinn, Kumar Barve, his mother Neera Barve, Dr Suresh Gupta and his wife Adarsh.

COURTESY: SURESH C GUPTA

Kumar had already told the Senator that the reception would be held at my home without even talking to me first.

That started our long family friendship and journey, which my wife Adarsh and I will always cherish, and led to my family developing close relations with the Senator, so much that the Senator has attended all of my children's graduations, engagements, weddings and my 70th birthday recently.

Kumar attends all our community functions, and has always encouraged us Indian Americans to get involved in the political process. The fact that Maryland has the largest number of (*Indian-American*) delegates in the state legislature is all because of Kumar; he's the one that encouraged and mentored Sam Arora and Aruna Miller to run. They both got elected because of Kumar's help and guidance and on his recommendations, several Indian Americans have been appointed to state boards and commissions by governors from the time of Parris Glendening to current governor Martin O'Malley.

Kumar pushed then Governor Glendening to appoint me as the first IMG Chairman of Maryland's Board of Physicians from 1996 to 1999.

I have personally watched how he takes pride in moti-

vating young Indian Americans to contest elections in their states, and he's always there to guide them through the process.

I have heard several Maryland Governors tell me that Kumar is their eyes and ears when it comes to any legislation to be passed in the assembly.

Besides Kumar having benefited all of us in the Indian-American physicians community and the community in general, he is a deeply caring person in the way he takes care of his aged 88-year-old mother, who he has made comfortable in an assisted living facility, which he visits however busy he may be.

A time will come soon when an opportunity will arise for Kumar to be elected to the United States Congress, and when that time comes, you bet we will be there to root for him both financially and with out votes. ■

**Dr Suresh C Gupta of Potomac, Maryland, is a longtime fundraiser for the Democratic Party.**



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# 'He possessed a vast reservoir of political prowess to lift the Indian-American community'

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## DR JOY CHERIAN

I vividly remember Kumar's first telephone call in the early part of 1990. He introduced himself and told me he was calling me per his father's advice to get my support for his campaign efforts. Kumar was not sure how me, a Republican Presidential appointee, would support a Democratic candidate in the Maryland State Assembly election.

He did not know I was a registered independent and was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to assume a non-Republican position at the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. He thought that I was a Republican activist.

But his father knew well about my independent political philosophy and past community activities in support of any candidate with class and character irrespective of his/her party affiliation. Further, he was well aware that I was always advocating for Indian Americans and other Asian Americans to get involved with political activities as part of their own civic responsibility performance.



Kumar Barve, along with Indian-American legislators Sam Arora and Aruna Miller, delivers Diwali wishes at an official celebration. Diwali or getting a Hindu chaplain to deliver the invocation at the convening of the Maryland General Assembly, Barve says, is not limited to symbolism. It is about having a seat at the table when it comes to how America works.



COURTESY: PROMILA BANIK

From left, Dr Sambhu N Banik, Kumar Barve, Helen Kim (of the erstwhile US-Asia Foundation), Gopal Raju (the late founder and publisher of India Abroad), Francis Vaz (the late minister political in the Indian Embassy) and Debasish Mishra (then director of India Abroad Center for Political Awareness) at a Diaspora event.

I assured Kumar I would support him if he could promise me that he would impartially represent all the people in Montgomery County in the State of Maryland. He promised me he would do it. I always wanted an Indian-American elected official in my state assembly to bring a new sensitivity for the benefit of all immigrants.

So, without much delay, I contacted a few active Indian-American leaders and requested them to raise money for Kumar's campaign.

In one of the fundraising gatherings, in Montgomery County, then US Senator Paul Sarbanes mentioned that he was pleased to see a Republican Presidential appointee standing with a Democratic candidate...

Kumar, the first Indian-American state level legislator in the United States, has inspired a number of Indian-American youngsters to take part in various local and state level elections.

Today, we have several Indian-American legislators elected around the country, and I salute Kumar for his history making and inspiring leadership initiatives.

I have also noticed his admirable leadership initiatives in legislative committees dealing with the health-care reform. In addition, among other things, he has successfully supported legislative efforts for the development of Maryland's science and technology programs, and it is these leadership skills that eventually led him to become the House Majority Leader in Maryland.

While he is very busy with his professional work and legislative responsibilities, he has always found time to extend a helping hand to assist Indian-American community members. He is willing to participate in the community meetings as a speaker in order to inspire fellow Indian Americans, and further, he has helped many community efforts relating to the business development and trade mission projects.

I hope that in coming years, he will assume higher statewide government positions and eventually be elected to the US Congress representing the state of Maryland. ■

**Dr Joy Cherian is the founder of the Indian American Forum for Political Education, the oldest Indian-American political organization.**

## DR SAMBHU N BANIK

I was so impressed by his sincerity of purpose to serve all of the people of Montgomery County, irrespective of party affiliations or any other reason. Over the years, he has proven beyond any reasonable doubt that sincerity, openness, hard work and honesty pay off in the long run.

I knew from the very first meeting that this young man possessed a vast reservoir of political prowess to lift the voices of the Indian-American community.

District 17 of the Montgomery County that he represents has a very limited number of Indian Americans who are eligible to vote, but still he was able to win in 1990. He won because he was savvy enough and not just smart, but politically mature and sophisticated enough to develop coalitions with other ethnic groups such as Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, African Americans, Hispanics as well as the majority to be part of his winning strategy.

Thanks to Kumar, the stature of India and Indian Americans has increased exponentially and this has been largely because of his exemplary services to his district and the state of Maryland.

I can say with great deal of confidence that one day soon, he will occupy the Governor's Mansion in Annapolis.

Kumar is a torch bearer and a beacon of hope for the next generations of Indian-American political aspirants.

As last year's winner of the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the community, I applaud the editors for selecting Kumar. He's a deserving candidate. ■

**Dr Sambhu N Banik of Bethesda, Maryland, a community leader and registered Republican, has supported Kumar Barve for over two decades.**



Kumar Barve's ability to poke fun at himself has kept him a well-grounded human being, says friend **Subodh Chandra**

**B**ack in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there weren't very many young Indian Americans active in Democratic politics. You could pretty much count them on two hands. So Kumar P Barve and I somehow found each other. I had worked on many campaigns and for three Democratic governors. Kumar had just been elected to the Maryland's House of Delegates. When I learned about Kumar's election (in *India Abroad*, I believe!), I was overjoyed.

Here was an Indian American who had not only made history, but he had persuaded his constituents — most of whom did not look like him or have names like his — that he was ready to serve them.

As someone who had grown up in America's Bible Belt, the achievement at that time (which we all now take for granted) seemed remarkable, almost dreamlike.

'When Kumar Barve was elected, we were all accepted,' I would tell people. (I used to utter rhymes like that long before O J Simpson's lawyer, Johnnie Cochran, made it fashionable.)

Kumar and I talked on the phone quite frequently in those days, and began meeting in person at various Indian-American and political conferences where we would often speak on panels together, and on my occasional trips to the Washington, DC area.

Kumar was the admired hub at the center of an emerging network of aspiring public servants who are now well established in their careers.

While many people know Kumar to be the successful politician and policy wonk of almost a quarter century whose achievements are historic — the first to push through health insurance reform and climate-change legislation for example — I would like to share some things about Kumar you may not know.

First of all, Kumar is funny. I mean *really* funny. Kumar is a great mimic. His regular performance at Maryland's legislative follies of the old Johnny-Carson-in-a-turban routine *Carnac the Magnificent* as *Kumar the Magnificent* always has his fellow legislators in stitches. Once I was driving Kumar across Southern California from event to event, and we became amused by the road sign for 'Sepulveda' Boulevard (which is pronounced by locals as Suh-PUHL-vuh-duh). Somehow, he and I started chanting the word as more of a Vedic mantra: 'Seh-pool-VEDA! Seh-pool-VEDA!'

Kumar's sense of humor — and in particular his ability to poke good-natured fun at himself — has kept him a well-grounded human being despite his tremendous accomplishments.

Second, Kumar Barve is proud of his heritage. This is all the more amazing given that he is essentially a third-generation Indian American who grew up with virtually no Indian-American friends. While Kumar's father, like mine, had been born in India, Kumar's Indian-American mother was, like me, born in America to Indian immigrant parents.

Yet despite the isolation Kumar sometimes felt as a



Kumar Barve was selected to serve as the president of the Maryland Electoral College for the last Presidential election.

## 'Kumar has opened countless doors for the rest of us'

child, ethnically and religiously, he has remained true, embracing the ideal that America is for all of us and that we don't have to change who we are to belong or aspire to lead.

Kumar has shared stories about his immigrant grandfather, who was president of Holkar College in Madhya Pradesh. A proud Hindu — and in sharp contrast with certain other notable Indian-American politicians — he never changed either his name or his faith to 'fit in' politically or socially.

Instead, Kumar has always — without a trace of shame or embarrassment — smiled as he patiently educates others how to pronounce his name, and what it means to him to be a Hindu.

When Kumar first started serving in Maryland's House of Delegates, he had to win over a redneck committee chairman, and he did so with so by discussing his heritage openly and finding commonality. As Kumar puts it, he was able to turn his unusual name electorally 'into a big plus because it's easy to remember.'

And by winning others over, Kumar has opened countless doors for the rest of us.

Consequently, one of my disappointments has been how relatively few Indian Americans have provided financial support to Kumar's campaign committee during his political career, including so far in this election year.

Third, just by being there, Kumar has made a difference for all of us. For example, in the immediate 'backlash' of 9/11, Kumar's stature as an elected official enabled him to arrange police protection for gurudwaras, temples, and

mosques in his state.

Fourth, Kumar has mentored and inspired countless young Indian Americans who have aspired to public service. While other Indian Americans could be petty and resentful of others' success — smiling to your face while stabbing you in the back — Kumar has always been there for aspiring elected officials and political appointees, congressional staffers, and campaign volunteers across America.

I could fill pages with the names of people Kumar has mentored and assisted and to whom he has written checks despite his humble means as a public servant.

I have 10-year-old triplet sons — third-generation Americans — who have been living their lives filled with endless possibility in part because the Honorable Maryland House Majority Leader Kumar P Barve forged the path for them.

When I see what Kumar has accomplished and contributed, I smile knowing that the future for third-generation Indian Americans is bright indeed.

For that, we all owe Kumar Barve a debt of gratitude. ■

**Subodh Chandra is the managing partner of The Chandra Law Firm LLC, a civil-rights, white-collar-criminal-defense, and business-litigation law firm based in Cleveland, Ohio with a national practice.**

**He has served as law director of the City of Cleveland and as a federal prosecutor, and was a candidate for Ohio attorney general in 2006, winning most major newspaper endorsements.**