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Ami Bera

INDIA ABROAD PERSON

OF THE YEAR 2012

Friday, June 28, 2013 Vol. XLIII No.39

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M3 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



For creating legislative history; for inspiring future generations, and for starting a fresh conversation in democracy.







merish 'Ami' Bera created history when he became only the third United States Congressman in the history of the Indian-American immigrant experience last November, and only the second Indian-American Democrat in more than 50 years after

Dalip Singh Saund. The good doctor, a second-generation American, born and raised in California, is also the first Indian-American physician to be elected to Congress.

In this interview with India Abroad, Dr Bera

US Congressman **Ami Bera**, the **India Abroad Person of the Year for Political Achievement 2012**, in eloquent conversation with **Aziz Haniffa**.

speaks about how serving in the House of Representatives inspires the next generation to believe that they can accomplish anything.

To make a difference

It's nearing six months since you were sworn in as the US Representative representing California's 7th District and I know you hit the ground running. Has it fully sunk in that you are a US lawmaker – that you've created history?

Every day, when I walk to work, I walk past the Capitol Building and appreciate the honor







Ami Bera created history when he became only the third US Congressman in the history of the Indian-American immigrant experience last year.

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India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012

M4 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013





Former President Bill Clinton, right, endorses Ami Bera during his campaign last year. In Bera's words to India Abroad then, it was 'a big deal.'

To make a difference

PAGE M3

to represent our country - to represent America.

There is still a sense of excitement in the Indian-American community, particularly the next generation.

I believe that my getting elected and my serving in the House of Representatives inspires that generation to believe that they can do anything that they set their minds to.

That is an incredible honor - to be in a position to inspire that generation.

Are there moments when you reflect – when you sit back and the reality hits you that 'I am here in Congress, seated here, going to the well of the House, making statements, asking questions at hearings'?

Are their times when – while not necessarily overwhelming - there is a sense of awe?

There is always a sense of awe because I am serving our country -America - at the highest level and it's that sense of honor, understanding the privilege and responsibility that I have.

And yes, it's a wonderful opportunity. (But) I would not describe it as overwhelming

You are also the first Indian-

American physician to be elected to Congress. How much of a sense of responsibility do you feel not just to the younger generation as a role model, but also to the Indian-American physicians community because they are in a lot of ways the most respected brand in the Indian-American community?

First off, as a physician, I have a deep sense of responsibility to my patients - young and old - and making sure that as we go for health-care reform, we don't lose sight that this is about taking care of our patients.

As an Indian-American physician, we are 8 percent of all physicians and surgeons in this country, so it's a large community.

Certainly, I talk to that community as well.

It is a community that has made great strides in America and it's an opportunity for us to give back.

As a role model for the next generation, there too, I am sure there is that sense of responsibility. Absolutely.

Raised with traditional Indian-American and American values of always building for the next genera-



INDIA ABROAD PERSON OF THE YEAR

SWATI DANDEKAR Then Iowa Congresswoman India Abroad Person of the Year 2002

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PREET BHARARA US Attorney for the Southern District of New York India Abroad Person of the Year 2011

M5 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Friends and family surround Ami Bera is he is sworn into office in January. There is, he says, always a sense of awe and honor in being able to serve the country.

COURTESY: AMI BERA'S OFFICE



tion, making sure that we raise our children and grandchildren with more opportunities than we had.

It's exciting when I am speaking to that next generation. You can see that excitement in their eyes, that 'Hey, if he can go to Congress, maybe I can.'

And, if in some ways, we can inspire the next generation to run for office, we would have accomplished a lot.

At almost every Indian-American event you talk of how you are buttonholed by reporters and asked how you won as an Indian-American candidate, and if you found that a major hurdle in your Congressional campaign and you always respond by saying that you won because you were Indian American.

What do you really mean by that?

What I mean by that is, I ran as an Indian American as a son of parents who immigrated here from India — and it's the values that our parents raised us with, the values of a strong sense of family, the values of working hard, the values of making sure you've built a solid foundation of education, the values of sacrificing for the next generation to make sure your children are better off than you.

To make a difference

10

These are not just Indian-American values, those are historical American values as well that this country has always built on.

So, when I talk about that, those are values that are deeply ingrained in me — building for the future, building for the next generation, giving people opportunity.

Why is it that you are very strong in expressing this sense of pride and not at all apologetic?

I know of other elected Indian Americans — who will remain unnamed, some who ran for Congress — who were diffident about their ethnicity.

Of course, a part of this could be attributed to the handlers who did not want to show up their candidates' ethnicity.

You have no qualms about talking about being Indian American, even though your constituents are a mix of all races and the mainstream.

Is it because ethnicity has evolved so much so that it's no longer a big deal?

I have to run on who I am, and I am not going to run away from who I am, what my values are. What makes this country strong is this fabric of different ethnicities, different cultures, coming together in the melting pot that is the United States of America.

That's historically what has always propelled us forward. The Indian-American community is part of that fabric and part of the strength of the United States of America.

We have a lot to offer — we've done well in health care, we've done well in academia, we've done well in business and technology and this benefits the United States of America.

Why would I run away from the tremendous value that the Indian-American community brings to the broader American community?

Is it because ethnicity today is no more a factor in some ways that perhaps it was a few years ago?





M6 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



To make a difference

← PAGE M5

Again, I have to run on who I am and what my values are, and I am not going to run away from that.

The Indian-American community is not a large portion of our district and so when I talk about my values, talk about who I am, I am talking to the broader American community. Those are American values. So, there's no reason to run away from them.

Your wife is African American, so in some ways you are like (California Attorney General) Kamala Devi Harris — you've got this African-American connection and you are also Indian American — and in a sense you also speak to the interests of the African-American community, in terms of the civil rights struggle.

Could you speak about that, and how much of an influence and support your wife Janine has been?

None of us does anything by our-selves.

While my parents and my family set the foundation, it has really been this partnership with Janine — in May we were married 22 years — where you have a life partner that makes you better. Hopefully, she'd say the same thing about me.

My mom talks to her more than she talks to me. Sometimes she'll pick up

the phone and call Janine, who is also a physician. and ask her questions. And I'll say, 'Mom, I am a doctor too, how come you are not asking me?'

Janine has a very close relationship with my parents.

By your marriage to her, you have a much broader, deeper, perspective — the fact that you have African-American relatives, that you've been part and parcel of that community too.

Again, it's that melting pot of America. It allows me to step into many different communities. Certainly getting the Indian-American cultural background, getting the African-American cultural background, and then just the broader American cultural background, that's what makes this country remarkable — it's this melting pot and this fabric that is woven together.

When you first decided to run for Congress, what did Janine say?

Was it ⁵What the heck are you talking about? What the heck are you thinking? You are a physician!'?

A lot of that... there was certainly some head-scratching... but as with everything, we talked about it, we sat and discussed what impact it would have.

Once she saw that I was determined to go out there and explore running, she was on board 100 percent.

I believe you had the political bug in you from your college days.

We grew up in a very political household.

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My father, as a high school student and then college stu-



Ami Bera, left, with wife Janine, right, at the Indiaspora Ball this year. He says, "I am not going to run away from who I am, what my values are."

dent in Gujarat, was very active in India's independence movement.

When we were growing up, one thing what we did as a family was we watched Walter Cronkite every night...

We would eat dinner together and watch the evening news and talk about what was happening in the world.

So, I was raised with this deep sense of wanting to be involved in the community and public office was one way to do that.

When I made the decision to go to medical school, it was because that clearly was another way to give back to the community and have an impact.

What was the turning point that made you determinedly decide that you were going to run for Congress?

Was there something that triggered you to do it?

I've had the privilege of being able to serve in many capacities — as chief medical officer for Sacramento County, as Medical Director for the Mercy Hospital System, as an Associate Dean within the University of California.

I truly think now is the time where we can't dance around making decisions.

We have to have the courage to engage in some of the difficult conversations that we have to have to start moving the country forward — to start building for the next generation.

So, I found myself saying, I could stand on the sidelines and complain about what I wasn't seeing in Congress, or I could find the courage to step in and try to make a difference.

And it's in my nature to want to make a difference.

Now as a member of Congress and being totally involved in all of its deliberations that often get down and dirty, do you have any regret?

Any sense of frustration because there is always this reality check because for all the idealism to make a difference and set priorities on one's agenda, to work with a Republican majority in the House in a bi-partisan manner and reach compromises is hardly a walk in the park?

No regrets. As I said, everyday when I walk past the Capitol Building, I understand the tremendous honor I've been given to serve the United States of America at the highest level.

We do have challenges and as anybody who's spent time here in Washington, DC, there is a lot of dysfunction going on. But I am an optimist.

I believe American democracy is a very stable brand of democracy and will help us move forward.

The American public has expressed its desire to see the people that they

are electing work together, not as Democrats versus Republicans, but as leaders finding those areas of common ground, those areas of compromise, and moving forward doing the country's work.

But not to belabor the point, but in terms of a sense of reality, and of the challenges that you speak about, an example of this was when you were making your debut with your first amendment to freeze Congressional salaries in sequestration. This attempt was shot down; you couldn't even get to first base in the Rules Committee. Perhaps even a lot of Democrats were wondering, 'What the heck was Ami thinking?'

With our first amendment, we actually got a lot of praise from the leadership because they saw how strategic we were.

The first bill that we co-sponsored, The No Budget, No Pay legislation, we did with two Republicans and myself and another senior Democrat.

When we introduced that bill, the Republican leadership saw how powerful and important an issue it was, and they came back from their conference and introduced it themselves.

Here was Speaker (John) Boehner using the same language that I used, about the importance of passing a budg-





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M7

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M8 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M6

To make a difference

et. It was a testimony to what we introduced.

That piece of legislation — the Republican version — passed the House, it passed the Senate, and got signed into law.

And I was directly responsible for that for the fact that for the first time in several years, the Senate is going to produce a budget.

You are a freshman member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and also the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, which has jurisdiction over matters pertaining to South Asia.

How did it come about? Did you actively lobby to become a member of this Committee?

Issues of trade are very important to us, and as much as I would like to be on the Ways and Means Committee — no freshmen are on that Committee — we worked towards getting on Ways and Means.

But Foreign Affairs is very important, and the partnership between the United States and Asia and the United States and India is very important.

As you've heard me say, it's a very important economic partner to us and a very important strategic partner.

Through the Committee of Foreign Affairs, with chairman (*Ed*) Royce (*California Republican*), chairman (*Steve*) Chabot (*Ohio Republican*, who heads the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs), we do look to build that strategic partnership.

As a fellow Californian, Chairman Royce see the issues of the relationship in a nonpartisan way.

Most of the issues we talk about on the Foreign Affairs Committee are really nonpartisan issues — they are issues of protecting the United States and then bouncing some of America's agenda with its allies.

Both at the full Committee and in the Subcommittee, you've been quite pointed in your questioning of how the US-India Strategic Partnership can be further fostered and cemented, and also in terms of India's role in Afghanistan, post the 2014 withdrawal of US and NATO troops from that country.

You've also brought up India's role regionally and globally with administration and other expert witnesses.

Why have you been so laser focused on these particular issues?

Let me start with two things.

The leadership in the House of Representatives recognizes the important asset that they have in having an Indian-American Congressman. That has given us a lot of entrée to take a leadership role here in the US-India conversation and the US-India relationship.

I would say the same thing with the administration and through the State Department they recognize our impor-



Ami Bera, right, in Afghanistan as part of the bipartisan Foreign Affairs Committee trip this Memorial Day weekend.

tance and so forth of working through our Congressional office and have been very supportive in giving us a leadership role.

I would come back to you that we recognize the importance of a US-India, US-Asia trading relationship.

Certainly, there are areas where we are making a lot of progress, there are other areas where strategically we'd like to open up some of India's markets in a way that helps our goods and services, helps us create more jobs here in the United States as well as in my home state of California.

Those conversations will be ongoing and there's a recognition that given who I am and given my background and coming as a Californian, we can take a leadership role there.

As I've questioned the witnesses, the United States has made tremendous investments in Afghanistan and so, as we start to draw down, we don't want to lose those gains.

We'd like to see a stable Afghanistan and India does have a critical role as we start to move toward 2014 and continue the trilateral conversation between the United States, India and Afghanistan.

That's an area that we'd also like to continue to stay engaged with and again, India has a vital role in stabilizing South Asia.

So, it's building on some of the conversations that are already taking place and again, using my position as an Indian-American Congressman to elevate some of those conversations, to elevate some of those trade discussions, to elevate some of those strategic discussions.

Chairman Royce has been extremely supportive, Congressman (*Joe*) Crowley (*New York Democrat*) as the co-chair of the India Caucus has been extremely supportive.

The folks at the State Department, those within the think





M9 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M8

To make a difference

tanks have been extremely supportive.

Obviously, we made a strategic decision in hiring a chief of staff, Mini Timmaraju, who clearly understands the Indian community and has worked extensively on the US-India relationship.

So, it seems as if you are reaching out at all levels in terms of making yourself much more well versed in some of the issues and concerns, both communitywise as well as the foreign policy outlook is concerned.

Absolutely.

And again, it's taking advantage of the wealth of knowledge within these think tanks, the wealth of knowledge within the Committee of Foreign Affairs.

Chairman Royce is a strong believer in the US-India Strategic Relationship. So, it's a case of strategically inserting myself where I can be of value.

In several interviews with you during your first campaign and second campaign, and even on the eve of the election, when we discussed your take on Obamacare, you indicated that you had not wholeheartedly embraced this Affordable Health Care Act and had argued that there are areas it needed to be tweaked.

Can you speak about that, now that you are an elected member of Congress?

How do you hope to be part of that tweaking?

As a physician, who is a health-care expert and who has spent most of my adult life working on these issues, clearly I am going to add value to the conversation. Still the number one issue we have to be talking about is the cost of health care.

My criticism of the Affordable Care Act was that it did not do enough to address the cost of health care. Now that the issue is settled and the Supreme

Court has ruled, let us take the context that is there, and let's make this a better piece of legislation. A specific area would be where we talk about

Medicare. Medicare in itself, is not broken — it's a very efficient sys-

tem, 95 cents on every dollar goes to direct patient care, puts the patient in charge.

So, what is the issue?

It's the cost of health care. We have to shift the conversation from, 'Hey, we have to fix Medicare' to 'We have to address the cost of health care.'

So, the proposals like some that are being talked about in terms of raising the eligibility age of Medicare really is the wrong direction to go - from 65 to 67 - because when you do that, you don't actually lower the cost, but actually in most published reports suggest you will raise the cost of health-care.

So, we should be really shifting the conversation to saying how do we make it more affordable for small business owners, large business owners and individuals, and that's where the conversation needs to go now.

Let's have the courage to address the issues that need to be addressed.

That's what we were elected to do, that's what I was elected to do and that it what I intend to do around this critical issue of health care in America.



Ami Bera says when he was an intern on Capitol Hill in 1985, he didn't see anyone who looked like him. So, it excites him now to see the number of Indian Americans and Asian Americans working on Capitol Hill.

When you lost the first time, what made you decide to run again? What made you certain that this time you could prevail, notwithstanding that (*Dan*) Lungren (*the longtime Republican incumbent*) was not just so entrenched, but also had the machinery of the Karl Roves of the world behind him?

In 2010, we built a race from scratch. I had never run for public office before. What came together was one of the most surprising races in the country.

In fact, a few weeks before that election, *The New York Times* was writing about our race — that this may be one rogue wave that's going against the Republican tidal wave.

We didn't win, but on every matrix, we had a tremendous grass-roots campaign — thousands of people came together to support the race.

And as I was making thank you calls, almost to a t, everyone of them said, 'We really want you to run again... you did a great job... that it was just a very difficult year to be running.'

And the most important person, my wife, was the first to say, 'You know, Ami, you've got to run again.'

So, we took a few months off to reflect and then got right

back into it.

Do you really believe the Indian-Americans' time has come politically, so much so that in the next few years, not just in terms of the election of a couple of House members, but the election of an Indian-American US Senator is imminent?

The community had to see and experience the success of my getting elected.

Now that that door is open, I do believe we'll see more and more individuals taking that leap of faith — whether it's running for local office, state office or Congressional offices.

So, I do believe that pipeline is there and we are seeing in each successive election cycle more Indian Americans, particularly of our next generation, getting engaged.

You've heard me say this: 'When I was an intern on Capitol Hill in 1985, I didn't see anyone who looked like me.'

Today, when you look at the number of Indian Americans and Asian Americans working on Capitol Hill, working in the administration, it is so very exciting. You see this real talent pool in the next generation. ■



M10 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



hen Dr Amerish 'Ami' Bera broached the subject of running for the United States Congress to his wife, Dr Janine Bera says her initial reaction was that he was pulling her leg.

"I thought he was joking; I was so surprised," she tells *India Abroad.* "It was not at all like saying, 'No way'. I never say no to anything. I never say no, 'Why do you want to do that? That's ridiculous!' It was more like 'Whatever.' And, then you wait to see what happens."

But Ami, Janine adds, "kept going on and on about it." "All our friends were asking "Why do you want to do this?" because he had a good job, but he said, 'I can do a good job,

and it's a way to contribute, to give back to my community. I have a lot of good ideas," she recalls.

"He has a lot of skills, and basically, he thought he could be useful as a Congressman. Although first surprised, shocked, I threw up my hands and said, 'Good luck.' And then, I helped him, of course."

Janine — born and raised in Los Angeles, to devout and traditional Baptist parents Tommy and Barbara Williams, and a physician like her husband — says the first time Ami ran, in 2010, she was a lot more involved.

"I saw that when you are first standing up before people, talking about your ideas — that's really hard. I felt it was helpful for me to be in the audience, and he could talk to me. I was like a friendly face in the audience. But everybody was pretty respectful too."

Ami lost that election, decided to run again and take on the entrenched Republican incumbent Dan Lungren.

"I, 100 percent, supported him because I saw what he was able to create with this great team of people. I saw the kind of grass-roots support he had," Janine says.

"When someone comes up to you, who is not a friend, not a family member, not an acquaintance, somebody you've never known, and says, 'Wow, I am so glad that your husband's running,' it makes you stop and think that this is beyond me; he has something other people can see. He has a gift to give, and he got so close, coming from no political connections — basically starting from ground zero to creating what he created. Of course, he had to run again."

Asked if she now sees Ami as a career politician, Janine is philosophical.

"I am open to anything in the future," she says. "It's been wonderful and exciting and what's more, I am so proud of him. I believe he's really trying to be a good Congressman, trying to do what he said he was going to do, and I am very proud of him!"

But rewind more than 22 years to the love story of how a Gujarati boy met this African-American girl and then pursued her even though both sets of parents, initially, were hardly enthused over this union, and it has the making of a

'Ami is really trying to be a good Congressman'

Janine Bera tells **Aziz Haniffa** about falling in love with 'this really cute guy in the library' and more...



Ami Bera and wife Janine at the Presidential inauguration this year.

made-for-Hallmark movie.

Janine was a senior year undergraduate at the University of California, Irvine, majoring in social ecology on how people relate to an environment; Ami was a second year medical student at the same university.

Even though the undergraduate library was more than a mile away from the medical school library on this huge campus, Ami would always be hanging out in the undergrad library.

"Here is a medical student in the undergrad library walking around talking to people, and there's only one reason for a medical student to be in an undergrad library — a lookout station (to flirt with undergrad female students)."

His excuse, she adds, would always be that "he was just visiting, but he was clearly checking out the undergrads."

Recalling how they met, Janine says, "I was studying for a math final and I was in a study group. I saw him walk by and I thought, 'Oh my God, who's that?' And he walked around and went over and started talking to my close

COURTESY: FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/AMIBERA

friends. I though he was Puerto Rican — this was in the 1980s. He has this mustache and he was wearing a nice Bomber jacket and smiling and had all this curly hair. I started looking from the corner of my eye, and my girl friend came over to me and said, 'You want to go get coffee?' I had a final the next day, but I immediately stopped studying and said, 'Yes.'''

What Janine had not known was that her friend and Ami were good friends.

"They (*her friend and Ami*) had been good friends for many years, only I didn't know it. He was actually friends with almost all of my friends, and I never knew it! It was kind of amazing that I never knew who he was — he was pretty well known across Irvine because he had done a lot in student activities."

"When I think back, I know for sure, I met him one other time — I just couldn't stand him then; he was very annoying. I was thinking about going to law school, but I hadn't really committed. I was at a point where I should have been planning to take the LSAT, and so we were at a picnic or like a lunch-

eon or something and he sat next to me - and again, his friends were actually my friends, but we had never met and kept asking question after question and kept saying, 'When are you taking the LSAT?''

"But that was years before, and I didn't connect that annoying guy with this really cute guy in the library at all."

Janine recalls that Ami was quite ingenious in that he had done his research: "He found out that I was marketing director of the (*college*) newspaper and he called me and said he was an editor and wanted to write an article on the marketing director (*as a ruse to meet her*). But I appreciated it — that's very clever, and he was smart enough to have thought about something I was doing. And that was before Google!"

They met in March and started dating in April, and that



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M12 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'Ami is really trying to be a good Congressman'

← PAGE M10

summer, it so happened, Janine's family decided to go to India.

"They were into travel. My mother was a great bargain shopper, so we went wherever things were cheap and the most interesting, and so, we were all going to India. We did the Golden Triangle and it was a wonderful trip, but they thought I was dating Ami to get the full cultural experience."

Concern came from both sets of parents when Ami proposed to Janine in August 1990. But he had made up his mind that he would marry Janine come what may.

"Ami has always kind of marched to the beat of his own drummer. But, of course, as parents you want what you think is appropriate for your child, which is a good Gujarati girl."

"His parents were very worried and afraid, but they were also such good loving people, they helped us understand things from their point of view."

The Beras explained to Janine's parents that they liked Janine, but their concern was cultural — that they wanted Ami to marry someone from the Gujarati culture.

Janine remembers that Babulal and Kanta Bera said they would be upset even if the girl was someone from the south of India: "They were very frank, very honest and helped me to understand it. I had really no anger, just understanding. But, of course, you are stuck, because you are madly in love with their son."

Ultimately, she says, her "sisters-in-law (both of Ami's brothers are married to Gujarati girls) were the ones who really helped to kind of bridge my entry into the family."

Ami and Janine wed in May 1991, the day he graduated from medical school.

"Interestingly enough," she observes, "a lot of the things that they felt afraid of — when the culture is different that somehow or other the person isn't going to understand the other's cultural values — were the exact same cultural values I was raised with in that you respect your elders, you love your family, you care for each other, you treat everybody well and you make them happy. These are the same basic principles of any culture, and once they realized that I didn't want to take Ami away from his family, they were fine."

Her parents, Janine says, "were more cool" with their relationship "although they would

have also preferred the nice African-American young man who lived down the street whom they knew; it would have been more comfortable for them. Also, he'd been my high



Ami Bera with wife Janine and daughter Sydra.



school boyfriend and they were all set for me to marry him, because again, who doesn't want their kid to marry someone whose background they know completely?" It helped, Janine says, that her great grand-aunt Gertrude Dewey had married someone who was Caucasian in the 1960s.

Today, in an age when the Pew Research Center notes that more than 50 percent of American marriages are inter-racial, she feels things would have been far less complicated.

When it was time for the wedding, Janine recalls, "We were going to get married in my family's traditional Baptist church, but when I took Ami there, that just didn't feel right. We felt that his parents would be very uncomfortable. They would feel like we were just taking him away and not respecting their culture at all."

 \overline{S} o, they got married at the Self-Realization Shrine Temple in front of some of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes, which was contained in a small urn in the temple.

"The Self-Realization Fellowship is a religion that combines Eastern and Western cultures and religions and its kind of like Unitarianism where you respect all religions. It's Hinduism and Christianity brought together, but there's some Judaism and Islam too."

"We got married at this beautiful lake shrine - just outside Malibu, California - and it was a place where both families could

feel comfortable. I rode up in a horse in a full white dress and then at the reception, my sisters-in-law, dressed me in a sari."

It was after marriage — when they moved to Sacramento where Ami was doing his residency— that Janine decided to become a doctor.

"I wanted to do something where I could help people. I was going to get my PhD in psychology," she says.

Ami persuaded her to do medicine.

Ami's older brother Rimal was also an influence.

"He is a physician — a psychiatrist — and he too asked me why I didn't go to medical school," which she did at the University of California, Davis.

The years — through deciding to adopt a baby in her third year in medical school, the tough days of internship and residency, two election campaigns — have been fun, Janine says.

"Ever since we were dating we were always going to adopt — maybe have one biological child but there are so many kids in the world without homes."

And now — between working for Kaiser Permanente as a primary care physician, bring up

her daughter, Sydra, 15, a sophomore in high school who she and Ami dote on, and being a US Congressman's wife – Janine declares, "I am having a great time." ■



M13 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He felt he had to be in Washington to make a difference'

sk Kanta and Babulal Bera how they felt when their youngest son Amerish 'Ami' Bera became the second Indian-American Democrat and the only Indian-American physician to be elected to the House of Representatives, and you realize that he is in many ways a chip off the old block.

They speak of how they were the first from their respective districts in Gujarat "to come to

America." Babulal — who lives with his wife in La Palma, California, where they raised their children — says, "From my district, I was the first to come to America. From her district, she was the first to graduate from an Indian university. She was the first woman from her district to work for the government of India, and she was the first one to come to America."

Babulal, who hails from Vadodara, came over in 1958, armed with a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Rajkot University. He came to the US to do postgraduate studies in chemical engineering and received his master's degree from the University of California in Los Angeles.

Kanta, who hails from Gomta, followed two years later. She had a bachelor's degree in psychology and philosophy and went to school for her master's degree in secondary school administration and supervision in the US.

And in the manner of true pioneers, Babulal, who was studying, worked parttime — including for the LA Dodgers and

Giants — to support his wife in those early years, years that saw him move from Brooklyn to Los Angeles and then to San Francisco.

Says he, "I was at USC and they needed people to do ticket-taking and help in such things, so I worked part-time at the LA Colesium for the evening games by the Dodgers. I didn't have transportation and USC was only walking distance to the Colesium where they played. They paid \$8 a game."

He continued to do summer and part-time jobs to put himself through college, and says, "In 1961 after I got my degree, I got a job at \$375 at the Teledyne polymers division."

The company became part of Union Carbide and broke down into various divisions. He became vice president of Avnet, another of its spin-offs.

Babulal retired in 1985, and started his wire and cable company and also began dabbling in real estate with his brother.

Kanta kept going strong after receiving her master's

Ami Bera's trajectory runs akin to that of his parents. **Aziz Haniffa** discovers the family's fascinating history.



Proud parents: Babulal and Kanta Bera in their son Ami Bera's office in Washington, DC.

degree and has been teaching at the Johnston School in Norwalk in the La Mirada School District since 1967.

Babulal recalls those early days vividly — when "there were only 12 Indians in Orange County, and all of them were students, six in engineering and six in pharmaceuticals. We saw not only the community grow, we also saw California grow. No matter where I went then, Orange County was nothing but the oranges."

"At that time, we bought a hall in 1972 just to play bridge. Ten of us used to get together and play bridge. Earlier, we had to arrange to play bridge from one house to another every weekend. The ladies would do all the cooking. So, we decided rather than doing this, let's get a hall for about \$100,000 and we paid cash — all 11 of us. Later, we made it into a temple in LA, and we continue to expand it. Now there was no bridge and now we had to take our shoes off."

Meanwhile, Kanta was very involved in community activities.

"Our extended family was almost 300 and my house is always open to students, visitors, for anybody who comes. If

one needs any advice for immigration, for family matters, we are always there for them," she says.

They helped Babulal's four brothers and one sister to immigrate to the US. "I brought all my brothers here, and all thanks to Kanta. She wanted them educated and she helped me get them all over here, one by one. All live within 15 miles of each other."

It was in this atmosphere that Ami and his elder brothers Rajesh and Rimal grew up.

"Ami was always bright, and he was gifted," says Babulal. "He was very outgoing. He was very people-oriented, wanted to make friends and was very active in high school, the John F Kennedy High School in La Palma."

Ami, he says, "was always a public education guy — no private school, no charter school, nothing like that."

"Ami always wanted to do something to make a difference — to do something for the betterment of the people," his father adds. "And, he felt he had to be in Washington, DC to make a difference."

When Ami announced that he was 'looking into' running for Congress, Babulal recalls telling him, 'You are a doctor, you have a good life, but if you get into politics, you know what you are getting into and, life is going to be difficult.'

"We told him it's not going to be easy. We asked him to think deeply about it, but we made it clear to him that if he was going to run, then to go 100 percent — give it his all... because then even if you win or lose — somebody has to win and somebody has to

lose — you will know you gave it your best." "After his loss the first time, we told him to go get some

sleep and that we'd see him in the morning. When I saw him in the morning, I knew right away that he was going to run again. And I told him if you want to do it, we are behind you all the way. I advised him to give his best again. I knew he was going to win this time around."

Asked if as parents, they give their son, today a lawmaker, any advice, Babulal says, "I do discuss with him what we need to do for this country in immigration, in education. We give him our thoughts and knowing him, he just listens."

Kanta — who when this correspondent met her in Ami Bera's office on Capitol Hill, was visiting with her son for the first time in Washington, DC, not being able to make it for his inauguration because she suffered a stroke on the eve of the inauguration and was in a coma for three weeks — says, "We tell him a lot of things, but ultimately, Ami is a man with his own mind — from the time he decided to marry Janine to the time he decided to run for Congress."



M14 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Dr **Rimal Bera** takes immense pride in the kid brother who now inspires a community.

mi had the benefit of being the youngest. All three of us kids got a lot of freedom, but our parents were the least strict with him. He could explore more areas of interest.

Î was most into sports, and he got into it too. So, when we traveled we'd go see the different sports stadiums — where the Yankees play in New York, where the Red Skins play in DC.

Traveling was something we did from a very early age. I think we all really enjoyed it. We had a station wagon and we traveled every break we had. We'd go camping within California and beyond. We'd drive 600, 700 miles a day. We drove cross country twice, I think.

In a seven-eight year period, my parents probably sponsored 300 people to come to the United States. My parents were kind of pioneers in the community in southern California. People would come to them for advice.

We had a pretty big backyard at our house; we had a tree house. Lots of people came over and hung out at our house. Kids stayed over for dinner a lot. Our house was kind of the hangout spot for all our friends.

Ami always assimilated well. He wasn't really shy or anxious. He was always really comfortable with people.

Ami feels very confident about the decisions he makes, and they don't have to please others.

His decision to marry Janine shows his spirit.

Ami felt 'I know my love for Janine is right, and I know I'm making the right decision.'

My parents really relied on my wife and me for emotional support in the whole process of Ami marrying outside Indian culture.

It was unexpected for them, but they love Janine.

My wife played a really big role in talking about how the most important person in one's life is who you are going to marry. She helped my parents come to a place of supporting Ami.

Ami announced that he was going to run for Congress at a family Christmas party in 2008 at my older brother Rajesh's home. I think our first reaction was surprise and not quite understanding why he would want to run. I knew from an early age that he always had an interest in leadership. He always wanted to take on new challenges and move on once he accomplished something.

But I am still amazed and intrigued how he put this great team together, inspired people and got elected.

He is very genuine in what he believes. I don't always see things in the same light as he does, but he is very genuine, and grounded, and real. That's what I have noticed in the last 4 to 6 years. I am extremely proud of him.

Our parents' goal for us was to focus on education and public service from an early age, no matter what fields we went into.

Ami has got the best of both worlds, with his Indian-American roots and the traditional cultural values that go along with that — hard work, education, serving others, the values of immigrants — along with this independent spirit from being born and raised in the US.

I think it has energized my father and my kids too. It makes me feel more creative and passionate about the things I do. ■

Ami Bera, center, with, from left, brother Rajesh, friend Paresh Shah, father Babulal and brother Rimal on his first visit to California after his election win.

'Representative Bera would not have been possible had President Obama not been there'

The Congressman's elder brother lets **Ritu Jha** into some family secrets.

ajesh Bera, Congressman Ami Bera's eldest brother, came to the United States with his mother when he was three-and-a-half years old in 1960. Over 50 years later, he still remembers his father waiting at Los Angeles airport waving, and his mother telling him, 'Look, your father is waiting for us.'

The early years in the US were challenging for the Beras, but by the time Amerish - or Ami as he was to be known - was born, life was more or less settled for the family.

Ami's first achievement was in his senior year when he was elected Mr Irish — the mascot for the John F Kennedy High School he attended was the Fighting Irish. The most popular boy in the school was elected Mr Irish.

"This was a step forward in our assimilation into America," says Rajesh. "Up to that point, most Indians stayed in the background and did not make an effort to stand out in a crowd. We did our jobs, saved money, and tried to secure our family's future."

Ami is eight-and-a-half years younger than Rajesh, who believes his youngest brother is closer to Rimal, his younger brother. By the time Ami was in his formative years, Rajesh had left home and was already in college.

"We did not have much money growing up," Rajesh recalls. "However, we never lacked for anything. Every subsequent year showed progress over the previous year. We developed an expectation of forward progress in our lives and financial future. Our parents installed a strong value for education. There was no question of having anything less than a graduate degree."

Their mother was a school teacher, their father an engineer who invested in motels. Rajesh, who studied finance and economics at UC Berkeley and worked for an aerospace company for 18 years, is now an investor in real estate.

PAGE M15 \rightarrow







M15 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

10 YEARS

'I wanted him to be a role model'

aresh A Shah is an attorney, the founder of the media company Hollywood TV, and the founder of Millions of Milkshakes, which Hollywood celebrities and athletes like Miley Cyrus, Shaquille O'Neal and Dennis Rodman visit for their specialized milkshakes.

He was part of the White House delegation that accompanied President Bill Clinton on his first visit to India in March 2000.

In 2010, when his childhood friend Dr Ami Bera decided to run for office the first time, Shah took six weeks off work to support him.

Shah, who has been Bera's tireless supporter through failures and triumphs, on their friendship:

I just knew that Ami was going to be an outstanding Congressman. I also wanted him to be a role model; it's like the little kid in me that wanted a role model. Ami was a phenomenal candidate and I wanted to do whatever I could to help the Indian-American community get over that barrier of losses.

Rimal (*Ami's elder brother*) also took time off work to focus on how we could help Ami.

In 2009, he had only 3 percent recognition, so it was a challenge introducing someone of the Indian-American community they have never heard of, but by the end of 2010 his name recognition was over 80 percent. People were getting to know him.

In 2012, when Ami again ran for Congress against Republican Representative Dan Lungren from California's 7th Congressional district, it was easier to work with people **Paresh Shah** believes Ami Bera will be an outstanding



Ami Bera on the campaign trail. Paresh Shah had taken six weeks off work to support his friend during his first election campaign.

because he had already become a household name. I didn't have to take off from work in the 2012 election though I still had resistance from people, but these things do happen.

I would say he got an incredible team together with the passion, and we knew it is going to be the one where history was going to be made.

I know Ami since his pre-school days. I was four-and-ahalf years old, and I believed that I was the big man on campus since I had been at the school (Temple Baptist Pre-School in Downey, California) for a year.

One day I was alone in the sandbox at the school digging away at dirt with a shovel when a two-and-a-half-year-old boy was carried and placed into my sandbox.

The boy was Ami.

I acknowledged that the boy was somebody I already knew because we were family friends, but to my dismay, Ami suddenly began digging in my sandbox. How dare he, I thought. He did not look up, but kept digging away carefully with deliberate strokes. Soon he began digging in my area of the box.

I tried to stop him through my frustrated looks, but Ami remained focused on his digging, never looking up but instead steadfastly focusing on the task at hand as he methodically dug away at the dirt stroke by stroke. I eventually yielded to him and allowed him to continuing digging in my area as he appeared to be a on a mission.

As I think about this story, this episode reflects the many great traits that Ami has brought into his current life. Among many things, it reflects his extreme focus on performing and completing the task at hand along with his methodical manner at reaching the completion of any task he puts his mind to.

- As told to Ritu Jha

PAGE M14

Dr Reginald Herren, an obstetrician at the Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital, and his wife Dorothy, a nurse, have had a great impact on the brothers' lives.

"They had a very good set of values and strongly engrained their values in their children," Rajesh remembers. "The Herren family taught us American culture and values. We used to call Dr Herren's wife Mamma. We loved what she cooked. They led by example, installing the values of service to others that the Bera family values today."

"The Herrens would be local guardians for scores of foreign university students," Rajesh adds. "They would guide them in their assimilation into American society. Sunday meetings would be held at their home for these students from all over the world. This would be a Bible study session followed by dinner. My father, who arrived at USC in 1958, and my mother and I were lifelong friends with the Herrens."

'Representative Bera would not have been possible had President Obama not been there'

Dr Herren delivered both Rimal and Ami. "Shortly after Ami's birth, my mother's father passed away, and she traveled to India. The Herrens had us move into their home for the three months that my mother was in India. Ami was only three months old," Rajesh recalls.

"For Rimal and me, it was an amazing house to live in. They had a large family, a swimming pool, and many people coming and going. They had an amazing collection of books."

"I believe Rimal was inspired to become a doctor during this exposure to the Herren family. Ami would have picked up on this and the values of community service over the next several years. The Herrens became role models for our family."

One summer Ami Bera traveled to Washington, DC to intern for then US

Senator Alan Cranston.

"He came home one day and told our father, 'I am planning to change my major from biology to political science.' My father started taking blood pressure medication. He told Ami, 'Do what you want, but first become a doctor.'

"His decision to go into politics became a big family issue; he was so young," Rajesh says. "We were unable to see how he could make a living from politics. Indians born here today are quite different from Indians born years before."

"I appreciate my father getting him to become a doctor. I don't think he would have accomplished as much as he has done today had he not been a doctor. Being a doctor adds so much to his present work."

"Another different step he took was marrying Janine," Rajesh tells me frankly. "This was a big shock for our family. I remember inviting him to dinner and Ami told me he had been seeing Janine for two years. I would say he was fast forwarding us to American culture and American society. I like Janine. If you look at a check list at what you want in a daughter-in-law, you would check 'yes' for everything except that she is not Indian. Janine is a great person."

Recalling the day Ami announced that he would run for Congress at a family gathering five years ago, Rajesh says, "We were all excited. I asked him, 'Are you sure you want to do this?' and he said yes. President Obama opened the doors for many."

"Representative Ami Bera would not have been possible had President Barack Obama not been there," his eldest brother points out. "I am a Republican, so we have good conversations on issues like healthcare. Ami takes inputs from everyone. He has changed a lot since he won the election, become quite polished. He has became a good listener. He remembers people's names, even the last conversations he had with them. I wonder how he does it!" ■



M16 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



From a steadfast commitment to caring for the sick, to a historic march into the halls of Congress, Ami Bera is a trailblazer who personifies what is great about the American spirit. By putting himself through school to improve the

quality of health care, and fighting to diversify opportunities for the middle class, Ami's advocacy on behalf of others is rooted in a deeply held ethos of service to others, that runs deep within the of hearts Indian Americans and Hindu Americans throughout our country.

As a close ally and friend, I'm proud of the road Ami has paved, but I'm even more proud that our marches of progress are rooted in a simple belief that we can be true champions of change when we unite people together through our shared motivation of serving others.

- US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu elected to the US House of Representatives

'Ami has already proven himself to be a true leader'

As the son of immigrants, Ami Bera has the tenacity to fight for our values while understanding the strengths new Americans bring to our shores, says US Congressman **Mike Honda**.

 ${
m A}$ s a fellow Californian, I am especially proud to call Representative Ami Bera a dear friend and colleague.

In just the few months he has served in Washington, Ami has already proven himself to be a true leader and advocate for the people of his district, and for the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

As chair emeritus of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus in Congress, I have long fought for policies that promote the well-being of the entire AAPI communi-

I have also campaigned across the country for many candidates for public office, seek-

ing to broaden perspectives in Congress to include members from all walks of life and to better reflect the diversity of the American experience.

Ami is one of the very best, and I was thrilled with his election.

As the son of immigrants, Ami has the tenacity to fight for our values while understanding the strengths new Americans and citizens bring each day to our shores.

I first met Ami during his 2010 campaign for Congress, and was immediately impressed with his determination and fortitude in presenting a positive, forward-thinking vision for his constituents.

A physician by trade, Ami has the patience and heart to humanely address the most challenging issues of our time — including immigration reform and access to education and health care, three topics close to the hearts of the AAPI community.

As a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ami is already taking a strong stand and working to strengthen relations between the US and India, and to be a leading voice on South Asia overall.

I am proud to work alongside Ami as we promote the diversity that will strengthen our economy and, ultimately, better our nation. ■

Congressman Mike Honda (D) represents California's 17th District.





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M18 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



first-generation Indian-American Congressman, Ami Bera's story is like millions of Americans across the country.

Born to immigrant parents, Ami put his nose to the grindstone and worked hard to build a career, raise a family, and contribute to America.

He has worked as a doctor, university dean and now as the representative for California's 7th Congressional District.

Ami's drive and dedication is thanks, in part, to his upbringing, and he is now fighting on a national platform to ensure his constituents, and all Americans, have the same opportunities he had to achieve the American dream.

As co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, a bi-partisan group formed in 1993 that is dedicated to chempioning

that is dedicated to championing strong ties between the US and India, I've witnessed first-hand the depth of expertise and experience Ami brings to the caucus, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the United States Congress as a whole.

He is using his Indian ties to build bridges between India and Congress, and India and his district.

For example, he is working to encourage greater job-creating investments between India and the United States, and he has called for the removal of barriers that will ensure California agricultural exports have greater access to markets in India.

Ami's clear focus is on using his strong relationships here and abroad to create jobs and opportunities for all Americans.

Although Ami is new to Congress, he brings real world experience to the job.

Ami and I have relied on one another for advice and counsel on ways to strengthen the US-India defense relationship and address civil rights issues facing the Indian-American community.

Ami and I both recognize that as India plays an increasingly important role on the global stage, US-India relations have never been more relevant.

The largest democracy in the world, India is a critical player in a number of international issues including security, economic growth and civic participation.

He has also been a leading voice on the increasing role India is playing on international security issues, such as cooperating on efforts in Afghanistan.

Through many years of working hand-in-hand with the Indian-American community in transforming the US-India relationship, I have had the opportunity to learn so much about this wonderful community.

There are many cases where the community faces a

'The community has a true partner in Ami'

US Congressman **Joe Crowley** admires the way Ami Bera is fighting to ensure all Americans have the same opportunities he had to achieve the American dream.



Ami Bera listens to testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

unique set of challenges, such as hate crimes targeting Indian-Americans, and there are many cases when Indian-American families face the same challenges as all American families, such as putting food on the table, finding sustainable work, paying for college or buying a home.

I'm certain that on all these issues, the community has a true partner in Ami.

The India Caucus will continue to play an influential role in furthering the partnership between the US and India and championing the needs of the Indian-American community, and it will be because of committed leaders like Ami Bera. ■

Congressman Joe Crowley is the US Representative for New York's 14th District.



M19 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

FROM THE EDITORS

For being an outstanding leader; for his commitment to the advancement of human dignity; and for leading America's quest for bringing hope to those who need it most.



India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012





USAID Administrator Raj Shah – the highest-ranking Indian-American administration official – hit the ground running with the devastating Haiti earthquake, his first assignment.

From the American People For the American People

Every day, in his capacity as USAID Administrator, Dr **Raj Shah** heals the world a little more. Aziz Haniffa salutes the India Abroad Person of the Year for Public Service 2012.

 n May 2012, President Barack Obama, launching a White House symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security, referring to Dr Rajiv 'Raj' Shah, had declared, 'Every time I meet him, I realize that I was an underachiever
 in my 30s.'

Shah, who turned 40 this year, is the highest ranking Indian-American administration official as he continues as Administrator, US Agency for International Development — a job

to which he brought a degree in medicine, a degree in business, a long tenure at the Gates Foundation, and then as a senior official at the Department of Agriculture where he was an under secretary and also chief scientist.

One of then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's final statements before leaving office was to 'thank Raj for his innovative, committed, passionate leadership at USAID.'

Shah, in the first term of the Obama Administration, next to Clinton, perhaps logged the most frequent flyer miles of any US government official, flying across the world to oversee USAID's development projects, humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief efforts.

Now in the second term of the administration, with Secretary of State John F Kerry, unlikely to undertake the frenetic pace of inter-





M20 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



– PAGE M19

national travel as his predecessor, Shah could very well be the senior US official who logs the most number of miles across the world as USAID continues to fulfill its development priorities in the underdeveloped regions of the world and seeks to eradicate poverty and end preventable child death, largely though public-private partnerships.

Last year, in a wide-ranging interview with *India Abroad* in his expansive and well-appointed office in the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC, Shah — who hit the ground running immediately after he was confirmed unanimously by the Senate to deal with the devastating earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan – he had spoken of what he described as "an amazing experience" of being the Obama Administration's point man in the US efforts at development, humanitarian and rehabilitation efforts.

He had spoken of how humbling it was in terms of making a difference in the lives of people in the throes of poverty and hunger.

None of that enthusiasm and zeal to make a difference had dissipated when this correspondent met him last month.

Far from any burn out, he said, "I've never been more motivated to stick it out and to see it through."

During his confirmation hearing in December 2009, Shah had told senators that 'USAID's motto, "From the American people," represents our effort to project the hopefulness and aspiration of the American Dream to the farthest corners of the globe."

He had then recalled, 'I remember seeing the power of that American ideal at work in a remote village in rural South India, where I served as a volunteer in a poor tribal community before medical school, and I was struck by the one-room schoolhouse where children, who didn't speak our language or enjoy our freedoms from hunger or disease, could look up at the wall and admire photographs of their heroes — Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and President John F Kennedy.

Throughout his first term, and now in the second term of the Obama Administration, Shah has been lavished with praise by lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, for his efforts to foster development efforts in sub-Saharan Africa, parts of South Asia and Haiti with scarce resources, and consistently been described as a 'visionary.'

When he appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the first time as USAID administrator, the then ranking Republican Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana had said, 'It's a special joy to welcome you, Dr Shah. I admire very much, as I've told you from the beginning your willingness to undertake this awesome responsibility.'

While Senator Jeanne Shaheen, New Hampshire Democrat, and Senator Johnny Isakson, Georgia Republican, thanked him for his efforts around the world, Senator Chris Coons, Delaware Democrat, had said, 'You've been a true visionary and an innovator. You've really brought a new level of energy and leadership and focus... In a number of the areas of initiative I've been able to see in Africa, whether it's Feed the Future or the Global Health Initiative... you've been able to both reduce the total cost of service delivery while improving outcomes.'

Early this year, Roll Call, the Capitol Hill newspaper,



Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton swears in Raj Shah as USAID Administrator in 2010. During his confirmation hearing in December 2009, Shah had said that 'USAID's motto – from the American people – 'represents our effort to project the hopefulness and aspiration of the American Dream to the farthest corners of the globe.'

From the American People For the American People

reported how Republican Senator James M Inhofe of Oklahoma, the 79-year-old right-wing conservative, and Shah had struck an unlikely friendship, the kind only those who strive for non-partisanship dream of.

The Senator and Shah were stuck on a dirt road in a remote part of southern Ethiopia, when they, along with several GOP members of Congress and their entourages, were on their way back from a visit to a rural development program in the midst of a downpour.

They had waded through the mud, struggling for nearly an hour to dislodge the vehicle, with Shah remembering Inhofe joking that 'anyone under the age of 70 has to push.' Subsequently, Inhofe declared, 'There's no one I'd rather walk through the mud with than Raj Shah.'

Roll Call noted the fact that Inhofe, the new ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, had forged such a strong relationship with the USAID administrator was a 'testament to Shah's assiduous work courting support on Capitol Hill for his ambitious efforts to overhaul the sclerotic agency, which is widely viewed as wasteful and inefficient.'

'By reaching out to lawmakers from across the political

spectrum,' the newspaper noted, 'Shah is helping build a political constituency for a part of the budget — international development aid — that has generally lacked one.'

Shah's dedicated perusal of causes — in fact his entire career — has carried the stamp of a childhood experience in India and he has never shied away from reminiscing about it.

He has spoken many times about the profound impact the in-your-face poverty in India had on him during a visit to Mumbai as a kid.

It ignited in him a burning desire to make development a part of his psyche and being that he had put into practice from his days at the Gates Foundation and then in the Obama Administration — first as Under Secretary of Agriculture at the Department of Agriculture and now as America's point man for developmental aid disbursements. At the annual Center for Global Development conference that he was keynoting in 2011, he had said, 'This year,

PAGE M27



M21 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

'Success is helping people transition from aid to self-sufficiency'

Raj Shah tells Aziz Haniffa about the rewards and challenges of his dream job.

SAID Administrator Dr Rajiv Shah, the highest-ranking Indian American in the Obama Administration, is one of those few officials in Washington, DC who enjoy support from both sides of the aisle.

Both Democrats and Republicans — even though subjecting him to tough questioning during the numerous times he has appeared before Congressional committees always praise his integrity, credibility and character of purpose and shower kudos for his turning around an agency that had hitherto been mired in bureaucracy and inefficiency to one of efficiency, effectiveness and one striving to make the best use of taxpayer dollars.

Three-and-a-half years into his job, Shah, who hit the ground running to deal with the devastating earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan, maintains that grueling pace and the same zeal he started out with.

Unlike several senior Indian-American officials who resigned in the first couple of years of the Obama Administration, you not only stuck it out for the entire term, you are on the go continuously.

Don't you feel a sense of burn out, which many of the others complained of?

I love what I have the opportunity to do and I love this opportunity to serve.

The President laid out in the most recent State of the Union address the goals that we've established for ourselves — ending extreme poverty within a decade, which would be an amazing accomplishment that has never before been achieved in human history.

Also, ending preventable child death and turning the tide on HIV AIDS.

So, the problems that humanity has struggled with for centuries are now solvable problems that with creativity, partnership, innovation, good management and strong execution on the ground can actually be achieved.

I've never been more motivated to stick it out and to see it through.

I just think that we have a unique historic opportunity, and I have the ability and opportunity to serve an amazing President.

There was a lot of euphoria in the community when President Obama was re-elected that you could be appointed a Cabinet secretary.

But you continue as USAID Administrator.

Is this your dream job?

This absolutely is.

I believe as President Obama believes and (former) Secretary (of State, Hillary) Clinton and now Secretary (of



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA/RELEASE

President Barack Obama holds a conference call from the Situation Room of the White House concerning the earthquake in Chile, February 2010, with, from left, then deputy national security advisor Tom Donilon, Raj Shah, and then White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel. Obama once said about Shah: 'Every time I meet him, I realize that I was an underachiever in my 30s.'

State, John F) Kerry believe that for America to maintain its role as a superpower in an increasingly multi-polar world, we have to project our power through our values and our global aspirations.

There is no other position in government better suited to that task than the leadership of our development portfolio.

President Obama has been committed to elevating development as part of our foreign policy and national security and it is an honor to get to see that through.

Does that mean you are going to stick it out for the full second term of the administration?

I am committed to seeing this through. We'll see what happens.

What are the priorities you will be focusing on in this second term?

Our overarching core priority is to end extreme poverty as we know it.

There is still more than a billion people that live on what

is equivalent of a dollar and a quarter a day, and that is 20 percent of humanity that is living on... living in absolute subsistence.

It just doesn't have to be that way anymore.

Today, private investment goes into countries as diverse as Burma, Somalia and Haiti.

Today, often the fastest-growing economies are countries like Nigeria that grew 7.7 percent last year and still has more than a 170 million people and has very high rates of preventable child deaths.

Today, there is an alignment of economic opportunity, business investment, and the knowledge and technology to eradicate extreme poverty and its most disastrous consequences — hunger, and child deaths.

And, that's really our priority and our goal.





M22 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M21

Are the devastating earthquake in Haiti and the awful floods in Pakistan in 2010 a distant memory now?

How have these disasters shaped your perspectives in terms of your work?

Absolutely not (*a distant memory*).

There is always an ongoing commitment to both tremendous disasters that took place where America played a lead role in protecting vulnerable human beings around the world, whether it is the Haiti earthquake, which led to 250,000 deaths, (*which*) was also the largest and most effective humanitarian response in terms of scale and outcomes that was ever mobilized; or the Pakistani floods that affected 11 million people.

Our response directly co-related to helping those people get back on their feet, and supporting Pakistan's balance of payments through what otherwise would have been a crisis.

The Somali famine, in which more than 100,000 children died in large part because of a terrorist group called Al-Shabab, or today in opposition-controlled Syria, the United States has always been the world's leader in addressing major humanitarian disasters, whether they are naturally caused or resulting from conflict.

We will continue to do extraordinary things and to do that and part of my responsibility is to carry that mantle forward for this agency and for our country.

So, we are always engaged in those activities.

You cut your teeth in development work for seven years at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with its immense resources and specific projects, before you joined the administration.

You now deal with the administration, budget constraints, allocation of both personnel and resources.

Do you find yourself frustrated at times that these challenges can be overwhelming?

The responsibilities in public service do tend to be broader and more diverse.

I've had to learn how to work effectively with Congress, how to navigate and build bipartisan support for major initiatives like the effort we launched to end preventable child deaths.

We got more than 150 countries, including the United States, to commit to achieving that goal and have accelerated investment in 24 of those countries that account for 80 percent of child deaths.

In India, we worked with private sector leaders and public sector leaders to build partnerships in high burden disease states to address the fact that India still accounts for 22 percent of the 7 million kids that die under the age of 5.

I am now seeing the results of these efforts as we are steadily reducing the number of children under 5 who die of preventable causes.

The lesson I've learnt from that is when you have a big idea and when you have the right constellation of partners, and when you can build bipartisanship for big initiatives, we can still get some pretty tremendous things done.

Sometimes, it takes American leadership to set and achieve those kinds of global goals.

So, if anything, I feel empowered by the opportunity to build movements that can help do extraordinary things.

But in terms of budgetary constraints, etc, I remember when you appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations





Raj Shah speaks to reporters on the flight line of a Pakistani air force base in Pakistan about relief efforts in the country after the devastating floods of 2010.

Committee to present the administration's Fiscal Year 2014 development aid requests, each senator asked you about some project or the other or complained that some region was not being served.

For example, Senator Robert Menendez, New Jersey Democrat and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, came at you saying that Latin America, South America was seemingly being ignored.

How do you meet this challenge?

I spoke to Senator Menendez and reported to him on my recent trip to Colombia where USAID is a core part of the peace process that has an opportunity to end what has been a five decade-long conflict between the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* or *Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia*) guerrillas and the government.

We are doing extraordinary things to help people gain title back to their lands and their farms so that they can reenter communities, bringing peace and security where there was violence and conflict.

Sometimes, our impact is measured by those types of results as opposed to the dollar allocations that we can offer.

One of the things I've tried to do in leading our organization is to focus more on results and outcomes and to define success as helping people transition from aid and assistance to self-sufficiency and trade and investment.

That's the path that we seek to put countries on.

Under our leadership we have actually closed 14 country missions helping those who are achieving that kind of success transition.

On his 2010 visit to India, you accompanied President Obama, and thereafter, you made at least two major trips to India.

How would you describe the USAID programs in India and the collaborations with India?

We've transformed our program completely because India is one of those countries that doesn't need traditional aid and assistance.

What we seek to achieve in India is to build a joint innovation laboratory that can develop new solutions to problems we face all around the world, and then bring those solutions to parts of India and other parts of the globe where it is necessary.

We support an organization called GRAM power in India.

They take small-scale micro grids and have a novel clean energy technology that allows them - it's solar

— to basically put Indian villages that are otherwise off-grid on to energy systems that are reliable and affordable.

It brings down the cost of energy to people who rely on diesel generators.

It improves access, so there is light and energy for businesses and learning and students and growth and they can scale and sustain themselves.

We gave them a little bit of a start-up capital.

We are now working to partner them with others in other parts of the world like Africa, where those same technologies perhaps adapted can be deployed to bring energy to hundreds of millions of people that live off the grid.

It's that kind of search for innovation, entrepreneurial successes that can help change both, certain parts of rural India and certain parts of the rest of the world.

That's what our partnership with India is all about.

Critics could come at you and the rest of you development pundits that for all of India's progress economically and technologically and all of the public-private partnerships





M23 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M22

and joint projects, India is still beset by huge problems of poverty, disease, education and health disparities.

How optimistic are you that these problems can ever be resolved?

How important is the US-India strategic partnership to making a dent in these critical areas?

It is very important, and I am very optimistic.

On my last trip to India, we had state health leaders present their strategies and report cards how they were going to achieve the end of prevention of child deaths in their states.

We launched new public-private partnerships with players like Hindustan Zinc who can mine more zinc and produce the zinc syrup that allows us to reach children with something that can prevent deaths related to diarrhea, which will be an important breakthrough.

We are also partnering in the area of health with the Hinduja Hospital system and tracking and treating both tuberculosis and studying what is now known as XDR TB, a very difficult strain of tuberculosis that has proven resistant to a lot of existing drug regimens.

By partnering with India on science, technology and innovation to tackle these problems, we can both have achieved success there and in many cases like XDR TB, develop insights that will have real relevance to the rest of the world, including right here in the United States.

What have USAID's greatest successes been under your leadership, and what would you attribute them to?

I'd say our focused efforts to build large-scale public-private partnerships to address massive hunger and preventable child deaths are definitely at the top of the list.

I attribute success in those areas to our ability to reach out and engage *Fortune* 500 CEOs and their companies to get them involved as partners.

Before, we might have just done traditional development projects in Ethiopia for example, and sent food aid.

Today, we are reforming our food aid system to create more incentives for local farmers to produce more partnering with Dupont to make sure those local farmers have access to improved hybrid maize varieties or seed varieties and working aggressively with the government to help them pass a new seed law and to change the way they govern the agricultural sector so they are more open to trade and investment.

Those things taken together will help them not only end hunger in Ethiopia, but help the whole region see that there is a pathway out of chronic hunger, and under-nutrition.

It's a new way of working. It's a new business model for USAID, but it has proven highly successful so far, and in that one example, we've motivated companies to make \$3.5 billion of private investments in the agriculture sector in Africa, which is a tremendous amount.

We can now detail each of the specific commitments and how they are progressing often in partnerships with USAID.

This hasn't been done before in that manner and that kind of public-private partnership is our biggest success story.

There was a time when the USAID didn't have the chops or the kind of gravitas to merit support from the hierarchy at the State Department and the White House.

'Success is helping people transition from aid to self-sufficiency'



COURTESY: S K VEMMER/DEPARTMENT OF STATE VIA FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/USAIDAFGHANISTA

Raj Shah in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, February 2011. He is leading the USAID to help people re-enter communities, bringing peace and security where there was violence and conflict.

Is there now that back-up from the State Department and the White House?

Yes, yes, and yes.

A resounding yes, yes, and yes.

There are probably very few examples of federal agencies that have done what we have done in the last few years.

We've hired about 1,600 people, helping to increase the size of our foreign service by 40 percent in an effort to do a better job of tracking and being accountable for the investments we make around the world.

We have been much more present in the National Security Council and in the highest levels of policy making, when it relates to Mali or Syria or Afghanistan or Pakistan.

We have built a tremendous amount of bipartisan support on Capitol Hill by engaging, listening to, and addressing the very real criticism that members on both sides of the aisle had of the way American assistance was being conducted around the world.

And we've pivoted to being much more focused on privatizing local solutions, whether that means trying to untie food aid and invest in local farmers so there is a transition from dependency to self-sufficiency in that area.

Or whether it means finding more than 1,200 local organizations in over 70 countries that we've now invested more than \$750 million in.

Those efforts are really extraordinary and would only have happened with the kind of very high level support that we've had from President Obama, from Secretary Clinton and now Secretary Kerry.

What role would you like the affluent Indian-American Diaspora to play in India as well as in global development, perhaps in partnership with USAID?

Have you incorporated the support of some of them, including the likes of Indian-American billionaires like Vinod Khosla and Romesh Wadhwani?

What we would seek is more partnership and engagement.

Those individuals in part because of their traits that made successful here in this country, or the knowledge they have in certain areas, can help connect our work to new technologies, young entrepreneurs, large-scale businesses that can scale solutions in India and elsewhere around the world.

We have been much more actively partnering and engaging with all kinds of private-sector partners ranging from some of the individuals you mentioned to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and so many others.

We just continue to seek more of that kind of partnerships because it is our belief that those partnerships are ultimately how you solve these problems, not the traditional forms of service delivery.

A perennial problem they probably would encounter and





M24 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'Success is helping people transition

from aid to self-sufficiency'

← PAGE M23

be constrained by would be the bureaucracy hurdles. For example when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation were trying to alleviate the HIV/AIDS problems in India, they ran into bureaucratic hurdles and initial denial.

Has USAID tried to remove some of the bureaucratic impediments in India because to these philanthropists working with USAID would be working government to government and, hence, they may be more inclined to going it alone at the local level, bypassing the state authorities?

Absolutely. We've created a whole division we call IDEA (*Innovation and Development Alliances*), which is basically our partnerships group.

They have served as a single one-stop shop for private sector partners and partnerships, and through that effort, we've been able to execute now 1,100 public-private partnerships.

Some of our partners would report that we are more streamlined, much easier to work with and more effective than we've ever been at executing those kinds of partnerships.

We did that so that we could reduce the bureaucracy that is felt by some of our private sector partners.

Also, we work much more with local partners in order to achieve exactly what you defined — getting in at the ground level, learning from the people we seek to serve and

measuring outcomes on the ground, so we know what we're achieving when we spend US taxpayer resources.

When you were in college, along with your now wife Shivam and a few college friends, you guys were some of the earliest grassroots activists in the Indian-American community.

In fact, you had an organization called Project Impact. Today, when you look back, is there a sense of wonderment

when you see the progress that has been made by the community, particularly the second generation?

Our goal when we launched Project Impact was to just try to inspire a sense of service and commitment in younger Indian Americans, who we sensed had a desire to be involved in public service and community service, but didn't really have the knowledge of how to build activities or careers in that space.

I am just thrilled to see the huge progress that this com-



USAID Administrator Raj Shah, left, briefs Dr Jill Biden, right; Dr Sanjay Gupta, next to Shah, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent; and others on board a plane on the way to the Dagahaley refugee camp, in Dadaab, Kenya, in 2011. They had travelled there to assess the drought situation and the humanitarian response.

munity has made with leaders in politics, in media, in community service, in so many other walks of life.

I think that is appropriate because it's a community that has a lot of knowledge, some financial success, the ability to give back and a strong ethic of responsibility that plays out in so many different examples around our country.

Whether you admit it or not, you are a role model, particularly for young Indian Americans contemplating public service.

In this regard, do you feel a deep sense of responsibility? I certainly enjoy having the opportunity to speak with young people who will often ask how do you build a career that's focused on service and what advice do I have for them.

I don't usually have great advice other than to say that if you do something you are passionate about and you love, if you take your work seriously and commit yourselves to world. Remember, a lot of times, people will say foreign assistance is difficult to build political support for, but as I have gone to college campuses across the country, met with Diaspora communities across the country, spent time at places like Greenville, South Carolina with (US Senator, Republican) Lindsey Graham or Starkville, Mississippi with (US) Senator (Thad) Cochran (also a Republican), I've actually seen the opposite.

OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY DAVID LIENEMANN

I've seen that it is possible to build political support for this portfolio of work because Americans have a deep desire to project our values around the world.

They know that that will keep us safe in the long run.

So, I love what I am doing right now, and that's what I basically think about.

I get plenty of opportunities to engage in the politics of building support for this organization and that's enough for me right now. ■



achieving the outcomes and the results that got you inspired in the first place, that can be very, very personally rewarding.

I know you don't want to look too much into the future, but have you given some thought to some sort of political career a run for the US Senate perhaps?

You have the experience, the track record, not to mention the gravitas, in terms of the wherewithal for political office. Or is politics out of the

question?

Will you continue to be one of those development policy wonks?

To do my current job well, you have to be passionate about what you are trying to achieve and develop a real understanding of how politics works.

I have, and I continue to kind of love this opportunity to both work on the policy and the politics of how America projects itself around the world.

M25



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M26 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Solution of the president Barack Obama was re-elected, there was a strong buzz that Dr Raj Shah could become the first in the community's immigrant experience to be appointed to a Cabinet position. This interview is excerpted from an earlier conversation with Aziz Haniffa.

You were the closest Indian American in our immigrant experience to have come close to a Cabinet-level position. Do you believe it's time for an Indian American to serve in the Cabinet of the next administration?

I don't know. (*But*) What is interesting is that one of the things that I've gotten to do in this job is that I have learned

— and I didn't have this experience before — is just understanding that part of being in this role is building a base of support in Congress — in the Senate and House, meeting people who have been elected officials.

I'll tell you, it is less about being Indian American; it's more about delivering results.

What people value is: Do you take the job seriously?

Are you committed to the President and the Secretary's agenda, which in this space is tremendous?

They have really elevated the role of development in foreign policy, which is why we play such a big role from Afghanistan to Egypt, from malaria to the fight to end HIV/AIDS, to moving tens of millions of people out of poverty and hunger.

And it's about recognizing the expertise that exists in these organizations, and working very, very hard to change the rules so that their expertise can generate results more effectively and efficiently.

We haven't talked as much about this, but USAID Forward reforms

are not always the sexiest things to talk about, but we've reformed our procurement systems, which I know is a boring topic, but that alone will mean that billions of dollars a year will go directly to local institutions, local entrepreneurs and the real change agents that are out there, whether they are in a slum in a particular community in India or a young entrepreneur in Nairobi or a small business in Haiti.

By doing that, we will essentially create the conditions that will enable our own exit over time.

We've brought in hundreds of new people into the agency, including a lot of new scientists, engineers, PhDs — people that have come in on these fellowship programs.

It's a pool of talent that you'd be amazed by in terms of what they are capable of doing and as a result of some of the more innovative things they are doing.

There are kids designing programs on their iPhones that can diagnose malaria based on a photograph of the sample, blood smear, electronically.

'It is less about being Indian American; it's more about delivering results'



Raj Shah visited the Anti-Retroviral Therapy Center at the Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi, December 2011. In India, USAID seeks partnership and engagement.

It's just amazing.

We've really worked hard to reinstate a results-oriented approach, where we now measure and make public the evaluation date on all our major programs within three months of completion of that program.

Just this alone, we have been posting more than 200 third-party validated evaluations online.

So, at the end of the day, to me, it's about delivering those results.

I always joke that I always want someone to write about - that no one wants to write about - on procurement and evaluation and human resources and managing the building for success.

At the end of the day, that's how you leave lasting institutions that can do great things like ushering in a new Green Revolution or eliminating child deaths under the age of five or spreading democracy through access to elections and transparency and open government — all of which are happening and all of which we're a part of. refugee camp on the Somali-Kenyan border last summer, we met women who were walking for days or weeks.

What drives this commitment of

yours, which seems to be prevalent in

the second generation of Indian Americans running both for office, as

well as pursuing public service oppor-

I can't speak for others, but for me,

getting a chance to work for a trans-

formational President, who has a

unique and deep commitment to

these issues internationally, is very

Getting a chance to work with

Secretary Clinton, who brings amaz-

ing leadership and instincts and commitment, is also very unique. To me, the biggest difference,

between this kind of role and being in

the private sector, is that if you are

successful, you get to have impact at a

When Dr (Jill) Biden (wife of Vice

President Joe Biden) and I went

together with (former US Senator from Tennessee and a physician) Bill

Frist and a few others - including

Sanjay Gupta (Chief CNN Medical

Correspondent) – to the Dadaab

scale that's tremendous.

tunities in other areas?

unique.

They would hold their children and they would walk from South Central Somalia — from famine-affected areas.

They would leave their homes and communities when they had run out of food and their livestock had died, when they had nowhere else to turn.

They would walk on this dangerous track where many of them were abused, robbed, attacked.

We met a woman who had started off on a journey with two children and literally couldn't carry both physically and had to make a tragic decision to leave one child behind and take the other one to safety, just to save one of her kids.

It's very hard to express the amount of commitment and passion that people who do this work in these camps have for this work, when you get a chance to meet someone like that.





M27 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'It is less about being Indian American; it's more about delivering results'



She was a caring, loving mother who just wanted safety and opportunity for her kids and the fact that when she crosses that line, comes into that camp as difficult the circumstances were, she more or less got a medical check-up because of USAID's presence and commitment, nutritional supplements for her child that likely will save her child's life, food and rations for several weeks in order to get settled, and then access to a living environment where hopefully, she can get back on her feet, all because of the US government's commitment to a basic mis-

sion of spreading human dignity around the world. It's a very basic thing and to get to work on that is very inspiring.

It's why I am so committed to making sure we can do this kind of work efficiently and effectively and build a strong bipartisan political coalition to support even more success in the future

How much credit would you attribute to your folks and the older generation who were, in a sense, the pioneers?

Preet Bharara spoke of how when he was appointed US Attorney of the Southern District of New York, his father talked about how proud he was.

But Preet said his father could never be as proud as he (*Preet*) was of his dad?

It's not really comparable. My parents came with no resources.

My mother tells the story of coming with just one suitcase. They came because they had college scholarships for graduate schools and then they went around the country until they got jobs.

My dad ended up spending more than three decades at Ford Motor Company and that's why we grew up in Detroit.

And, so, I don't think these are comparable because they really had to struggle, and in an environment that was deeply uncertain and then they had to work very hard to make sure their kids had unique opportunities.

So, you do feel a certain sense of responsibility to do something with that opportunity. But it's not a comparable thing, and Preet says it very well, better than I could. ■

From the American People For the American People



USAID will celebrate its 50th anniversary and reflecting on our anniversary has really reminded me of the first time I ever even heard about USAID. I was a young child traveling to Bombay, now Mumbai, to see my relatives.'

'Before returning home, my uncle insisted that I travel with him to one of the slums near his family's home. I was shocked by what I saw. There were pits of open sewage and children were running through garbage and through waste. It was clear that none of those kids went to school, and despite being around my own age at the time, they all looked thinner, smaller and more frail than I — which is saying something, if you knew me as a 10 year old.'

'The image of those children has stuck with me for a long, long time. We were the same age and the same race, but the lottery of life guaranteed they would have very, very fundamen-

tally different futures.'

'As we were leaving that slum, there was another image that also stuck with me. There was a billboard describing a local water-treatment system the city was putting in place with the support of the United States, and right in the middle of that billboard was a logo depicting a handshake — the logo of USAID.'

'In recent years, we've added a tagline that represents that handshake: From the American People. In my time at USAID, I've come to learn that our assistance is not just from the American people. It's also for the American people.'

America's assistance, he said, developed the markets of the future and recalled his trip to India in November 2010 with President Obama.

We saw a solar-powered micro-irrigation pump being sold to small farmers. The solar cells were manufactured by a small company in Georgia called Suniva. That company is growing. They have already created hundreds of manufacturing jobs outside of Atlanta, and they soon plan to build



'That transaction which brought a solar manufacturer from the United States to selling their product to rural, small-scale farmers in India could simply not have happened without the sustained commitment of US foreign assistance.'

Shah had also spoken of how in addition to keeping the US competitive in tomorrow's global economy, this assistance also had a major security dimension to it: 'In the most volatile regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan, we work side-by-side with the military, playing a critical role in our nation's efforts to stabilize countries and build response, viable local governance.'

All of this has accorded Shah rock star status among development pundits and policy wonks in the non-governmental organization world.

At the annual Center for Global Development conference, Nancy Birdsall, director, CGD, had said, 'When Secretary Clinton spoke here at the center just a year ago, she made these two promises: That she would elevate development to an equal place with defense and diplomacy in US foreign policy and that she would work to ensure USAID becomes, once again, the world's premier development agency.'

'One of the best steps she could have taken in those two directions was to appoint Administrator Shah as head of USAID. Raj brings tremendous talents — smarts, passion for development, strategic thinking— to the helm at USAID.'

'Raj already has behind him a lifetime of accomplishments. I am old enough to be allowed to say... he is still, remarkably, a young man of promise.' \blacksquare

Raj Shah speaks at a roundtable with leaders of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. He enjoys rock-star status among development pundits and policy wonks in the NGO world.



M28 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He does things in extremes for the people he cares about'

That Dr Raj Shah is an intense, driven, singularly focused workaholic is undeniable. But a romantic? Apparently he is.

Shivam Mallick Shah, his wife of 13 years, still can't stop smiling when she recalls how Raj proposed to her while she was vacationing with two of her friends in India, and at that particular time had been in Agra taking in the Taj

Mahal, Shah Jahan's monument of love to his Mumtaz. "I had gone with two of my friends right after graduating from business school. It was that period from finishing exams and graduation and I had not been to India in

years and two of my girlfriends wanted to go." At the time, Shivam says, "Raj was doing his pediatric rotation in medical school, and of course, he couldn't come on this trip in the middle of medical school, but he surprised me and actually came for about 36 hours. A lot of people knew — my friends knew — but I didn't know.

It was such a surprise for me." She reminisces about how "in the morning, we were having breakfast at the hotel and he walked in" and how, though it was a surprise, she still had no idea that he had come intent on proposing to her, and that too in as romantic a manner as he could — on the marble entrance steps of the Taj.

"You got to remember it was 1999, and it was not easy to stay connected. He had come to the hotel. So, that in itself was actually remarkable given all the challenges that came in the way," she says.

"He had a delayed flight to Delhi. Then he rushed to the train station and took the Shatabdi Express to Agra." "He proposed in grand style" she adds, and almost

"He proposed in grand style," she adds, and almost immediately after the proposal, "he had to get back to the US - it was such a short trip."

Though she was caught by surprise, Shivam says in many ways it was quintessential Raj:

"Raj is one of those people, he does everything to extremes. It was not obvious to me when he first came to the hotel that he was going to propose. I thought it had been a long time since we had traveled together and how incredible is it that he's here to join me on this vacation. Even then it was not obvious. But then he does things in extremes for the people he cares about."

The Allentown, Pennsylvania-born Shivam, who was raised in Kendall Park, New Jersey, first met the Detroit, Michiganborn Raj when they were both undergraduate college students — she at Georgetown University and Raj at the University of Michigan.

In their junior year in college in September 1993, they were both at the London School of Economics as part of their undergraduate degree.

"For both of us," she recalls, "London was an incredible

Shivam Mallick Shah tells **Aziz Haniffa** about the other Raj Shah: The romantic, the family man, the husband.



Raj and Shivam Mallick Shah, with their two older children. Till the time she resigned her job as director, Special Initiatives, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Department of Education, with the birth of their third child, they were the Indian-American power couple in DC.

experience. To have the opportunity to be abroad for a year at such an incredible institution and study the things that we cared about. And we remained very close and also to the many friends that we made during our study abroad."

Asked if it was love at first sight, she says, "It's hard to say. We were in our 20s. It was such a formative experience for many of us. We had met early on and we had two classes together of our four classes and we had many of the same interests."

"Although, we are now very different people than we were in our 20s, we've lived together for 20 years and lived through some incredible opportunities and experiences together."

⁶From the very beginning," Shivam says, "Raj was always very driven. He was very focused and he was applying for medical school at the time. He was very serious about his academics, but he was always serious about doing something more than just being a physician — that was clear from the beginning."

"At the time he was interested in becoming a physician, but he was studying economics, which I thought was very interesting. So, even then he was thinking about development policy and health and the impact of health economics on communities."

She recalls the summer he spent at a development effort in Bihar.

"He had come back with these ideas of really thinking about how he could apply this knowledge that he had acquired and how as a physician he could do so in larger ways than not just individual patients but communities," she says.

"It was compelling, and, of course, I appreciated that he was so smart — that was always very clear — but then he was really thoughtful about wanting to have an impact beyond his day job."

After his undergraduate degree, Raj enrolled in a seven-year MD/PhD program at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and Shivam started working for Bear Stearns in New York as an investment banker after she graduated from Georgetown.

After two years, she moved to Boston to do her master's degree at the Harvard Business School and in the middle of his graduate program, Raj went to work for the Al Gore Presidential campaign in Nashville, Tennessee.

Shivam acknowledges that the long-distance relationship was a challenge, "but we were in a committed relationship. We made that decision. We were very fortunate to have great opportunities, but they were unfortunately in different places. We were very young in our careers and both felt that the other should have the opportunities they should and not constrain their choices."

"So, we were quite deliberate in making that commitment and following it through. I went and looked at graduate schools and ended up applying to Harvard and moved to





M29 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He does things in extremes for the people he cares about'



PAGE M28

Boston and not Philadelphia, and then when I looked at jobs, my best jobs were in New York and not in Philadelphia. Then, it was very difficult to find things in Nashville."

Even after they got married in May 2000, she says, "I started working for McKinsey in New York and we continued to do what we did."

Shivam believes it was when Raj took a leave of absence half-way through his MD/PhD program to work full-time on the Gore campaign that "really seemed to open his eyes to the different ways he could make a difference, and it got him really excited about politics in a whole different way."

Though feeling devastated after Gore lost to George W Bush in the highly-contested election, she clearly remembers how Raj, after he returned to the medical program at U-Penn, spoke of thinking about what else he could do.

"At that point I was still working in New York and he was finishing up graduate school and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was just starting. Some of the early leaders of the Gore organization were individuals that Raj had connected with at some point in the Gore campaign."

"So, they approached him about joining the early team. It seemed very far-fetched at the time that Bill Gates wanted to start a founda-

tion, and here was Raj, a medical student. I have to say, I was clearly very skeptical, but he started his work with Gates when he was a doctoral student — he essentially made a short-term commitment of two days a week, and we thought we would try it out. But it quickly became clear he wanted to do that work full time."

"Raj was the second hire in the Foundation's DC office,' she adds, "and so the formal task at hand was launching the DC office. But his work took him all over the world because his focus was global health and he spent quite a lot of time in Seattle. It really made sense for the work to be a full-time job."

But with his academic commitments in Philadelphia and her in New York, it was a challenge. The couple finally decided to move to DC, which they did for about a year.

"At that point," Shivam says, "I started working for a different company in DC and he was working for Gates. Then I also started working with the Gates Foundation and we decided to move to Seattle."

She was part of the Gates Foundation's education team as deputy director in the US Program, where she focused on managing its education investments and grant-making activities in the Northeastern United States with the goal of help-



Raj Shah, who was unable to attend the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in New Delhi in 2011, is accorded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award in Washington by then Indian Ambassador to the US Meera Shankar. With them are Shivam Mallick Shah and the Ambassador's husband Ajay Shankar.

ing 'every child graduate from high school ready for college, work and citizenship.'

Meanwhile, although armed with a medical degree, Raj had decided not to practice as a physician and also not completed his PhD, but gotten himself a master's degree from Wharton in health care financing.

They found themselves moving back to DC when Raj took up the Obama administration position as chief scientist and under secretary of agriculture.

Shivam landed a job as director, Special Initiatives, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Department of Education leading two programs — The Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund and the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative.

Till the time she resigned with the birth of their third child, they were the Indian-American power couple in DC.

Shivam says she is justifiably proud of her husband and agrees with him — as he had contended in his interview with

this correspondent — that he currently has his dream job.

"He is doing what he likes, and so I am not at all surprised that he is sticking it out (*in the second term of the administration, when the majority of the senior Indian Americans appointed by Obama had quit after a couple of years in the President's first term*). He has his dream job."

"He is doing something he's good at and at a level and a scale that no one could have imagined. And it's exciting and with this President and this administration's commitment to development... it's an incredible opportunity."

"I am very proud of the role model he is for our children in really leading in service. Our kids are very fortunate to have lots of opportunities in life."

And as good as Raj is at his job, Shivam says he is just as good a father and husband.

"I don't think he's any different in his personal life than he's in his work life," she says. "He is deeply committed to our family and when he's not working, he's not working. He's a committed husband, a committed father — it's the way he is."

"Our children want nothing more than time with their dad, but they appreciate when he's not there, why he's not there. But we do a lot together. Weekend time is spent together, when he's not traveling. We plan around his work and travel as much as we can."

"He always makes time for what is important, and especially as the kids get

older, it's going to be easier to do things with them. Last week, he taught our daughter how to ride a bike without training wheels — she's four-and-a-half years old."

"He's a great dad, no matter how heavy is the load he has to carry in the workplace. When he's home, he's a dad, he's a husband. He gets energy from the kids. They ask him so many questions, and it's a lot of fun."

"Of course, he is a very light-hearted person. I believe many people who are driven to work so hard, when they are not working, like to relax equally as much. He has always been fun to be around with — has a lot of friends, and someone you'll find very easy to get to know, very easy to spend time with."

As for the future, Shivam says, they are so busy and so caught up in the moment — while always wishing there was more time to do things together — had not thought that afar: "This is one chapter in our life, and it's really special."



M30 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'We realized how natural a path public service was for him'

Though nervous about his career choices, Janardan and Reena Shah could not be more proud of their trailblazing son, they tell **Aziz Haniffa**.

anardan and Reena Shah, Dr Raj Shah's parents, who hail from Ahmedabad and Petlad, in Gujarat, respectively, had different wishes vis-à-vis their son's career paths.

Janardan, 73, wanted Raj to get into some technical field and then go into management.

Reena, 69, dreamed that Raj would become a highly successful physician.

Both common aspirations of Indian-American parents of that generation who had crossed continents for better opportunities, especially for their children.

Janardan came to the US in 1967 on an engineering scholarship at the University of Arizona. After receiving his master of science degree he moved to California to work as a project engineer for aerospace companies.

work as a project engineer for aerospace companies. In early 1970, he says, "I took a three months leave of absence, bought a round-the-world airline ticket and traveled through Europe before going to India. While in India, I met Reena and we got married in March 1970. I then traveled through Asia Pacific and got back to California. Reena could not join me because her visa had not been finalized. She joined me in July 1970."

"In October 1970, we moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where I worked as a senior engineer on the Apollo 17 program and upon completion of the project, I joined the Ford Motor Company, in Dearborn, Michigan, to develop and test exhaust emissions technology to meet government clean air and fuel economy standards."

Reena, who had teaching experience in pre-schools, easily landed a job as a director of the Ann Arbor Child Care Center, which was part of the University of Michigan.

Both parents, now in their retirement, say they could not be more proud of their trailblazing son and what he has achieved.

More importantly, they say, they are proud that first as director, Global Health Development, at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and now as Administrator, US Agency for International Development, he is making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate, all around the world.

Janardan says this facet of Raj's personality manifested itself very early in his life.

"He always felt compassion for the less fortunate. When he was eight years old, we visited the southern city of Mysore, and the king (*maharaja*) of Mysore's palace. The palace was very impressive and full of rich art, crafts, paintings, crystal chandeliers, etc. But when we came out of the palace, there were children begging for food."



The Shahs: Janardan, Reena, Ami and Raj

"Seeing this, Raj got sad and asked, 'If people are so poor, how did the king get so rich? Is this India?"

Then, of course, there was the now famous drive and walk through a Mumbai slum, where Raj was shown the abject poverty side of India by his uncle, which he says had a significant impact on him and triggered his passion for development work in poverty-stricken countries.

In 1985, when Janardan was transferred to Michigan. "We moved to West Bloomfield — a suburb of Detroit — in the Birmingham School District. Our primary consideration in choosing this area was because of the quality of the school system and professional environment. We asked Raj to go to a private school, but he insisted on going to the public Groves High School in Birmingham."

He recalls Raj as saying, 'I want to be part of a more diversified group of students, without any special privileges.' Janardan recalls, "We did not insist as it was one of the best schools in Michigan. We felt that he would be challenged and he was."

While at Groves, Raj excelled, winning Michigan state's debate championship — a first for his school — played varsity tennis and participated in various other programs while maintaining excellent academic achievements.

Reena, who had given up her job to be a stay-at-home mom because she wanted to have the time to take her children to their extra-curricular activities, says, "He was always a very good student — very hard working, totally self-driven and motivated."

"From his very young days, he was very curious, very







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M32 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M30

hyper. Every minute he had to be doing something. You never saw him sit down and relax or lying down and doing nothing. He had to read or do something or the other." When it came time to go to medical school, Raj, once

again, exhibited his unique approach to life.

When Raj agreed that he would go into medical school," Janardan remembers, "we urged him to apply for a six-year inter-flex program at the University of Michigan. This would assure medical school admission and an MD in six years after high school. But Raj chose not to apply for it. He wanted to go for a four-year undergraduate degree, take his MCAT and compete for medical school admission. His argument was 'If I cannot go to medical school, when I want, then, maybe I am not good enough."

"So, at the University of Michigan, he chose the honors program in liberal arts and majored in economics, and along the way, he did his junior year at the London School of Economics. He then took the required courses and appeared for the MCAT and applied to the top eight medical schools in the country."

"He went for six interviews and was accepted by all six. He chose the University of Pennsylvania, MD/PhD program."

But then Raj dropped a bomb.

"One weekend," Janardhan says, "he flew home to tell us

that he had decided to take a year off from his studies and work in Al Gore's Presidential campaign. We were very nervous. As his MD/Phd program was a seven-year program, in my opinion, and also in the opinion of his U-Penn advisors, this would slow down and distract from his career goals."

Reena was aghast when he decided to put his studies on hold and go to Nashville to join the Gore campaign.

During one conversation, Raj said, 'Dad, you came to this country with almost nothing. From that, you built up and provided for our comfortable upbringing. If I make 10 times or 100 times more money than you, would it be called success? I don't think so. I am not going to practice medicine to make money. I wanted to do things that will have a much broader impact.' 'We realized how natural a path public service was for him'



Raj excelled in school, winning Michigan state's Debate Championship – a first for his school – played varsity tennis and participated in various other programs while maintaining excellent academic achievements.

He had convinced his parents.

"We realized how natural a path public service was for him," says his mother. "It was this desire to serve people that led him to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, where he was instrumental in developing plans and funds to ensure that millions of children in the developing world, had access to life-saving vaccines and adequate food and nutrition."

She recalls "Raj telling me in Seattle, how happy he was in what he was doing, and how with his effort, millions of children would be saved. I was so touched and so very proud of him and can still remember my telling him, '*Beta* (*the Hindi word for son*), I hope you write a book about all of this someday."

In all of this, Raj's steadiest supporter was his younger

sister Ami.

Raj and Ami Shah. Their parents say that in every major decision, they

would consult each other and stand by each other.

"They stood for each other all the time," says Reena, who now volunteers with Retooling Detroit where they are using the Montessori-based approach to get inner city children excited about school.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: THE SHAL

She recalls how during his high school years, while riding his bicycle home from the library Raj was side-swiped by a hit-and-run driver and suffered severe head injuries and was taken to emergency.

"Ami was by his side, helping in dressing his wounds and taking care of him," she says.

"Raj would always take care of her in the same way, and in every major decision, they would consult each other and stand by each other. They would plead each other's case to us, so we would give into their decisions."





M33 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

THE THE TRANS

'Raj has always had the ability to see the big picture'

I had a chance to sit down with Dr Raj Shah's sister on a rainy Monday in New York.

Dr Ami Shah is a surgeon at Mount Sinai, and we discussed Raj's upbringing, the childhood experiences that made him who he is today, and his big moment of deciding to go into public service — with their parents Janardan and Reena, who are retired from long careers in engineering and education, adding their perspective and his 5-yearold niece, Ella, working on a puzzle by the window overlooking a dreary Manhattan.

What is it about Raj that makes him good at doing the kind of work he does?

Raj has always had the ability to see the big picture and to go against the grain a little bit.

Growing up in a suburb of Detroit, he was able to kind of see more than the small task that was next; he was able to see the big picture.

He's always had a tremendous ability and comfort with taking risks to do things in a novel and unique way.

Their dad adds: He wanted to have people of Indian origin get out of their traditional roles and participate more in the political process and do more for society.

So, was he also a kind of leader from a young age?

It was small things with Raj — like growing up Indian, everyone wants you to do a 7-year medical program, but he had a big picture of making an impact beyond living in a nice house and having nice cars.

He's always wanted to do more for the community at large. And through that, I think he always had the ability to be a leader.

People naturally followed him. He was able to sort of garner others' energy.

And yeah, he was a very special little child... he was naturally able to get all types involved in whatever ideas he had, whether that be manage a small restaurant out of our kitchen, or organize a play or games.

He was just able and willing to do that.

What would you say is a standout trait that kind of lends itself to this ability?

Well, he's compassionate.

I think as a small child, not everything came naturally to him; he worked harder than most.

We lived for a few years in a small town in Pennsylvania, and you know, we had to work harder than most to be noticed.

It was a small town where we were the only minority kids, and I remember they told us we couldn't be in the school play because there are no brown people in the North Pole, and Raj had the ability to look beyond that.

The teacher told him, 'You know, we can't always have what we want. I want to be principal, but that's not going to happen.' **Chaya Babu** meets one of Raj Shah's steadiest supporters, his sister Dr Ami Shah.



COURTESY: THE SHAH

Ami and Raj Shah. She says, "Growing up Indian, everyone wants you to do a 7-year medical program, but he had a big picture of making an impact beyond living in a nice house and having nice cars."

But for a little kid to not get angry, and to figure out a way to look beyond that — I think next year he got the lead in the school play.

He learned to work harder and be more creative. I think if you have to work very hard as a young child that probably serves you well as an adult to understand all perspectives.

That teacher example shows how things were for us

Indian kids in American schools in the '80s and '90s.

(*Laughing*) Yeah, I think I threw a temper tantrum. But he was somehow able to be like, 'You know what, some people say things like this, and I'm 10, this man is 45, but this man is not going to measure what my potential is.'

And he had a very clear indication of that.

We weren't the best-dressed kids or the richest family or we certainly weren't the coolest kids in this neighborhood, we didn't have the fancy stuff.

I mean we were fine, but we were still the only two Indian kids, and you figure out a way to make it work how to make friends without losing yourself.

You figure out how to work harder without being offputting.

You figure out how to be better without being simply irritating.

And when we moved back to Michigan, those skills became valuable.

So, this was while you were in Pennsylvania...

Yeah, it was a very good school district, just homogenous.

Their mom adds: What she's saying is true; it was very white.

They asked mom to come talk about India, and the kids were all like, 'Where are the tigers?' and she's like, 'These are my gods, and this is my *puja*.'

And that was just the awkwardness of being Indian then. I think Raj is tremendously good-looking now, but we

were scrawny awkward kids with braces. But I think it builds character. (*Laughing*)

We were not childhood models, you know.

It makes you able to deal with people whom other people can't deal with.

Right, there is some amount of hardship even though as children of professionals, we are very privileged.

There are some things money can't buy — money can't buy things like figuring out how to run birthday parties because there's a way to do it.

There's like a social expectation that even 4 year olds have.

(As the child of immigrants) you have to figure it out for yourself.

We talk about it all the time — like what are we taking away from them by handing them everything on a silver platter.

What is Raj like as a father?

He is a great dad (*to his three kids, ages 7, 4, and 2*). He's very energetic; he's very active.





M34 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M33

He's good at being on the go. He likes doing things and pushing the kids...

He's athletic, so he makes the kids go hiking with him, and he ends up carrying half of them plus all the stuff.

His wife is like a saint putting up with him — she's like a city girl and she'll totally strap on the Patagonias and go on those hikes.

Their father quickly adds: You can see how much he values family and his kids because of the way he jets in and out of the country.

Just yesterday he was in London and he came back because his son had a piano recital.

He is a modern father. He tries to do his half; he's read (*Sheryl Sandberg's*) Lean In.

He's there for the recitals and the graduations — and they graduate from EVERY-THING — from music classes and art classes.

And he's there for all of it.

He's all over the world, but he comes back. He has a tremendous sense of priority for that.

That's impressive. Do they understand his work at all?

What he does is a little abstract, so his oldest son is beginning to understand it. And they'll make care packages for kids in the places he goes to.

They understand that he's going to help set up schools. That's concrete enough for a child.

But development as a broader concept, government... his oldest gets it. And he gets that he can do cool things because his dad works for the President, but yes sometimes that means that dad misses a recital. But the little ones don't quite get it yet.

How did the community react to Raj's work around the time he started in public service, coming from a background where the Indians were all engineers and doctors?

I think the community thought Raj had immense potential.

But it is a level of risk to leave a career path where there's always the next obvious thing to then go do something that's a little more ambiguous.

And some people are more comfortable with risk than others.

Raj has an MD and was working toward his PhD.

He left (*and took a terminal masters*) and went to work for the Gore campaign.

So, he never fully finished his board certification for medicine, which is a hard stop because you can't practice if you're not board certified, and he didn't do a residen-

'Raj has always had the ability to see the big picture'



Raj Shah at an American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin event. His sister believes he valued the background for medicine, but wanted to do something broader and less technical than the actual practice of medicine.

Did he want to be a doctor before that?

I think he valued the background for medicine, but wanted to do something broader and less technical than the actual practice of medicine.

Though their dad is more candid: No! He didn't want to.

So, he just stopped?

Yeah, and I think it's scary for some people - I mean you don't really make money from the Gore campaign.

His wife worked long hours at McKinsey, and she was the one bearing the brunt of this risk... Gore was unpaid at first.

What was that moment like?

(*Laughing*) They (*the parents*) thought he was going to be unemployed.

His wife was totally supportive. They were engaged at the time, and she was kind of like, 'Even if this is a total bust and you're completely unemployable for 10 years, we can figure this out.'

At this point, Raj's parents defended their reaction.

While his dad said, "It was not a known path to us," his mother added, "A lot of Indian parents would have a hard time. Because we come here and we have learned a way to be a secure."

"We came with nothing and had to make everything. And we want to give them the best we can, and that's the best we knew at that time — giving them the right type of education so they can stand on their two feet."

"And then he walks off from there and selects something else. That's mind-boggling for us. But we didn't have a choice at that time because he was very firm."

"The day he sat down, I remember that morning, he said, 'I'm not asking for your advice, and no opinions, this is what I'm going to do. I want your blessing.' So it was hard.

So, is that what he's like? He lays down the law?

He's actually very good at making people think something is their idea.

But if that's not going to work, his second strategy is being like, 'This is the way it's going to be.'

Though their dad adds, "Yes, but respectfully."

Do you think there were things in your upbringing that laid the foundation for him to do work that has such a wide societal impact? As a kid, you respond more to what you see than what you're told.

We grew up seeing our parents make sacrifices — to take care of their own parents, to bring the extended family over, to value taking time for their children — and you kind of do what you see.

I think that's where it came from.

So, even though they weren't like, 'Pack up team, we're going to go spend the day cleaning out the soup kitchen,' we still saw mom spend the night in the hospital with her mother-in-law who couldn't speak English.

We were fortunate; we went to school in a suburb of Detroit that had an experiential learning center, and it was very multi-disciplinary, so we were able to do a little bit of this a little of that, to do projects.

We did go to soup kitchens, but we didn't just peel potatoes.

We learned about gentrification in Detroit and childhood hunger and met with professors who were trying to come up with broader solutions than just donating canned food.

And did being from a place that has so much need play into this?

Growing up we went back to India a few times.

We saw, well you can't go to India and not see the stark difference between rich and poor there, right?

And then you also grow up in this country where you see extremely successful Indian people, which naturally leads to the question — any child would ask the question — 'If Indian people are so smart and winning all the spelling bees, why are all the people here so poor and have broken roads and no food?'

I think that's a natural place of connection, asking those questions and being exposed to that.

You see that there are opportunities to make a difference.

Their dad adds: "Raj, I always kind of thought that he never liked to take the straight easy path. He liked to do things in a more challenging way."

Yes, it sounds like it!

wait for him.

Yeah, but he was still clear-headed. When he left to change his path, he knew the timing was right, and it wasn't going to


M35 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'I see him as a Gandhi born in the US'

Bhagandad Parikh recounts the trip that changed Raj Shah forever.

n his accounts to *India Abroad*, as at many other forums, Dr Raj Shah has spoken about the "very, very deep impression" his first visit to a Mumbai slum made on him.

"These images stayed with me for a long time," he had said.

"When I had the chance after college to go to India, I worked on a development project in South India. I learned a lot more and had a chance to join this field of global development and work with Bill and Melinda Gates and now here (*at USAID*). "

"But my first awareness that the world had such incredible inequities and injustices was walking through that Mumbai slum."

Bhagandad Parikh, his uncle who was with him then, on that life-altering experience:

where a lot of Raj as a child because he was born in the US and educated there, but his mother would keep me informed about his academic progress over the years.

The first time we met him was in 1992 when the entire family visited India. They started their trip from Delhi and then came to Mumbai.

At the time I was living in Navi Mumbai (a satellite town on the outskirts of the city's municipal limits).

It didn't take long for me to realize that he wasn't like the rest of the children.

What struck me most was his thinking and analytical mind.

He was observant, sympathetic and respectful towards everyone around; it impressed me a lot.

While sightseeing, I couldn't help noticing that he was more interested in knowing about the downtrodden, speaking with them, trying to understand how they



Raj Shah with uncle Bhagandad Parikh in India.

Below, Shah speaks to the children of Syrian refugees during his visit to the Za'atri refugee camp in the Jordanian city of Mafraq, near the border with Syria in September 2012. Parikh says Shah is "a person who thinks not just about the poor and downtrodden in his own country, but

Parish says Shah is "a person who thinks not just about the poor and downtrodden in his own country, but rather about those around the world."



lived.

He would chat up hawkers and ask them how they made ends meet; he was genuinely empathetic towards them.

One evening, I mentioned that I'd like him to see how people lived in dire straits in the city.

He immediately requested me to take him there the next day.

It surprised me — a young boy barely out of his teens, having lived in the US wanting to see the slums of Mumbai.

While travelling to Vashi from Mumbai you come across two large slum areas in Mankhurd and Govandi (*northeast Mumbai*).

I took him to those slums where he saw how many poor people in India lived with no sanitation and no hygiene.

He was terribly upset, seeing the conditions of people living there.

There too, he asked people what he'd been asking others he'd met during the trip earlier — how do you make ends meet.

When we returned home, I had to explain to him that (the people in the slums) had come to the city from villages, where they had even fewer opportunities.

They came to Mumbai in search of a better life and in the hope of making a little more money. But they ended up in such places, living in misery. I realized something in him

had changed at the time.

When he returned to India in 1996, he visited me and stayed over.

The next morning, he said to me, "*Mama (maternal uncle*), give me your blessings!"

He told me he wanted to do something different. I didn't know what it was at the time.

I see him as a Gandhi born in the US — a person who thinks not just about the poor and downtrodden in his own country, but rather about those around the world.

We are very proud of all that he has achieved at such a young age. Our blessings are with him!

- As told to Abhishek Mande



M36 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He believed in the community, when our community did not believe in ourselves'

Mika Rao Kalapatapu reflects on two decades of friendship and community activism with Raj Shah

t's hard to believe it was 17 years ago that Raj Shah and I It's hard to bene-

I was in my senior year as an undergraduate at The University of Pennsylvania and Raj was in his second year there pursuing a dual degree MD/Health Economics pro-

project IMPACT

gram. Just a few months prior, he and his future wife -Shivam Mallick Shah — had founded the fledgling organization Indian American Political Awareness Committee. They had begun speaking at community organizations urging the parent generation of 'aunties and uncles' as well as younger people to vote and participate in civic life. My parents met the duo at a community function and raved about them to me.

"You must meet them," my mother urged. "You have so much in common.'

Activism had long run in my blood as well. My parents were well-known figures in the Philadelphia Indian community and had formed and helped lead numerous local organizations. I had finished up a term as the president of Penn's South Asia Society and had become a committed advocate of South Asian Americans having a voice in politics and media. So, when Raj and I sat down in the computer lab of Wharton's Steinberg-Dietrich hall to compare notes an instant connection took place.

But then, Raj is the kind of person everyone immediately likes

As Raj and I talked about politics and apathy, about the pressure our generation faced to forgo their passions and pursue only medicine or engineering, I felt like I'd known him forever.



Left, the Project IMPACT executive board in 2000. Back row from left, Ahalya Nava-Majmudar, Mika Rao Kalapatapu, Shivam Mallick Shah, Purnima Menon, Rithu Singhal Kathpalia, and Gail Dave. Seated, Raj Shah, Anuj Gupta, and Vinit Dhruva. Above, At the LBJ Presidential History Museum this year. Back row from left, Raj, Shivam, and Mika. Center row from left, Sajan Shah, Jaisal Kalapatapu, and Asha Kalapatapu. First row, from left, Jaisal Shah , and Amna Shah. Mika says, "I like to call this Project IMPACT the next generation!"

After nearly two decades of friendship, however, I now know that nearly everyone who meets Raj comes away with the same feeling of familiarity. It has less to do with you, and more to do with him. As my husband recently pointed out, when you are talking to Raj – no matter the topic – you get the feeling that he is 100 percent tuned in to you and understands where you are coming from.

Within a few weeks, I met Shivam, and a sisterhood that would take us through marriage, motherhood and crosscountry moves was formed. From that moment on, the three of us were inseparable. Whether we were pulling allnighters in Raj's Philly condo putting together packets and poster board presentations, or taking our show on the road travelling to New York, Washington DC, or Rhode Island, we were usually found together.

Although Shivam was a financial analyst at Bear Stearns, I was a new consultant with Accenture and Raj was toiling away as a medical student, we spent the few extra hours at our disposal getting IAPAC off the ground.

Soon, we had recruited others in the Philadelphia area to join us and were a registered 501c3 organization. Eventually, IAPAC was renamed Project IMPACT for South Asian Americans and was the first organization to create this kind of non-partisan voice for the community.

Our newsgroup (this was many years before Facebook) sent alerts and updates to nearly 1,000 individuals nationwide.

Project IMPACT co-founders were presenting issues the community had not discussed before, such as media stereotypes and ethnic intimidation. It was important, but lonely



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M38 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He believed in the community, when our community did not believe in ourselves'

- PAGE M36

work, without a distinct path or any kind of infrastructure. Nor was there much support from the mainstream American community who could not comprehend the need to separate from others — or much understanding from the first-generation Indian community who felt activism should be replaced by studying, earning money, or getting married.

Remember, this was the late 1990s. These were the years before 9/11 changed the social landscape for South Asians in this country. This was before a young filmmaker named M Night Shyamalan added color to Hollywood through his groundbreaking film, *The Sixth Sense.* Those were the years before Bobby Jindal became Governor of Louisiana, Dr Sanjay Gupta became a familiar face on CNN and the technology industry's boom put Indian cities on the American map.

Raj, Shivam and I — along with the other Project IMPACT co-founders and members believed the South Asian-American community could play a greater role in mainstream social and political American life, but it would take courage and action.

We dreamed of a time when people would ask us where we are from and we could respond with 'Philadelphia' or 'Detroit' without getting a quizzical look followed by, 'No, I mean, where are you really from? Originally?'

The organization grew to include chapters in seven cities and hundreds of volunteer members who participated while working full-time jobs or studying.

In 1997, we formed The Creating a Voice Awards to bring to light the South Asian Americans who were making a difference locally or nationally.

Our early honorees had run for school board in their neighborhoods or created the first South Asian Bone Marrow registry. Each year, we honored a different group of carefully selected individuals. Some were well known in their field, while others were unsung heroes. Many went on to become household names within a few short years. All were our heroes and role models. A reminder to ourselves of all that was possible. So, it is not only a little ironic that today, Rajiv Shah would have certainly been one of the individuals we would honor if the Creating a Voice Awards still existed.



Raj Shah with wife Shivam at the Indiaspora event

Raj, Shivam and I often reminisce about those early days of community service, and I know Raj feels that forming and running Project IMPACT was a defining moment for him as it strengthened his resolve to pursue the path less taken.

From medical school, he went on to work for the Gore campaign, which led to an opportunity to join The Gates Foundation.

The rest, as they say, is history.

I should also say that during this time, Shivam completed her MBA from the Harvard Business School, the two got married and Shivam became a leader in the field of education innovation and reform.

I have watched this couple over years as they support each other's goals and nurture each other's dreams. Shivam's encouragement of Raj, and willingness to sacrifice, has made all the difference.

Nowadays, Raj, Shivam and I don't have always have time together to discuss stereotypes or why more South Asian-Americans didn't vote in the last election. We are busy with our careers and combined five children (their three, and my husband and I have two).

But Shivam and I still speak nearly every day over the phone, and we try to meet as families as often as possible.

On a recent visit, Raj took a look outside my home in suburban Houston and noticed a lake. After a quick debrief with my children (our daughter Asha is their godchild and our son Jaisal thinks Raj hung the moon), he ordered a kayak online for us. I yelled at him. I told him he was nuts.

"You know me, Raj!" I said, "I am not going to use a kayak!"

Well, that's why I'm getting it for you, was his response.

Yes, that's Raj in a nutshell. He pushes you and believes in you — often more than you believe in yourself. Just like he always pushed for and believed in the South Asian-American community, even during those years when our community did not believe in ourselves. \blacksquare

Mika Rao Kalapatapu lives in the Houston area with her husband and two children. She serves as director, public relations and communications, K+S Consulting and owner of Rao Communications. She remains active in South Asian-American community affairs and serves on the Advisory Board of Directors for the Houstonbased Indian Cancer Awareness Network.

PARESH GANDH



M39 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'The transformational leader that USAID has been waiting for'

know it's been a long wait to have a new Administrator named, and it took even longer to get him confirmed and sworn in, but it has been worth the wait, because in Dr Raj Shah, we have a passionate, visionary, experienced development expert at the helm.

I am so thrilled that he will provide the leadership that is needed today as we not only work in partnership on so many of the issues that we care deeply about, but that we continue to elevate the role of development in our foreign policy.

Yesterday, I was privileged to give a speech that I had been waiting to give until we had an Administrator — so I was especially pleased that that day came — in which we outlined our new approach to development, our commitment to rebuilding AID as the premier development agency in the world, bar none.

When I finished my speech, someone came up and whispered to me, "Does Raj know what he's getting into – how much work he has ahead of him?"

I said, oh, he totally gets it, and he is more than ready. There is no doubt that we are going to be taking on an

enormous agenda. But we don't have a choice. We're working on major initiatives on food security and

global health, we're pursuing new ways and making a greater commitment to women and girls, we're expanding partnerships not only with governments and multilateral institutions, but with the private sector, the NGOs and civil society and the faith community....

It takes an exceptional person to walk into this with his eyes wide open and to embrace the multitude of challenges that we face.

Someone who understands the mission of USAID, who understands the courage and commitment of the men and women who we ask to spend long hours, often away from family and home in difficult places serving our country.

It takes a leader who knows that our AID workers make these sacrifices because you too believe in the power of development to improve lives and advance America's goals and values around the world.

I believe Dr Raj Shah will be the transformational leader that USAID has been waiting for.

One only needs to ask his wife Shivam the lengths to which Raj will go to achieve important goals.

After all, this is a man who flew to India for one day to propose to her at the Taj Mahal when she was traveling there alone.

This is also a man who summated the 14,400-foot Mount Rainier, one of the most difficult climbs in the continental United States. And it combines the challenges of an unforgiving glacier with the unpredictability of an active volcano.

That may be the best preparation Raj has for working in Washington these days.

So, he brings determination and an unwavering belief that anything is possible.

Praise for Raj Shah has been unanimous



Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with Raj Shah, left, and Ambassador to Haiti Kenneth Merten, center, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in January 2010.

Yet he also brings the humility and quiet confidence instilled by his family. He also carries with him the enduring images of his first trip to India as a boy with his parents, both immigrants from that country, where he saw that nation's rich history and diversity, but also saw human suffering on a scale that inspired him to action then and continues to inspire him now.

He brings a wealth of experiences — a degree in medicine, a degree in business, his tenure at the Gates Foundation, at USDA. He did groundbreaking work in each place along the way, helping to transform the global system of vaccine financing.

And he has the support of those who have worked with him along the way. I received a 10-page, single-spaced, typed list of people who were willing to go to bat for Raj in the Senate with respect to confirmation — names of giants in the field of not only development, but diplomacy, public service, the private sector, the foundation world, here at home and internationally as well.

So it is with great gratitude, delight, and relief that I wel-

come you officially, Raj, to this new job.

— Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton before swearing in Raj Shah as USAID Administrator in 2010

When President Obama selected Raj Shah to be the leader of this organization, I knew instantly he'd picked somebody who understood this mission, who understood we also need to change a little bit, that we need to understand that we have to account clearly to our citizens in a time of tough budgets for all of the dollars we're spending in a very transparent and thorough way.

We want to do that. But it also requires us to think creatively, sometimes out of the box, about how we may be able to deliver some of this in 21st century terms in ways that augment, multiply, when we don't have the same amount of





M40 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'An innovative, brilliant thinker'

John Lawson remembers a star student

was Raj's debate coach at the Wylie E Groves High School from 1989 to 1991. I also taught Rajiv in a social studies college preparatory elective called Major Court Cases in United States History. I have followed his meteoric rise in the worlds of public health, agricultural research and development and national service with both pride and pleasure.

As an interscholastic policy debater in high school, Rajiv excelled in his research, organizational, writing, analytical, and communication skills. He was an innovative, brilliant thinker, who could effectively strategize about major policy issues and arguments on the international and national levels.

Most importantly, he possessed the innate ability to adapt his persuasive skills to a wide variety of audiences and judges, no matter what their preferences were in debate styles.

This was a major factor in causing him to win the Detroit Free Press John S Knight Debate Scholarship Contest, the first Groves debater to do so.

He also reached the quarterfinals of the state varsity finals and the quarterfinals of the National Catholic Forensic League's Grand Tournament at Columbia University in New York City.

Rajiv was an excellent undergraduate student at the University of Michigan, later earning advanced degrees in business and public health from the University of Pennsylvania and its famed Wharton School.

I was honored to be invited to his wedding and a local celebration of his forthcoming nuptials in the Detroit area.

I followed his career with great interest, as a health policy advisor to Vice President Al Gore, research director for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, deputy agriculture secretary and, finally, administrator of the US Agency for International Development. I delight in receiving the AID's periodic newsletters, with his well written, incisive columns in each issues.

Several years ago, I nominated Raj as the Groves Honors Alumnus at the school's annual senior seminar. He was ultimately chosen for this honor, though a few days before his speech, an international crisis (the Haitian earthquake) called him abroad to supervise the delivery of emergency relief. He still gave his presentation via a video; it was very well received by Groves students, teachers and school district administrators.

I am always happy to receive a holiday greeting from Rajiv and his wonderful family-his wife and kids. I have also enjoyed seeing him when he returns to the Detroit area. He is an extremely worthy recipient of this recognition from *India Abroad* for his academic and humanitarian achievements.

John Lawson was social studies department chair, Wylie E Groves HS (1988-2012); co-director of debate and assistant forensic coach (1988present), Groves HS; vice chair of the board, Detroit Urban Debate League (2009-present).



Secretary of State John Kerry addresses USAID employees in February.

'The transformational leader that USAID has been waiting for'

PAGE M39

resources we've had previously, but multiply the efforts in their return on that investment by creating greater investment opportunities, more jobs, building the economies.

I think there are a lot of things that we can think about creatively together to help make that happen, and I'm convinced Raj Shah understands that, and I'm looking forward to working with him over these next years to help make that happen. We're going to get this job done.

Secretary of State John Kerry at the USAID headquarters

During the past half century, USAID has served our nation exceedingly well.

For many years in many places, your agency has been the face of America, and a superb ambassador for the United States.

Your energy and expertise have played an indispensable role in reducing infant mortality, lengthening life spans, fighting hunger, curbing disease, teaching sustainable agricultural practices, and responding to humanitarian disaster.

Given this record, you could have become complacent, but instead you have challenged yourselves to do even more — a summons echoed by our President and Secretary of State.

— Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the USAID Development Forum in 2012

The selection of Dr Rajiv Shah as the next administrator of the United States Agency for International Development demonstrates a commitment to providing strong, evidence-based, effective US foreign assistance.

We have worked closely with Raj for several years and know he will bring the same commitment, intelligence and visionary management style to USAID.

Raj was an important part of the foundation's leadership and played a key role in our efforts on global health and agricultural development.

In global health, he worked to promote the development and distribution of vaccines, which are the most cost-effective public health investments we can make.

He also helped develop and implement a strategy aimed at breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty by providing small farmers in the developing world with the tools and opportunities to boost productivity, and build better lives for themselves and their families.

We are confident that he will bring the same rigor, innovation and belief in the transformative power of foreign assistance and sustainable development to USAID, and we look forward to working with him.

- Bill and Melinda Gates



M41 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

FROM THE EDITORS

For his remarkable philanthropy; for being an accomplished entrepreneur and for giving back so generously to the country of his birth, and indeed the world.



India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012





Dr Romesh Tekchand Wadhwani is a tangible manifestation of the oft-used phrase 'only-in-America' in all of its facets.

The Heart of a Tycoon

Billionaire entrepreneur and philanthropist Dr Romesh Wadhwani, winner of the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Achievement 2012, bares his soul as he has never done before in a conversation with Aziz Haniffa.

> ackneyed as the cliché 'only-in-America' may be, billionaire entrepreneur and philanthropist Dr **Romesh Tekchand Wadhwani** is a quintessential and tangible manifestation of this oft-used phrase in all of its facets.

That a Karachi-born child — who was one of those Midnight's Children, born in 1947 at the cusp of Partition — who barely escaped with his parents the brutality that led to the birth of Pakistan, and came to the United States as a student at age 22 could achieve the success that he has, is yet another one of the fascinating compendium of immigrant stories that this country can take justifiable pride in.

As Wadhwani says, his father Tekchand — who later became a banker at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, first in Delhi and then in Mumbai — and mother Shanta, a homemaker, "were absolutely products of Partition. We moved to India from Karachi in the midst of Partition. In fact, almost 80 percent of the group that they were in was slaughtered during the atrocities. We happened to be the lucky few, and I was just a few days old."

Wadhwani is not one who forgets — not his beginning, not what India did for him and certainly not what the US gave him.

'The US has been the country which has given me the opportunity and the privilege to have achieved three suc-

PAGE M42 →



M42 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M41

cessful companies, two in Pittsburgh, one in Silicon Valley. Today, I run a large group of companies, about 14 companies, doing around \$3 billion a year, he said while launching the Wadhwani Chair for US-India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies - a leading Washington, DC think tank - in 2011.

In a wide-ranging interview with India Abroad, Wadhwani bares his soul as he has never done before on his early years, his marriage, his entrepreneurial success, his philanthropy, including his commitment to the Bill Gates-Warren Buffet Giving Pledge, and the issues of the day.

After you received your master's degree and PhD from Carnegie Mellon till you founded Aspect in 1991, what did you do in the interim?

I came to the US in 1969, I got my master's in 1970, I got my PhD in 1972, and straight out of Carnegie I started my first company, CompuGuard Corporation ... (It) had nothing to do with my PhD; (it had to do with) computer systems for energy management in buildings.

It grew to about \$10 million in revenue and then was acquired by a large European company.

I stayed for a year and then left to run a company called American Robot, which had been started by the Rockefeller family.

I bought a major interest in the company, became the CEO, built it up over a 10-year period and then sold American Robot as well.

American Robot was a very, very, very difficult journey because robotics were supposed to be the fastest-growing industry all over the world, but it never actually worked out that way.

The Japanese were then dumping robots into the US, so the economics and the business

model of the robotics industry were absolutely terrible.

These were 10 very difficult years and the performance of the company mediocre.

We were doing better than almost every other US company in robotics, but that wasn't a high bar because everyone else was doing very badly.

I was able to transform the company from robotics to computer integrated manufacturing software, that allowed us to build a company of around \$40 million in revenue.

We then sold it in two or three different parts because there wasn't single buyer for the whole company.

At that stage I had been in Pittsburgh for about 20 years, I was on a number of boards in Pittsburgh; it was very comfortable, but I could see that the big winners in technology were not in

INDIA ABROAD AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Salman Rushdie (2006) Novelist

Padma Desai, Jagdish Bhagwati (2007) Economists

Zubin Mehta (2008) Music Conductor

Sonny Mehta (2009) Publisher

Madhur Jaffrey (2010) Actress

Anita Desai (2011) Novelist





COURTESY: ROMESH WADHWAN

Pittsburgh they were in Silicon Valley. So, I had a sort of ...

Epiphany?

Epiphany, thank you, that's exactly the word I was looking for.

I decided that if I wanted to compete with the best of the best, there was only one place to do it — Silicon Valley. So, I started Aspect Development in

Silicon Valley.

- Did you start Aspect from scratch?
- Started from scratch. Our family moved there in early 1991 and

over a roughly 10 year period I built a company that was truly a great company, growing 60 percent a year, doing 25 percent operating margins.

The valuations in 1999-2000 were incredibly high because it was the time of the Internet bubble. So, when i2 Technoloigies called up and made an offer to buy us at \$235 a share, it took me only about 48 hours to say yes.

Aspect went public in 1996. I ran a public company for several years, and we had a perfect public record of exceeding every

Romesh Wadhwani came to the US in 1969. He started his first company immediately after he earned his PhD.

quarter's expectations till Q1 of '99.

In Q1 '99 we missed the quarter because it was a very volatile time.

Our stock price went from \$60 a share to \$6 a share.

Everyone had been trying to recruit our managers and our key employees because it was a very crazy time in Silicon Valley, but I was able to retain all of our managers and all of our key employees.

The morning after we had to announce that we had missed the quarter I gave them a talk about our recovery strategy and all the things we are going to change in a three-year period with the hope that as all these things happened we would be able to grow from a \$6 price back to a \$100 stock price.

As it turned out, we were able to achieve everything we wanted to achieve in three years in less than a year.

We accelerated new product development, innovated a whole bunch of new solutions, restructured the company, brought in some great new leadership, and the end result was that our stock price started at \$6, went to \$15, went to \$30, went to \$100, went to \$200 - all in 9 months.

At that point is when i2 called up and said we don't know what kind of magic steroids you've put the company on ... and that led to the offer to us.

And you stuck it there for a while?

I was there for about a year.

I had thought that going into the merger I'd be a vice chairman, which means I would be a person with very little responsibility.

I just wanted a year or so in which to work at a normal pace, not my 80-90 hour a week pace, which I have done for all my life.

As it turned out, shortly after the merger, stock prices started to come down, the country began to go into recession.

i2 was hit by the recession as much as any other company. So, the board asked me to help out with the transformation of i2.

I spent about 18 months on the board and as vice chairman, helping in the transformation and restructuring and repositioning of i2.

After that, I really wanted to go build a company with my DNA, with my set of values.

But I didn't want to do a single-company start-up again because I had done it three times, and I felt I wouldn't be able to learn very much doing a fourth start-up.

I am very passionate about continuing to learn in everything I am doing because if I am not learning I get bored.

It's not about the money for me; it's about building great companies; its about learning as we build a great company. You've got to have that adrenalin pumping...

Yes, and I love working 80-90 hours a week.

I love waking up every morning with all cylinders fully



M43 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M42

engaged, but I didn't want to do it for just one company at a time.

I started Symphony Technology Group, with the idea that I would build a group of companies focused on software and technology-enabled services

That some of these companies would be acquisitions and some of these companies would be start-ups, but in every company we would try and put the company on a path to becoming a great company in the technology space.

Our definition - at least my definition - of greatness, is a company that does four things the first is that it is continuously increasing the value it delivers to customers; the second is that it can attract and retain the best talent in its sector; the third is that it is achieving organic growth through innovation... and the fourth is that it is the highest-performing company in its sector whether you measure it by revenue growth rate, by innovation, by profit margins, by the lowest levels of attrition or by the value delivery to the clients.

On any of these metrics I feel each of our companies has to be the best in class for that particular sector.

And that's the foundation of the Symphony Technology Group.

How many companies are there in the group? Today, we have 12 companies in the group; collectively the companies will do over \$2.5 billion in

revenue - keep in mind that 10 years ago it was zero, so we have come a long way.

We have 16,000 employees, and by the end of this year, we expect to have about \$3 billion revenue, probably 17,000 to

18,000 employees. Our employees are all over the world, we have companies with headquarters in the US, with headquarters in Europe.

We now have one company with headquarters in India (Bengaluru).

Of our 16,000 employees, they are roughly something like 35 to 40 percent in the US, about 25 percent in Europe.

We have something like 6,000, 7,000 employees in India. Across our different companies, we have almost a thousand employees in China.

We have 600 employees in Russia.

All of us at the Symphony Technology Group think globally, because that's the measure of the world we are in.

So, you are still working pretty hard?

My conclusion is that I have defective DNA and when you have defective DNA it can't be changed, so you just have to accept it and move forward.

I love what I do, and yes I do travel a lot; it's less than before, but my working hours haven't changed.

I still work 80 hours a week; in the old days it would be 80 hours a week applied to one company, now it's 80 hours a week applied across 12.

I am actively engaged with all 12 of our companies.

Each of our companies has a CEO, a full leadership team. I am probably the executive chairman on maybe half of

them, but I am actively engaged in the other six as well even

The Heart of a Tycoon



COURTESY: WADHWANI FOUNDATION

Romesh Wadhwani, center, with National Entrepreneurship Network students in 2008. The Wadhwani Foundation initiative is educating more than half-a-million students each year. The initiative measures its ultimate success by counting companies and jobs created each year.

> if I am not chairman - either with their transformation plans, their innovation plans, or helping them build out their leadership team and their talent or all three.

> Are the majority of them still technology companies, even the new acquisition in Bethesda, Maryland?

> They are all either software or technology-enabled services. (The new acquisition) is technology-enabled services for the health-care industry globally.

> Was starting a company immediately after your PhD the way to go for those who did their doctorate at Carnegie Mellon?

Or was it just your DNA?

It was just my DNA

I must say I made a lot of mistakes in my first company.

If I had the experience of working in another entrepreneurial company - not a GE, not a Westinghouse - but in a more entrepreneurial company; if I had the opportunity to see what worked and what didn't work, I would have been a better first-time CEO.

I think it's fair to say that I have evolved as a CEO and now as a chairman through the lessons learnt in each company.

So, would I advise everyone to start a company after a Phd? Absolutely not!

But if you have entrepreneurial DNA, if you have done your homework and tried to learn about the opportunities and the pitfalls of being a first-time CEO of a start-up, then its okay.

You have to be prepared to make more mistakes than some experienced person would. And (there will be) lots of scars on your back in your first company, but they get less in your second company.

By the time I started the Symphony Technology Group, I felt like I had a very good grasp of not just the overall role and responsibility of a CEO or a general manager, but I'd gotten to become pretty adept in all the key functions of corporations.

My love and passion is for innovation, technology development and marketing and sales.

I can hold my own in finance. I can hold my own in operations. I can hold my own in professional services. But those are not the areas of passion for me

Having that breadth is very helpful, not just to be a CEO of a company, but, particularly in my case, where I am essentially responsible for a group of 12 companies, and on any given day each company has opportunities, some companies may have challenges.

The experience I have gained over the last 40 years allows me to very quickly diagnose problems, very quickly give advice on how to go about fixing things, very quickly spot an opportunity that the leadership team of the company may not have spotted, very quickly work with them to identify opportunities for innovation, new markets and new talent.

But this is all the result of having worked for 40 vears.

I guess in the end there is absolutely no substitute for experience, so long as you keep learning and so long as you keep doing different things.

There is an old story, which is when you have 40 years of experience, do you have one year's of experience repeated 40 times, or do you truly have 40 years of diverse experience that you can apply.

I'd like to think I have more of the latter.

Last September, you committed yourself to the Bill Gates-Warren Buffet's Giving Pledge. What was your motivation for this and what is your vision, vis-à-vis your contribution?

About 10 years ago, well before the Symphony Technology Group had begun to make the kind of progress that it has made, I had decided to give away most of my wealth.

I didn't know what the amount would be because obviously my work is still a journey in progress, even though it has been 40 years, but, god willing, the work is not yet done.

I just felt that all of us have been very privileged. I also felt that most people who grow up in India and become very successful in business in India are not particularly focused on philanthropy...

I had a desire to be different.

I had a desire to want to give most of my wealth away, so I started doing that 10 years ago.

I started the Wadhwani Foundation.

About a year ago, Bill Gates invited me for dinner, and he didn't make a case one way or the other for Giving Pledge,





M44 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



The Heart of a Tycoon

PAGE M43

which is the commitment to give more than 50 percent of your wealth away.

He just shared his experience and others who were at that dinner also shared their experience.

To me, it felt like I wasn't going to be doing anything different from what I was doing anyway.

I am giving away 80 percent, but Giving Pledge is only 50 percent, and so, I am actually doing more than what Giving Pledge requires.

Secondly, I felt that in this broad and diverse group of very successful entrepreneurs, company builders who are all philanthropists, all whom have made a commitment to give more than 50 percent of their wealth away, there might be something there to be learnt from them that would help me make the Wadhwani Foundation a better and stronger foundation.

I like to learn — whether it's learning about business or learning about philanthropy. They are both very important areas of learning for me.

I felt by joining Giving Pledge it would be a great opportunity to learn what others are doing and from that seeing if there are any lessons that would apply.

How did the Gates meeting come about? Did you know each other?

We did not know each other before that. He called up one day... Pretty much out of the blue and said, you know I hear about the stuff that the Wadhwani Foundation has been doing and hear about what your business career has been like and can you join me for dinner, and would love to talk about and share ideas about philanthropy.

He explicitly made it clear that this was not about trying to convert me to joining Giving Pledge. Obviously, I knew it would come up in the conversation because he is so passionate about it...

I felt it would be a great opportunity to share experiences... he flew down specially to Palo Alto to have this meeting.

And who were the others there? Tom Steyer, who runs Farallon Capital; John Doerr from

Kleiner Perkins; Ram Shriram... There were a couple of other very, very, successful entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley there.

Most of them were already members of Giving Pledge; I may have been among the one or two who weren't.

Last year, your wife and you inaugurated a research center at the National Center for Biological Sciences in Bengaluru.

The Shanta Wadhwani Center, named after your mother, is the first example of major unconditional support from a private foundation to that campus.

What motivated you in this particular regard?

You will have to start with the mission of the Wadhwani Foundation to understand why we did that.

Our mission is to accelerate economic development in emerging economies and to create millions of jobs through this accelerated economic development.

The question then becomes: How do you go about doing that?

Some philanthropists like Bill Gates focus on primary education and health-care, others focus on the arts, others focus on other things.

I've had the passion for wanting to help create jobs because



I know how bad the situation is in India.

It turns out that, at a very different scale, there are opportunities in the US also to create jobs given the nature of the economy here.

So, then the question was what are the initiatives that have large-scale impact in which the work of the foundation is an additive to and different from what the government is already trying to do, what other foundations are trying to do, where we can measure outcomes and measure our success.

I don't believe in simply having a lot of people working really hard and then not being held accountable for how many beneficiaries did we actually help.

I think of the beneficiaries of any of the initiatives of our foundation as customers.

I feel that even though we might be trying to help them, they are customers nonetheless and in the end, we can only measure our success through their success.

If they don't succeed, then we have not succeeded either. In this context we came up with four major initiatives –

the first was an initiative to accelerate entrepreneurship in India, which we call 'The National Entrepreneurship Network.'

The second was an initiative to train and place disabled people in jobs in India because India has such a huge problem with disabled people and very few people are willing to help them.

So, we created the 'Opportunities Network For The Disabled.'

The third big initiative was the skills development initiative; we are building the 'Skills Development Network' to help create a new system of community colleges in India, to provide vocational training and career education — initially at the level of tens of thousands a year, then at the level of hundreds of thousands a year and then at the level of millions a year.

The fourth initiative was something we call 'Research and Innovation Network.'

India does little or no world-class research in any field.

From left, Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. Though Romesh Wadhwani has signed up for The Giving Pledge started by Gates and Buffet, he says, 'I wasn't going to be doing anything different from what I was doing anyway. I am giving away 80 percent, but Giving Pledge is only 50 percent. I am actually doing more than what Giving Pledge requires.'

You take the IT domain — you have all these giant IT outsourcing services companies, they are all growing fast, they all have high levels of profitability, but none of them is putting any meaningful amount of money into innovation, into the development of intellectual property, tangible intellectual property as compared to simply the knowledge that's in the head of the software engineers who do the outsourcing work.

My feeling was that no country can be a really great country unless it also does world-class research, unless it produces world class intellectual property.

I picked one field, which is biosciences and biotechnology. In India there is no new molecule development, no new drug development.

India is terrific at generics, but generics is not about creating anything new, its about copying what's been done before, having reasonably good manufacturing practices, selling it at a low price.

Well that's great, but again, if all you do is copy and you don't create any new intellectual property, India cannot in the long run be a great country.

So, I thought one of the ways in which we could both address the national need to innovate and to create, through innovation, jobs that would support the mission of our foundation was we should initially support two research centers.

We funded the Shanta Wadhwani Research Center last year, then we funded the Wadhwani Research Center in Biosciences and Biotechnology at IIT-Bombay.

Have you also funded other programs at IIT-Bombay?

I have, of course.

That's my alma mater, so many years ago I funded the Wadhwani Electronics Laboratory.

I also funded a number of entrepreneurship activities. Anything at your US alma mater?

I just made a commitment.

The president of Carnegie Mellon University, Jerry Cohen, was kind enough to meet me half-a-dozen times.

He never actually asked for support, but we kept talking about possibilities of things that our foundation could do with Carnegie Mellon, particularly in the area of leadership and innovation.

Jerry retires in June, so I just felt I had to make my commitment before he retires.

We are working out the details, but it's a pretty significant commitment.







M46 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M44

The Heart of a Tycoon

It's now two years since you established the Wadhwani Chair at CSIS.

How did it come about it?

How satisfied are you with its progress in shaping policy?

I joined the board of CSIS right about the time I was funding the chair because I felt that CSIS was being very gracious.

I had decided to fund the chair, so the only question was which policy think tank in Washington, DC to work with.

The reason I wanted to fund the chair on both sides, Washington, DC and Delhi, was I felt that the policy agenda between the US and India was not consistent.

The policy agenda between the US and Israel is very consistent, it's independent of who the President in the US is; it's independent of who the prime minister is in Israel.

The US-India policy agenda goes up and down depending on who the President is, who the Indian prime minister is, who is the head of the National Security Council, who is the foreign secretary, who is the cabinet secretary — too much variability.

You cannot build a great geopolitical strategic partnership for 50 years if everything is going to change every two years or four years.

I know that no foundation and no chair can take the place of true spirit and friendship between two countries, two people and two governments.

However, you can be a facilitator of dialogue, you can be a facilitator for creating a long-term strategic agenda, and you can try and create an agenda that both countries can agree upon with minimal controversy, because (*then*) there is much higher probability that the agenda will be put into action...

I wanted to try and create a mechanism for a long-term strategic framework that could be carried out, regardless of party, regardless of individual.

I thought the best way to carry it out would be to take a major policy think tank in the US and a counterpart policy think tank in India, fund the chair in each.

Two years ago, there was no chair in India for US-India policy; even today this is the only chair in US-India policy.

I felt there would be several phases to the building out of this policy program.

The first would be establishing credibility; policy makers aren't going to trust you on day one because they don't know what your motivations are.

They have to see you actually do something for a few years for them to build trust.

When they build trust, they are willing to participate in the making of policy and the actioning of policy.

Over the last two years, I would say the biggest area of focus has been on communicating the mission and on building credibility and on starting to do policy white papers.

The chair did a major white paper on defense trade; they recently did a joint white paper policy with the India Chair, the Wadhwani Chair in ICRIER around a bilateral invest-



ment treaty.

I would say we have begun extremely well.

However, what we have not done, and that's the next phase of the journey, is to create a basic strategic policy framework to establish support for it, both within the US government and the Indian government, and then to pick two or three key initiatives from that overall policy framework and work on actioning them over the next few years.

That's the stage we are in right now.

The good news is that over the last two years we have been able to build support from the Senate India Caucus, the House India Caucus, and all the major departments of the US government.

Similarly, the India Chair is building support from the important departments of the Indian government, so it's a work in progress.

Will anything significant and high impact come from it? I don't know, but I would say that the early signs of it are very encouraging.

We have achieved a lot in the last two years. Today, if you want to go a policy think tank to talk about US-India policy, you only go to CSIS.

Every minister who comes from India wants to go to CSIS and talk to the team there, invite a group of people there.

When the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of State wants to talk about or to test out new ideas they go to CSIS. Three years ago, they would not have done that.

Why CSIS and not some other think tank?

There were three very simple reasons.

Romesh Wadhwani at the opening of the Wadhwani Research Center for Biosciences and Bioengineering at his alma mater, IIT-Bombay, last year.

The first is that CSIS is a truly bipartisan institute.

I don't want us to be in bed with one party, one camp, one president, one prime minister.

The second is the board of trustees — Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brezinski, Sam Nunn, William Cohen — the great Democrats, great Republicans.

In our board meetings they all talk collegially with each other, they share great ideas with each other.

The quality of the board was very impressive and even though it had Republicans and Democrats, or particularly because it had Republicans and Democrats working together in a bipartisan way.

The third is John Hamre (*CSIS president*). He was very, very passionate about it, and in our conversations he made it very clear that this was so important to CSIS because it has a Japan Program, a Korea Program, a China Program, but it does not have an India Program.

He felt this would be a very strong part of the CSIS Foundation and that kind of passion and commitment from the president of the policy think tank meant a lot.

So, it seems like the stars aligned.

Here you are thinking of setting up a chair and at the same time these think tanks were trying to solicit people like you? No, it was entirely initiated by me.

I wanted to set up a chair in US-India policy in a major think tank, and I wanted to do it on both sides of the ocean because I felt that you can't clap with one hand.

If you're going to do it in Washington, DC, we have to do it in Delhi as well.

We are the ones who initiated conversations with CSIS and Brookings and other institutes in DC. Similarly, in India, we talked to ICRIER and two or three other policy think tanks and in the end we picked these two partners.

But we were very much the initiators and drivers of the conversations, reflecting a vision and a belief that I have.

When you left India did you ever think you would be what you are today?

Not in my wildest dreams.

What was your ultimate dream?

It wasn't even completely clear. But I kind of had a sense that I wanted to be an entrepreneur.

I kind of had a sense that I wanted to do well as an entrepreneur, but beyond that you know if you would have asked me in those days, being a CEO of a million-dollar company would have been my lifetime ambition.

That would have been the extent... I could not dream beyond that. \blacksquare



M47 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'It's about helping communities you do not know, people you do not know, even communities you do not trust'

here are very few Indians – whether in India, the United States, or elsewhere in the world - who have donated as much of their wealth for good causes as Romesh Wadhwani has.

It is an area of his life that he considers deeply personal.

Dr Wadhwani opens up about why in his hands philanthropy emerges as a tool of humanitarian and educational change, not influence policy.

Should philanthropy be a vehicle of foreign policy?

I don't think so.

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Philanthropy is a very personal subject. Each person needs to look within themselves and talk to their conscience and decide.

All philanthropy is good. My definition of philanthropy is not about helping your family or helping your immediate community, it's about helping communities you do not know, people you do not know, perhaps even communities you do not trust because of history or ethnicity or whatever the background might have been.

If you can get over those barriers and help people like that, then I would say you are a true philanthropist.

I feel that everyone and anyone can be a philanthropist, but those of us who have been particularly privileged - partly because of our education in India at IIT-Bombay or any other IIT, partly

because of our education in the US, partly because we live in Silicon Valley, partly because of other factors - if we have had the opportunity to be more successful than average, then we have an obligation to give more to philanthropy than average.

That has always been a personal philosophy and a philosophy that I hope other successful entrepreneurs, businessmen, will follow.

But I don't believe that this is a government-mandated thing or a policy-mandated thing.

I think it's a very individual thing, I think it is important for there to be role models.

Bill Gates is a great role model; Warren Buffet is a great role model; they are giving away virtually all their wealth to philanthropy.

All of us can learn from great philanthropists like them, but having said that, each of us needs to have a conversation with our conscience as to how far we should go.

State Farm

Romesh Wadhwani explains his philosophy of philanthropy to Aziz Haniffa.



Students make the most of a Wadhwani Foundation initiative. The foundation is focused on accelerating economic development and creating millions of jobs.

> So, you don't subscribe to the likes of George Soros and the Open Society Foundation?

I do not.

Because I feel that is mandating philanthropy, and I think there are two negatives in that.

I don't believe people who want to be great philanthropists should have to be told — and I think they will resent being told — and the second is when you have foundations like that depending on how they choose to allocate their funds, there can be room for controversy.

The last thing you want when you are being a philanthropist is to be in a controversial position; after all, you are helping other people, and you want to feel good about what you are doing.

You don't want to feel attacked about what you are doing. So, it's much better to do the kind of philanthropy that is

You believe philanthropy should stress on humanitarian,

educational, objectives rather than political ones.

Exactly. First of all, let me say that each philanthropist is free to do whatever they want to do.

My personal philosophy is about helping people.

You can help people in different ways. You can help people in relief after there is an earthquake; you can help people whose kids are going through primary education; you can help people who are in the last stages of their life in hospitals; and you can help people get prepared to get jobs that are high quality and sustainable.

I've chosen that particular mission.

While we absolutely give contributions to relief efforts, it is not a focus of our foundation.

Our foundation is focused single mindedly on accelerating economic development and creating millions of jobs.

We have been at it for 10 years; we have made a lot of progress, but we have at least another 10 years to go before I feel we will have created or impacted enough - hundreds of thousands or millions of jobs — that I can really feel good about the impact.

How can you ignore politics, some may argue, while working for the good of mankind?

You have to separate them.

I am not saying you have to ignore politics. But my personal belief is that our

foundation will have absolutely no role in politics. Now, beyond the foundation, you are entitled to vote for whoever you wanted to vote for, you are entitled to support any particular political party or a political group in the US or in India.

It turns out that my wife and I are both centrists. We've voted for Republicans and we voted for Democrats.

In the end, we vote for an individual and the individual who we believe will be the best for the United States at that particular point in time.

So we are not sort of ideological - you know, left wing, right wing, moderately left wing, moderately right wing we are pretty much centrists, and in the end it all comes down to the individual.







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to create millions of jobs and to place skilled workers in

We feel the best way is for people who are in the last two

years of high school or in the first two years of college to go

through a next generation community college system in

I don't believe it is possible to achieve scale for a next gen-

eration community college system without working with

the government, so effectively we have to create a public-

We are the private partner, our approach to working with

The hard infrastructure is building the community col-

The soft infrastructure is about building the curriculum,

about training the teachers, and about building a software

platform through which massive open online career educa-

We are not trying to do what the government should be

The government is not trying to do what we are probably

So, no one can argue about it; it is not a question about

Zero is what we charge, so we can't be charging too much.

In that context, what may be different between from what

someone saying you are charging too much.

better able to do than they are, and everything we do, we

leges, hiring the teachers, providing the equipment.

the government is very simple – we've said there is a hard

those millions of jobs that are being created.

infrastructure and a soft infrastructure.

India

doing

private partnership.

tion can be provided.

provide at no cost.

It's a perfect partnership.

M48 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'It's about helping communities you do

PAGE M47

Some people might do that kind of philanthropy because you can get a lot of tax shelters.

There is absolutely the risk of that.

We have two fundamental principles in the way in which we execute the initiatives of our foundation.

The first is every initiative in which we work with a government agency - whether it's a central government or a state government in India - has to be non political.

So, we work with chief ministers who are members of the BJP (the Bharatiya Janata Party, the main Opposition party at the federal level), we work with chief ministers who are members of the Congress (the party that heads the ruling alliance at the federal level).

We work with the central government - it has been Congress for the last few years, it could be something else; we would still want to be able to work with them.

So, we have to be completely agnostic in the nature of who, which party that particular government represents.

The second key principle is we never ask the government to fund our foundation because the thing I absolutely want to avoid under any circumstance is that there could be anyone who is able to say, 'You know what, this guy took advantage of his foundation to either get money from the government into the foundation or to help one of his businesses or to get tax credit.'

We have never asked any government — the US government or the Indian government - for any benefits whatsoever; we don't ask for any tax credits; we don't ask them for anything.

If you take the 'Skills Development Network' we just completed a very successful pilot with the Harvana government.

It was very simple. We did not ask the Haryana government or the central government for any money.

They invested their money into hiring teachers for their high schools in which this skills development initiative would be implemented.

We funded the development of curriculum, we funded teacher training, we funded the software platform, and we provided it to the Haryana government at zero cost.

We provided a program manager to the Haryana government at zero cost.

I am very, very, sensitive to the fact that I never want anyone ever to be able to say 'This guy benefited personally from the foundation.'

I wanted it to be known that there is only a one-way flow of benefits, which is from me to the beneficiaries, not from anybody else to me.

The likes of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation connect local and global forces and focus their work in terms of bypassing government bureaucracies.

When they sought to fight the HIV AIDS scourge in India, the Gates got involved in promoting and funding scientific research, the distribution of condoms and turning a lot of sex workers on the ground into public health workers.

Is that a perfect example of how you work and connect with local groups and local involvement of a philanthropic foundation?

We do work with governments and I'll give you two examples

In the skills development initiative, it's all about helping



you said and what we do, is that we do work with the government, but we have a very clear set of rules on engagement with the government.

Again, we are not yet at the point where we are trying to recruit, train and place you know 5 million students a year into high quality jobs in India.

We are still at the stage of doing multiple pilots.

We have done one in Haryana; we are about to do pilots in Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh; we are building out the infrastructure.

The first major occupation which we will be rolling out is a massive online career education program for nurses' aide for which there are 1 million open positions in India today.

If we can roll this out widely, which we expect to over the next 6 to 12 months, we are potentially helping to train and fill over the next few years as many as 1 million jobs, a significant impact even in the scale of India.

Each foundation, I think, needs to evolve its own model, and I think in our model a private-public partnership is good.

If we take the US as an example, when we did the Skills Development Network, we began to build it in India.

I had not really thought about whether any of those ideas might be applicable in the US. But if you think about the circumstances in the US, there are 3.7 million jobs open today that are not being filled.

We are filling 150,000 to 200,000 jobs a month - that's only around 2 million jobs a year.

And yet there are 3.7 million open jobs that cannot be filled because there aren't right skills, there aren't people with the right skills to fill those jobs in the locations where those jobs are for the industries where those jobs are.

So, that led to the idea that perhaps some of the work that we are doing in the skills development network would also be applicable in the US.

About nine months ago, we came up with the idea of a US-based initiative called 'Race to a Job.' The purpose of 'Race to a Job' is to skill people in the US, leveraging the community college system in the US, to help fill open jobs, many of the 3.7 million jobs, but also to fill millions of future jobs that will be created over the next few years, so it could have a pretty high impact.

Now, in the US, we need a public-private partnership. So, we are working with the Department of Education,

PAGE M49 →



M49 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M48

the State Department, the White House and others to develop this initiative such that it can be executed at a scale through the US-based system of community colleges where we are helping to technologically enable the existing community college infrastructure.

We are developing a technology platform, lots of new generation courses for new kinds of occupations, trying to make sure that they are market driven, that they are employer focused and at the same time making sure that they are meaningful in scale and

impact. It's a different kind of public-private partnership, but because we are doing this in India, because we are doing it in the US and because it's a need in almost every country, it also turns out that this represents a potentially big area for US-India cooperation as part of the policy framework that we've been developing through the Wadhwani Chair at CSIS (*Center for Strategic and International Studies*) in Washington and the Wadhwani Chair at ICRIER (*Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations*) in Delhi.

In fact, last night we had a dinner of key policy makers in the US, and I mentioned that they were representatives of US government agencies, the Indian ambassador, the President of CSIS.

What was really interesting was that as we were talking about key areas of policy cooperation between the US and India, it was agreed that skilling should be right there at the top of the list.

It's a need in the US and it's a need in India.

Skills developed for welders in the US are equally applicable in India; skills developed for nurses' aides in India are equally applicable for nurses' aides in the US.

Welders are welders, nurses are nurses.

Health-care is health-care, sick people are sick F people.

There is a lot of commonality in terms of the names; the same applies to other countries in the world.

So, anything that we can do to advance skills development in the US and India is probably applicable to a hundred other countries.

I consider it to be the most important initiative of the Wadhwani Foundation and one in which, we are really ramping up the amount of money that we will be spending as a Foundation to accelerate these programs.

What advice would you have for the Indian-American community in terms of philanthropy? Do you believe it is time for them to move beyond the building of temples and more into perhaps towards setting up of chairs and building colleges, hospitals like the Jewish Americans have?

Absolutely.

I believe it comes down to a very fundamental question that all immigrant communities have to deal with — are we immigrants, but always different?

Or can we be different where it counts like our culture, and yet be part of integrated America that has helped America grow generation after generation and be a greater and greater country.

I feel when you build a temple, nothing is wrong with that

'It's about helping communities you do not know, people you do not know, even communities you do not trust'



Romesh Wadhwani with wife Kathy, left, daughter Melina, second from right, and son-in-law Pat Carey, right.

it is an important thing to do for our culture — but if that's all we do, we are essentially transplanting India into Queens, or India into Monroeville in Pittsburgh or...
Ghettoizing?

Yes. It might be a very high-class ghetto; it might be a very beautiful temple, but it is a ghetto nonetheless.

I don't believe that that's the way we should assimilate. The Jews have assimilated completely into the American fabric, but they haven't lost their Jewish identity — they have their Jewish temples and yet they are part of the whole philanthropic system of the US, they are part of the business system of the US; they are part of the government system of the US.

Now, if I take India, first of all we are a much younger immigrant community, so we haven't been in the US for 200 years.

The bulk of immigration that has happened from India has happened in the last 20 years.

When I came 40 years ago, there was just a handful of Indian immigrants.

So, certainly from a time stand point, there is nothing to be critical of.

But going forward, philosophically, it is very, very impor-

tant for the Indian Americans to be philanthropists and to be philanthropists outside of the temple community family.

They have to help other communities in the US.

They should build hospital wings; they should build schools; they should build colleges; they should fund US universities, not just Indian universities, and they should also do great things in India.

To me, philanthropy is not just about giving money; it's also about giving bandwidth and time, because remember all of us have the privilege of great education and a worldview.

We have an India view, we have a US view and we have a world view, and if that is applied to philanthropy, both in India and the US, it can have so much of impact.

I would use Bill Gates as a great role model. He gave up the running of Microsoft; he spends his entire day, entire week, working passionately for health-care, malaria, HIV prevention, primary education.

The Indian-American community needs to do a lot more of that.

The good news is I see it beginning; the bad news is it is still very small. ■



M50 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

With lots of love and a bucket of the Colonel's chicken

he late Colonel Harland David Sanders, the founder of the Kentucky Friend Chicken restaurant chain, is perhaps smiling that it was a bucket of his chicken that resurrected the great love affair between Kathleen Hartman and Romesh Wadhwani that continues to be on fire four decades after their wedding.

Kathleen tells *India Abroad* that when a mutual friend invited her to a celebratory party and dinner marking Romesh's near completion of his PhD from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, it was love at first sight.

Then a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh getting her master's degree in social work, Kathleen said when that mutual friend invited her over she never dreamed that anything as life changing as meeting the man of her dreams would be the outcome of this get-together of friends.

"Indeed it was a magical meeting. What transpired between the two of us was unforgettable," she says.

Kathy, as she likes to be called, remembers what attracted her to Romesh almost instantly was "the incredibly calm and positive energy," he seemingly emitted "and to be honest with you, the look in his eyes, that I immediately responded to."

"And, of course, there was clearly this inner strength that seemed to stand out and his personality and his wonderful sense of humor," she adds.

Romesh admits to *India Abroad* that in his case too, it was love at first sight. "We dated for about two years, three years maybe, and then I asked her father for Kathy's hand in marriage."

It was the 1960s — the era of free love, the hippies, the Beatles, Woodstock, and anything goes.

Recalls Romesh, "I would wear purple kurtas, I had my hair down to my shoulders, so they (*Kathy's parents*) took one look at me and their immediate answer was no, and hell no! So we broke up for several years... Because of the opposition. Kathy didn't want to go against her parents and I didn't want her to go against her parents."

Kathy laughs long and uproariously at my: "Your dad probably felt that my daughter falling for an American hippie was bad enough, but an Indian hippie with long hair and in a kurta was just a bit much!"

"Men wore long hair," Kathy adds, "and my parents thought it could never work in the corporate world. Also, he was a student at the time, so they didn't take it seriously." Then KFC rode to the rescue.

"Five or six years later, I was coming home from work after a long day, at 11 pm. I went to a Kentucky Fried Chicken to do a take out. Kathy was also doing a take out. We met and it turned out that she wasn't dating anyone and I wasn't dating anyone and so we started dating again. This time we dated for about three years and this time her father After four decades of marriage, Kathleen Hartman and Romesh Wadhwani are as much in love as the first time they met. They share their story with **Aziz Haniffa**.



Kathleen Wadhwani remembers what attracted her to Romesh almost instantly was 'the incredibly calm and positive energy' he seemingly emitted.

said, 'Young man, when are you getting married to my daughter?' He had completely changed his mind and a year after that, we got married."

Asked if his parents would have preferred he married 'a nice Indian girl,' Romesh says, "No, they were actually very open-minded," even though it was more than 40 years ago, when inter-racial dating, let alone marriage, was rare."

"They were completely open-minded about whether I marry an American or an Indian. I remember the first time I went back to India and showed my parents the pictures of Kathy and me because obviously she wasn't with me, they fell in love at first sight with her from the picture."

"They somehow sensed that Kathy was a person of great

value, very kind, very gentle, and really the perfect partner for me because I am so driven and worked so hard and traveled so much."

At that time, he says, Kathy "had a very successful career in social work — she worked for the state of Pennsylvania, running one of the departments in social welfare in Pittsburgh. So, she was working when we got married. After we got married, she phased out of her work because of my travel schedule."





M51 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M50

Asked what she admires most about her billionaire husband and what makes her most proud, Kathy exclaims, "Wow! There are so many things. What makes me enormously proud of him is the fact that he is such a wonderful family man and that includes not only as a wonderful husband and father to Melina, our daughter (who's 26 and married about 20 months ago to Pat Carey who works for SalesForce.com), but also to all the family — all the relatives in the US and in India."

"All the family adore him and it's mutual -100 percent. That quality of his is very dear to me."

Despite all his traveling, his incessant drive and being a hands-on boss when it comes to more than the dozen companies under the umbrella of the Symphony Technology Group, of which he is the founder and chairman, Kathy says, "He never misses a birthday or misses contact with any of his relatives. He is the one who always reaches out," and is so much the anchor of the family.

And his drive, even at age 66, she said, is simply drive, not overdrive: "He has always been driven. When I first met him, he was already driven. I remember I was sometimes with him when he would make phone calls with regard to work and I could tell the passion that his voice had."

"He is a born leader. And it was natural for him to take leadership. He would always shine in all his business dealings — he would always be successful."

She acknowledges that never in her wildest dreams did she ever think he would be the entrepreneur that he turned out to be — among the best of the best.

"I always knew that he would be successful," she says, "but I never could have known how successful he would become. It completely surprised me over the years, including the sale of Aspect."

In June 2000, when Wadhwani sold Aspect Development, a software manufacturer which he founded in 1991 for \$9.3 billion, then the largest merger in software history, Kathy recalls, "I was cooking dinner — I knew he had been working on and meeting with people about selling the company. When he came into the kitchen and said, 'You want to guess how much they have agreed to pay for it,' and I said, 'I am terrible at these things, but let me try."

"It was in the day and age when there was a bubble and companies were going for a billion dollars sometimes, and so I said, 'OK, I am going to reach very high — they've offered a billion."

"He said, 'Guess again,' and I said, 'It's impossible for me to guess beyond that,' and he said to me 'It's more and more.' When he told me what it had sold for, I never could believe it. It was mind-blowing — it surpassed anything I could have thought of, anything I had in mind."

When Romesh decided to start the Romesh and Kathleen Wadhwani Foundation, a philanthropic foundation, Kathy says, "I was so proud of him — exceedingly proud about it."

"Romesh takes it very seriously. He really cares about it,

With lots of love and a bucket of the Colonel's chicken



Travel is one of the several things that the Wadhwanis love doing together, 'and is a tremendous stabilizer in the marriage,' Kathy says.

he really thinks about it. Thinks what is the very best contribution he can make — not just financially, but also with his time and his focus."

According to Kathy, the Foundation's support for diversified projects — from the technical and technological and research projects in India to the Wadhwani Chair for US-India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the funding for the promotion of arts and culture at the Kennedy Center, including significant underwriting of the Maximum India celebration more than three years ago — are a tangible reflection of his personality.

Asked how much of a partner Kathy is in terms of the foundation, and asked if she is the Melinda Gates reminiscent of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Romesh says, "She is not the Melinda Gates here yet. Right now she is aware of what the foundation does, we have conversations about it, but she is not actively involved in the foundation as of now. Over time she does want to be more involved."

"I don't know whether she will ever get to the Melinda Gates level, but she can certainly get to a much more active level than today. I am not sure what my daughter might want to do with the Wadhwani Foundation. But again, that will be her choice, I will not be forcing her or trying to force her to, you know, help, lead or participate in the Foundation, but over time who knows how things go."

Kathy, who isn't done talking about her husband, asserts, "Romesh is a very, very, talented man. He is very, very, balanced in that he enjoys the work, technology and entrepreneurial aspects of his career, but he also enjoys music of all sorts — opera and ballet. He is such an exciting personality with all of these interests."

With regard to the Foundation, she says, "It makes sense to me it started off with it being focused on education and entrepreneurship in India — and is still very much focused there — but it doesn't surprise me at all that it has grown to include the Wadhwani Chair at CSIS, the arts at the Kennedy Center, because it all reflects his personality."

Kathy says their interests are in sync and it is this compatibility that contributes to their enduring love and marriage. "He thoroughly enjoys music — we both enjoy it," including Indian classical and Bollywood music.

"All the CDs I have in my car, are all Indian music - I love it," she says. "Both classical and Bollywood, particularly the Bollywood, because of the high energy and the rhythm of the music. I just love it."

"We both enjoy Indian food and we eat it maybe three or four times a week. We have a chef at home and he is very good about watching the amount of oil — only non-fat yogurt instead of sweets (*for dessert*)."

Travel is another thing they love doing together, "and is a tremendous stabilizer in the marriage," Kathy says.

"It's a very happy marriage," she reiterates, "and it's because we've known each and loved each other for so long — since we were students. Also, it's a lot because of Romesh's personality. He's not only very inspiring, but such a generous spirit, which is so wonderful for the family, friends, and the community."





M52 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'She said you should have a presence in China'



Romesh Wadhwani with his mother Shanta. He has launched and supported the Shanta Wadhwani Centre for Cardiac and Neural Research at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bengaluru, dedicated to his late mother. With one anecdote, Romesh Wadhwani explains to **Aziz Haniffa** his mother Shanta Tekchand Wadhwani's influence on his life.

mong the many initiatives Romesh Wadhwani has launched and supported through his Wadhwani Foundation is the Shanta Wadhwani Centre for Cardiac and Neural Research at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bengaluru, dedicated to his late mother.

What most don't know is the influence and support she was to her children.

She encouraged them to innovate, but Romesh recalls that unlike many South Asian parents she never asked him how much money he was making.

"Really. She never once asked me," he recalls. "She was, of course, aware of what I was doing in business, but she never probed deeply into wanting to know about any particular company or any particular thing I was doing because she knew that I work at it 80 hours a day, and I go very deep and there will be no point in having a superficial conversation."

"In fact, she would read in the newspapers what I was making and she would read in *Forbes* what I was making, but I never once told her what I was actually making. Sometimes, she would point to a *Forbes* article and say, 'My god, is that really true?' And I would tell her, yes, it's kind of accurate."

His mother, he says, was very progressive.

"I'll give you one interesting story about her," he says, remembering a conversation they had when she was living with him in his Las Altos Hills home in the last eight years of her life; his father had passed away many years ago.

"One day (*about five years ago*), we were having lunch and out of the blue, she asked me what the Symphony Technology Group's strategy for China was."

"I told her not only do I not have a strategy, I am not particularly interested, and she could not believe it. She said, 'Why aren't you interested? Everyone else is interested, everyone else in Silicon Valley and elsewhere is starting up or buying companies in China."

"I told her that for the kind of technology we do, it is not exactly clear what the opportunities are, concerns about the intellectual property and to buy a company in China valuations are extremely high, accounting is a little hard to figure out, and for all those reasons — and there were so much opportunity elsewhere in the world — we didn't do anything."

"So, for the first time in my life, she gave me some words of advice. She said you really should have a strategy and a presence in China. Naturally, when words come from your mother you start to think about them. As I was thinking about it (*I realized*) my mom could be right. A couple of months later I went to Beijing and we started figuring out things for Symphony to do."

"I went to Shanghai, then I went to Cheng Du and the end result is that today Symphony has almost a thousand employees in China across different companies. I would say that conversation — even though it was only 30 seconds long — on the subject of China was a turning point in my thinking."

"It was very catalytic, and shows how well informed a mother can keep you on the straight and narrow."

Shanta Wadhwani was almost 90 years old when she had this conversation with her son. "She had a very sharp mind; she read all the news, she would read day-old copies of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, she would read a week-old copy of *The Economist*, so she was completely up-to-date on world affairs. She was always a home maker. That's why I was always impressed that she knew as much as any of us."

He adds that he named the research center after his mother "because it is particularly focused on using the newest techniques in cardiac care and neural care. My mother had congestive heart failure and she ultimately passed away because of the problems with her heart, even though she lived to be 94 years old."

"She always had a passion for knowledge and always wanted to know what the new developments were in medicine, in biosciences, biotechnology."

"I felt this was the perfect way in which to honor her memory — to do something in research and innovation, which she was very passionate about, to do it in the area of cardiac care because ultimately that's what took away her life, and to do it in one of the best research centers in India."

"That's why we decided to call it the Shanta Wadhwani Center." \blacksquare



M53 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



hroughout history, it is the people who had the ability and courage to think big and fully commit themselves to the mission that have impacted humanity with a positive and lasting outcome.

Dr Romesh Wadhwani is one of those men.

Dr Wadhwani serves as chairman of the board of the company that I lead, MSC Software, which at 50, is one of the 10 oldest software companies on the planet. The company was catalyzed by President Kennedy's 1962 call for the mission to reach the moon by the end of the decade.

Over the past few years, I have had the good fortune to meet and share ideas with some of the pioneers from our nation's space program. This included several of MSC's incredible founders who had the confidence of the US government and the flight director of the Apollo Space Mission at NASA, who an entire nation stood behind.

These were extraordinary men who showed me similar qualities. They are very smart, gifted with a thirst for knowledge, and possessing the innate ability to invent. They were supremely confident in delivering into a completely uncertain future. Their personal commitment to success was selfless and unwavering. They were leaders and they completed the mission. As a result, they all played a part in helping to inspire a society and move mankind forward.

Dr Wadhwani without question can be put in the category of these men who help to move humanity forward.

Whether it is in businesses that he has touched, which have provided economic prosperity to tens of thousands of families

'One of those men who helps to move humanity forward'

Dominic Gallello finds inspiration in Romesh Wadhwani's pioneering spirit.

or in social initiatives, his principles are the same.

He thinks big — always seeking a step change — he invests in the face of uncertainty, he commits and he drives himself, and motivates others to accomplish the mission.

Without hesitation, he tackles what others would consider as unsolvable problems and turns them into large opportunities.

His multidimensional, strategic thinking lifts the people around him to take on challenges with the confidence that they can be achieved.

The result — companies that he is involved with improve dramatically by providing better results for their customers and more personal prosperity for their employees.

For my own company, under Dr Wadhwani's guidance, we

have returned to growth, innovation, a strong brand and a future that is very bright.

The foundations that he has started for the social good take on challenges that some could not dream of and most would consider impossible to achieve. The good that they have accomplished could only be achieved with the leadership of a big thinker.

Like the great men who accomplished the almost impossible during the Apollo days, Dr Wadhwani is always supremely confident in delivering into a completely uncertain future.

Dominic Gallello is president and chief executive officer, MSC Software

Transforming the lives of millions

Romesh Wadhwani has the heart to use his immense wealth for the welfare of society, says Ajay Kela.

uring my first meeting with Romesh, almost 10 years ago, it became evident that I was meeting someone extraordinary; this reaction is not uncommon.

I had recently returned from a trip to India and had made the decision to not give my business to Symphony Services (one of Romesh' companies). Romesh asked for a meeting to understand why he had lost my business.

Here was a man who had just sold his company for over \$9 billion eager to understand and learn why he lost a business that was going to generate less than \$400K per year for one of his companies.

During the meeting his intense passion for excellence through

knowledge and learnings came alive. I found myself wanting a longer term association with the man.

To my surprise, Romesh asked me if I

<image>

From left, Ajay Kela of the Wadhwani Foundation, Indian lawmaker Kapil Sibal, Senator Mark Warner and Glenn Dubois, chancellor, Virginia's Community Colleges.

> would go and run Symphony Services in India. I made the spot decision to move to India after having lived in the US for more than 22 years.

My journey with Romesh continues, first as President of Symphony Services and now over the past four years as president and chief executive officer of Wadhwani Foundation.

Through a decade of association, I have come to regard Romesh as one of the most brilliant, determined, and hard working individuals with an immense intellect and appetite to generate wealth and a heart to use most of that wealth for the welfare of society (Romesh recently signed the Gates Buffet Giving Pledge where he has committed to donate most of his personal wealth).

While his extraordinary success both as a serial entrepreneur and subsequently as the chief nurturer and driver of a group of companies (most of which he founded) within his private equity firm, Symphony

Technology Group, is well known, very little is known of his passion to impact the lives of millions of people through his foundation, the Wadhwani Foundation. Romesh started the foundation 10 years ago with the mission of creating millions of jobs and thus accelerating the economic development of emerging economies.

Establishing such an audacious goal and having the insights to execute on it is the hallmark of Romesh.

No single foundation can achieve such a goal through its own resources. The brilliance lies in identifying niche high-impact initiatives, making the initial investment to demonstrate feasibility and subsequently achieving high-quality, large scale impact by leveraging technology and creating opportunity networks — this has been Romesh's mantra in all of the Foundation's five initiatives.

Such a unique approach to scale and sustainability is a reflection of a visionary leader with the capacity to translate the vision into executable plans with tangible outcomes.

Romesh' first such initiative, the National Entrepreneurship Network, is inspiring and educating more than half-a-million students each year through 500 colleges and 1,200





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M54 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013





NEN-trained faculty in India.

The initiative measures its ultimate success by counting companies and jobs created each year. This year the NEN graduates created over 700 companies in India. The goal of this initiative is to create half-amillion jobs in the next five years.

Transforming India to become a world-class leader in innovation through creating role-model institutes that compete at the world-stage and mainstreaming the educated disabled into sustainable high-quality corporate jobs through recognizing the business value proposition of these individuals are examples of other initiatives that Romesh envisioned and started in India.

Romesh was also one of the first individuals to recognize the growing global gap between skills required by the industry and those acquired by the students. This was a direct result of academia not being able to keep up with the technology-induced accelerated pace of the industry.

Two years ago, Romesh initiated the Wadhwani Foundation's Skill Development Network with a unique approach to fill the global skill gap through a massively open online job program that adopts a learner-centric approach to skill development through use of video, animation, simulation, gaming and learner analytics for continuous program enhancement.

To unleash the full potential of the growing US-India relationship, Romesh established parallel policy chairs with Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations in Delhi.

On a personal note, I interact with Romesh two to three times a month and have done so for the past 10 years. Every single meeting is a learning and enriching experience but short-term disheartening as well.

Most of the time, after the meeting, I kick myself for not having thought of the ideas and suggestions myself which appear so obvious when he presents them.

My fellow CEOs who work with Romesh share the same experience. Romesh' clarity of thought, attention to details, coupled with the capacity to envision and undertake bold transformational ideas bodes well for his first mission of wealth creation.

However, having a heart to use that unique talent and wealth with equal fervor on transforming the lives of millions of people through the activities of the foundation is where, I believe, Romesh will leave his biggest mark. ■

Ajay Kela is President and Chief Executive Officer, Wadhwani Foundation

A thought leader

Romesh Wadhwani is an action-oriented philanthropist, says **Karl F Inderfurth**, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs in the Clinton administration.

hree years ago, when I was on the faculty at George Washington University, I received a phone call from Dr John Hamre, president, Center for Strategic and International Studies.

He told me a very interesting and successful Indian-American entrepreneur from California, Dr Romesh Wadhwani, was considering establishing a chair at a Washington think tank to support and advance the growing United States-India relationship. John asked me what I thought of the idea.

I responded enthusiastically, saying that with India as a rising power, it would behoove the think tank and academic communities to devote more time and resources to better understanding the other rising Asian mainland power (as we were already doing with China), since it was clearly in the interest of the US to work closely with India to address the many challenges that both countries will face in the 21st century.

John asked if I would communicate this view directly to Dr Wadhwani as he was then making up his mind on whether to proceed with his chair initiative. I said I would gladly do so, and did.

Fast forward a few months, and I was very pleased to receive another call from John saying Dr Wadhwani had decided to proceed not only with starting the first think-tank program in Washington, at CSIS, dedicated exclusively to US-India Policy Studies, but a counterpart program in New Delhi at the Indian Council for Research on Economic and International Relations to do the same. Both chairs would work closely towards a common goal of 'unlocking the full potential of the US-India relationship.'

Clearly, Romesh Wadhwani was doubling down as a think tank thought leader.

John then asked if I would be interested in being considered for the CSIS position. Given my long-standing com-



Karl Inderfurth views Romesh Wadhwani as an action-oriented philanthropist

mitment to building closer US-India ties going back to the Clinton Administration, this was truly a proposition I could not refuse.

The Wadhwani Chair was formally established in early 2011, and was launched at a high-profile event on Capitol Hill. Attending were the co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus, Senators Mark Warner and John Cornyn, and then India's Ambassador to the US Meera Shankar.

In his remarks, Dr Wadhwani explained his rationale for establishing the two US-India Chairs: 'The relationship between the two countries is perhaps the single most important relationship each can have geopolitically.'

And why he was committing his own

resources to do so: 'The US has been the country which has given me the opportunity and the privilege to have achieved. And once you have that kind of privilege, you also have an obligation to give back.'

Since then, the Wadhwani Chair at CSIS has been hard at work with some 40 events, 100 publications and indepth reports on issues ranging from India's emerging economy to prospects for a US-India bilateral investment treaty and a Free Trade Agreement to growing defense trade and military cooperation.

At a recent speaking engagement at CSIS, Indian Ambassador Nirupama Rao said she'd taken note, 'CSIS has been in the forefront of undertaking analytical work relating to India and various facets of India-US relations, and providing fresh approaches and policy recommendations.'

On Capitol Hill, Senator Mark Warner has expressed a similar thought, more personally: 'Romesh Wadhwani has been doing great work at CSIS.'

Wadhwani is a leader in the Indian-American Diaspora community for many reasons — one, of course, is that he is a highly successful entrepreneur. But beyond that, Romesh is a thoughtful, action-oriented philanthropist, having established the Wadhwani Foundation for 'on the ground' work in India and the CSIS and ICRIER policy chairs for strategic thinking about the future direction of the overall US-India relationship.

While 'unlocking the full potential' of that relationship will take time (and a little patience on both sides), progress is being made.

Wadhwani's significant contributions rightly deserve enormous credit for pushing this ball forward. I expect much more to follow. ■

Karl F Inderfurth is the first chair holder of the Wadhwani Chair in US-India Policy Studies, CSIS, and a former Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs (1997 to 2001).





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M56 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'I learn from each interaction with him'

Sanjay Dhawan treasures the lessons he has learnt — and is still learning — from Romesh Wadhwani.

e all play many roles in our daily lives. However, most of us spend our entire lifetimes perfecting any one of those roles. We may choose to dedicate ourselves to being successful entrepreneurs or respected teachers or selfless social workers.

Very rarely do we come across an individual who has chosen to live his life very differently, focusing not just on setting and achieving huge milestones in his professional life through hard work and entrepreneurship, but then on utilizing the knowledge that he has gained in his journey to mentor other businesses to success and profitability, and then bringing his life to a full circle by using the knowledge and the financial resources generated from his endeavors to reinvest in the growth and upliftment of mankind as the ultimate social activist.

I am fortunate to have the daily pleasure of spending time with and learning from such a person, Dr Romesh Wadhwani.

Dr Wadhwani is a visionary leader who plays his many roles with great élan.

He is an extraordinarily successful entrepreneur who used his intelligence, drive, and motivation to build a highly successful business — Aspect Development — and then turned around and continued to utilize his knowledge to nourish many start-ups under the umbrella of his private equity fund, the Symphony Technology Group.

Most people would have been satisfied with so much success.

Instead, Dr Wadhwani continues to use his extraordinary business acumen in running his most significant venture to date — the Wadhwani Fundation.

The foundation is Dr Wadhwani's philanthropic initiative whose goal is not just to dispense money slated for charity to a group of needy people. Its uniqueness lies in its mission statement: To accelerate economic development in India and other developing economies.

The foundation utilizes a very unique approach by which it takes part in the National Entrepreneurship Network, research and innovation, and provides an opportunity network to the disabled.

In this way, the foundation does not passively help people. Instead, it helps them become responsible for their own development.

The Shanta Wadhwani Centre for Cardiac and Neural Research, a closely watched initiative of the foundation at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bengaluru, is involved in cutting edge research in understanding the regeneration and the degeneration of the brain and the heart, two of the least understood, but the most intriguing organs in the body utilizing a world class faculty.

The foundation partners with myriad institutions of professional education in India, fostering new ideas and innovations, and providing hope to thousands of hopeless people.

In my role at Symphony-Teleca, one of the several ventures that the Symphony Technology Group has chosen to invest its resources in, I learn from each interaction that I have with Dr Wadhwani.

There is not a single meeting with him that I leave without having gained either more knowledge or a new perspective. The most important thing that I have learnt from him is that exploring just one dimension of who we are is not enough.

Professional and personal success brings great joy, but it is really the assistance that we extend to others by teaching them to help themselves that brings meaning to our lives. ■

Sanjay Dhawan is Chief Executive Officer, Symphony-Teleca.

Romesh Wadhwani has used his extraordinary success to not just nourish many start-ups, but also people.

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Natwar Gandhi's record-setting tenure as Chief Financial Officer of the District of Columbia made him a darling of the Congress and Wall Street.

The Financial Wizard

Natwar Gandhi, who pulled the District of Columbia from the brink of bankruptcy, is one of the most powerful figures in the capital.
Aziz Haniffa discovers the fascinating life story of the winner of the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Achievement 2012.

n the past two decades in the Washington, DC area there probably hasn't been any Indian American who has enjoyed as high a profile — particularly on a sustained basis — as **Natwar 'Nat' M Gandhi**, the District's Chief Financial Officer for the last 13 years, often dubbed as one of the most powerful officials and influential figures, respectively, in the DC government and the nation's capital.

Gandhi, who holds the record of any CFO in

the country for serving continuously for 13 years during the tenures of four mayors, has been a darling of the United States Congress and Wall Street for bringing the nation's capital back from the brink of bankruptcy to triple A ratings and the envy of other exchequers in major cities and District's residents who have seen their home equities rise exponentially in an otherwise adverse housing market across the country.

Under Gandhi's stewardship, the District has obtained a 'clean' audit opinion from independent auditors in the District's Comprehensive



PAGE M58



states.

M58 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

- PAGE M57

Annual Financial Report every year since Fiscal Year 2000, which ended the city's Control Period and facilitated the return of Home Rule.

Under his leadership, the District secured several rating upgrades for its general-obligation bonds from the major rating agencies, including an A+ from Standard and Poor's, an AA- from Fitch Ratings and an Aa2 rating from Moody's Investors Service.

The District's income tax secured bond ratings are AAA from S&P, AA from Fitch and Aa1 from Moody's.

First appointed by Mayor Anthony Williams in June 2000, he served through Williams' two terms, the one-term of Mayor Adrian Fenty and till his retirement, the first term of Mayor Vincent C Gray — all Democrats.

It was no secret that Gandhi was strongly tipped to be the director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, but was apparently dropped from consideration when a few months into the first term of the Obama administration a major embezzlement fraud was discovered in the DC tax office on his watch, which led to Gandhi offering to resign amidst criticism as to how such an astute and conscientious CFO like him could have missed such thievery.

But Mayor Fenty refused to accept his resignation and the lawmakers who sit on the committee that oversees DC also stuck by him with a strong show of support despite this blemish and prevailed on him to stay.

Since then, Gandhi has gone from strength to strength, continuing to obtain AAA ratings for DC.

"The latest bond upgrade came last month, a nice retirement present," he says.

Following President Obama's re-election, he was offered a choice of senior administration positions in the Treasury and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, but turned them down, opting to continue being CFO of DC.

Gandhi's story is yet another fascinating metamorphosis of an immigrant — an immigrant who hailed from a small town in Gujarat called Savar Kundala, near Bhavnagar, and grew up in primitive conditions with no running water, indoor plumbing or electricity.

"I remember reading under a kerosene lamp," he says. "There was a school in my town, but in order to graduate from high school, we needed to go to Bhavnagar, the provincial capital, to take the finals. It was my first visit to a city of paved roads, automobiles and commuter buses."

"I remember seeing my first Hollywood movie in Bhavnagar — a film starring Marilyn Monroe. How can one forget that?"

"There was basically nothing in this town, and the only thing that excited me in this town, which was barely a little bigger than a village, was a small library. And, in this library, I used to read all the newspapers that would come from Bombay (*now Mumbai*) and Ahmedabad, which was about 24 hours late, but to us it was fresh news."

"The USIS (*United States Information Service*) used to have a magazine called *Span* and I used to read it and see the pictures and dream of America."

His parents were illiterate, with his father Mohandas, "interrupting his studies to go to jail for participating in the Independence movement," and his mother Shanta being a homemaker.

Gandhi's childhood years were spent working in the little grocery shop his father ran "as a clerk, but there was nothing

The Financial Wizard



From left, Natwar Gandhi, then DC Mayor Anthony Williams, former Federal Reserve Vice Chair Alice Rivlin and DC Council Chairman Linda Cropp before a House Oversight Subcommittee hearing on the District's budget in 2004.

in that town. So, after my so-called matriculation, I went to Bombay, because most of the young people went to Bombay to find jobs."

Gandhi recounts how with the help of a relative he found a job as a gofer in a Bombay cloth market.

The salary was meager, and since he couldn't afford rent, he would sleep in the firm's one-room office at night.

"Then I ran into a cousin who said, 'Look, you can't go on like this, you have to go to college.' When I said I didn't have any money, he asked me to give tuitions to his children and offered to send me to college."

"That's how I joined Sydenham College of Commerce, the oldest commerce college in Asia, and part of the University of Mumbai."

"I lived in a community hostel for four years and I did my BCom. That's where I developed the zest for literature, because Bombay, along with Ahmedabad and Baroda, was the center of Gujarati literature."

After obtaining his BCom degree, Gandhi wanted to study chartered accountancy and come to America.

"But again, economic circumstances did not make it possible," Gandhi recalls. "My parents wanted to come to Bombay as there was nothing in our small town, and they also wanted to make sure that my brothers and sisters get educated in Bombay. So, I had to take a job and again, by my luck, I got a job at a mail distribution shop in Bombay."

"I worked several jobs there and my routine was, every day, I would open *The Times of India*, look at the want ads and put in an application. I would walk from where I was to the *Times (building)*, drop my application there in a big gold

box."

He got a job as an accounting clerk and supported his parents and his wife, but "all the time my dream was to come to America. I would constantly communicate with my friend Navin Jarecha, a college friend who was in the US for graduate studies."

"He arranged for me to come here, but at the time, there was the Chinese invasion and Morarji Desai (*later the Indian prime minister*) introduced the so-called PL480 and there was no foreign exchange available. So, all my hopes were dashed."

But Jarecha didn't give up.

Finally, Gandhi says, "I got admitted to the University of Atlanta. I was overjoyed. Then I told him I have no money to come to America. He got me a scholarship, but I had no money for air travel. These were the golden days of the American educational system, so he was able to reach a foundation and they got me my tickets."

And so it was that Natwar Gandhi arrived in New York with the mandatory \$7 in his pocket October 10, 1965.

"I started my education at age 25 and got an MBA from Atlanta University, in addition to a law degree, which I had received from the University of Bombay, in addition to my BCom. Immediately after that, I had to get a job because I had to bring my wife here. I got a teaching position in Greensboro, North Carolina, at the Agricultural and





M59 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

PAGE M58

Technological Institute in a low-income, underprivileged, minority area, but I took any job because I had to get a Green Card and get my wife to the US."

But if he wasn't satisfied with just any job in Bombay, Gandhi was unlikely to be satisfied with just any job in America — the land he had dreamed about for so long.

"I was always consumed by this desire to do better, and started my PhD at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, but it was really too much, commuting from Greensboro to Chapel Hill. So, I was always looking out for a university that would give me student housing and a scholarship. I was lucky to get an assistantship with student housing at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and I got my PhD in accounting from there. From there it was on to the University of Pittsburgh as a professor of accounting from 1973 to 1976."

Gandhi enjoyed teaching, the exploring and molding of young minds.

What he didn't like about the job was accounting research and academic publishing.

The focus in academic publishing, at least at that time, was to specialize in some arcane area and then to formulate research findings in a highly quantitative, jargon-laden and obtuse language. Writing in simple, easy-to-read English was frowned upon. It was viewed as journalistic and lacking sufficient academic gravity."

"Moreover, academic specialization was anathema to me. I could not imagine specializing in accounting subjects such as inventory valuation methods and their impact on share pricing... To my mind, however, excessive specialization was a retreat into irrelevance and obtuse expression that simply reflected muddled thinking. This was not for me."

"In 1976, since I always wanted to come to Washington because of my interest in politics and public policy, I applied and got an internship at the GAO (General Accounting Office, which is the watchdog agency of the US Congress) for a year to do research."

It didn't hurt that Gandhi had always been fascinated by Washington, DC: "Along with literature, my other passions were politics and public affairs. Even in India, I used to keep up with what was going on in the US and around the world. I used to read Walter Lippmann's columns and journals like the New Statesman and Encounter.

"As soon as I learned to drive and bought a car in the US, my first out-of-town trip was to Washington, DC."

'The nation's capital had a special attraction for me. I was fascinated with its magnificent monuments, particularly the Lincoln Memorial, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, the Capitol and the White House."

"More than monuments, I was in awe of Washington's great newspapers and their power to make or break politicians. I was also impressed with the highly informed commentaries of famous columnists as well as the hard-hitting reporting of the journalists who influenced policies."

He ended up staying at the GAO for 20 years!

"The work that I started in the area of insurance taxation was so promising they made me an offer and I became part of the team that did analysis of the taxation of the insurance companies, defense contractors, banks and others - those who find ways to avoid taxes - and I concentrated to study this to find ways in which to plug all the loopholes and hold them liable for taxes.

The Financial Wizard



Natwar Gandhi in the office he has held for 13 years.

with Gandhi, he would always pull out a small chart from his jacket, several copies of which he always carried with him and point out the graph that showed that when he joined the city it had a deficit of \$500 million in its fund balance, and every year since that time, they had reformed the tax system till they had a surplus. Gandhi succeeded Williams as CFO and

worked the same magic in this role too. "At one time it was \$1.5 billion in fund balances and then during the recession we were at \$700 million of that. Now, we are back at \$1.5

billion surplus. It was a \$2 billion turnaround." "No other city has been able to come back as fast as DC – from junk bond to AAA rating

now. "Every six months, I go to the University of Chicago — the Booth School — where we have

conferences of the CFOS of the 20 largest TOGRAPHS PARESH GANDHI



Gandhi lets India Abroad in for a peek into his work day.

"Also at the time, I started auditing the IRS for the GAO, and I developed a reputation on the Hill, working with Congressmen and Senators and their staff, and of course, I had a reputation in tax circles."

During his GAO tenure, then US Congressman Jim Florio, later New Jersey governor for a brief period of time, invited Gandhi to study the pension system of New Jersey because he had worked with him on taxation of insurance companies when he was in Congress.

"I spent six months in Trenton," and in 1997, "they promoted me to run the tax department there, but then I got this offer from the then CFO of DC, Tony Williams, to run the tax department of the city and so I came to the city."

"People in the GAO thought I was crazy to leave a GAO SES position to run the DC tax department, which at the time was operating out of shoe boxes, but we reformed and rationalized it and strengthened tax collection."

In those days, whenever this correspondent would meet

cities, and they are all amazed as to how well we are doing now."

"It was truly a financial renaissance for the city and we are doing better than perhaps any other major city in the coun-

"Whenever I look back at my life — where I came from and where I am today, I am simply amazed, not because I have accomplished something great, but because of the twists and turns that I have gone through along the way."

'It is as if I have been in a small boat that left some sleepy shore and sailed inadvertently into a turbulent ocean full of gales and mighty waves before landing onto an unknown port."

"It is the distance that I have traveled, the things that I have



M60 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

PAGE M59

gone through and endured, and yet somehow kept going, not knowing what the next day would bring!'

"I have often wondered what kept me going all these years, and still keeps me going as I am about to retire and embark on the next chapter in my life."

What is it about public service that was such a passion for you?

You could have easily been on Wall Street making tons on money.

The fundamental point here is that America has a fascination for me not for its millionaires and billionaires, but for its great public figures like (Abraham) Lincoln, (Franklin D) Roosevelt and also, of course, Washington, and also its great intellectual figures like Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Henry David Thoreau.

The real strength of America is among these people.

But the orientation I had for public service as opposed to making money is because I believe the library that I had gone to in India in the little town where I was born and the books that I read from Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography and others, (KM) Munshi and Indulal Yagnik; they were deeply devoted to public service.

It was all about how can you contribute to the larger good, and that staved with me.

And even though the field that I selected - accounting, which is as practical as you can get - the question to me was how can I use that accounting to benefit public service, and that is what I've done.

My understanding of accounting and taxation basically helped me educate people on the Hill about how taxes are being avoided and what you can do to prevent this tax avoidance

After that two-decade stint at the GAO, you brought that same passion to the District, which was then in the financial doldrums.

In the same way in the District, the CFO basically has purview of an entire city.

We have a \$10 billion gross budget - \$10 billion coming in, \$10 billion going out.

So, you control revenues, tax collection, estimation, comptrollership, budgeting, treasury operations, borrowing money, and even lottery.

Anything and everything to do with the money must come to the CFO - whether you want to pass as legislation or build a stadium, or build a big hotel.

So, people come with all these notions of doing good, but at the end of the day, it has to be financially viable and feasible.

That's a massive responsibility, particularly since you have to reckon with the politicians and their pet projects...

My 16 years in the District's financial theater, 13 as CFO managing its \$12 billion annual budget, have not been without difficulties.

Practically every day has been a challenge.

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Managing a demoralized tax office staff early during my tenure was particularly daunting.

A 20-year \$50 million embezzlement scheme involving property tax refunds is but one example of the kind of corrupt practices I have had to confront and root out.

Yet, all financial issues in the District - from the fiscal sufficiency of a minor legislative proposal to the building of a \$530 million baseball stadium, from allowing gay couples to file joint tax returns to approving a ground-breaking teach-

The Financial Wizard



Natwar Gandhi, left, with Henry Kissinger.

ers' union contract - the buck starts and stops at the door of the CFO.

I always tell my people - and I have about 1,200 people working for me in the city – that you guys sit in your cubicle doing your financial stuff, collecting taxes, etc and you think nobody knows.

But I tell them I know because what you do here will make it possible for the mayor to provide a program for the homeless, for a welfare child, for a school program, a specialized children's program - and all that is possible only when there is money.

When the city was literally bankrupt with all these hundreds of millions of dollars of deficit, they had to cut services. All the stuff that should have been done, were not done, primarily because there was no money.

So, when you collect taxes, when you stabilize the finances, when you are able to borrow money at a cheap rate, then you make it possible for policy makers to provide the services to take care of the poor and those who are in need.

And the city does have a need.

I believe one-third of Washington, DC is Medicaid eligible - 200,000 people are Medicaid eligible, the City's adult illiteracy is 36 percent, meaning that one out of three residents cannot read or write at a level where they can get a job.

So, if you want to educate those people, we have to make sure the city has money.

Look at any health indices - hypertension, diabetes, infant mortality – we are at the bottom in the country.

So, to take care of those people that will need money, lots of money.

I just gave an additional \$190 million for the remainder of 2013 in our revenue estimation and the mayor said \$100 million will be put into affordable housing.

So, once again, that is possible only when you have stable finances and that is how you use your skills to do that. An ancient Athenian oath says:

We will ever strive for the ideals and sacred things of the

city, both alone and with many. We will unceasingly seek to quicken the sense of public duty.

We will revere and obey the city's laws. We will transmit this city not only not less, but greater, bet-

ter, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.' This has been my creed and this is what I have tried to do over the last 16 years in Washington, DC.

As you retire - apparently they have still not been able to find a suitable successor and I believe the Mayor has implored you to stay on a little longer till there is someone to fill your shoes - and reflect on your tenure, how much of a sense of fulfillment do you feel that you have been able to make a tangible and significant difference in the city that was virtually bankrupt and also called the Murder Capital of the World? An enormous sense of satisfaction.

First of all, professionally, I have never done more important work in my life than what I have done in the city - being able to stabilize the city's finances, preside over a \$10-billion financial enterprise, help elected leadership to accomplish



PAGE M62 \rightarrow



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M62 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

← PAGE M60

their vision of taking care of the poor, taking care of the city's economic development.

So, on that larger scale, I've been extraordinarily lucky to be able to do that.

On a personal scale, as I've often mentioned to you in the several interviews and interactions we've had over the years, I am a first-generation Indian immigrant with an accent — some would say a heavy accent — and I am the chief financial officer of the nation's capital.

This is because of the generous American people and their policy of inviting people from all over the world.

And, no matter where they come from, as long as you can contribute, they are willing to give you a position and opportunity to contribute.

This is truly remarkable and that is why I said if you recall the words of Henry Luce, that the 20th century is an American century, I contend that the 21st century will also be an American century, because despite all of the problems that we have in this country, because of its liberal immigration policies, its innovation, its constant adaptability, will make sure that we always stay in the forefront... and to me that is really the strength of this country.

In addition to your public service to the Washington area community, as well as to the US Congress in educating them and keeping them abreast on a plethora of fiscal policies, you have also never shied away from being an Indian-American community activist.

I remember in the early 1980s you were in the forefront of testifying before Congress when the family reunification provisions of the immigration bill were being threatened by the Simpson-Mazzoli bill.

Also over the years, you've been a conspicuous presence at

community events — political, cultural, professional, and always on hand to support and mentor the first and next generation of Indian Americans.

What has made you always find the time to also be an Indian-American community activist?

I firmly believe it is your duty to be a contributing member of that community and to see how you can help the others to the extent we can provide a role model to others.

If because of either luck, chance, ability, education, that I have all these advantages, I want to be sure that others can participate in those advantages.

To me, it was extremely important that Simpson-Mazzoli (*Act of 1986*) liberalized our immigration laws instead of restricting them.

The Financial Wizard

10



Along with his demanding career, Natwar Gandhi has made time for his family, below, for the community, above, and for his passions. Along with writing poetry and learning music, he has also dabbled in acting, starring as Mahatma Gandhi in a play, right.





Thanks to our efforts, it led to the second major wave of liberalization in the 1980s that brought in hordes of specialized technicians, professionals, who could contribute to this community in a significant way.

Secondly, I believe in this country, more than anywhere else, it is organized action that matters.

In Sanskrit there is a proverb that says, *sangra shakti kaloyugay*, which means that it isn't just individual action, it has to be organized action that becomes a force.

I believe the Indian-American community in an organized





M63 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

In the seat of extraordinary powers and responsibilities

hortly after Dr Natwar Gandhi finished a decade in office as chief financial officer, District of Columbia, he had spoken to **Aziz Haniffa** about the financial rejuvination of DC. An excerpt from that interview:

You are perhaps the longest-serving Indian-American CFO in any administration. What has made you stick around for this long?

The CFO in DC is among the most important positions in the local government anywhere in the country. The CFO here has extraordinary powers and responsibilities.

Congress established the Control Board here just after the state of New York did for the city of New York and at that time they removed all the financial powers and responsibilities from the mayor and the council and put everything under the CFO.

It made him independent of the mayor and the council. So, the mayor appoints the CFO, the council confirms the CFO, but the mayor cannot fire the CFO without a cause. He has to have a two-thirds majority of the council and the decision has to wait on the Hill (*Congress*) for 30 days.

This is as independent a CFO you can find anywhere in the country. You can disagree with the mayor in the morning, (but) you can still be in office that afternoon. Everywhere else, you'll be sitting at home.

The idea here was that Congress wanted to assure itself that it wouldn't have to worry about the city anymore. The combined \$10 billion budget of the city is the responsibility of Congress. So, when it went basically insolvent in the mid-1990s, by appointing the Control Board and giving all the power to the CFO, they made sure the city would always remain financially viable, would always have a balanced budget and would access the credit markets.

All the financial people in the city - 1,200 of them - report to the District's CFO.

So, the CFO in the police department, the fire department, schools, all report to the District CFO and not to the police commissioner or mayor or anyone else.

Again, the idea here is the CFO should have flexibility and all the authority and the power to mange these finances...

This is probably your longest stint after your days at the Government Accountability Office and your earlier days as an aide to then Governor Jim Florio of New Jersey and as a professor.

Why didn't you accept some of the offers to join the Obama administration?

I find the job of the CFO the most challenging and most rewarding job of my career.

I was offered a few positions in the Obama administration, basically to run HUD (*Housing and Urban Development*) as the chief of staff, to become an assistant secretary at the Veterans Administration and also a top job at the commerce department. A flashback to the time Natwar Gandhi crossed the 10-year milestone as chief financial officer of the District of Columbia.



Natwar Gandhi finds the job of CFO of DC the most challenging and most rewarding of his career.

I met all three secretaries, but at the end of the day, those positions are — how shall I put it — you are answering to someone.

Here, you don't have a so-called boss.

Of course, you work very closely with the mayor, with the council, with Congress, with the administration, particularly OMB, but at the end of the day, you are independent.

How much did the embezzlement that happened in the DC tax office affect your credibility and integrity?

If you live long in public life in this country, such things happen all the time.

Even though I have a 5-year tenure, I always say, you take one day at a time. You never forget that.

The second thing is that the embezzlement was going on

for 20 plus years, long before I was there.

My sense is that, you do the best you can and you have seen the results here. I am doing the best I can.

I take full responsibility, but people realized that that's not my doing and they also thought that I was the best person to fix that.

As far as I know, you've had very good relations with all the mayors you served as well as the lawmakers in Congress who serve the committees that have jurisdiction over DC and the powers that be in Wall Street.

The DC mayors' relationship with Congress have hardly been amiable.

How have you balanced these relationships?

What has led to the mayors appointing you again and again?

In the mid-1990s, we had about \$500 million in deficit in our fund balance and then we went to \$1.5 billion in fund balance surplus.

Since then we've had 14 consecutive balanced budgets from junk bonds to triple AAA (*shows pocket chart he carries around indicating the continuing rise in the city's surplus*).

I joined the city in 1997. Since that time it has been a surplus every year and we've gotten numerous credit upgrades. We currently enjoy a Triple AAA credit rating.

So, what I have is built up credibility and at the end of the day — and this is the American genius — they look at a person and see the guy has done the work, has credibility.

There was a time I remember, during the Marion Barry era, when people were leaving DC in droves, but now the housing market in DC is said to be one of the highest in the country.

How do you feel that all this, in a sense, has happened during your watch?

We had an excellent mayor in Williams, followed by Fenty and now Gray. I believe the city has gone through a renaissance.

Right now, it is the most attractive commercial real estate property market in the country, if not the world.

People want to come to the city. It's kind of a hip city. Younger people want to live in a city where they can walk to restaurants, theaters, museums, movies. You can certainly do it here.

If you remember, in the mid-1990s, DC was called the murder capital of the world. It is all changed now...

The city has more first-rate theaters per capita than any place in the country. It has the world renowned Shakespeare Theatre, the Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, among others.

Also, because it's the federal seat of power, the city has great attraction.

We have among the most sophisticated populace in the country and a great deal of the stability comes from the federal government.



M64 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



hen Navin Jarecha's dear friend from college wrote to him about his frustrating job as a gofer in a wholesale cloth market in Bombay, he knew he had to do something.

The Natwar Gandhi he remembered was a brilliant mind — after all they had bonded over writing poetry — and he knew his friend would be destroyed if he didn't get him out.

Jarecha left no stone unturned — from arranging admission for Gandhi, to getting him a visa, organizing his tickets and a scholarship — in getting his friend to the United States.

This is the story of a rare friendship.

How did you and Natwar Gandhi meet and become friends?

We were students at Sydenham College in Bombay. We used to write poetry together, so that's how we became friends.

He's been writing poetry for a very long time — this goes back to 1955 or 1960.

I came here in 1960, he came here in 1965. I came for my MBA and I staved.

We were still connected then through letters and all that. And then he came too.

You played a role in his coming over to the US? What was that like?

He wrote me a letter telling me that it's not worth living in India.

He was very frustrated. He was a brilliant mind, and he was working at a cloth market in Bombay. He was working as a, you know, people tell him, 'Go get this, go get that.'

Can you imagine this guy running around getting tea and all this stuff?

It's unbelievable the life that he lived there.

He wrote me a letter and explained the cir-

cumstances of living in a *kholi* (*a small room*), and he had to change his house every three months because you can't afford to get a place in Bombay when you don't even have a job.

I sent him some money and told him to get his passport ready.

I was a businessman and had gone to school in Atlanta, so I had to sign all the papers and take responsibility for him.

Then we sent him the I-20 and I got some funds together for his tuition and transportation. Then I sent him the ticket and he came.

I picked him up at the airport with his little briefcase with all his papers, no clothes, nothing. I had told him not to bring anything.

We stopped at a store and picked up clothes and everything for him, and the rest is history.

You helped him tremendously...

I sponsored him. He was a student and then I got him a part-time job.

Whatever other little things he needed, like going out to eat and all that, I would take care of it.

The money he was making, he was sending it to his wife because she was in India, and she needed support money too because she was not working.

So, we worked it out like that.

When he finished and he started a job, he was on his own

'Can you imagine this guy running around getting tea?'

In conversation with **Chaya Babu**, Navin Jarecha, the friend who helped Natwar Gandhi escape a deadbeat job and come to the US, looks back at a friendship that has lasted almost 60 years.

Navin Jarecha has helped other people come to the US too, but, he says, Natwar Gandhi is the best of them in what he has done for the country and the economy here.

after that.

After his MBA, he went for his PhD.

As his friend, how have you seen him change and grow over all this time and through his career?

Well, he was always very smart.

When he was in India and we were writing poetry together, he was brilliant in that and almost anything that he did was like this.

That was the main incentive for me to get him here. I knew that he would just destroy himself, that the country would destroy him, and he would not get a chance to grow at all back there.

I'm talking about the '50s and '60s, when it was difficult to get a job that will pay you even Rs 150.

In fact, I had the experience: I went back to India in 1970 to 1975. I couldn't get a job with my MBA there. It was very difficult then.

Right now it's very easy, but in those days there were very few industries and very few jobs. I could not work in a high school doing clerical work.

You couldn't get a job there unless you knew somebody. I've helped other people come here too, but he's the best

one who has rewarded himself and the country and the economy here.

He was working at the University of Pittsburgh and he got

recruited into working at the Government Accountability Office. And from there, he was picked by the United States Senate to head the Washington job because Marion Barry (*then mayor of the District of Columbia*) had messed it up totally. He was running a deficit for quite a few years.

So, they put someone in charge who was reporting to a commission that was established by the Senate. And he reported directly to them instead of the mayor.

Once they were happy with him, they turned him loose on his own, and he was his own boss; he didn't have to report to the mayor even or anyone else.

I am so proud of the job he has done. Beyond any doubt, he's a very honest person, so nobody can point any fingers at him to even say, 'You took \$2 worth of a bribe,' and that is the greatest thing.

He has a very strong character. He's a real Gandhian, with the name, the culture and the character.

Natwar Gandhi has these two sides to him — the finance and the poetry. How does he balance the-

se? He was writing even before college, and so was I, so it was always developing.

Him, myself, and Meghnad Bhatt — he was a part of us three musketeers writing poetry, but unfortunately Bhatt has passed away now.

Gandhi is very much into literature, but also very much into the field of accounting and finance. He has written quite a few poetry books, and the first one he wrote he dedicated to me.

I was a good friend of his wife and his children, Apoorva and Sona. There was just a natural talent on the literature side.

Didn't he want to pursue that as a profession?

One has to make a living (*laughing*). You cannot make a living writing poetry!

Even with me, I have an MBA and a business, but I'm a photographer.

So, a lot of people have two sides because you can't make living out of one, so you have to stick to the other one where you make a living.





M65 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M64

But he has a great passion for the writing, and he's a very accomplished poet.

How has Natwar Gandhi fulfilled his goals through his career in finance and economics?

A big example is what he has done with the DC finances — there's almost \$2 billion in surplus right now, compared to \$.5 billion deficit before he took over. And he hasn't missed a year without accumulating more on the plus side, so that is a great achievement.

He's also known as 'Dr No' because every penny coming into Washington and going out has to go through him, so the city council cannot just do whatever they want to do; it has to go through him.

How is he known amongst friends?

Personally he's known for his literature and for being a very friendly person.

He will not look down on anyone; he will make friends with rich, poor, known, unknown.

He's a member of the Gujarati Literary Academy here. In fact, we were the charter members of it; we started it with a few other people, and it's a 30- or 40-something year old organization now in New York.

Some of his writing is on the theme of the American dream. What does that mean to him?

We discuss this a lot — it's been about 40 or almost 50 years now.

When were young, we'd always talk about what we were going to do next, how were going to plan our lives and all that.

'Can you imagine this guy running around getting tea?'



Natwar Gandhi, left, at a community event. While Washington, DC knows him as the formidable 'Dr No,' his friends know him for his grasp of literature and for being a friendly person.

I think he's done a really good job of staying in touch with India but excelling here.

But I think he realizes that if he were in India, he would not have amounted to much the way he has been able to do here.

He very firmly believes that this is a country of opportunity if you have the talent and if you're willing to work at it.

In the days when he came here and I came here, it wasn't like that at all in India — now maybe it's more possible and it's getting there.

The opportunities exist now. I think we both think it's much closer to (*being a place*

of opportunity) except for the corruption part of it.

It has made great strides in terms of the industry and economy and liberalization and everything else.

So, the good and bad is coming with it - with the advancement, corruption has gotten out of control.

I think we both feel this way, if corruption wasn't there, we would be so much further ahead. And yes, he cares very much about India still.

How has he embodied this dream and how does he continue to do so?

Natwar has made great strides in making himself a full-fledged American, besides being actually Indian.

He has accomplished a lot by taking charge of his life; he has taken advantage of every opportunity, job, or assignment that came his way, whether that be in finance or literature. Did you know he played Gandhi in one of the plays in Washington? And that got very good reviews!

He's a great man, and he will be great in the rest of his life. He will accomplish a lot in addition to what he has accomplished.

I think he's going to devote himself more to social issues and literature (*after retirement*). I think he'll be traveling and speaking a lot, including in India.

He gets invited to speak to impart his wisdom to a lot of people, and I'm sure he'll be helping a lot of people.

I think that's what I expect of him.

I always tell him: 'I helped you. Now you help other people.' \blacksquare

ing the Bush years, as to what went wrong in this country, particularly its foreign policy, and the disastrous wars that we had undertaken in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Why did I return to literature late in life to publish three collections of poems written mostly in arcane Sanskrit meters?

Or for that matter, why now at an advanced age of 72, am I taking piano lessons?

Why did I accept my first-ever acting role playing the lead character of Mahatma Gandhi in a highly cerebral play about the independence and Partition of India? (*The play was recently performed in several cities, including at the landmark Shakespeare Theater in Washington, DC*).

I seem to be driven by an abiding ambition to be relevant and to excel in whatever it is that I am doing at any particular point in my life.

I do not think I can settle for mediocrity or insignificance.

This desire to excel pushes me to strive to overcome, and not reconcile with, the difficulties that I face. ■



fashion can make much more of a difference as you have seen first-hand and indeed reported first-hand.

PAGE M62

If one sits in one's office and you do your own thing, that's well and good, but collective, concerted action is the heart of the American democracy, and unless you have a collective action you will not succeed.

It was this kind of collective action that made us prevail when we made sure that Congress and Congressional leaders addressed our concerns on the immigration issue nearly three decades ago.

You have said that now in your retirement years, you want to engage your passion for poetry — it was at 64 that you wrote your first book of poetry.

You are learning music at age 72.

You have also set out on another wonderful journey with your significant other and want to travel with her and share your common love for poetry.

The Financial Wizard

How important is it for you to continue to give vent to these passions at this stage of your life and live life to the fullest?

I believe the real lesson one has to learn about life is one has to make sure there is a constant renewal, and the more diverse interests you have, the more alive you become — the more rejuvenated you are.

Of course, I specialized in accountancy, but that does not mean that I don't have other facets of my life. In Sanskrit again, I would say that you must have *sahitya sangetu kala vihayna, shakhda the pashpuhta vishaheyhegnam*, which translates into — if you don't have interest in literature, if you don't have those interests, then you are basically living an animal life.

I believe specializing in accounting has not brutalized my sensitivity.

If anything, I crave for it more and I always had interest in life and literature in politics, but because I devoted the bulk of my life to the professional of accounting, at some point I said, if I want to be a poet, maybe it's about time to begin.

So, I concentrated on writing poetry and I have now published three volumes.

America, America, comprising 50 sonnets, which I have done in highly disciplinary Sanskrit, and they are about reflections of an immigrant in America, how I see America.

The next volume is *India*, *India*, where as an immigrant, I've settled in this country, but when I go back to India, what do I see there — how does India look to me now.

There are another 50 sonnets on India, viewed from an American perspective of a naturalized citizen.

And, then the third volume called *Pennsylvania Avenue*, because my office overlooks Pennsylvania Avenue, and it talks about my disillusionment, particularly dur-

M66 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'The man of my dreams'

The most surprising thing that I learned about Natwar Gandhi was that he was no boring bean counter; he was a romantic, says **Panna Naik.**

met Natwar Gandhi about 35 years ago. Suresh Dalal, the late distinguished Gujarati poet and a dear friend, was visiting the United States. I took him to Washington. Gandhi had just moved to Washington on a one-year fellowship from Pittsburgh where he was on the faculty of Pitt Business School. He was our host in DC and had arranged a literary program for us.

Gandhi's fascinating literary introduction of Suresh showed a deep familiarity and understanding of Gujarati poetry. He even selected a beautiful poem from Suresh's vast oeuvre and recited it so well that both Suresh and I were impressed. He had dabbled in poetry in his college years.

While I wrote poetry in blank verse, Gandhi's forays into poetry were in classical mode and in difficult Sanskrit meters. He showed an amazing grasp of Sanskrit meters and mostly wrote sonnets.

It was only later that I learned that he was an accountant by profession and had never studied literature.

I thought I should get to know him better.

In the years that followed, we collaborated to establish the Gujarati Literary Academy of North America of which he became the founding secretary-treasurer and I became president. In the process of organizing the Academy's many programs throughout the East Coast, we visited each other often and developed a close family friendship

ship. While I devoted myself to developing a literary career, Gandhi concentrated on his professional career — first in academia and then in government.

His one-year fellowship in Washington turned into a government career in senior positions first at the US General Accounting Office and then in the government of the District of Columbia.

Gandhi is credited with playing a significant role in the District's financial transformation from a near-insolvent, junk bond-rated jurisdiction into a financially stable, AAA-rated municipality.

I got to know Gandhi better in the last few years as we drew closer for we both had lost our respective spouses a few years ago after decades of marriage.

The most surprising thing that I learned about him was that he was no boring bean counter. He was a romantic!

Despite his stern reputation (Dr No!) as the District's Chief Financial Officer responsible for its \$12 billion budget and perennially obsessed with its overspending and deficits, Gandhi was a romantic at heart with choice poetry on his tongue.



Natwar Gandhi with Panna Naik at the India Abroad Person of the Year Awards last year.

He knows I like roses, so he never fails to bring me roses every time he visits me.

Recently on a cruise, he would habitually wake up early around 4 am (a most annoying habit!) and write a sonnet for me every day. When I would wake up, he would read the day's fresh sonnet to me as we relished our morning tea in balcony overlooking the Caribbean Sea.

What could be more romantic for a woman?

Gandhi is a driven man. He came from a very humble background and reached the pinnacle of his profession, yet he never takes himself seriously. He often says if you take your work seriously but not yourself, you get a lot done in Washington. What I like best about him is his quick-witted, selfdeprecatory sense of humor. He has hair jokes (he is bald) and government jokes (he has been a civil servant most of his life) in equal number. He is famous among friends for his uproarious laughter.

Above all, he makes me laugh, and I like that in a man.

I also like his venturesome nature. He wants to try out different things, away from his 24/7 job and the office.

Late in life he rejuvenated his love for poetry and published three well-received collections of his poems. He often goes around the country giving poetry recitals. We just returned from giving such recitals in the United Kingdom.

As if this is not enough, last year he played a lead role of Mahatma Gandhi in a two-hour play about India's independence movement and the Partition. The play had performances around the country, including one in Washington's the prestigious Shakespeare Theater with the District's political establishment, including the mayor, in attendance.

This thespian venture was his first ever, yet he did not hesitate to take such a demanding role in a highly intellectual play. Only recently, he began learning the piano!

Last year, we were in India giving poetry recitals. The Indian trip brought us together, and we talked a lot about our life together and committed to each other.

In preparation for our future together, he decided to give up his prestigious CFO position. He said he wanted to spend more time with me and travel and do things together that we both like.

He sent shockwaves in Washington by resigning the position to which he was nominated and confirmed for a third 5-year term only in July last year. (He has been the longest serving -13 years! municipal CFO in the country).

The Washington Post carried the story of his resignation on the front page of its A-section above the fold February 1, 2013.

As I look forward to being with him in my golden years, I feel extraordinarily lucky.

At last, I have found the man of my dreams.

Panna Naik is a distinguished Gujarati poet who has been active on the Gujarati literary front for about four decades. She has also done pioneering work in the teaching of Gujarati language and taught second-generation students for years in her capacity as adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania.



M67 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

Role model of the immigrant narrative

Natwar Gandhi is a shining example of the kind of person who comes here from modest means and puts to work his talents and tenacity to achieve great things, says Washington, DC Mayor Vincent Gray.

commend India Abroad for its decision to honor Dr Natwar Gandhi with the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Over the past 16 years, Gandhi has provided sterling leadership in his financial management of the District of Columbia. First as tax commissioner and later as chief financial officer, Gandhi has used his superb intellect and interpersonal skills, often under difficult circumstances, to improve the District's financial standing.

I am proud to have partnered with Gandhi to improve the fiscal standing of the district to the point where we now enjoy AAA ratings from Wall Street, a robust fund balance for rainy days, and economic development projects that are the envy of every other city in the country.

Our nation is one that welcomes men and women from all over the world to pursue their dreams and contribute to society. Gandhi is a shining example of the kind of role model and leader who comes to this country from modest

'My turnaround partner'

Anthony Williams, former Mayor, Washington, DC, hails Natwar Gandhi.

s the chief financial officer for the District of Columbia, Dr Natwar Gandhi has been the District's foremost proponent of responsible fiscal stewardship. In my decade working with Dr Gandhi, including my time as mayor of the District of Columbia, Gandhi was my turnaround

and a persistent advocate for the District's fiscal health. He presided over an everexpanding string of balanced budgets, clean audit opinions, and increasing bond ratings as the District recorded the most rapid recovery from fiscal insolvency in US historv.

partner, a voice of eminent competence,

In what was a crucial crisis period for the District of Columbia, Gandhi exhibited diligence and discipline as he navigated the District on a conservative path to revamp its financial status and future, an approach that has been vindicated by the District's current financial strength.

Gandhi's tenure as CFO has won acclaim

and respect from our City Council, the Washington-area business community, Wall Street and international observers. Perhaps most importantly, Gandhi has engendered





means and puts to work his talents and tenacity to achieve great things and make a difference for the common good.

Columbia, my deepest thanks for recognizing Gandhi for his outstanding work on behalf of our beloved city.

On the behalf of the residents of the District of Vincent Gray is Mayor, District of Columbia.



Natwar Gandhi presents the District of Columbia's annual financial report in 2004. Standing behind him is then DC Mayor Anthony Williams.



M68 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013





Natwar Gandhi is today recognized as a master of urban finance.

← PAGE M67

respect for the District before the US Congress and has received consistent praise from the District's congressional oversight committees for his contributions to the District's financial performance.

His steadfast commitment to fiscal integrity, balanced budgets and clean audit opinions serve as a successful model for other cities struggling to improve their financial systems.

As CFO, Gandhi enforced politically diffi-

Under Gandhi's leadership...

The District of Columbia has gone from a fiscal embarrassment to one of the most solidly financed jurisdictions in the country, says **Alice M Rivlin**, former director, Office of Management and Budget.

atwar Gandhi, who recently announced his retirement as chief financial officer of the District of Columbia, leaves the capital city of the United States in far better fiscal shape than he

The one-time accounting student from a village in Gujarat earned widespread admiration for his skill in transforming the financial condition of the city of Washington and is a recognized leader in urban finance in his adopted country.

Although Washington is the capital of a wealthy nation, the city itself has a weak tax base and a history of fiscal miss-management.

In 1995, the city was virtually bankrupt and the federal government had to come to its rescue. As budget director in President Bill Clinton's administration at the time, I was charged with finding a way to put the city back on its fiscal feet.

We knew a temporary bail-out would not suffice. We had to make a lasting institutional change and install stronger financial leadership. So, we created a new position — an independent chief financial officer with major powers and responsibilities.

Gandhi was recruited by the first CFO, Anthony Williams, to straighten out the struggling tax administration of the city, but was promoted to CFO in 2000 soon after Williams became mayor. Under Gandhi's leadership, the city has gone from a fiscal embarrassment to one of the most solidly financed jurisdictions in the country. It now has a strong fund balance, an excellent credit rating, and its financial management systems have gone from creaky and inadequate to modern and informative. Professional tax collection has enabled the improvement of public services.

Gandhi has overseen the financing of major economic development projects, including a handsome new baseball stadium, and neighborhoods are reviving all over the city.

As Gandhi leaves his challenging post, he should feel a strong sense of satisfaction at a job well done.

Residents of Washington should be grateful for his hard work on their behalf, and the Indian-American community should be proud of his contributions. ■

Alice Rivlin served as director, Office of Management and Budget (becoming the first woman to hold the Cabinet-level position), and as vice chair, Federal Reserve, during the Bill Clinton administration. She also served in President Barack Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. She is currently visiting professor, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, and senior fellow, economic studies, The Brookings Institution.



cult decisions to ensure the protection for the long-term financial interests and stability of the District.

Perhaps more important than his professional accomplishments, Gandhi is a trusted friend to leaders throughout the District of Columbia. His personal character, commitment and charisma throughout his service to the District have augmented his work to bring assurance and confidence back to the District's financial operations.

Gandhi often refers to himself as 'just a bean counter.' Those of us who know him understand that his contributions extend far beyond his financial acumen.

As a colleague and friend, it is a pleasure

to watch him succeed and receive such an outstanding honor as the India Abroad Lifetime Achievement Award 2012. \blacksquare

Anthony Williams served as the first chief financial officer of the District of Columbia. He also served as a two-term mayor of the District.



M69 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



For being one of the world's most brilliant economists; for pushing the frontiers of economic thought; for being a true genius poised for greater glory.





Raj Chetty is the winner of the 2012 MacArthur Fellowship, popularly known as the genius grant, and the John Bates Clark Medal, otherwise known as the Baby Nobel.

The Genius

aj Chetty may not have been around when you last bought olive oil or the therapeutic soap or cake mix at a supermarket.

But he was at a California supermarket a few years ago, checking out if customers calculated what a bottle of shampoo and other items would cost with sales tax, and if knowing this before they reached the counter would led them to change their mind about buying the items.

It was one of many experiments that have made Harvard Public Economy Professor Raj Chetty, 33, one of the most discussed and honored economists in the country.

The traditional assumption in economics, he has said, is that you are keeping such taxes in

He is often mistaken by grad students at Harvard as one of their classmates till he takes the podium... **Arthur J Pais** profiles **Raj Chetty**, the **India Abroad Face of the Future Award 2012**, one of the world's most brilliant economists, who may win a Nobel Prize one day.

mind when you make purchasing decisions. 'But we wanted to test the assumption and we started studying the buying pattern in a large grocery store, with the owner agreeing on putting special price tags on items.'

PAGE M70 →





Year

2012

CELEBRATING

YEARS





PAGE M69

We added these tags that said \$7.99 plus California sales tax equals whatever the price of the item was,' he said in an interview over three years ago, adding that the owners limited the experiment to hair care products and cosmetics. They assumed the price tags would cause customers to buy less.

"They (*the owners*) were right," Chetty had said in an interview with *India Abroad* then. "We were able to show that demand for these products fell by 8 or 10 percent. It was as if customers were ignoring the tax before we put these tags on."

*1

You don't have to be a Nobel Laureate to know that good teachers have a huge and life-long impact on students. But it becomes a formidable argument when economists like Raj Chetty study the achievements of teachers and their students, collect extensive data and create information that not only makes into the national media, but also catches the attention of President Obama who used it in a State of the Union address.

Chetty and his colleagues, including Harvard Kennedy School associate professor of public policy John Friedman, examined data from Project STAR, a study of nearly 12,000 Tennessee kindergartners conducted in the mid-1980s.

Other analyses of Project STAR showed that children in small classes, and those with the best teachers, scored higher on standardized tests in the primary grades.

But by the time those students reached junior high, the advantage vanished, a phenomenon known as 'fade out.'

'By the time they're in seventh or eighth grade, the kids in a better kindergarten class are not doing any better on tests than the kids in not-sogood classes,' Chetty told the *Harvard Gazette*.

Conventional wisdom held that the boost from a good kindergarten ebbed with time. 'What's really surprising about our study,' Chetty says, 'is that (*the advantage*) comes back in adulthood,' he added.

When he and his colleagues looked at what the students — now in their early 30s — recently earned, they found that those who had the best kindergarten teachers are better off.

'We estimate that if you move from an average teacher to an excellent teacher, each student gains an average of \$1,000 per year in earnings,' Chetty, who recalls he had excellent teachers at the St Columbus school in New Delhi, has said. 'If you add that up over a student's working life, and adjust for inflation and interest rates, you get a total lifetime gain of around \$16,000 per child.'

'In a classroom with an average of 20 students, an excellent teacher means a total gain in earnings of \$320,000 for the entire class. And stu-



Raj and Sundari Chetty with Montek Singh Ahluwalia, deputy chairman, India's Planning Commission. Raj caught the eye of not just economists, but also the media and politicians soon after he began teaching at UC, Berkeley.

The Genius

dents from small classes experienced other important advantages — they were more likely to attend college, to own a home, and to save for retirement.'

New Delhi-born Chetty, the third child and the only son of economist and Boston University professor Dr V K Chetty and Tufts medical researcher Dr Anne (Anbu) Chetty, is a gangly but towering personality.

He looks much younger than his age and is often mistaken by grad students at Harvard as one of their classmates till he takes the podium, dressed elegantly but casually.

He graduated from the University School of Milwaukee in 1997 after having come to America at age nine and started on a healthier life, putting behind his severely asthmatic childhood.

He received his BA from Harvard in 2000 and PhD from Harvard in 2003 at the age of 23. He was an assistant professor at UC-Berkeley and returned to Harvard in 2009 as one of the youngest tenured professors in Harvard's 350year history.

Chetty has been named one of the top economists in the world by *The New York Times* and the *Economist* magazine. In 2012, he received a MacArthur 'Genius' Fellowship for 'illuminating the key policy issues of our time.'

Most recently, he received the John Bates Clark medal, given by the American Economic Association to the best American economist under age 40. Many previous winners of the Clark Medal have gone on to win the Nobel Prize.

At 33, Chetty is the youngest-ever recipient of the Clark Medal since 1947.

'Raj Chetty is a remarkably productive economist whose contributions assimilate evidence using a variety of methodological perspectives to shed new light on important public policy questions,' AEA said in a statement, announcing the





INDIA ABROAD FACE OF THE FUTURE AWARD

One of the youngest professors at Princeton, mathematician extraordinaire, a musician of unusual talent, Dr **Manjul Bhargava** won the inaugural India Abroad Face of the Future Award 2008.

An astrophysicist exploring brave new worlds, she pushes the frontiers of our knowledge, constantly. It is the enchanting promise of future achievements that India Abroad recognized last year by conferring on Dr **Priyamvada Natarajan** its Face of the Future Award 2009.

A pioneering innovator in social networking, he built Foursquare, a community of 20 million people and counting across the world. We honored **Naveen Selvadurai** with the India Abroad Face of the Future Award 2010.

For being a technological genius; for developing innovative sensor systems to improve the quality of daily life; and for being a brilliant, young visionary, we honored MacArthur Fellow Dr **Shwetak Patel** with the India Abroad Face of the Future Award 2011.


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M72 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Clark Medal, which is often called the 'Baby Nobel,' for Chetty.

'His work extends basic price theory by incorporating behavioral and psychological aspects of economic behavior; reconciles results from different branches of economics, whether between structural and reduced form economists, or among previously inconsistent estimates of key parameters such as labor supply elasticities; and employs data that are uniquely suited to answer otherwise unanswerable questions.'

'He has,' the AEA noted, 'established himself in a few short years as arguably the best applied micro-economist of his generation.

What sets Chetty apart from many of his colleagues is that he comes up with creative ways of using data to understand how the economy works, many academics, including his Harvard mentor the legendary Martin Feldstein, have said.

"He conducts his experiments in the real time and in the real world," says Feldstein.

Henry Aaron, an economist at the Brookings Institution, a Washington, DC think tank, told Marketplace.org that Chetty has a unique ability to look at data sets and ask the right questions.

And when you marry those two you get results to which people pay attention,' Aaron explained, 'and I think that's been the case with Raj Chetty.'

Just as he was beginning to teach at Berkeley, Chetty started catching media attention.

'At 28, economist Raj Chetty aligns theories with realworld facts, leading him to surprising conclusions on taxes, investing, and welfare,' wrote *The American*, the online magazine of the American Enterprise Institute, under the title The Experimenter.

'He combines a clean understanding of economic theory with a great interest in data and the real world,' James Poterba, chairman of MIT's economics department, told The American.

For 25 years, economists have debated how US corporations would react if there is a drastic change in rates, and when the dividend tax rate was cut from a high of 35 percent to 15 percent in 2003 Chetty and his collaborator, Emmanuel Saez, were the first to analyze the data and look for changes, noted Poterba.

In their study, Dividend Taxes and Corporate Behavior: Evidence from the 2003 Dividend Tax Cut, published in The Quarterly Journal of Economics in 2005, Chetty and Saez found not only that more companies paid out dividends after rates were lowered, but also that they were likelier to pay dividends if top executives had substantial shareholdings in the firm.

The study found that efficiency and productivity suffered when the dividend tax rate is too high - or when top executives own too few shares.

Those factors can drive a wedge between the interests of CEOs and shareholders, encouraging managements to reinvest earnings in lower-priority projects or frivolous purchases, like a nonessential corporate jet or a plush office, The American said.

When rates were higher, Chetty explained, executives 'had a stronger incentive to keep that money within the firm and get that private jet, instead of paying it out in the form ... of

The Genius



President Barack Obama mentioned the findings of Raj Chetty, left, and John Friedman's report titled 'The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood' in a State of the Union address.

dividend income.'

The study was in response to the 2003 dividend tax cut by the Bush administration, which increased dividend payouts by companies by about 20 percent.

"My research and findings are not swayed by political considerations," Chetty told India Abroad. "For me, the empirical data is the starting point. Some of my conclusions may please the Republicans and some, liberal Democrats and unions.

Many of his research projects have similarly challenged the prevailing wisdom.

Among Chetty's many admirers is the 2001 Nobel Laureate, George Akerlof who has described Chetty's work as 'revolutionary.'

'He had a new way of looking at the problems of the unemployed. Raj emphasized that they find it very difficult to meet their prior commitments,' he told The American. 'For example, they must pay their rent or their mortgage, and these commitments very much add to the difficulties of being unemployed. Economists were just not thinking of that until Raj came up with it. This is a very big innovation in the theory of unemployment.'

In How Does Your Kindergarten Classroom Affect Your Earnings? Evidence from Project STAR, Chetty and colleagues examined the long-run effects of the Tennessee STAR experiment, which randomized students into classrooms with few students or the conventional number.

The economists then persuaded the Internal Revenue Service to link students in the STAR study to their later tax records, allowing them to estimate the long-term impact of class size.

The views of Chetty admirers, including Martin Feldstein, were reflected in the MacArthur 'Genius' citation: 'By asking simple, penetrating questions and developing rigorous theoretical and empirical tests, Chetty's timely, often surprising, findings in applied economics are illuminating key policy issues of our time.

About three years ago Esquire magazine listed him as one of 'The Brightest: 16 Geniuses Who Give Us Hope.

'He may never be a best-selling author. Instead, he'll just change the way we live,' declared the feature's author Mark Warren.

Chetty says he is humbled by the attention and the awards. "I did not ask for any of these honors," he said. "Even when the MacArthur came about, I was totally surprised. I was having lunch with my mother in a Boston restaurant. I took the call, not knowing what it was about. The awards and honors are reminders that I must continue my work that could benefit a very large number of people, especially children." ■





What I like really about academics is that nobody cares about what your age is. It's more about who has the best ideas.' **Raj Chetty** tells

f you enjoy playing chess and listening to A R Rahman, you can have a good time at Raj and Sundari Chetty's home in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Arthur J Pais.

If you enjoy fine food and improvised dishes like the Naan Pizza that the couple whips up for his six nephews and nieces, you will have an even more interesting time.

The Harvard economist recently made time for an interview with India Abroad, ranging from his taste in movies to his politically "incorrect" research findings.

A few years ago I was interviewing another MacArthur 'Genius' Dr Atul Gawande who said one of his guilty pleasures was mystery books, particularly by novelists like Eric Ambler. What are your guilty pleasures?

I like watching 'action movies' similar to Law and Order and any sort of sports, rather than books.

Have you seen Iron Man 3? What are some of your favorite action films?

I have not yet seen the newest Iron Man. But I saw Zero Dark Thirty a few months ago, and I liked it.

Among the favorites is a movie I saw a long time ago, The Fugitive.

I was in high school at that time. I found it a very exciting and entertaining movie. It was about a doctor who has been falsely accused of killing his wife.

At that time I was thinking about becoming a doctor, so maybe I related to it in some way.

I like watching these detective type shows like Law and Order, shows that involve some logic and are entertaining

There's another show called Numb3rs that is about a mathematical detective. These are what I find interesting.

You were interested in medicine. Your mother is a physician and a researcher. And so are your sisters.

What made you change your mind?

What changed my mind was -

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1. The experience of working in a lab in high school for 2

'I am fascinated by the power economics has to transform lives'



'Taking a phenomenal introductory economics class with a professor at Harvard in my freshman year,' is one of the things that influenced Raj Chetty's career choice.

years, which I liked, but made me realize I'd prefer doing something more mathematical/abstract that did not involve using my hands to do lab work.

2. Taking a phenomenal introductory economics class with a professor at Harvard in my freshman year, and,

3. Having a longstanding interest in social problems, partly because my father is an economist who has worked on major social issues in India.

What is your home life like?

I would say, very relaxed.

We (wife Sundari is a stem cell researcher at Harvard) do a lot of things together.

We play tennis, cook together, watch movies together, we also work together – sometimes in the evenings we work in the same room and often talk about our work or about family or whatever we've read.

Sometimes, we ask each other for feedback on each other's work.

What sort of cooking do you enjoy most?

Mainly Indian cooking.

I help with cleaning up and cutting vegetables and things like that.

My wife has the actual skills for cooking.

We make many South Indian dishes. What is your favorite South Indian dish?

Probably, Okra Masala. I like it a lot prepared in a South Indian style.

I also like Dosas and Uthappam.

We eat non-vegetarian as well, but in recent years, vegetarian food is a bigger attraction.

You have addressed students and faculty in a number of places. Are there any questions that people ask you that surprise you?

What I find the most surprising question from a lot of students in India, when I give talks at universities, is that they have a very different perception of what professors do in the US and what economics research specifically is about.

Many students thought, for instance, that economics is basically a verbal arts and humanities subject. And that it would focus primarily on a lot of writing and arguments and so forth and was not a quantitative field.

Whereas in practice, here economics is completely a quantitative field, purely based on statistics and math.

The IIT-type graduates who I was talking to would be perfectly geared to do that type of work and would be very good at it. But I think that information is not known among many people in India. They are just not aware of it.

Tell us about teaching and the life lessons you share with your students.

What I find most inspiring about teaching is seeing students making their own discoveries.

Most of the teaching I do is at the graduate level. Most of



M74 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M73

these students are trying to develop their own research careers and make contributions to society.

So, seeing some of them do really well and write papers that become influential and much discussed, after being trained by me and others here, is really meaningful because you feel that you've taught the students enough so they can teach others.

That's really what I try to focus on: To teach others how to think for themselves, and how to teach that next set of students to discover new things.

And you know that's a very difficult thing to try to teach because it's one thing to teach what we already know; it's much harder to teach someone to find out what we don't know.

So, we struggle to find out how to teach that skill.

Can you give us an example?

For example, if you are doing research on education policy, you say these are the papers that have been written so far.

We know that teachers have such and such effect and schools have such and such effect, going to the next step and saying these are 10 important questions we don't know the answer to, then teaching the students how to

come up with solutions, ways to solve the puzzle, I think is the important challenge...

Often what I'll do is to give the students exercises to work on or have them work with me as a research assistant on a project so that they really see how the discovery is made rather than simply memorizing facts that were learnt.

Learning can be a two-way process.

What have you learnt from the students?

That's exactly what I was referring to: That teachers and students working together can discover something very gratifying.

Often I find that with students, you teach them something and within a few months they've written a new paper or come up with a new idea that you're citing in your work.

So, that two-way feedback is incredibly helpful. Many people must have told you that you look younger

than 33.

Have you been mistaken for a student?

There were a number of times, while a professor, I was mistaken for a graduate student or some other student. You know, people did not mean any insult.

What I like really about academics is that nobody cares

about what your age is or what your position is. It's more about ideas, about who has the best ideas and

about ideas that are most likely to be right.

'I am fascinated by the power economics has to transform lives'



Raj Chetty has repeatedly said he wants his work to help people, especially children. According to his mother he has shown this kind of caring and compassion right from childhood.

That's what allows you to succeed very quickly in academics, regardless of your age, as long as you have something to contribute.

Do younger professors get enough respect?

I think people tend to respect you more as you get older and have more experience.

There are two reasons for that: People tend to respect those who are older, but also you become a better teacher. You know the first class I taught was definitely not as

good as the fifth class.

I think it's natural for students to see you more as an advisor and a person they respect as you get a little bit older.

Please give us some examples of what you enjoyed in your research.

I think the best ideas are those that seem very obvious after the fact that you have come up with to that point.

I think you get those type of ideas just by observing the real world and not getting too caught up in academic literature, just focusing on what actually seems to be happening in reality.

To give you one example of the study that has a little bit of that flavor is the paper on how unemployment insurance affects the amount that people work.

In the past, people thought there was this very distortionary effect of providing unemployment benefits. That it makes people feel the value of working is much lower, and so they end up taking much longer to find a job with no real purpose.

But the way I was thinking about it is that maybe the reason that when you give people higher unemployment benefits they take longer to find a job is because now they can afford to look longer for the type of job they really like.

If you have no money and I give you a little bit of unemployment benefits, now you have enough money to put food on the table and help the family survive while you are unemployed.

And, that may make you take longer to find a job, but in a way that's not bad for the economy.

So it ends up changing the way you think about this important policy, whether you want to have more unemployment insurance or not.

You have studied situations that pleases neither the political Left nor the Right.

Yes. One of my main objectives is not to be politically biased while I'm doing research.

It's really important to just bring scientific evidence to





M75 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M74

bear on these policy questions.

So some of my studies end up naturally favoring the conclusion and favoring what Democrats would like, like this finding that I just described, that unemployment benefits are not as harmful to the economy as you might think.

Other findings might support Republican viewpoints like taxing corporations in the form of high dividend taxes can be quite detrimental.

Evaluating teachers more flexibly by using a quantitative matrix and trying to keep the best teachers and let the teachers who are not as effective go, using a merit-pay type of system seems quite valuable.

That's more of a view point that a Republican may support instead of a Democrat.

I think I have various studies, some of which favor the Democratic view and some of which might favor the Republican view.

My view is that I want to get this right.

You have been tirelessly stressing the importance of excellent teachers especially in kindergarten.

I would say that there is a lot of variation in teacher quality.

My guess is all teachers are trying their best to help children, but you know it turns out that some people are better teachers than others just like some people are better at basketball than others or some people are better baseball players than others.

So, all of us have different innate abilities.

It makes sense to try to keep people who are the best at teaching in our elementary schools because that has a huge impact on children in America and in other countries.

Teaching happens to be a profession where not much value is attached. So, whether you are doing well or not, you pretty much get tenure.

* * * *

Shortly after he won the MacArthur Genius award, Raj Chetty gave an extensive interview to Arthur J Pais.

The excerpts from that interview, below, highlight Dr Chetty's school days in India and America, and his fascination for economics.

What were your school days like?

I came to America with my parents and two older sisters when I was about nine and went to a school in Bethesda, Maryland. It was a little challenging

adjusting to a new environment.

I had studied at St Columbus in New Delhi, where the habit of answering a teacher's question by standing up had been ingrained in me.

When I would get up to answer a question in the class in Maryland, my class laughed at me. But I got over it and was encouraged by the fact that I was able to do well academically.

'I am fascinated by the power economics has to transform lives'



COURTESY: RAJ

Raj Chetty, second from left, at IIT-Bombay. He says he is fascinated by the power that economics has to transform millions of people's lives, contrasted with our relatively poor knowledge of how the economy works.

To my surprise, the school in Bethesda was actually much easier and less rigorous than the Catholic school I had attended in New Delhi, which made the transition much easier.

Moving to the US was one of the many experiences over the years that taught to me to adapt to different environments quickly.

I think those experiences have had an impact on my research, by making me think more abstractly and understand that there are many different ways to look at society and social problems.

I enjoyed and was lucky to excel in academics, but I also enjoyed playing cricket when I was in India.

Later, in Milwaukee where my family had moved from Maryland and Harvard, I enjoyed video games and intra-mural basketball.

I was a reasonably good shooter, but not a physical player.

My friends would always make fun of me for trying to 'protect the brain.'

One of the earliest principles I learned in my life is that passion makes a huge difference.

It is very easy to spend time on things that you are passionate about. I bring that passion to my research and teaching every day.

What were your career goals when you were in high school?

My sisters and my mother are medical researchers and at one time I thought I would be a medical researcher too.

But I also found out soon enough that I was interested in abstract math and studying how the society around me could be improved and changed.

This passion came partly by observing my father, a well-known economist and statistician. Both my father and mother encouraged me to think ambitiously about doing something that would have substantial impact on the world.

One of the most powerful impacts on my life was a visit to the Taj Mahal when I was a boy. I was amazed by its beauty. At the same time I was also amazed and disturbed by the poverty around the Taj.

The contrast has played an important role in shaping my interest in studying social inequities and finding ways to change the world, especially the lives of needy children.

What fascinates you most as a researcher in economics?

I am fascinated by the power that economics has to transform millions of people's lives, contrasted with our relatively poor knowledge of how the economy works.

I think it is immensely important that we collect data and obtain data-based answers to critical policy questions — such as the best way to design

health insurance policies or tax policy — irrespective of any political considerations.

We want to inform the public discourse using rigorous scientific methods, so that key policy choices are not just based on instinct or political opinion but rather on hard evidence.





M76 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'Students take pride to be in his class'

'When someone is a genius, and he certainly is, it is nice to see the person not being arrogant. He never lets success go to his head,' says Professor **Carl Morris** about Raj Chetty.

ot often do undergrad students take Professor Carl Morris's class in statistics designed for graduate students, but Harvard sophomore Raj Chetty was among the brave few.

"He was rather quiet, but he was an A student," Morris recalls. "It was a small class, but he did exceptionally well. All the other students were quite old compared to him. He must have been a little older than 20. Except for one course where he got an A minus, he was a straight A student."

Morris would discover later that Chetty had already started working on his PhD thesis. He had a singular passion, the professor adds.

His 2003 PhD dissertation, 'Consumption, Commitments, and Risk Preferences,' shed new light on unemployment

benefits. Morris points out it was just the begin-

ning of many innovative studies.

When someone is laid off, should the government provide high benefits?

Traditional theory says no, because the general belief is that big benefits seeming-ly reduce the incentive to find a job.

'Standard models predict that we should have no safety net,' argued Chetty. But higher benefits are more in line with actual needs, because most Americans have so much income tied up in commitments, such as payments for houses, cars, and other comforts.

'There are a lot of things you can't adjust in the short term,' he said, adding that



Raj Chetty, center, took Professor Carl Morris's, left, class in statistics designed for graduate students as an undergrad.

> higher benefits could also spur consumer spending. Today, one of the most honored of Har-

> vard professors, Chetty is a big favorite on campus. "He is attracting some of the best stu-

> dents," Morris adds. "They want to offer their best and take pride to be in his class."

> Morris admires the way Chetty has focused on his academic goals. "From a freshman to a PhD, he was able to achieve this in just six years," he adds. "Even the best of Harvard students usually take about nine years to complete this."

> He also praises Chetty's temperament. "He is ambitious, but he is also calm and friendly. When someone is a genius, and he certainly is, it is nice to see the person

not being arrogant. He is certainly confident, but he never lets success go to his head."

"In some ways, he takes up after his father," Morris who has known the Chetty family for quite some time, adds.

Father V K Chetty, who has a doctorate in statistics, is a professor of health economics in the Department of Family Medicine at Boston University.

"One reason why fellow professors and his students like him is that he is not promoting himself," says Morris

And Raj Chetty is not against enjoying life. "He has a beautiful home, a beautiful wife, and he knows how to handle success." ■

- Arthur J Pais

'I am fascinated by the power economics has to transform lives'

← PAGE M75

Together with my research group at Berkeley and Harvard, we have applied scientific methods to analyze a variety of policy questions, ranging from the best way to design corporate tax policies to evaluating elementary school teachers to designing unemployment insurance systems.

Being able to tackle these important issues and see our work have an impact on the policy debate at a national level is very rewarding and motivating.

How do you feel when politicians cherry pick from your reports?

For instance, when one line from your report was widely quoted in Congressional discussion ('It is well known that unemployment benefits raise unemployment durations...').

I recognize that politics will always play a role in any important decision.

My goal is to provide evidence on the key facts, and what happens from there is largely outside my hands.

My hope is that in the end, solid evidence will carry the day, but in the short run, I accept that other factors may intervene.

A question I have asked most people I interview is about their biggest fear. The travel writer and novelist Paul Theroux told me he was never afraid of not having ideas for his novels, but he was afraid he might write a boring novel.

What are your fears?

I am afraid of following a big project over the years and see that it has not much of an impact.

I want to use my limited time to maximize my impact by doing work that actually matters.

From time to time I get self doubts, but then I look at how far I have come in my research and draw confidence from the people who believe in my work, and renew my pursuit. ■



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M78 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



artin Feldstein, a star economist, perennial candidate for the Nobel Prize, and chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Reagan, was not looking for a research assistant, but when a freshman sent him a critique he had written while he was at high school, Feldstein became curious and interested.

"He was just a freshman and I don't know why he picked me," Feldstein, the the George F Baker Professor of Economics at Harvard and among the first few people to grasp the breadth of Raj Chetty's genius, recalled while chatting with *India Abroad* from Britain.

"When I read his review I said to myself, 'This is brilliant, I must make him an offer.' It could have been a critique of the work of Robert Fogel, the Nobel Laureate in economics, recognized worldwide as an economic historian and scientist," Feldstein, who has degrees from Harvard and Oxford universities, said.

Soon Feldstein, who has served as the chief executive officer of the prestigious National Bureau of Economic Research, thought Raj Chetty, who was 17 then, should not do mechanical things like analyzing data.

"To do so would not be a very good use of his time, I concluded," he added. "So I told him, 'I will continue to pay you, but what you will do is to read a lot of journals and then you and I will discuss what you have read."

Chetty was a sophomore at Harvard when he came up with the theory that higher interest rates sometimes lead to higher investment, according to *The American Magazine*, which said, 'It was a counterintuitive idea.'

Usually, companies invest less when interest rates rise because higher interest rates increase the cost of capital. But Chetty startled academia with his theory that some companies, in fact, invest more because they want to get revenue-generating projects off the ground sooner, rather than later, so they can pay down that costly capital more quickly.

Feldstein, who loved Chetty's discovery, encouraged his prized assistant to pursue his ideas.

A professor likes nothing better than to have a brilliant research assistant,' he said in an interview some years ago, 'I realized Raj was quite unusual. His sophistication and ability to work through problems were higher than even the best undergraduates at Harvard.'

"You recall rightly that I had pointed out that in economics most people don't do experiments," Raj Cr Feldstein told *India Abroad.* "They are happy to take the data as they find it. At times they conduct experiments in a class room. But these are not real-time experiments. They don't create novel experiments to understand the way the world works."

Raj was very different, and his approach to economic problems and situations was "quite novel," Feldstein added.

Feldstein, now 74, was about 38 when he received the John Bates Clark Medal (popularly known as the Baby Nobel) while his star student Raj Chetty won it aged 33 some weeks ago. But none of Chetty's awards surprise Feldstein. He has been expecting his star student to soar for a long time.

'Many economists are brilliant mathematicians, few combine the two the way Raj does'

Martin Feldstein was about 38 when he received the John Bates Clark Medal, popularly known as the Baby Nobel, while his star student Raj Chetty won it aged 33 a few weeks ago.

> But none of Raj Chetty's awards surprise Professor Feldstein, he told **Arthur J Pais**.



Raj Chetty's approach to economic problems and situations is 'quite novel,' according to Professor Martin Feldstein, left.

After leaving Harvard with a PhD, Chetty, who had taken up a job at UC, Berkeley, created an experiment to see if separately labeling the sales tax on an item would affect shopper behavior. He persuaded a large grocery chain to allow him to post tags next to 750 of its products for three weeks, showing how much the item cost with sales tax.

The experiment caught the media's attention; one news report mentioned that the chain did not allow Chetty to post signs on its most popular items, afraid that sales would slump.

"It was a very unusual and ingenious way of showing how

taxes affect shopping behavior — that people actually shopped less when they recognized the full cost of what they were doing," Feldstein said.

"Many economists are brilliant mathematicians," he continued. "Some are very good with data. Few combine the two the way Raj does."

Chetty is drawn to the psychological underpinnings of economic theory, experts have pointed out, adding it is one of the things that makes him a pioneer.

Feldstein and Chetty are in continual touch. "Even when he was at Berkeley, we kept in touch and met several times a year," Feldstein recalls. "He would bring his laptop when we met and show me the data and diagrams and discuss what he was working on. I was always eager to learn his progress."

Chetty worked on his PhD at Harvard under Feldstein's supervision, but as per Harvard tradition he could not immediately start working at Harvard.

"We have a very strict rule that Harvard PhDs cannot be hired immediately," Feldstein explained. "We believe people should have experience in other departments. If we don't follow this rule, every member of our department could say, 'This is a brilliant student, let us hire him."

Chetty spent five years teaching at UC Berkeley and was offered tenure at Harvard in 2007 at the age of 28, the same age as department superstar Lawrence H Summers, secretary of the Treasury in the Clinton administration.

He said it took him a year to weigh various options before deciding on Harvard where he would be joined by his wife Sundari who would be conducting stem cell research as a post-doctoral fellow.

'I had thought about coming back to Harvard for some time, as one always has an attachment to the place where he went to school,' Chetty had said in an interview then. 'In addition to its outstanding faculty, Harvard's main attractions for me are its outstanding students and the central presence of Cambridge in the economics profession.'

"He had offers from Princeton, Yale and many other excellent universities," Feldstein said. "But he decided on Harvard."



M79 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



aj was about four when he sat for a kindergarten entrance exam for the famous St Columbus School in Delhi. The school also had a test for the parents, it was so demanding!

As we were walking out of the school, Raj, who knew he had done very well in the test, tugged at my hand and said, 'Appa, I have passed the exam. But will they still admit me if you or Amma fail in your exams?'

I don't remember what I told him, but I do remember his question vividly.

We brought up our three children by and large by example.

My thinking is that if I were to tell someone, especially a young man, to do something, he would turn around and say, 'Why should I?'

I thought we should let Raj decide what career he wanted to pursue, even though my wife and her relatives wanted him to study medicine or do research in science.

I also thought Raj should at least get a feel for what medicine is about. So, when he was his in early teens — we were in Wisconsin then — I got him to be an intern with doctors.

One summer, he had just started shadowing an ophthalmologist at the Medical College of Wisconsin. On the first day, the doctor asked Raj to follow him as he was going to examine a patient. Raj saw the patient on the chair and even before the doctor began the examination, Raj almost fainted.

The doctor had to ask the patient to get up and make Raj sit on the seat and helped him to regain his composure. Raj has always been scared of blood being drawn.

I knew right then, following the near fainting episode, he was not going to be a medical doctor.

He also used to wonder how many diseases were incurable. And he would say, 'What will I do with such incurable diseases?'

People often ask me why Raj is so modest. One answer could be he is so because he grew up in India meeting many world famous scientists, mathematicians and statisticians like Professors C R Rao and Anand Gadde Swarup who presented to Raj the first programmable home computer, the Sinclair MK-13 when he was three years old. Many of them would come home when we were in New Delhi. My children loved collecting their autographs.

As one of Raj's undergrad professors, Carl Morris, at Harvard pointed out, it took him quite some time to realize how brilliant Raj was because of his very modest behavior.

Raj was an undergraduate at Harvard, but he was also a TA (*teaching assistant*) to professors who were teaching graduate courses.

My son is now an internationally recognized economist and thinks of money matters, but he can often be outrageously absent minded.

Haven't we all heard of absent-minded professors?

His absent mindedness has been around him from his early years.

Once he and several other Harvard students got into a car — he had borrowed his mother's car — but just as they got out of campus, the car stopped. There was no gas. His first response often is to call his mother. So, he called his Amma to call the AAA.

The AAA wanted to know where the car was.

In front of Harvard Square, she said.

What is the nearby street, the man asked her.

My wife is a physician and she was in the hospital at the time. So she had to say something like, 'Oh, I can't see well,

'People often ask me why Raj is so modest'

He is now an internationally recognized economist, but he can often be outrageously absent minded, says **V K Chetty**.



V K Chetty and his wife returned to the US after working for 17 years in the best educational institutions in India solely for the purpose of providing good education to son Raj.

but you will recognize the car,' and she gave the description. Meanwhile a police officer stopped by the car and wanted to know what was happening?

'We are students from Harvard and we have run out of gas and we are waiting for AAA,' they said almost in chorus.

The officer gave a wry smile, shook his head, and said, 'If ever I need any help, you guys will be the last people I would think of.'

On another occasion, he had come to Logan Airport to take me home. As I was making my way to the parking lot, I heard him desperately say, 'Appa, do you have my car key?' He had shut the door with the key inside.

Fortunately, I was carrying duplicate keys in the left pocket of my jacket, and over the years, it had become my habit to carry spare keys and a few important documents belonging to my children in one pocket all the time!

His story of turning up on the steps of Capitol Hill to testify before the Senate Finance Committee and not having cash to pay for the cab has become famous. The cab driver could not accept his credit card. But he looked closely at Raj said, 'You look like an important person. You can send the money when you get home.'

Raj sent him some extra money after he returned to Boston.

The pizza story is also quite well known. He stands in the long line in the Harvard cafeteria and when his turn to pay comes, he realizes he has no money on him.

He looks around and spots Professor Carl Morris.

'Carl, can I borrow a dollar from you?'

Morris said, 'Forget it, Raj. I will buy you the slice.'

We returned to the US after working for 17 years in the best educational institutions in India solely for the purpose of providing good education to Raj. We planned every move starting from the right time to move to another school and where to live in the US.

It has turned out to be much more rewarding than we ever imagined.

From the time when Raj was in high school, he had very precise goals and worked hard to achieve them.

He wanted to go to Harvard and he did. He wanted to become a tenured professor at Harvard before he was 28 and he did.

He aimed to reach the top of the profession and he got the most prestigious Clark Medal given to the best economist under 40.

He has thus clearly and convincingly shown that with clear goals, hard work and some luck, it is certainly possible to excel both professionally and personally. \blacksquare

Dr V K Chetty is an economist and a statistician. He is currently a professor of health economics in the Department of Family Medicine in Boston University. He has been a consultant to the Prime Minister's Secretariat, ministries of finance and industrial development and the Planning Commission in India and to the United Nations and the World Bank.





M80 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'His compassion and concern for society is reflected in his research'

'Amma, I did not mind the snake biting me. You would not have been able to run as fast as I could. And it would have bitten you again. Anne Chetty on her son, Raj Chetty.

e were at a wedding in a small village in Tamil Nadu and as we came out of the temple I could not find my chappals left outside. There was no time to look around as we had to be at home for the celebrations.

Raj, who was nine years old, was by my side. I used Raj's chappals, started walking with him and took a short cut to reach home.

Suddenly he started crying and jumping and I saw a small snake running away near his feet.

To my shock, the snake had bitten him. As we rushed him to a clinic, I said I was sorry and said I should not have taken his chappals.

'Amma,' he said, 'I did not mind the snake biting me. You would not have been able to run as fast as I could. And it would have bitten you again.'

Right from his childhood, he has shown this kind of caring and compassion.

I am not surprised that his compassion and concern for society is reflected in his research as an economist.

Early in his school years, he once said a bit boastfully, "I come first in class."

I said something like we owe it to God, and we should not think of success in individual terms.

He may not be religious, he may not go to temples as I do, but he shares my belief that God resides in us and our good deeds are more important than going to a temple.

I once asked him, 'Do you believe in God?' He said, 'Since no one has proved that there is no God, I might as well



Anne Chetty with son Raj.

believe there is a God.' He has his own way of making us feel

comfortable in bad situations.

About 10 years ago, on a way to an event, we lost our way.

I was upset as we were going to be very late. I said something like, 'What are we

going to do? It is going to be so late.'

He smiled and said, 'Never fear when I am here, Amma.

On the day when he heard that he had won the MacArthur 'genius' award we

were in a restaurant enjoying lunch.

He was so overwhelmed, tears sprang in his eyes. My eyes too welled with tears of pride.

And then I said, 'Let us compose ourselves. People around us must be wondering what is happening.'

Dr Anne Chetty is a pediatric pulmonologist at the Tufts Medical Center in Boston. She is currently conducting research in lung diseases that leads to asthma in premature babies.

'We work at adjacent desks in our home office'

Sundari Chetty tells Arthur J **Pais** how rewarding being part of an academic couple is.



Raj and Sundari Chetty.

acArthur Genius Raj Chetty readily acknowledges how his wife Sundari motivates him in his research. She is a post-doctoral fellow in stem cell and regenerative biology at Harvard and enjoys being part of an academic couple. Sundari spoke to India Abroad about life with a

genius. Tell us about how you came to marry Raj and

what it means to be married to a researcher while you too are a researcher in the academic world. Raj and I were introduced to each other through

his sister whom I knew well from a young age. While I was growing up in southern Illinois, my

parents often took my siblings and me to many







10

M81 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



HS COURTESY: RAJ CHETT

'They are proud to have Raj stand next to them as they graduate'

Raj Chetty is a hero and role model to the children in his family, discovers Arthur J Pais, giving them sound advice as they journey through their own academic careers.

or Priya Shanmugam posing for a picture with her Raja Mama after her Commencement ceremony at Dartmouth in early June was really special.

About four years ago she was heartbroken when she did not get admission to Harvard where her Raja Mama (Dr Raj Chetty, to the wider world) had received his degrees including a PhD.

"He consoled her, encouraged her to study

at Dartmouth," her mother Malathy Shanmugam recalls. "He is a hero and a role model to three of my girls and three boys of my younger sister Shanthi. He told Priya if she did well she could find a place at Harvard.

His advice worked. Priya Shanmugam will study behavioral economics at Harvard this fall.

"Over the years, when Raja, as we sisters have always called him, would get a degree, his nephews and nieces would pose with him," Malathy Shanmugam, a cancer researcher who is 14 years older than her brother, recalls. "Now they are proud to have him stand next to them as they graduate."

Raj is the youngest of three siblings. His elder sister Shanthi Srinivasan, who is also a research scientist, is 10 years older. "He was like our baby," says Malathy Shanmugam. "But as he began college, he became more of a friend. In our family, we have a very open relationship with our siblings and children.'

They have always called him Raja, and he has called his older sisters by their first names. "We are not the stereotypical Asian family," adds Shanmugam. "There was never the Tiger Mom kind of atmosphere in our home. We did everything in a trusting and open atmosphere."

Raj Chetty is very much at home with his sisters's children. "They are more like sisters and brothers to him," says Shanmugam. "When he would visit our home in Chicago,



Raj Chetty with his sisters, Malathy, left, and Shanthi, right. As their father once told India Abroad, he has not two but four parents.



Raj now plays as important a role in the lives of his nieces and nephews as his sisters played in his.

one of the first things my children would ask was how long he was going to stay. For they have lots and lots of fun with him. They also learn from him. And he considers their opinion."

A few weeks ago, Dr Chetty was preparing a commencement address he was to give to his alma mater, a high school in Milwaukee.

"He wanted a test audience," Divya Shanmugam, 17, who

has just graduated from high school, says. "So my younger sister Vidya and I listened. It was a brilliant speech, but in some places it was getting to be too technical. So we told him it would go over the heads of the high school students. We also told him what was funny and what wasn't. He took our advice very seriously and made many changes."

When Malathy and Shanthi, both medical scientists at Emory University (with Shanmugam relocating from Northwestern University), face dilemmas about their children's education, their brother is always ready to help.

Shanthi says her three boys, especially Karthik, who is 18, adore their uncle and they will do anything he wants them to do.

> "Sometimes when the six cousins are with him," she continues, "it is fun to see how the younger ones compete with each other to get his attention."

> Her eldest son will study economics at Northwestern and hopes to enroll at Harvard in a few years. "Raja is very fond of chess and has participated in national championships," she adds. "My children like chess and they enjoy playing it with him."

> For the two sisters, Raj is like their child. "We have been with him from birth," Srinivasan says. "We were waiting outside the maternity ward when the nurse came and told our father that he had a boy. He was joyous and when he saw our mother, the first thing he said in Tamil, was, 'You have a son.' Our mother being a pediatri-cian, said, 'First tell me, does he have 10 fingers and 10 toes?,' meaning is he all right?"

> As their father Dr V K Chetty, a professor at Boston University, once said, Raj has not two but four parents.

The new born was not alright. For several years he fought severe asthma, which began to disappear as he stepped into his teens.

When the family thought of sending Raj to a Christian school in New Delhi, they got him to stop by a church school in the vicinity. "He got to see the priests and nuns in their formal, religious, clothes," remembers Srinivasan. Soon the family would know that Raj could adjust to any environment.

As his parents took jobs in various cities in America, he went to school in those cities, including Milwaukee in Wisconsin before ending up at Harvard.

"He was never a bookish sort," Shanthi remembers. "He enjoyed taking part in school plays, and when he was in India he was in several plays, including the episodes from the Ramayana, and in one he played Lakshmana."

The Srinivasans lived in St Louis before moving to Emory in Atlanta. Shanthi had known another Chettiar (a caste in tamil Nadu) family not far away. It also happened that her parents also knew the family. "So we introduced Sundari to Raja," she says, adding that in the

final reckoning the couple chose each other. The MacArthur Genius is humble, full of fun and loves

the outdoors, his sisters say, but he has always been very



M82 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013





A Chetty family portrait.

'They are proud to have Raj stand next to them as they graduate'



ambitious and has wanted to stand out from his very early years. "Soon after coming to America (at age nine), he suddenly said, 'Can you believe it? I cannot become President," Shanmugam recalls with a chuckle. He had discovered that only Americanborn citizens could be President. "I said something like, 'Don't be

crazy. You can achieve so many other great things. "I am a worrying type," says Malathy. "In fact, I look for something to worry about. But Raja has been always composed. He understands the teens better than I do, and when it comes to what they should study and where they should stay, his advice matters a lot.

With Priya joining Harvard and Divya about to start at MIT, she says she is doubly happy. "They are living close to my parents and their Raja Mama.'

Divya was weighing between Stanford and MIT, with her parents wanting her to study at MIT.

"Raja Mama discussed the pros and cons," says Divya. "He told me of the advantages I will have studying at MIT and he encouraged me to meet a researcher at MIT. He does all this without being pushy. He offers a very good perspective. I was able to make my mind because I discussed my options with him."

The other day, V K Chetty told his son after hearing that Priya is going to enroll at Harvard , 'Raja, watch out. You are going to have competition.'

PAGE M80

religious and cultural events in St Louis and Chicago, where both of Raj's sisters happened to live.

I got to know both of his sisters well, but didn't meet Raj until much later when we were introduced to each other.

After meeting, we soon chose to move to Berkeley, California, together and have since then been married for eight-and-a-half years.

My draw to academics began at UC Berkeley where I did my PhD in neuroscience.

Growing up in a family of physicians (father, two sisters, and brother), I subsequently chose to direct my interests in biology towards patient therapy by doing my post-doctoral fellowship in stem cell and regenerative biology at Harvard University.

Being an academic couple has been a very enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Raj and I are both truly passionate about our research and having an impact on society.

The hours and effort that go into research before one sees the fruits of the work can be long and extensive.

It has been most rewarding when Raj and I have both made

'We work at adjacent desks in our home office'

new discoveries in our fields that we are excited to share and celebrate together.

At the end of a work day, we enjoy coming home to have dinner together to share exciting new results we've found from our latest experiments and studies.

This often leads to interesting conversations at dinner, ranging anywhere from mice/stem cell studies to unemployment and taxation.

Being in two different fields also brings in colleagues and friends of diverse backgrounds whom we enjoy interacting with and having over for dinners

What is it to be in the academic world together?

Work often continues at home (either writing manuscripts/analyzing data), and our friends and family like to make fun of us because we work at adjacent desks in our home office whereas many other couples seem to like separate office spaces.

Academics often tend to be distracted by their work – we have had a couple of instances where we often walk in to campus together, but will be deep in thought about our work that we may not say a word to each other for some time.

Your husband spoke about your training as a scientist and how it has helped him fine tune and refine his research.

One of the main differences between my work and Raj's work is that it is relatively easy in biology to actually perform experiments.

As a biologist, conducting randomized experiments to get at the cause and effect of a treatment is

critical In my PhD, I studied how stress affects brain development and learning and memory.

Using rats as models, it is easy to assign a treatment and control group: One set of rats is subjected to a stressful condition while another set of rats is not.

This experimental design then allows one to identify what types of effects stress has on the brain.

Similarly, my more recent work in stem cell biology aims to identify whether certain chemicals/ drugs can drive an embryonic stem cell into a more specialized cell type, such as an insulin secreting â-cell, that could be used as a source of cell replacement therapy in diabetic patients.

In economics, it is not as easy to run randomized experiments on the human population in which one set of people is subjected to certain conditions while others are not. This is one of the biggest challenges in the field, and Raj has pushed the field to become experimental in its more approaches to tackle real-world issues.

What are your shared passions and life interests?

One of our main interests outside of work is food and cooking.

For instance, while most may find grocery shopping a boring chore, we enjoy our weekly trips together to the local supermarket.

If we are not busy at work in the office, we are likely to be in the kitchen.

The kitchen in many respects is like the lab for me, and Raj makes a great research assistant by cutting vegetables.

While we are still trying to master my mother's phenomenal Chettinad cooking, we also enjoy experimenting with new recipes we often like to make fusion Western dishes influenced by Indian flavors (Indian Naan pizzas).

We also enjoy playing tennis, spending time with family (especially with our 10 nieces and nephews), and traveling to new places.



Akhilesh Yadav

SETTING THE MOTION OF CHANGE IN UTTAR PRADESH

o sooner than the Samajwadi Party scored a tally of 224 seats in the 402-member Uttar Pradesh state assembly in March 2012, the decision to entrust the reins of the state's governance in the hands of 39year old Akhlesh Yadav, was widely hailed as the first significant move towards a much desired change .

After all, it was this young and dynamic son of the party President Mulayam Singh Yadav who was responsible for all the churning which led to reinventing the Samajwadi Party and putting it back on the power pedestal in the country's most populous state, that could well be rated as the fifth largest country in the world.

Without dismissing his father's style of politics, he weaved a blend of the old and new; the rustic and the modern to send the message aloud that SP was ready for appropriate modifications and changes that could well go with the changing times.

What initially seemed like an uphill task for the 39-year old in a party dominated largely by much older and veteran politicians, eventually turned into a smooth sail after realisation dawned on the bigwigs that the gen next man was all set to do the impossible-transform UP.

It did not take the Environmental Engineering graduate from Mysore and post-graduate from Sydney to take the party out of its hackneyed anti-English and anti-technology mindset into the techno-savy world. He emphasised that computers had become the order of the day, not only to keep pace with the world beyond, but also to promote employment.

Tech-savvy Akhilesh made full use of gizmos all along his election campaign – be it the macro or the micro level. Experts from professional groups were engaged to not only plan but also monitor the campaign from a plush corner created in old bungalow at Vikramaditya Marg in UP's capital Lucknow.

While taking the modern tech approach on one side, he simultaneously caried on the path of his father-by undertaking 'rath' yatras during the 2012 election. Just as his father had set out as the then Janata Dal leader on a specially created "kranti rath" in

1987, Akhilesh chose to get a relatively more modern "rath" designed for his journey across the length and breadth of the state. And it was the "rath yatra" followed by helicopter sorties, which took him across to as many as 386 of UPs 402 state assembly constituencies, where he not just reached out to the masses but also managed to send out the vibes of a politician who was totally grounded and came to be seen as the young man next door.

If he was seen identifying even smalltime partymen by their first names during the election campaign, he did not change, even after donning the chief minister's mantle. Today, he is busy lending as much ear to the plight

of the man on the street as he was in giving audience to leaders of industry who had literally stopped looking towards the state as any investment destination.

Extremely particular about ensuring his accessibility to all and sundry, he threw open the doors of the chief minister's residence to commoners and the privileged alike—in sharp contrast to his predecessor's diktat to turn the entire area "out of bounds" to all and sundry. With the passage of time, he has gone a step further by doing video conferencing to monitor the action taken on grievances of people referred by him to concerned officials across the sprawling state.

Combating many odds, he has managed to set the ball rolling for establishing an IT city in Lucknow, where he sees huge potential for software development.

And to pave way for making the youth IT savy right from their school days, he came up with a unique policy of free distribution of laptops and tablets to as many as 4 milion students across the state. It was a dream-come-true for the young chief minister





when he personally gave away 10000 laptops to the first batch of students at a special function in Lucknow. He has made it a point to attend similar functions in other places, as a part of his larger plan to distribute 1.5 million laptops to all students clearing Class XII and 2.6 million tablets to those clearing Class X.

In a society where girls were often deprived of higher education because of financial crunch faced by common Indians, Akhilesh Yadav's policy of giving a special incentive of ₹30000 to every girl seeking education beyond high school, was welcomed as a revolutionary move. He is also the first chief minister to have introduced a monthly unemployment allowance of ₹1000.

No sooner than he assumed the chief minister's office, his mission was clearly laid out-to take UP out of its slumber and transform it into a happening state. It was in fulfilment of this mission that he not only re-establised dialogue with the centre with which the state's relations were badly soured during the previous regime, but he also reached out to the industry that had virtually given up on UP.

Making a beginning with an open house with captains of industry at Agra, he also promptly responded to the US-India Business Council for a meeting at his residence.

Realising the need for infrastructure development as a prerequisite for attracting investment in the state, the young engineer-turned chief minister has initiated fast-track road-connectivity between the state capital and each of UP's 75 districts. His plan to connect Lucknow and New Delhi on the fast track was also underway–by building a new 270-Km expressway between Lucknow and Agra from where Delhi was already linked with the world class Yamuna Expressway. This will also ensure faster connectivity between Lucknow and entire Western UP.

Augmentation of energy high on his agenda, several initiatives were being taken to promote new power generation plants both in the private sector as well as the PPP model. He is very hopeful of making UP self-reliant on the energy front by 2017.

Sure enough, Akhilesh Yadav was doing his utmost to live up to the faith reposed in him by millions of people of India's most populous state. After a long spell of inertia, a beginning has been made in UP that was for decades dismissed as "bimaru" (sick). His sincerity and commitment, his acessibility and affability, together with his grit and determination would surely prove to be the architects of change-that would mark unfolding of the Unlimited Potential of what is called UP. ttar Pradesh (UP), till a year ago was a picture of an opportunity lost. Then, the state got its youngest Chief Minister in 39-year old Akhilesh Yadav, who has since, transformed the state's fate from despondency to that of nascent hope. A slew of deft policy decisions have ushered in an era congenial to business growth and new investments.

UP is India's fifth largest state covering 9% of the country's geographic terrain and is the largest state in terms of population with 16.4% share (apporx. 200 mn). This makes it the India's biggest consumer market. It contributes 8% to the country's GDP. The State is growing at about 7% p.a. and per capita income are rising at a fast clip to create a large consuming class.

UP has set itself an ambitious target to grow at over 10% over the 12^{th} Five Year Plan. For accelerating growth, the state has announced a number of forward looking policies with a clear focus on making the state attractive for ease of doing business.

New investor friendly policy related to Infrastructure & Industrial Development has been announced. Sector specific policies relating to IT/ITeS, Food Processing, Solar Power, Poultry Farming and Sugar Industry with special focus on co-gernation and distillery too have been announced.

SKILLED MANPOWER - A CORE STRENGTH

network

8,763 km

»

The state has surplus availability of formally skilled, semi-skilled and traditionally skilled manpower and is a net exporter of manpower to other states in India. There are 36 universities, 3,104 colleges, 1,500 ITI's/ITCs, 197 business schools and 320 engineering colleges in the state. 2.8 lac B.Sc. and 96,000 engineering & technology students are enrolled every year in the state. The State is

- » 3rd in number of Colleges in India
- » 2nd in number of ITI's/ITC's in India
- 3rd in number of Business Schools in India
- » 4th in Engineering Colleges in India
- » 3rd in number of Polytechnics in India

IN HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, UP IS HOME TO SOME OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, SUCH AS:

- » Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow
- » Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur
- » Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
- » National Institute of Technology, Allahabad
- » Indian Institute of Information Tech., Allahabad
- » Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
- » Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences with top of the line medical facilities
- » Setting up of All India Institute of Medical Sciences is already in the pipeline at Rae Bareli for which land has been allocated by the State government.

ITI's and Polytechnics in the state are being strengthened through PPP mode. The state has also requested Central Government for sanction of two more IIT's.

EXISTING ROBUST INFRASTRUCTURE

» UP accounts for 9.45% of the total National Highway

» Largest Railway network in the country spanning over

» 43 National Highways connect it with nine neighbouring

6 Domestic Airports at Agra, Allahabad, Gorakhpur,

» 165-km six-lane Yamuna Expressway covering distance

» Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida is India's

» Eight SEZs are functional in the state, of which six have

» Integrated Industrial Township Tronica City has been

» Growth Centers at Shahjahanpur, Jainpur (Kanpur-

District), Jhansi, Dibiyapur (Auraiya) have been developed.

To encourage development of MSMEs, Integrated

Industrial Development Centres have been developed.

The State Government has introduced Cluster

» Under the Central Govt. Scheme for promotion of

» Leather Technology Park has been developed at Banthar,

» Two Agro Parks have been developed (over 180 acre

of land) for food processing industry at Lucknow &

To promote Apparel Industry; Apparel Parks at Tronica

City, Ghaziabad, Textile & Hoisery Park at Kanpur have

exports two EPIPs have been developed.

developed over 1600 acre land in Ghaziabad.

states and other parts of India

Kanpur, Lucknow and Varanasi.

» An International Airport at Lucknow.

only circuit for FI motor racing.

Development Scheme.

in Unnao on 232 acre.

Varanasi

been setup.

been developed under private sector.

between New Delhi-Agra in < 2.5 hours.

PROPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE

- » Investments worth ₹230 bn planned for 2500 km of state highway projects.
- » 6730 km has been identified as core road network by World Bank, of which 2466 km has been developed.
- » 11 hitech-townships and 31 integrated townships are being developed by private developers in major cities.
- » Three urban infrastructure projects on PPP mode; International standard Cricket Stadium cum Sports Complex in Lucknow, Northern Peripheral Road in Ghaziabad and Inner Ring Road in Agra.
- » Proposal for VGF is under consideration for 11 roads totalling around 1000 km at estimated cost of ₹71.29 bn.
- » Six lane 270 km green field expressway between Lucknow and Agra bringing travel time < 4 hours.</p>
- » To boost exports Industrial areas and zones along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial corridor (DMIC) & Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) will be developed.
- » 36,068 sq km (15%) of Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) catchment area across 12 districts of the state.
- » 57% (over 1049 km) of 1839 km of the EDFC falls within UP.
- » International Airports on PPP model near Agra and at Kushinagar to promote industrial development and tourism.
- » Two National Manufacturing and Investment Zones (NMIZs) have been planned in the State - at Jhansi and Auraiya.
- » To avail maximum benefits of the ample availability of polymers, being produced by Gas Authority of India Limited in its plant, an extensive Plastic Park based on the polymer as raw material will be set up at Auraiya.
- » IT Parks at Lucknow and Agra to attract Software Industry investment. Huge potential of investments in Tier-II and Tier-III cities of Uttar Pradesh.

Uttar F

"Uttar Pradesh with access skilled manpower, proximi and incomparable connect for investment and partner

Chief M



Pradesh ITED POTENTIAL

to large consumer market, ty to raw material sources ivity is an ideal destination rships:

Akhilesh Yadav inister, Uttar Pradesh, India



INFRASTRUCTURE & INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT POLICY INCENTIVE

- » Stamp Duty Concession
- Investment Promotion Scheme
- » Infrastructure Interest Subsidy Scheme
- » Capital Interest Subsidy Scheme
- » Industrial Quality Development Subsidy Scheme
- » Special Facilities for Mega Projects
- » Tax incentives
- » Energy sector related incentives
- » EPF reimbursement Scheme

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- » Textile Park
- » Agro Park
- » Leather Park / Leather Mega Cluster
- » Export Promotion Industrial Parks
- » Growth Centers
- » Plastic City
- » IT Park
- » Integrated Dairy Park
- » Mega Food Park
- » National Investment & Manufacturing Zones
 » Highway Upgradation & Expressway Projects
- ENERGY POLICY INCENTIVE

NON RENEWABLE ENERGY

- » Encouragement to setup co-generation Plants
- Investment through participation in transmission
- » Participation in rural & urban distribution

RENEWABLE ENGERGY

- » Sale of surplus energy to UPPCL and third party
- » Special incentives on new Solar Farms > ₹5bn
- » Single window clearance agency
- » Central subsidy for biomass power generation
- » Central subsidy for non-bagasse co-generation

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- » Power generation & transmission
- » Secondary distribution & transmission
- » Installation of Solar Power units & lighting systems
- » Wind & Biomass energy power generation plants
- » Small hydro-energy power generation plants

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY INCENTIVE

- » Subsidy on Term / Working Capital Loans
- » Exemption on Stamp Duty
- » Interest Free Loans with 7 years moratorium on VAT
- » Rebate on purchase of land in tier-II / tier-III cities
- » 100% Bonus FSI in tier-II / tier-III cities
- » Land use relaxation to IT/BPO units
- » Single window clearance & facilitation
- Industrial Promotion subsidy in tier-II & tier-III cities
- » Uninterrupted power supply
- » Special incentives for employment generation
- » Permission of 24x7 operations

» Special incentives for mega IT projects INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- » Information Technology Park, Lucknow
- Information Technology City, Lucknow
- » Export Promotion Industrial Park, Agra
- » Export Promotion Industrial Park, Greater Noida

FOOD PROCESSING POLICY INCENTIVE

- » Exemption from stamp duty
- » Exemption from Mandi Fees
- » Interest Subsidy
- » Capital Investment subsidy
- » Assistance for global competitiveness
- » Assistance for market development
- » Special incentives for employment generation
- Warehouse receipt system to facilitate loan

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITES

- » Agro Parks
- » Mega Food Park
- » Integrated Dairy Park
- » Potato Flakes processing
- » Potato based vodka manufacturing
- » Pulp & Canning of Mango/Guava/Litchi



Government of Uttar Pradesh

IN LESS THAN A YEAR, SEVERAL DIPLOMATS, SENATORS, BUSINESS DELEGATIONS, CORPORATE HONCHOS AND OPINION MAKERS HAVE VISITED AND SHOWN KEEN INTEREST IN INVESTING IN UTTAR PRADESH



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LETTERS



The article by Sudheendra Kulkarni (Understanding Advani, India Abroad, June 21) is self serving on the part of Kulkarni and nothing but sour grapes on the part of Advani. Advani undoubtedly brought both the BJP and Narendra Modi to the levels where both are today. Nothing has changed in the BJP's functioning or ideology. It is the same party which Advani co-founded and Modi is the same person Advani saved from sacking by Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Goa conclave of the BJP after the unfortunate riots in Gujarat in 2002. The only thing changed is Advani's age. By following the Hindu tradition the BJP propounds, Advani should try to become 'Raj Guru' and not Raja. His respect in the eyes of the general public and the BJP workers will increase tremendously, if instead of trying to become prime minister of India, he retires from electoral politics and supports and advises a new generation

In his descriptor, Kulkarni says one of the reasons he resigned from the BJP was the neglect of Muslims by the BJP. Kulkarni had been with the BJP for years. He was the main speech writer of both Vajpayee and Advani. He was in

charge of the media and publicity during the last general election in which the BJP received quite a drubbing. Kulkarani never spoke of neglect of Muslims by the BJP while he was in the BJP. Of course, it is very fashionable to pronounce who is secular and who is communal.

I hope people look at the holistic development and progress of all the sections of the society in Gujarat and stop calling Modi communal and describing as secular people and political parties that want to highlight caste- and religion-based special treatment.

> Yash Pal Lakra Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

A flawed peace index

The Global Peace Index 2013 has ranked India among the 25 least peaceful nations to live in, putting it as the 141st of 162 nations (The Week That Was, *India Abroad*, June 21).

One, eight of the 22 GPI indicators of the existence or absence of violence or fear of violence are qualitative indicators that are subject to bias, misinterpretation and ignorance.

Two, estimates have been made where there have been gaps in the quantitative data. Those estimates, subject to bias, misinterpretation and ignorance, again could be unreliable.

Three, out of the 22 GPI indicators, seven are normalized for population, one is normalized for GDP, but the rest of the 14 are absolute numbers, which are meaningless.

Four, there are always unreported numbers, therefore the actual level of violence may be much higher than the numbers gleaned from the official database. And the unreported numbers may be a function of the culture of a particular nation. For example, many rape cases in India go unreported.

Five, the report seems to ignore the fact that in the context of military expenditure. Some countries are just freeloaders and enjoy peace because other countries — often the United States — provide their defense.

Six, the report ignores indicators relating to violence against women and children. For example, in Egypt, a lot of women are subject to genital mutilation. In India and China, female infanticide is still a chronic problem.

Thus, the GPI report is useful, but its findings should be taken with a grain of salt.

Pradeep Srivastava Detroit



A protest against Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi outside a college in New Delhi where he was speaking, February $\mathbf{6}$

Modi, a true leader

The secret of Narendra Modi's success (*India Abroad*, June 21), lies in that after the post-Godhra riots, he refused to sink in the quicksand of endless fruitless investigations to satisfy India leftist polity, run by the Congress party under Sonia Gandhi.

He realized that these were communal riots — triggered by the burning of pilgrims in the Sabarmati Express — like those that have plagued India since Partition.

Instead, he focused on why the voters had elected him in 2001 and ejected the non-performing Congress party rulers of Gujarat of the previous 50 years: To provide development.

'If you provide the people with development,' he said recently, 'then they will also forgive your mistakes.'

His development model includes free enterprise, with relatively non-corrupt administration, providing good infrastructure. He got the government to step aside — no mean feat in India. This led to a double digit growth, year after year, with 24-hour electricity and clean drinking water for most in Gujarat. Now, Gujarat is facing a labor shortage — a true sign of fast development.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has no choice but to nominate Modi as their prime ministerial candidate if they want a shot at forming the next government. Otherwise, the BJP will lose for sure.

In the Gujarat state assembly elections of December 2012, in Muslim-dominated constituencies an average 49 percent of Muslims voted for the BJP. To surprise of many, the BJP's Hindu candidates defeated the Congress party's Muslim candidates. A newly elected Muslim councilor, Musa Abbas, said. 'The story in our political system was of promising and not delivering. Modi has broken that negative cycle.'

Muslims in Gujarat are more prosperous than those in Congress party-ruled States.

Some Indian 'minority' outfits and leftists in India continue with their hate campaign against Modi over Godhra, while living in America. They can learn about tolerance and moving past old hates, as Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat have done. What really counts is what the majority of Indian voters think of Modi. We will know soon.

A K Sharma Flintridge, California Reuters REUTERS Should try to become Ka Raja. His respect in the eral public and the BJ increase tremendously, i ing to become prime m he retires from elector supports and advises a of BJP leaders. In his descriptor, Kull the reasons he resigner was the neglect of Musi-Kulkarni had been wi



reenath Sreenivasan, currently Chief Digital Officer and faculty member at Columbia University, is moving to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in August.

Announcing the move, Thomas P Campbell, director and CEO of the Met, said Sree will lead the museum's Digital Media Department, which manages and produces digital content - especially documentation and interpretive materials on the museum's collection — for delivery, both online and within galleries.

Sree will also work on the Met's mobile platform.

Campbell pointed out that Sree's 'work in traditional journalism, his role as a commentator on technology and media issues, and his expertise in Web sites and social media will all be key to the museum's work in the digital space.

'His academic background will also position him well within our community of scholars and we look forward to working with him as we leverage mobile, in-gallery, and online platforms for the Met's collections,' Campbell added.

"I absolutely love the Met," Sree said, _____



Sree makes a big move

describing his "three-decade-long love affair" with the museum, beginning from the time he was growing up on 89th Street and Madison Avenue, and studying at PS6 on 82nd Street and Madison Avenue, which is but a block away from the museum.

"This was entirely the Met's timing," he told India Abroad, pointing out that he was building a team that was doing exciting

things at Columbia and all set to do more. "I have said no to many other opportuni-

ties and jobs. When they came calling, I thought it would be a clean break," he said, adding, "This is not about leaving Columbia as going to the Met.

"All the things I talk about all day long are part of my mandate... the connection between the physical and the digital. So now that will be my job to do it. Instead of -----

just teaching it, I'll be doing it," Sree added.

Sree noted what a great country this was that gave an immigrant the opportunity to choose between Columbia University and the Met.

He and his wife Roopa Unnikrishnan became citizens earlier this month. Sree will continue teaching at Columbia

as an adjunct.

Waving at the phone



COURTESY: MIT

She isn't 3dim Tech's only Indian connection. Ahmed Kirmani, one of its three co-founders, is an Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi graduate. And Vivek Goyal, a second-generation Indian American, is the chief technology officer.

ou might never have to touch your smartphone again, thanks to a gesture-recognition software - developed by Goa girl Andrea Colaco and her colleagues at 3dim Tech - that will allow you to interact with your phones through thin air. The innovation, that has probably got sanitizer freaks all excited, helped 3dim win the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's 2013 MIT \$100k businessplan competition. Colaco and her team are believed to have already met up with the 'top 5 handset manufacturers in the world' and demonstrated their product whose greatest advantage is that it doesn't require any additional hardware. Colaco hails from Velim, a town in south Goa, and completed her schooling and early college from Margao before completing her BE from BITS Pilani, ending up among the top 2 percent of 900 candidates. She earned her master's from MIT, and is a registered PhD student there.



hile on desi journalists, PBS's NewsHour correspondent Hariharan 'Hari' Sreenivasan has landed a new job as the anchor for PBS NewsHour Weekend, which launches September 7. Mumbai-born Sreenivasan came to the United States when he was 7, attending the Nathan Hale High School in Seattle, Washington. After having earned a degree in mass communication at the University of Puget Sound, he interned for news stations in Washington state before being hired full-time by NBC affiliate WNCN-TV in Raleigh, North Carolina.

India Abroad June 28, 2013



Shining across the pond

mong other things, Anish Kapoor is known for his *Skymirror* at the Rockefeller Center in New York in 2006. The Indian-origin sculptor, best known for his giant public sculptures, was last week honored with knighthood by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in her birthday honors list 2013. Kapoor, 59, received the knighthood for his services to the visual arts. Born in Mumbai to a Hindu father and a Jewish mother, his list of honors is fairly long. Before he was honored with the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honor, last year, France awarded him the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2011, the same year he received the

A4

Japanese Praemium Imperiale. Sir Anish joins a list of luminaries that includes actor **Rowan Atkinson** (best known as Mr Bean) and women's activist **Jasvinder Sanghera**. Meanwhile, also

across the pond, Kolkata-born, South London-raised Amol Rajan took over as editor of *The Independent*, and was widely hailed — including in *The Guardian* — as the first nonwhite journalist to run a UK national newspaper. But Nina Martyris writes in *Prospect*

Magazine that 'Britain's first

non-white editor, first woman editor, and its only editor to simultaneously edit two rival Sunday newspapers' was Bombay-born Rachel Sassoon Beer, who edited the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* between 1894 and 1902. Rajan, 29, who read English literature at Cambridge University and edited its student magazine *Varsity* before writing a book called *Twirlymen: The Unlikely History of Cricket's Greatest Spin* *Bowlers* in 2011, is not the youngest editor in Britain either. **Piers Morgan** became the editor of the now defunct *News of the World* in 1994, at age 28. But that doesn't take anything away from Rajan of course!

A nyone who knows The Hulk could imagine the trouble with giving him a 'makeover'. How do you go beyond the trousers that become tattered shorts (and mysteriously stay on) every time someone ticks off Bruce Banner and he turns into the green superhero?

Turns out, India-based artist **Mukesh Singh** has managed to do just that! As Hulk manages to plunge through a temporal rift in *Indestructible Hulk #11*, releas-

ral rift in Indestructible Hulk #11, releasing next month, he will be seen sporting a brand new armor. Singh was working with a gaming company as a 3D artist, and was lured into the world of designing comic books by sheer chance. He told Marvel.com that The Hulk was 'a surprisingly willing model. He is an anatomist's dream come true, all invulnerable muscle and sinew. In 2005, Singh entered, as he calls it, a 'Draw Superman Contest' in the hope of winning the a Superman figure designed by Alex Ross. In his rendition of the superhero, he drew upon Lord Hanuman... and won. Before he knew it, Singh found himself working for Deepak Chopra's son Gotham, who was in the early stages of forming Virgin Comics. Chopra eventually fell out with Virgin and bought it out (renaming it to Liquid Comics). But by then Singh, who had made his debut with Virgin's flagship title Devi, had already caught the attention of the American comics industry. So far, Singh has translated Guy Ritchie's Gamekeeper concept to comics, and

Gamekeeper concept to comics, and also designed porn star Jenna Jameson's Shadowhunter series. Quite a range, what say you?

COURTESY: MARVEL.COM



Deepa's latest

Solution peaking of Sir Salman, after *Midnight's Children*, Deepa Mehta is working on adapting **Shilpi Somaya Gowda's** novel *Secret Daughter*, reports *Hollywoodreporter.com*. The filmed adaptation is being produced by **Jody Colero** of Silent Joe Inc and **Hussain Amarshi** of Mongrel Media. The novel narrates a heartwrenching story of two women — one in India who is forced to gives away her daughter, and the other in the US who decides to adopt one —and the child who connects them.

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'Before long, we will have the first Indian American on the Supreme Court'



AZIZ HANIFFA

egal luminaries including Solicitor General Donald B Verrilli, lawmakers, community leaders and secondgeneration attorneys attended a ceremony hosted by India's Ambassador to the United States Nirupama Rao for Srikanth 'Sri' Srinivasan, the newly minted federal judge on the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals.

Rao said she was confident that 'before long, we will have the first Indian American on the Supreme Court — as a Supreme Court judge.'

She said, 'I am elated to honor an extraordinary young Indian American. Today is even more special since Sri's mother Saroja and sister Srinija are also here with us. But there is a note of sadness here too, because Sri and Srinija lost their father, Professor T P Srinivasan, just over the weekend. So, we would like to express our sincerest condolences to him, to his family.'

Rao told Srinivasan, 'You exemplify it in many ways our hopes, aspirations and dreams. We are so proud and so happy to know that you have been confirmed as the Circuit Judge in the District of Columbia.'

Rao lavished praise on the Indian-American community and said there was no denying that it was an integral catalyst in the blossoming US-India strategic partnership. Srinivasan, she said, was a manifestation of this phenomenon.

'We know about the Indian-American community and the extraordinary successes and achievements that they exemplify, she said. 'To me, Sri personifies that and much more because here, he is, at a relatively young age and he has achieved such great things and so much more. The best is yet to be because the future ahead for him, I have no doubt will be extremely bright and special.'

The ambassador added: 'When you look at the relationship between India and the United States today, the role that the Indian-American community has played in promoting the understanding of India here in the United States is indisputable.'



Rao, who served in Washington as the press counselor and then minister, press, information and culture in the 1980s, said, 'I've been coming to the United States off and on since the early 1980s and I've seen this transformation. I've seen the way America and Americans now relate to India and how the image of India has been transformed. And, it has a lot to do with what the Indian-American community has achieved. Americans in every distant corner of this nation have Indian-American neighbors and see what they have achieved — the role they play in their communities, how they exemplify family values and are able to balance in perfect equilibrium, tradition and modernity.'

Rao spoke of how 'perfectly well adjusted to both these environments' the community was, and said, 'That is the strength of Indian culture and Indian tradition and Indian identity, which I believe every Indian American does carry within himself or herself, regardless of the fact that they are fully American nurtured in the soil of this country.'

Quoting Achamma Chandersekaran, the first woman president of the Indian American Forum for Political Education, Rao, said, 'What America offers to everybody is the freedom to be and the opportunity to become. And, that is really what the American Dream is all about. And, back in India, when we look at our development and our years as an independent nation, there is an Indian dream also — an Indian aspiration, and Indian promise. And it is to better the lives of each and every Indian and to make our tomorrows even better and brighter through the work we put in to promote development of our people and to build friendships with democracies like the United States.'



US News

US News

Emotional Srinivasan dedicates confirmation celebration to father

AZIZ HANIFFA

rikanth 'Sri' Srinivasan, the newly minted federal judge on the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals, thanked the Indian-American and the larger South Asian-American communities at a reception hosted by the Indian Ambassador to the United States Nirupama Rao, June 17.

'I know this occasion is meant to commemorate my confirmation,' Srinivasan, 46, said, 'but it's due to so many of you who are here today. And, I'd like to on behalf of my family express our gratitude to all of you for the instrumental role you'll played in this process - many different kinds of roles, some directly involved in the process, others involved as friends and supporters, but all deeply essential.'

The community support had been very important to him, he said.

'I think candidly it's not something that I appreciated at the outset of this process - it's something I grew to appreciate a great deal more as the process moved on,' he said. 'It's something that is so meaningful to us as immigrants from India, the way in which this community has come together in support of this.'

Srinivasan dedicated the celebration of his confirmation to his late father Professor T P Srinivasan, who passed away June 8 at age 81. Professor Srinivasan came to the United States as a Fulbright Scholar in 1961 to University of California-Berkeley. He then moved to Lawrence in 1968 and served on the Kansas University Mathematics faculty for 32 years, until 2000, before he moved with his family to Northern California.

Sri Srinivasan gave a moving eulogy to his father, at the end of which there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

'Yesterday was Father's Day, and it was an especially poignant Father's Day for us,' he said. 'It's the first Father's Day that we've had without my dad.'

He described his father as 'a great man' who had a quintessential immigrant experience. 'He brought his wife, my mother, and the children - my two beautiful sisters and the ugly duckling, me, to this country at an early age seeking opportunities for us,' Srinivasan said. 'His ambition was our ambition, his dreams were our dreams and I think they were fully realized.'

He recalled how at the end his father could only speak in whispers and speak only one or two words at a time.

'The first word he whispered to me, was "prime minister":

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his father, Srinivasan explained, were long time friends and colleagues from their days at Punjab University in Chandigarh. They had stayed in touch since then.

'In fact, the very last phone call that my dad received was from the prime minister and his wife,' Srinivasan said. 'And at that point he couldn't speak but he could listen and my mom held the phone and the receiver to his ear so that he could hear the words of encouragement, congratulations, and of sincere devotion to him, and fidelity to their friendship. That meant the world to him and that's why he whispered that to me.'

He added, 'The second thing dad whispered to me was: "97-0 (the unanimous US Senate vote to confirm him), how did vou do it?"

Srinivasan said it was not an easy question to answer.

'I didn't do it. The President did it, the Senate did it, and you all did it,' he told the audience. 'You all made that possible and I come back to where I started with my deep gratitude to all of you.'

Srinivasan said his victory was possible because of his father, 'and the opportunity he gave us when he brought us to this country, because of the example he set, and because



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of the values he instilled in us. He did it.'

Turning to Rao, he added, 'I'd like to, if I could, with the permission of the ambassador, dedicate this night, not to me, although I know it's to celebrate my confirmation, but I'd like to dedicate it to him because it was his example that shines through."

Judge Sri Srinavasan, left, with his mother Saroja, second from left, sister Srinija, right, and Indian Ambassador Nirupama Rao.

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A6

US News

А7

Powerful panel at NFIA seminar highlights women's issues



From left, Satheesan Nair of the NFIA; Islam Siddiqui, chief agricultural negotiator, Office of the United States Trade Representative; Maureen Greenwood Basken of the UN Foundation; Denise Rollins of USAID; Angela Anand of the NFIA; Acting Assictant Secretary of State Uzra Zeya; Lal Motwani and Sohan Joshi of the NFIA; Saba Ghori of the State Department; Maryland State Delegate Aruna Miller; and Riju Srimal of the State Department

AZIZ HANIFFA

stellar panel of speakers, including senior Obama administration officials, once again made the women's seminar the highlight of the National Federal of Indian American Organizations' two-day Washington, DC, convention.

The women's seminar was organized — for the third successive year — by Angela Anand, vice president, NFIA and chair of the women's committee.

Last week's symposium was perhaps the most high profile and powerful panel put together by an Indian-American organization to discuss women's issues.

The seminar, which focused on the proliferation of violence against women — triggered by the brutal gang-rape and murder of the 23-year-old student in Delhi — also zeroed in on strategies to empower women and girls not just in India and the US, but globally. It also discussed how Diaspora communities like the influential and affluent India-American community could be a catalyst in such an endeavor.

Uzra Zeya, acting assistant secretary of state, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, outlined the White House and the State Department's commitments to the advancement of women and detailed what the administration is doing to implement these objectives.

'We know,' she said, 'that securing equal rights and opportunity for women and girls is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do... For instance, women invest 80 percent of their incomes in their families and communities, and women-led local governments are both more honest and provide more public services. When we invest in women's education and give them the opportunity to access credit or start a small business, the economic, political, and social benefits ripple out far beyond the home.'

President Obama, she said, 'has launched comprehensive efforts to promote gender equality and empower women and girls domestically and worldwide, including strategies to combat trafficking in persons, prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and expand economic opportunity for women. In response to President Obama's challenge to other heads of state to break down barriers to women's political and economic participation, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton launched the Equal Futures Partnership on behalf of the United States along with 12 other founding members.

Secretary of State John F Kerry was also no stranger to promoting women's issues, Zeya said. When he was chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Kerry, Zeya said, 'worked to establish a subcommittee on global women's issues' and had recently stated that "No country can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind."

Gender-based violence, said Riju Srimal, women's issues adviser, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, State Department, 'doesn't exist in a vacuum. A number of social, economic, and political factors influence the prevalence and perpetuation of violence. It is therefore important that women have the ability to pursue edu-

cation and economic freedom to exit the cycle of violence.' Violence is a worldwide problem, said Saba Ghori, adviser to Kerry in his office of Global Women's Issues, 'but in the context of South Asia, it takes on additional forms... Women can be abused by their extended families including their mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. They are affected by harmful traditional practices including son preference which leads to gender-biased sex selection, early and forced marriage, 'honor' killings, and acid-related violence. You see it manifest itself in inadequate health care and nutrition given to girls, dowry-related murder, the neglect and ostracism of widows, and countless other forms of violence.'

Denise Rollins, senior deputy assistant administrator, US Agency for International Development, said there is extensive research that shows 'the more a society supports equality between the sexes, the more likely it is to have econom-

'While the US government can do much, you as part of the India- American Diaspora can do much more through your personal and professional connections here and abroad.' ic stability and be run democratically. Our approach in India and other countries worldwide is to work across sectors to identify and close gender gaps wherever they exist.'

Rollins said, 'We know that some in the community, such as Sakhi for South Asia, South Asian Network's Awaz Voices Against Violence program and the Asian Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project, have been long time advocates for change already for years.'

She told the hundreds in the audience: While the US government can do much, you as part of the India-American Diaspora can do much more through your personal and professional connections here and abroad.

On the first day of the Washington Convention, NFIA delegates attended a Congressional reception and a White House briefing. In the evening, Indian Ambassador to the US

Nirupama Rao hosted a reception and dinner for them at the Indian embassy.

Maureen Greenwood Basken, executive director, Women, Girls and Population Program, United Nations Foundation, said, 'It is heartening to witness the commitment of this impressive group to support women and girls around the world.'

The women's forum was followed by a cultural program organized by Lakshmi Swamination, founder and director of the Bethesda, Maryland-based Natananjali School of Dance. She brought together Indian-American dance schools in the area, including Rhythmaya Dance founded and directed by Nirathi Rao Kalavapudi, Nrityaki Dance Academy founded and directed by Shweta Misra, and the Kuchipudi Dance Academy founded and directed by Lakshmi Babu.



AZIZ HANIFFA

t the National Federal of Indian American Organizations' women's seminar, Uzra Zeya, acting assistant secretary of state, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said the Delhi girl who was gang-raped and murdered last year had stirred the world's conscience.

US News

The brave girl, Zeya said, 'defied her doctors and the culture of silence, giving two detailed accounts of her attack that the police used to arrest her rapists. This March... Nirbhaya (*as the girl was named by a section of the Indian media*) was named an International Woman of Courage by Secretary Kerry and First Lady Michelle Obama for inspiring millions of women and men to come together with a simple message — No more looking the other way when gender-based violence happens. No more stigma against survivors of this violence.'

The State Department, Zeya said, has 'provided several hundred women throughout Hyderabad rape-awareness training, we've convened discussions on gender-based violence with Indian youth, activists, and the diplomatic community in New Delhi. We've organized exchange programs to bring over

Indians to the United States to share lessons on preventing domestic abuse and violence. We've supported NGOs that help women learn their rights... This is just a small sampling of the things we've been doing. The various grants and programs we fund goes on. And there's also the great work of our colleagues at USAID (*US Agency for International Development*).'

She continued: We hosted a South Asia Women's Entrepreneurship Symposium in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in December... Participants from across South and Central Asia, including India, discussed the challenges and opportunities faced by women-owned small and medium sized enterprises and creation of cross-border linkages between women entrepreneurs and leaders throughout South and Central Asia.'

The US is supporting economic empowerment initiatives in India and across South and Central Asia, said Riju Srimal, women's issues adviser, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, State Department.

These, Srimal said, range from 'livelihood-generation training for Madhubani painters in Bihar and West Bengal and vulnerable groups in Northeast India to working with major self-help networks like SEWA (*Self-Employment Women's Association*) and women's business associations across India.'

Saba Ghori, adviser to Secretary of State John Kerry in his Office of Global Women's Issues, spoke about a program called the Garima project. It was a USAID-funded project, she explained, 'designed to address violence against women by engaging men and boys, community and religious leaders, and doctors and health-care workers... Garima has strengthened the implementation of key pieces of legislation including the Domestic Violence Act, the Prevention of Child Marriage Act, and the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technical Act.'

For these laws to be effective, she said, 'hard work must be done at the grassroots level to sensitize and educate



Bharatiya Janata Party supporters push through a police barricade as they march towards the home of Sonia Gandhi, chief of India's ruling Congress party, in New Delhi, April 21. Angry crowds demonstrated after a 5-year-old girl was allegedly raped, tortured and kept in captivity for 40 hours, reviving memories of last December's brutal gang-rape and murder.

local communities... The Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development is one important program supported by Garima to mobilize hundreds of men and boys from low income/rural communities in Rajasthan and Karnataka to address the problem of violence against women through street plays and performances.'

Ghori said she first became acquainted with the ICPRD While in India last November, when she watched 'male members of the Rajasthan community perform a powerful street play that addressed the negative impact of child sex selection, domestic violence, child marriage, and sexual harassment or "eve-teasing" (*sexual harassment*)... It turned boys and men into champions for the cause.'

In Chennai, Ghori said, 'I watched young men perform

skits that touched upon many of the issues of violence against women in front of an audience of at least 500 women. When I asked the young men why they participated in the program... one boy told me the harrowing story of his older sister who was being forced to marry a man more than twice her age. Another young man told me the pain he experienced watching his younger sister teased and jeered at whenever she through walked the street.'

The Secretary's office on Global Issues, Ghori said, has funded seven small grants in India, 'ranging appetizing flavor options.'

In recent years, Basken said, 'India has led the way in corporate responsibility... The UN Foundation has also engaged Mukesh Dhiruvhai Ambani and Nitin Paranjpe to champion a new private-sector partnership initiative, the Business Leadership Council. Our Energy Practitioner Network is working with Selco, an Indian solar company, to provide solar lamps to girls who attend school... The solar panels that charge the lamps are kept at the school and each day the girls charge their lamps while they are in class and bring them home to provide light for their families at night. If the girls don't attend school, their households are without light that night. This has given parents an additional incentive to educate their daughters.'



from such issues as providing legal aid to women, training for women political leaders on how to advocate for stronger laws and policies to protect women, supporting programs that work with men and boys to prevent violence against women, and training for women entrepreneurs and self-help groups such as SEWA.'

In India, said Maureen Greenwood Basken, executive director, Women, Girls and Population Program, United Nations Foundation, 'thanks to a strong relationship with our board member (*Infosys founder*) N R Narayana Murthy, the UN Foundation partnered with the Millennium Development Goal Health Alliance and Infosys to launch the Sankalp Platform.'

The Sankalp Platform, Basken explained, 'built on the Innovation Co-creation engine of Infosys, brings together stakeholders from across diverse organizations and regions onto a common forum to solve critical maternal and child health challenges. The first Sankalp challenge was to prevent 200,000 diarrheal deaths in children under five by 2015 and the members are sharing ideas on how to ignite greater uptake in the use of oral rehydration salts, including more

A8

US News

'Troops killed in Afghanistan and Iraq: 6,648. Number of women, in the same period, killed through domestic violence in the US: 11,800'

AZIZ HANIFFA

American woman legislator in the Maryland State Assembly, who will soon introduce legislation to allow for paid maternity leave in the state, cited stark statistics about violence against women.

She pointed out, 'Number of US troops killed in Afghanistan and Iraq - 6,648. But number of women, in the same period, killed through domestic violence in the US: 11,800... There are 1,500 shelters for battered women in the US, compared to 3,800 animal shelters. Percentage of homeless women with children reporting domestic violence: 92 percent.'

Violence against women and girls, she said, 'is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. Ending it needs deep culture change and that culture shift can only occur if each of us takes responsibility for our own attitudes toward women, where gender equality moves beyond the level of talk and rhetoric.'

She lauded Angela Anand, vice president, NFIA and chair of the women's committee, for 'raising this important issue.'

Miller also showered kudos on the men of the NFIA — Lal Motwani, chairman of the NFIA Foundation, Sohan Joshi, president of NFIA — for making the women's symposium a regular feature of the organization's Washington, DC, parley.'

She also thanked the standing-room-only turnout at the banquet hall of the Diya Restaurant in Vienna, Virginia, for 'taking the time to attend'.

Taking aim at India, Miller said, 'It is hard to believe that a country that has boasted a female



Maryland State Delegate Aruna Miller

President, a female prime minister, 14 female chief ministers is the same country that the United Nations recognizes as the most dangerous place in the world to be a girl. India's gender inequalities start with simply being born a female. Over 1 million female babies are killed annually in rural villages and elsewhere... Although outlawed in 1961, dowries remain a modern-day cultural tradition that upholds the tradition that women are less of a human and thus, must be traded at a material loss to the female's family.'

A9

She didn't spare the US: 'Despite all our rhetoric about family values, America's policies to support workers and families are worse than any other country in the developed world and out of 181 nations, four do not provide paid maternity leave. America has the highest GDP in the entire world, yet its policies to support working families are the worst of any country in the developed world. We need effective laws that are more responsive to women's needs, and a strengthened criminal justice system that is responsive to crimes against women.'

She said, 'We need the media to stop portraying women as sexual and visual objects. We need to increase the number of women in politics, law enforcement, and peacekeeping forces.'

She asserted: 'We cannot empower women without the support of men — men who see women as equal to them and men who refused to be silent about violence against women.'

She praised community activist Dr Sambhu Banik, who was in the audience, for being a vociferous advocate for women's rights.



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INDIA NEWS/FLOOD FURY

A10

Himalayan tsunami

Thousands stranded, many feared dead as rains and rampaging rivers wreak havoc on North India



The Kedarnath shrine in Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag district, one of Hinduism's holiest sites and one of the Char Dhams, submerged in mud and slush. Over 50 pilgrims died in the unprecedented flash floods while thousands were left stranded. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna said it would take a year to clean up the debris and restore the temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.



The rampaging Ganga submerges a statue of Lord Shiva in Rishikesh.

Pilgrims stranded in Rudraprayag.

Torrential rains hit North India June 15-16. Uttarakhand, where most rivers are in spate, was the worst hit. Houses and buildings collapsed and roads caved in many parts of the state. At press time the death toll due to floods was 150, but

thousands are trapped in Uttarakhand's higher reaches and the toll is expected to rise. The state government canceled the Char Dham Yatra to holy Hindu sites high in the Himalayas as well as the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra into Tibet

through Uttarakhand. An estimated 71,000 pilgrims were reported stranded. In Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district, another 1,700 tourists are estimated stranded. The meteorological department said rains in June broke an 88-

year record. At press time, about 8,500 army troopers, 30 India Air Force aircraft, 2,000 Indo-Tibetan Border Police jawans, and 250 National Disaster Relief Force personnel had been deployed to tackle the flood situation.

Experts said the disaster was waiting to happen because of frantic mining activities and mushrooming hydropower projects in the mountainous state. The debris being dumped into rivers has resulted in the water level rising unnaturally, contributing to flash floods. The top soil has been eroded, thanks to deforestation.

Page A11

COURTESY: INDIAN ARM

INDIA NEWS/FLOOD FURY





Army personnel rescue pilgrims near Hemkund Sahib, one of Sikhism's holiest places.



An Indian army trooper swims through floodwaters to reach victims in Rishikesh.

Rescue operations in Govindghat, Chamoli district.

A Page A10

Himalayan tsunami



Troopers distribute food packets and essential medicines to flood victims in Harsil village near Gangotri.







The man has passed, the legend remains

Vikram Sood salutes his friend and mentor B Raman, who passed away June 16

A12

n our trade and profession we hunted together — my friend and mentor, Bahukutumbi Raman, and I. Today I miss him and in grieving for him, actually I grieve for myself.

My friend for 40 years, not 30 as I had Tweeted in my grief, Raman was a core professional. But he was more. Strong on loyalty and professional excellence. Loved irreverent gossip yet immensely secretive professionally. A man seriously and earnestly devoted to his profession, for whom detail was everything.

A very private man, it took a while to get to know him after I was sent to study under him and eventually take over from him, in 1972. There would be days he would be very quiet; not rude, just immersed in whatever he was doing. I could sit there all day and read volumes of intelligence material and leave quietly without even a word. Or not have shown up that day.

There were other days he would be gossipy and cheerful with many stories to tell of his days in Madhya Pradesh, recounted with a loud chuckle. He did spend time moulding me, taking me through the paces, the dos and don'ts of an analyst and what makes a career intelligence officer. Over time the bond grew and even when we disagreed, both knew that we merely made a point and moved on.

Our career paths took us along different routes in 1974 but we met again, professionally, in 1983 when I took over from him once again and finally, in August 1994 when he retired. But he did not really retire. Such men rarely do. His frequent assessments, analyses and reports on events were a touchstone for most of us in the business of intelligence reporting and assessments.

All of these are now on his blog (ramanstrategicanalysis.blogspot.com) for posterity to read and learn. Over time his writings became legendary, like the man himself. Later, he was



called in to help the government with the task force on intelligence following the Kargil Review Committee, he became a member of the National Security Advisory Board and once again called to assist in the Naresh Chandra Committee review.

Raman's career took him through tumultuous times of the Cold War, the India-Pakistan war and the liberation war in Bangladesh of 1971, the Naga and Mizo rebellions and the peace talks, the Sikh insurgency of the 1980s and finally, the Inter Services Intelligence-led campaigns in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s, of which the Mumbai bombings of March 1993 were an important and monstrous milestone.

Raman was the only Indian intelligence officer with three books to his credit. Two of them were *Intelligence: Past Present and Future* and *A Terrorist State As a Frontline Ally.* He writes about his experiences in his last book, *The Kaoboys of R&AW*.

In this book, Raman is remarkably chatty as he takes the reader through his days in the intelligence world and its interactions with the powers that be. Raman expresses his anger at the US State Department of the Bill Clinton era pressuring us on Pakistan and the eternal hyphenation between India and Pakistan that was the hallmark of the nineties till Kargil 1999.

His final remark on the US and perhaps the Western attitude is still valid when he says, 'An over-anxiety to protect Pakistan from the consequences of its misdeeds still continues to be the defining characteristic of policy making in the State Department.'

Secretary of State John Kerry might do himself a favor by heeding Raman's last warning ' ... I am convinced in my mind that if there is an act of terrorism involving the use of weapons of mass destruction one day, it would have originated from Pakistani territory.'

The last chapter of this book contains his assessment of the organization he served so selflessly and his advice for the managers of intelligence in the country. We would do ourselves immense credit if we follow at least some of the ideals and goals he sets out. Raman the man has passed, Raman the legend remains.

Vikram Sood is a former head of the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external intelligence agency.



Premarital sex is marriage, court rules

If consenting adults have sex, the Madras high court said last week, it will be considered a valid marriage.

'If any couple choose to consummate their sexual cravings, then that act becomes a total commitment with adherence to all consequences that may follow, except on certain exceptional considerations,' Justice C S Karnan said in his order. Marriage ritual formalities, he said, were only for the satisfaction of society.

Either party could approach a family court for declaration of marital status by producing documentary proof for a sexual relationship, he said. Justice Karnan made these observations while modifying an April 2006 judgment of a family court in a maintenance case. The court in Coimbatore had ordered a man to pay Rs 500 (\$9) maintenance per month to his two children



An anti-rape rally June 18 in Kolkata. The demonstration was held to protest against the increasing number of rapes in the city. The National Crime Records Bureau said in its report recently that Bengal continued to top the list in crime against women for two years in a row.



and Rs1000 (\$18) as litigation expenses and had held that the woman's wedding with him did not have any documentary proof.

Justice Karnan directed the man to pay her maintenance.

Indian Air force gets US aircraft

The Indian air force June 18 received its first C-17 Globemaster aircraft, which landed at the Hindon airbase near Delhi. Two more C-17 aircraft will be brought in within weeks. The aircraft are part of a fleet of 10 aircraft that are on order from Boeing. The C-17 will gradually replace the Russian Il-76.

Raja Bhaiya to undergo polygraph test

Former Uttar Pradesh minister Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiya agreed to undergo a lie-detection test in connection with the murder of Zia-ul-Haq, a policeman. Although India's Central Bureau of Investigation does not have evidence that

Fresh faces in the Cabinet

Eight new faces were inducted into Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's council of ministers, June 17. The expansion and reshuffle of the council was necessitated by the exit of ministers from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the resignations of Pawan Kumar Bansal, Ashwani Kumar, Ajay Maken and C P Joshi. directly links the political strongman to the case, it wants to get a clear picture of his role, if any, CBI sources told the Press Trust of India. Haq was shot dead March 2 in Pratapgarh district's Balipur village, where he had gone to probe the murder of a village head. His wife Parveen Azad had alleged Raja Bhaiya was involved.

Nitish Kumar wins trust vote

Three days after dumping long-time coalition ally the Bharatiya Janata Party, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar won a trust vote June 19 and proved his majority in the state assembly. His party, the Janata Dal-United, sailed through with 126 votes in his favor after 91 BJP members and a Lok Janshakti Party legislator walked out of the 243-member House.

Mamata's new conspiracy theory

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged that the Communist Party of India-Marxist had joined hands with Maoists to kill her in a bid to return to power in the state. She also charged the rebels for being hand-in-glove with the Congress party and the Bharatiya Janata Party in plotting against her, and said the Ananda Bazar Patrika Group media house was also involved.

Amarnath Yatra on terror radar

The India army said it has received inputs that terrorists may try to disrupt the Amarnath Yatra that begins June 28.



THE WEEK THAT WAS

Page A13

'Intelligence inputs have revealed that they *(terrorists)* have intentions to disrupt the yatra,' Lieutenant General K T Parnaik, general officer commanding-in-chief, Northern Command, said June 17. 'Precautions are being taken. We have discussed security arrangements for the pilgrimage and plans are being made on how to secure the yatra.'

Britain spied on Indian delegates

Britain spied on foreign politicians and officials participating in two G20 meetings in London in 2009 to get an edge during the high-stakes financial talks, according to documents uncovered by United States whistleblower Edward Snowden and obtained by *The Guardian*.

The documents revealed that foreign politicians and officials who took part in the summits had their computers monitored and their phone calls intercepted on instructions from the British government.

Apex court to hear plea on US Internet data surveillance

India's Supreme Court agreed to hear a public interest litigation on Internet data snooping by the US National Security Agency. The plea sought to initiate action against Internet companies in India for allowing the NSA to access information.

The petitioner S N Singh, a pro-

fessor at Delhi University, alleged that such large-scale spying was detrimental to national security and urged the court to intervene.

Assam: 4 infected with HIV after blood transfusion

Four people tested positive for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus after blood transfusion at a staterun hospital in Assam's Darrang district, June 14. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi has ordered the police to register a criminal case against those responsible for the transfusion.

Mobile clinics help kill girls

The pre-natal sex-determination racket has gone mobile in Karnataka. A three-member team from the National Inspection and Monitoring Committee caught a radiologist who offered his services at a bus stop near Bengaluru. According to the police, the radiologist would visit the bus stop twice a week with a mobile ultrasound machine and help pregnant women determine the sex of their babies so that they could abort girl fetuses.

Doctor invents 'suicide-proof' ceiling fan

A Madhya Pradesh cardiologist has invented a 'suicideproof' ceiling fan. R S Sharma, a professor in a government medical college in Jabalpur, says the inspiration came when a teenaged boy in his neighborhood committed suicide after failing his high school examination.

The device has a hollow metal tube inside the fan's shaft, to which the motor and blades are attached. Hinged to the shaft are four heavy springs. The moment the limit set for the optimum weight exceeds, the springs uncoil, leading



Fruit for gods

A priest arranges mangoes to be offered to Lord Krishna during a mango festival in Ahmedabad.

to a soft landing of the person without stretching of the neck or straining the noose, Sharma said.

Illegal mining: 3-year jail for Modi's minister

Babu Bokhiria, a senior minister in the Narendra Modi government, was June 15 sentenced to three years imprisonment by a court in Porbandar in a 2006 illegal limestone mining case.

Maoists blow up school in Bihar

Maoists destroyed a government school in Bihar's Jamui district June 15, days after attacking the Dhanbad-Patna intercity train in which three people were killed. The police said the school was targeted as revenge for combing operations launched in the area since the attack on the train.

National cycling coach run over

Ruma Chatopadhyay, India's national cycling coach, died June 18 after being hit by a taxi on the Delhi-Noida Expressway. She was out on a training session with a group of cyclists. Chatopadhyay, 51, represented India three times in international competitions and served as coach seven times, including in the Asian Games and Asian Championship.

Economic issues to dominate Kerry's India visit

Economic issues like intellectual property protection, local content restrictions and a continued cap on foreign direct investment were likely to be on top of Secretary of State John Kerry's agenda when he travels to India June 23-25 for the US-India Strategic Dialogue.

Pakistan violates ceasefire again

Pakistan made another brazen ceasefire violation June 19 after a group of four armed men from the Pakistani side were seen moving toward an Indian forward post in Krishna Ghati in Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistani soldiers fired indiscriminately along the Line of Control (the *de facto* border between India and Pakistan) in Poonch sector, injuring a civilian and spreading fear among the villagers along the LoC.

Amitav Ghosh in longlist for UK literary prize

Indian writer Amitav Ghosh has made it to the Warwick Prize for Writing longlist in London. The list includes 12 novelists and poets pitted against non-fiction authors. Ghosh has been nominated for *River of Smoke*, alongside others like American writers Amy Espeseth (*Sufficient Grace*) and Jonathan Franzen (*Freedom*).

Right to life, liberty available to foreign nationals: Apex court

The right to life and liberty, enshrined in Article 21 of India's Constitution, was available even to foreign nationals, the Supreme Court observed June 20 and quashed a police case registered by the Maharashtra government against three Ugandan citizens who were visiting India to settle a business dispute with Videocon.

On a complaint by Videocon officials, the police had charged the three with extortion and their passports were impounded. The court said the charges 'were baseless' and directed the police to release their passports immediately.

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'It is a global problem'

Cyber-security expert **Aditya K Sood** explains to **Suman Guha Mozumder** the dangers digital currency poses to governments and people across the world

ditya K Sood, senior security consultant, IOActive, says online currency transfer business companies like Liberty Reserve, which was indicted in the United States in a \$6 billion money-laundering scheme, are becoming an alternative to the global banking system.

The basic concept, he adds, is to start with a fiat currency - an established national currency - like the US dollar or the Euro and convert it to an intermediate digital currency until the transaction is over, at which point the currency is converted back into fiat currency.

"It is true that according to the terms of use digital currencies are not to be converted by recipients for use of criminal activities or money laundering," he says. "But these restrictions are essentially unenforceable and that is how money laundering is taking place."

Sood is a PhD candidate studying underground economy at Michigan State University, and has worked in the security domain for Armorize, COSEINC and KPMG.

How big is the problem of underground economy in the United States?

I won't say that it is a problem related only to the US. It is a global problem. If you talk about e-currency, the question is where does this come from and where does it go? Where are the organizations that actually perform e-currency transactions? The Liberty Reserve was based somewhere in Costa Rica.

And WebMoney, another e-currency company, is based somewhere in Russia. The problem is big for those countries where actually the money is being extracted from, including the US.

The problem persists at the point where cyber attackers actually steal critical or sen-

behind e-currency is that these organizations do not actually want to pay huge taxes and transaction fee that is levied by different credit cards companies, or for banking transactions.

It is a big problem that the government is facing because all the money in these kinds of transactions is not reported to the financial intuitions or the regulatory bodies like the Internal Revenue Service.

So it is easy money or black money that is going in and out of the system. The govern-

The Business Interview Aditya K Sood

sitive information of different users and use that information to carry out monetary transactions. To do that they use what we call e-currency. So from the country perspective it is a big problem for the US, but it is also a big problem for countries all around the world.

Can governments play a role in preventing this?

Yes, governments can play a role. But we have to understand two points. Why did ecurrency come to exist? The major idea ment has to play a critical role. In the US, the laws are pretty strict. Still, it took seven to eight years to prosecute Liberty. The problem is that these organizations, which perform e-currency transactions, are actually private institutions residing outside the US, in countries where cyber laws are not that strict.

So there is a time lag here. The US government has to work with other governments around the world to actually come to a point where they can prosecute these criminals. But still they will have to wait a couple of years because they need to get all that information before they can prosecute these criminals.

In the Liberty Reserve case, they have taken down the system and that is only because the government has taken steps and has worked with foreign governments. The US has lost a huge amount of money not because of e-currency but for the kind of money and goods that have been transacted without being reported to the IRS or government regulatory authorities.

You just mentioned cyber lag. All you need is an e-mail address, fake or original, to transfer the money. How does it work?

There are two actors in this. The first are the exchange-makers who actually exchange your currency for e-currency. And then we have e-currency providers who have a particular set of exchange-makers, who are actually legitimate bodies, exchanging money at the current rate.

When you need to send money you have to register or have to go in person to these exchange-makers and have to register an account. Or maybe you can talk with them on the phone to initiate the process. They will say \$1, for example, equal to one WebMoney dollar or one Liberty Reserve dollar and charge you some percentage of the money being sent.

Only recognized exchange-makers are allowed to perform e-currency transactions. From a cyber attacker's perspective it is not hard to fake their identities and provide all the information and credentials to initiate transactions.

But even cyber attackers need to have an account with exchange-makers for e-currency. How would they do that?

As I said, once they have accessed information from a legit institution about a guy and validate that you are the same guy, you will be allocated an account number, which is used for storing money.

Remember until and unless an exchangemaker takes a step and converts e-currency into fiat currency, it is useless. E-currency can be stored and the recipient can take out any amount at any time. But if it is not converted to fiat money, if the system is taken down the stored money is gone.

Until and unless an exchange-maker goes to take out the money, or the government takes rigorous steps to move forward and force exchange-makers to convert money, the money is usually gone.

Can you elaborate on exchange-makers?

Exchange-makers have their policies and they present themselves as trading companies, saying that they just exchange money. There is actually one system out there that makes this happen. Unless and until you want to exchange the money, there is no way you can get the money out.

It is a game of ping-pong where everybody is trying to push the ball to another person's court. They have set up policies in such a way that you have just exchanged money and the money has gone into another system. The big problem is that all these transactions are irreversible in nature. And you do not know who to prosecute.

There are many money transfer companies here, say, for India. How safe it is for people to send money that would be converted from dollars to rupees?

You need to use an authentication system. If you use legitimate banks like the State Bank of India, it will get into your account one way or the other. There is a possibility that whatever interest you earn on that they

India Abroad June 28, 2013

Page A16

are going to report it to the government.

Similarly, for PayPal, you need to have an account and you need to have a proper checking account in your bank.

But in other cases, you send money and they will give the money only in cash. They do not send the money to a person's bank account. So there is no record and even if there is one it could be deleted. So that is the problem. There is no authentication when you register with e-currency. It is actually black money because it is not reported to the government. That is why the government is worried.

How do then people send money to Swiss banks, black or white money?

Swiss banks work in a different way. There you hold your currency in fiat currency, which is declared by a government to be legal tender. You can actually make exchanges, for example Indian rupees into Swiss currency, but there is no intermediate currency in between like e-currency.

Also there is a different way an account in a Swiss bank can be opened. The only thing is that they do not divulge account holders' information because of compliance rules.

So are you actually transferring money when you talk about e-currency? Suppose one has an account with a recognized bank, the bank will ask the sender about where the money is being sent, right?

That is a pretty good question. Yes you actually transfer money. But a sender can evade surveillance because the exchange-makers have legitimate bank accounts and so you can transfer inter bank.

Exchange-makers have usually different bank accounts. When you send money to an exchange-maker, banks do not want to know anything except whether the exchange-maker has an account with them or not.

Since exchange-makers have accounts with banks, they would not question the sender about anything else. Exchangemakers would admit that they have got the money from another legitimate account holder in a bank.

The problem starts after hackers have compromised the account, because banks would not know who the actual actor is. So it is basically open to hackers who can reset notification, passwords sitting in another part of the globe.

Can't something be done about it technologically?

Yes. Actually there are various organizations that are building some production mechanism to disrupt the flow. In computer parlance, one has to stop the error at the top; if we are not able to do that, it will keep on increasing.

We have to detect those kinds of malicious codes before they can extract all the information.

Solutions are being built but it is a kind of

'It is a global problem'

Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, describes charges against Costa Rica-based Liberty Reserve, one of the world's largest

digital currency companies, May 28. The company and seven of its principals employees were indicted in the US for allegedly running a \$6 billion money laundering

arms race. They (*cyber attackers*) know how the Internet works and that is why it has become a potential problem.

scheme.

But many companies provide Internet security against virus attacks, etc.

The problem is that the companies that are building defense mechanisms do not know about malicious codes until and unless they are discovered.

Banks too are trying hard to build different policies and have fraud-detection teams or fraud-prevention teams, given that the underground economy in the US is a multibillion-dollar and lucrative industry for criminals all over the world.

There are parallel systems like Liberty out there.

Cyber attackers have already built a mar-

ket place and have built systems, which are completely automated using Botnet, a collection of Internet-connected programs communicating with other similar programs in order to perform tasks.

This use can be as mundane as keeping control of an Internet Relay Chat channel, or it could be used to send spam e-mail.

What drew you to cyber security?

We are building technology but how many users understand the technology and its pros and cons? That is one big problem from the users' point of view. We take a step forward and start using technology right away without understanding the pros and cons.

You cannot expect every user to be technology savvy. That is why it is important to

understand where people are sending their information and what could be the consequences of that.

Security is very important while using technology. There is a dearth of cyber-security professionals and we need to have cyber-security solutions.

To answer your question, security is something that motivates me and we have to build products. We need to take care of people's privacy and their security as more and more people are using technology these days.

We have to make sure that information does not fall into wrong hands. I want to be someone who will provide security to people who are using new technologies and to protect them from cyber criminals.



A17

BUSINESS



the week that was

Rupee hits new low

The Indian rupee June 20 plunged by a whopping 130 paise to hit a new low of 60 against the US dollar in early trade on the Interbank Foreign Exchange.

Nasscom concerned over curbs in US bill

India's National Association of Software and Services Companies has raised concerns over what it calls proposed discriminatory restrictions in the draft US immigration bill. Som Mittal, president, Nasscom, said, 'Surely, we have got huge concerns on the restrictions that are being proposed in the Senate bill. There is discrimination because it is based on visa-dependent companies versus non-visa-dependent companies.

He added the restrictions would have a major impact on US corporations served by Indian IT companies, because of which the first impact would be on the US economy and customers there. 'So, it is the US corporations who are actually batting for us,' he said.

FDA warns RPG Life Sciences

The Food and Drug Administration has issued a warning letter to RPG Life Sciences for violation of Current Good Manufacturing Practice norms at its two plants at Ankleshwar, Gujarat, and Mumbai. During an inspection of the pharmaceutical manufacturing facility at Navi Mumbai, FDA investigators said they identified significant deviations from the CGMP for the manufacture of active pharmaceutical ingredients.

Rebuilding Infosys will take three vears: Murthv

Weeks after he was recalled and made executive chairman of Infosys, N R Narayana Murthy told

shareholders that rebuilding the company would be 'daunting' and the task would take about three years. Seeking their 'understanding, support and encourage ment', Murthy warned that there would be some 'tough decisions resulting in pain as we move forward.

India's gold import to see sharp fall

After a sharp increase in April and May, gold imports are expected to come down significantly in June, due to the Reserve Bank of India blocking the consignment import route for the domestic market and the federal government imposing a 2 percent additional import duty.

FDI in India dips to \$5.47 billion

Foreign direct investment in India declined by 6 percent to \$5.47 billion during the January-March quarter of the current financial year even as government is making efforts to promote the country as an investment destination.

FDI inflows were worth \$5.84 billion in January-March 2012. During the quarter, highest FDI of \$2.15 billion was received in January, followed by \$1.79 billion in February, and \$1.52 billion in March.

EU fines Ranbaxy

The European Commission imposed a fine of euro 146 million on nine pharma companies, including Ranbaxy Laboratories, for delaying market entry of cheaper generic versions of citalopram, a blockbuster antidepressant. Ranbaxy has been fined euro 10.32 million.

Mukesh Ambani's 'personal' firms ready for big boom

Mukesh Ambani's personal companies, led by his power and port ventures, are gearing up for a big business boom by adding capacity to meet future demand. Bankers say the unlisted Reliance Utilities & Power Ltd is expected to spend close to Rs 10,000 crore (\$1.7 billion) to add 2,600 megawatt of capacity over the next two years. The new

units will be set up in Jamnagar, Dahej and Hazira in Gujarat, and take care of the increasing power requirements of RIL's units.

AirAsia revs up for India

Budget airline AirAsia June 17 announced Tata Group patriarch Ratan Tata as its chief adviser, and Tata Consultancy Services vice chairman S Ramadorai as its

chairman. AirAsia begins its India service later this year.

Tatas looking at European buvs

Tata Coffee, India's second-largest producer of instant coffee, is aggressively looking to expand its business by acquiring companies. It is scouting for suitable firms in Europe and planning to close the deal some time this year. The company is looking at acquisition as part of its vision to become a Rs 1,000-crore (\$170 million) company by 2015.

India records secondhighest growth in superrich population

While the world is home to 12 million millionaires with collective net worth reaching a record high of \$46.2 trillion, India clocked the second-highest growth of 22.2 percent in its High Net Worth Individual population last year after Hong Kong, according to the World Wealth Report. The growth in number of HNWIs in India was attributed to positive trends in equity market capitalization, gross national income, consumption and real estate.



Apollo Managing Director Neeraj Kanwar speaks during a news conference in New Delhi June 14. Apollo Tyres lost a third of its market value in over two days as investors fretted over the debt it will take on to fund its \$2.5-billion acquisition of US-based Cooper Tire & Rubber.



India Abroad June 28, 2013



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A19



India investment tips for the Diaspora

I live in the United States and have lately started investing in India. However, I am not very clear about the tax incidence on various investments. Can you elaborate on Indian taxation on bank interest? Similarly, what is the tax position with respect to mutual funds and investments in property? Once tax is paid in India, will I be liable to pay tax here also? – Sankarshan

1. The interest on the non-resident ordinary account is taxable and also subject to tax deducted at source at 30.9 percent.

2. In the case of mutual funds, tax depends upon whether the mutual fund is equity oriented or not. Equity-oriented mutual funds are those where the investments are 65 percent or more in domestic equity shares. Long-term capital gains on equity-oriented mutual funds are tax-free whereas short-term capital gains are taxable at the rate of 15 percent.

For non-equity oriented mutual funds, long-term capital gains are taxable at 20 percent after reducing indexed cost or at 10 percent after reducing actual cost without indexation, whichever is lower.

Long-term capital gain will arise if the holding period is over 12 months, else the gain is short-term in nature.

All dividends from mutual funds are tax-free. However, there is a dividend distribution tax of 25 percent applicable on dividends distributed by non-equity oriented mutual funds.

3. For property to qualify as a long-term asset, the holding period has to be over 36 months. On long-term gains from property, the tax rate would be at 20 percent after reducing indexed cost from the sale proceeds. The option of 10 percent (as is available in the case of non-equity MFs) is not available.

Note that just as global income of a resident Indian is taxable in India (with Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement relief), the global income of a non-resident Indian may be taxable in his host country.

Legally, we can answer queries pertaining only to Indian tax laws and regulations. We cannot comment upon the taxability in any other country or jurisdiction. Kindly get this information from a consultant specializing in tax laws of your host country.

Recently, in one of your answers to a query you mentioned that a gift of Rs 50,000 (\$864) or less to an Indian citizen is tax free for the recipient in India. Is it per year or one time in a recipient's life? Also, if the gifts of Rs 50,000 or less were given to many family members of the recipient, say to his wife and his children, is that counted as income for him? Gangar

The Rs 50,000 limit has to be applied per financial year (April-March) and not for the lifetime. By way of a background on this, any gifts received in excess of Rs 50,000



(received without consideration or for inadequate consideration) is to be taken as income of the recipient and charged to tax accordingly only if the donor of the gift is not a relative of the recipient.

In other words, gifts received from relatives are tax-free irrespective of the amount of the gift. Also, for taxable gifts (received from non-relatives), if the gift is above Rs 50,000, it is the entire amount that will be taxed and not only the incremental one above Rs 50,000. For example, if the gift is say Rs 60,000, then the entire Rs 60,000 will be taxable and not only the marginal Rs 10,000 over and above the Rs 50,000 limit.

'Relative' means Spouse Brother or sister Brother or sister of spouse Brother or sister of either parents Any lineal ascendant or descendant Any lineal ascendant or descendant of the spouse. Spouse of the persons referred in clauses (ii) to (vi)."

Can an NRI give Form 15G/H to a bank so that bank does not deduct tax on interest on his deposits? If the bank deducts tax then what will be the best option for the NRI? Gian

Form 15G is meant for non-seniors whereas Form 15H is meant to be used by a senior citizen (65 years or more of age). If this form is submitted by the deposit holder in respect of his deposit, the bank does not deduct tax while paying interest. There are some conditions, which if the deposit holder complies with, these forms can be submitted.

However, both the concept of a senior citizen as well as submission of these forms is not applicable in case of NRIs. In other words, NRIs irrespective of their age are not eligible to file Form 15G or 15H as the case may be.

Consequently, it often so happens that the bank with-

holds tax (applies TDS) even if the overall income of the NRI depositor is lesser than the basic exemption limit for taxation of Rs 200,000 (\$3,450). In this situation the best course of action would be to file the tax returns and claim a refund of the extra amount of tax deducted. Note that a Permanent Account Number is mandatory in order to file the return.

My query is regarding insurance. Can an NRI (now a US citizen), invest in Indian insurance plans since his family continues to reside in India?

– C Sinha

Yes, an NRI or a person of Indian origin (an NRI with foreign citizenship) has been granted general permission to invest in any insurance plan in India irrespective of whether his family resides in India or not. As per the current tax policy, the premium paid during the financial year is eligible for a tax deduction up to Rs 100,000 (\$1,700). The maturity proceeds (if the plan is other than term insurance where there is no maturity value) are fully tax-free and can be remitted abroad with a ceiling of Rs 1 million (\$17,300) per financial year (Apr-Mar).

Readers who wish to ask A N Shanbhag a question can fill in the following details and mail the coupon to: The Business Editor, India Abroad, 42 Broadway, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004 Or fax it to 212-727 9730
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A N Shanbhag is an investment consultant and author of In the Wonderland of Investment: How to Convert a Taxpaver into a Taxsaver; NRI Investment Guide. This article does not constitute tax or legal advice. Consult your tax or legal advisor before making any tax- or legally-related investment decisions. The authors may be contacted at wonderlandconsultants@yahoo.com



An Air India **Airlines Boeing** 787 dreamliner takes off for a flying display during the 50th Paris Air Show at the Le Bourget airport near Paris,

the week that was

A Page A18 A

Jet-Etihad deal hits air pocket

Jet Airways' Rs 2,058-crore (\$350 million) deal to sell 24 percent stake to Etihad Airways has hit an air pocket, with the Indian ministry of civil aviation raising objections to the proposal of the West Asian carrier to relocate a few business departments to Abu Dhabi. Moreover, the ministry of corporate affairs has raised ques-

tions on Etihad's rights to nominate three directors on the board and, despite being a minority shareholder in the company, decide on the vice chairman.

Jet Air business class seats designed in garage

Giovanni Bisignani, former director general and chief executive officer, International Air Transport Association, revealed that Jet Airways chief Naresh Goyal developed his airline's business class mock-ups in utter secrecy inside the garage of his London home. Bisignani said Goyal had started from scratch to build a very impressive career.

Spot-fixing: Chandila to remain in judicial custody



he five-day police custody of Rajasthan Royals cricketer Ajit Chandila, arrested in the Indian Premier League spot-fixing case, ended June 20. He was sent to judicial custody till July 2.

The cricketer was arrested May 16 and remained in police custody till May 28, after which he was remanded to judicial custody. During a hearing June 17, senior public prosecutor Rajeev Mohan had sought five days' additional police custody of the player.

Mohan pointed out to the court that the Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act had been invoked against Chandila June 3 and his police custody was required to corroborate the evidence collected after invocation of the stringent law.

'For the purpose of investigating under MCOCA, accused Ajit Chandila was required,' Mohan said. 'He was found to be one of the main conspirators and his presence was required to unearth the deep rooted conspiracy of the organized crime being operated by underworld don Dawood Ibrahim and his aide Chhota Shakeel.'

In its application seeking Chandila's police custody, the prosecution had said, 'During investigation, lot of supportive evidence like intercepted voice calls, two mobiles used by him (*Chandila*) in spot/match fixing and match-fixing cash of Rs 20 lakhs (\$36,363.6) was found. He was found receiving money from many bookies, fixers in lieu of spot fixing in the cricket match.'

Chandila's remand was vehemently opposed by his counsel Rakesh Kumar, who said the MCOCA was invoked 'to trap us and keep us behind the bars as the court was going to grant us bail on June 4.'

The court had earlier granted bail to cricketers Santhakumaran Sreesanth, Ankeet Chavan and 19 others due to lack of evidence.

The Delhi police had opposed Chandila's bail plea, saying he was a 'key conspirator' in the spot-fixing case and was acting at the behest of a syndicate run by fugitive international gangster Dawood Ibrahim.

India retain Champions Trophy squad for Windies tri-series

The Indian squad that is currently participating in the ICC Champions Trophy in England has been retained for the upcoming tri-series in the West Indies, starting June 28. The third team in the tournament is Sri Lanka.

The matches will be played in Antigua, Jamaica and Trinidad.

With the team performing brilliantly and qualifying for the Champions Trophy semi-finals with an all-win record, the Indian selectors decided against making any changes.

The squad: Mahendra Singh Dhoni (Captain), Shikhar Dhawan, Virat Kohli, Suresh Raina, Dinesh Karthik, Murali Vijay, Rohit Sharma, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Irfan Pathan, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Amit Mishra, R Vinay Kumar.

India crush Pakistan

SPORTS

A21



India produced yet another clinical performance as they outplayed arch-rivals Pakistan by eight wickets in a high-voltage group league encounter of the ICC Champions Trophy in Birmingham, the United Kingdom, June 15. Man of the match Bhuvneshwar Kumar notched up figures of two for 19.

Pakistan 165

Nasir Jamshed c Raina b Kumar	2	(9)	
Kamran Akmal c Kohli b Ashwin Mohammad Hafeez c Dhoni b Kumar	21 27	(38) (31)	
Asad Shafig c Dhoni b I Sharma	41	(57)	
*Misbah-ul-Hag b Jadeja	22	(33)	
Shoaib Malik Ibw b Jadeja	17	(23)	
Umar Amin not out	27	(26)	
Wahab Riaz b Ashwin	0	(2)	
Saeed Ajmal c R Sharma b I Sharma	5	(16)	
Junaid Khan run out (Kohli)	0	(1)	
Mohammad Irfan run out (Yadav)	0	(2)	
Extras: 3 byes:0 leg byes:1 no balls:0 wides:2			
Total: 165-10 (39.4)			
India: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 8-2-19-2,			
Umesh Yadav 6.4-0-29-0, Ishant Sharn			
Ravichandran Ashwin 8-0-35-2, Virat Kohli 2-0-11-0,			
Ravindra Jadeia 8-1-30-2.			

India 102-2

Rohit Sharma c Misbah b Ajmal Shikhar Dhawan c Jamshed b Riaz Virat Kohli not out Dinesh Karthik not out Suresh Raina *M S Dhoni Ravindra Jadeja Ravichandran Ashwin Bhuvneshwar Kumar Umesh Yadav Ishant Sharma	18 48 22 11	(32) (41) (27) (15)	
Extras: 3 byes:0 leg byes:0 no balls:0 wides:3			
Total: 102-2 (19.1)			
Pakistan: Mohammad Irfan 4-0-24-0.			
Junaid Khan 4-0-21-0, Saeed Ajmal 5-0-29-1,			
Mohammad Hafeez 2.1-0-8-0, Wahab	Riaz 4-0-2	20-1.	

* captain


Dnyaneshwar Mulay, India's consul general in New York, with Federation of Indian Associations officials at a kickoff event for the FIA's famed India Day Parade.

Bollywood-themed New York event raises money for women's education

NY/NJ/CT

Page T2

her mother had severe leprosy, her father was an alcoholic. This girl, with so much ability, so much potential wanted to do an MBA. I came back to New York and raised about \$3,000 for her and this other girl. In going back I realized that it wasn't just her, that there were many young women who had a real desire to study at the higher education level, but money and social circumstances were really preventing them."

This was when Timms opened her first center, where women could come to study and have access to a library and a computer lab. At first it was just three students, today there are 100 students at that first center in Madurai. The organization has grown to include three other centers, with a total of about 250 women, between the ages of 18 and 22. They go to college on scholarships, and on the weekends and some evenings, they take part in a program called 'I am a leader,' in which they learn leadership life skills.

Timms says that this is a huge difference from what the alternative would have been for them — likely marriage before 18 into a home where they hold zero decision-making power, little knowledge about even their own health, and no voice.

"I just saw how very simply you can really change someone's life," Timms said, "that getting them into a classroom will change their future forever."

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Kirpan ban lifted in Rochester gurdwara, but dispute continues

GEORGE JOSEPH

T2

hough Judge Mathew A Rosenbaum, Supreme Court Justice in State of

New York, lifted all restrictions on carrying the *kirpan* – the ceremonial Sikh sword – at the Gurdwara of Rochester, New York, June 6, the mediation efforts by him to settle other disputes did not succeed.

The judge ordered a trial in the case, staring October 15.

The gurdwara, founded in the 1980s on an 8-acre land, was following the Sikh order till a few years ago, according to Parminder Soch, one of the defendants in a case filed by the seven trustees. The trustees changed the constitution to make it a religious organization as per Article 9 of New York State Law, which deals with free churches. It allows self perpetuating trusteeship, said Soch. Some of the members challenged this, demanding to reinstate the old constitution and democratic elections.

Following this, the trustees approached the court to ban some members from coming to the gurdwara in 2010. They also asked to ban carrying of the *kirpan* inside the gurdwara complex. The lawsuit had termed the *kirpan* as dangerous weapon. The court agreed, but the move was opposed by Sikhs everywhere.

"Usually, the aggrieved party files cases against the officials. Here it happened the other way," Soch said.

The ban order was modified January 11, 2011 to allow congregants to carry *kirpans* not bigger than 6 inches.

It also allowed 'full size *kirpans* to be worn by the groom in wedding ceremonies and that out of town dignitaries could wear full size *kirpans* with the approval of gurdwara general secretary, provided that all such *kirpans* remained fully sheathed.'

Santokh S Badesha, one of the trustees and founders, disputed the defendants' claims. He said the gurdwara was originally constituted as a religious corporation under Article 9. "We bought land, built buildings and facilities and there were no problems," he said.

By 2001, new members joined and there was tension building between fundamentalists and moderates, he said. In 2009, one of the defendants went to court questioning the incorporation under Article 9; the court threw away the suit. The defendants and their supporters then began to disrupt the functioning of the gurdwara; the police were called more than 10 times. The plaintiffs wanted to restrict the entry of two families, as they were allegedly creating problems.

The trustees went to court. They made it a religious issue creating religious fervor, Soch said. "Now the whole issue is in court," he said.

The Sri Akal Takht Sahib in Amritsar, the supreme authority of the Sikhs, had appointed a seven-member committee in the United States to get the *kirpan* restrictions removed.

The committee was headed by Californiabased Satpal Singh Kohli, ambassador of the Sikh religion in the western hemisphere. Sikh activist-scholar Dr Bhai Harbans Lal, known to both plaintiffs and defendants, was invited to assist. After their intervention both groups had agreed to work to settle the disputes amicably.

Following this, plaintiffs, Santokh S Badesha, Sudarshan S Bains, Bhoopinder S Mehta, Harbajan S Purewal, Maghar S Chana and Rajdeep K Cheema, trustees of the gurdwara, which is a corporation organized and existing under the Religious Corporation Law of New York, moved the court to lift all restrictions.

The defendants are Parminder S Soch, Mandeep (Makhan) Singh, Ajay Singh, and

Pushpinder Taneja and Gurinder S Bedi, Damapaul Sondhi and Sandeep S Grewal. The defense did not oppose the request to

end the ban on *kirpan*. 'Defense counsel states,' the court order

noted 'that the plaintiffs' true motivation to seek the modification is the result of continued significant pressure applied to plaintiffs by the supreme Sikh authority and the international media for incorrectly portraying a kirpan as a potential weapon rather than a sacred symbol of Sikh faith. Defendants contend that the plaintiffs' actions in obtaining the order to show cause has caused negative publicity and plaintiffs have been criticized for the position they took. Defendant papers seek to clarify their understanding of the plaintiff's desire to modify the injunction. No opposition to the relief sought is set forth. Accordingly, plaintiff's request to modify the preliminary injunction is granted as requested.'

No disputes have been resolved, said Jagjit Singh, secretary, Guru Ram Das Sikh Mission of America, Office of the Ambassador of Sikh Dharma, "except that the ban on *kirpan* has been lifted."

Satpal Singh is still in negotiation with both parties and is trying to mediate, Jagjit Singh said.

"The court case is going to be expensive, may take a long time and the outcome may not be what the parties are hoping for," Jagjit Singh said. "Satpal Singh is of the opinion that such Sikh matters must be resolved with the guidance of Akal Takht Sahib and not by a judge who may not know much about the Sikh religion and its practices."

CHAYA BABU

A building that used to be home to the Ansche Chesed Synagogue in New York but has 19th century Gothic interiors seemed like an odd location for an evening of Indian food, a *bhangra* performance, and an Indianinspired show fashion modeled on a runway.

But beneath the soft glow of pink and blue lighting and gold curtains hanging from balconies overlooking the floor and stage, the Angel Orensanz Foundation provided an elegant setting for Molecule Communications' fundraising event for the Women's Education Project.

The event, *Fashion Fiesta for a Cause*, drew a crowd of 250 and raised \$32,000 for the organization.

"I really like the idea of cross-cultural events," said Ajay Shrivastav, director of Molecule. "I'm from India, but I live here, and I love both countries. I want to bring these two cultures together, and if you look at the crowd, it's a total blend of India and the West."

Every year, Shrivastav identifies a nonprofit that he would like to help by creating a night of entertainment, cocktails, food, and big names. He met Zoe Timms, founder of the Women's Education Project, last year, and found her work inspiring.

"A lot of times genuine nonprofits and small organizations struggle for recognition, so our goal is to pick one each year, help them raise funds, and bring celebrities together to expose the organization to a bigger audience and donor base," he said. "It's a full house, as you can see. And next time Zoe approaches somebody, she won't be an unknown woman trying to run this small organization."

Bollywood-themed New York event raises money for women's education



From left, Betsey Johnson, Zoe Timms, Ajay Shrivastav and Sandra Bernhard

The event included comedy by Sandra Bernhard and Taylor Negron, dance performances by Rioult Dance NY, and Bollywood style by Betsey Johnson. Guests were dressed in a mix of Eastern and Western wear. Cassie Hardwood, who was hosting a table, had her blond hair tied into a knot on top of her head and her face decorated with tiny shimmering dots along her eyebrows. Her *bindi* and bangles matched her red *salwar kameez*. Her friend had garland of large orange flowers hanging from his neck.

"We were told it was Bollywood-themed, so we took it to the next level," Hardwood said.

The money raised is can support 100 students for a year at the Women's Education Project's centers in India, which was Timms' goal for the event. She founded the organization in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, in 2002, after realizing that she wanted to work in grassroots education and help women from the poorest socioeconomic backgrounds get to college.

"It really just started off," Timms said, "because I had a friend who I had thought was from a middle-class background. It turned out that she was living in real poverty with her family, that

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RITU JHA

we research by Stanford researcher Vinod Menon , shows for the first time that measures of brain structure and connectivity predict how much a child's mathematical problem solving ability improves with math tutoring.

The study was conducted by Menon, director, Stanford Cognitive and Systems Neuroscience Laboratory. The lab is a multidisciplinary brain research group in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford's School of Medicine.

Menon's study was published last month in the *Proceedings of the National Academy* of Sciences.

"My colleagues and I investigated the brain predictors of individual outcomes to one-on-one math tutoring in 24 children aged 8-9 years with different levels of mathematical abilities," Menon told *India Abroad*.

He said the children went through a set of standardized IQ, math and reading ability tests, followed by MRI scans before they took part in an eight-week tutoring program that emphasized conceptual and pro-

'Brain structure, connectivity predict effect of math tutoring'



cedural knowledge of math.

The researchers found that children with larger gray matter volume in three brain structures tended to get more benefit from math tutoring. The best predictor was the size of the hippocampus, a structure traditionally deemed vital to memory and learning.

⁶We observed improvements in the speed, accuracy and efficiency of math performance after tutoring, with some children improving significantly more than others," Menon said.

He said that while none of the standardized test scores predicted improvements in math performance in response to tutoring, the structure and connectivity of the hippocampus did.

"Our findings suggest that math tutoring outcomes can be best predicted by brain measures, and may help explain why some children benefit more from math tutoring than others," Menon said.

He was trained in physics and computer science but became interested in how the brain works and how people think, leading him to move to cognitive neuroscience. Menon said his lab is particularly interested in brain development and malleability — how children learn and acquire new knowledge.

"We are interested in learning in general," he said, "but we have focused on math learning because it is a more tractable problem compared to language learning which occurs in younger children. Younger children are more difficult to study with functional MRI techniques."

He said he focused on children of 8-9 years of age because that is an important age for acquiring basic arithmetic skills and building long-term memory.

Menon said the data took almost four years to acquire.



Menon believes this line of research will help provide a better understanding of brain mechanisms underlying learning in children and adults.

"Our work may help to identify children who require different approaches or more intensive tutoring," he said. "(*It*) may also lead to development of better learning paradigms, particularly for children with learning disabilities."

Menon, who came to Stanford University as a Sinclair Foundation Research Fellow in 1995, is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, the University of Texas at Austin and the University of California-Berkeley.

In California, play looks at complexities of India's freedom movement



RITU JHA

am a cynic, I don't believe (*throughout*) history people have selflessly fought for any-

L thing," said Sujit Saraf, co-founder of the Silicon Valley based theater group Naatak whose play, *Vande Mataram*, was staged at the Tabard theater in San Jose, California, June 15.

Saraf's 90-minute play shows how India's freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi impacts the





The cast of the play; inset, Sujit Saraf

Visa availability

BY ALLEN E KAYE

AVAILABILITY OF IMMIGRANT VISA NUMBERS - JULY

	All Chargeability Areas Except			
	Countries Separately Listed	China	India	Mexico
FAMILY-SPONSORED CATEGORIES				
1st Unmarried Sons and Daughters of United States citizens (F1)	01JUN06	01JUN06	01JUN06	22AUG93
2A Spouses and Unmarried Children of Permanent Residents – (F2A	a) 080CT11	080CT11	080CT11	01SEP11
2B Unmarried Sons and Daughters (21 Years of Age or Older) of Permanent Residents (F2B)	01NOV05	01NOV05	01NOV05	01NOV93
Married Sons and Daughters of US Citizens (F3)	01OCT02	010CT02	01OCT02	22APR93
4th Brothers and Sisters of Adult US Citizens (F4)	22MAY01	22MAY01	22MAY01	22SEP96
EMPLOYMENT-BASED CATEGORIES				
1st Priority Workers (E1)	С	С	С	С
2nd Professionals Holding Advanced Degrees or Persons of Exceptional Ability (E2)	С	08AUG08	01SEP04	С
3rd Skilled Workers and Professionals (E3)	01JAN09	01JAN09	22JAN03	01JAN09
Other Workers (Unskilled Workers) (EW)	01JAN09	22MAR04	22JAN03	01JAN09
4th Certain Special Immigrants (E4)	С	С	С	С
4th Certain Religious Workers (SR) (E4)	С	С	С	С
5th Employment Creation (Investors) (E5)	С	С	С	С
5th Employment Creation (Investors in Targeted Employment Areas) (E5)	С	С	С	С

C = Current; Cut-off date The cut-off date for an oversubscribed country is the priority date of the first applicant who could not be reached U = Unavailable within the statutory limits. Only applicants who have priority dates *earlier than* the cut-off date may be allocated a number.

VISA AVAILABILITY THE COMING IN MONTHS (August -October)

FAMILY-sponsored catemovement)

Worldwide dates:

Could become "Current" at should never assume that sisters of adult US citizens: the worldwide level. some point during the com- recent trends in cut-off date 65,000, plus any numbers ing months; F2B: Four to movements are guaranteed not required by first three ation: 7.1 percent of the seven weeks: F3: Three to for the future, or that "cor- preferences. worldwide level, not less seven weeks; F3: Three to for the future, or that "cor- preferences. five weeks; F4: Three to five rective" action will not be weeks

categories monthly movement)

E1: Current

E2: Worldwide: Current; China: Up to two months

appears that the availability of "otherwise unused" E-2 cut-off date in August seeable future. and/or September. It is expected that such movement will generate heavy **PREFERENCES** new applicant demand, prithe E-3 preference category. A sustained level of heavy demand could impact the cut-off date at some point children, and unmarried during fiscal year 2014.

E-3: Worldwide: No addi- manent tional movement. This cut- 114,200, plus the number off date has advanced 18 (if any) by which the months during the past worldwide family prefer-three months. Such rapid ence level exceeds movement can be expected 226,000, plus any unused to generate a significant first preference numbers: amount of new demand, with the impact not being children of permanent resifelt for three to five months. dents: 77 percent of the Therefore, the cut-off date will be held until it can be limitation, of which 75 perdetermined what level of cent are exempt from the demand is to be expected, per-country limit. and whether it is likely to be sustained.

India: Up to three weeks

E-4: Current E-5: Current The above projections for limitation.

the family and employment categories are for what is and daughters of US citi- first and second preferof the next few months bers not required by first of which to 'Other Workers. based on current applicant and second preferences. F1: Up to five weeks; F2A: demand patterns. Readers required at some point in an **BASED PREFERENCES** EMPLOYMENT-based effort to maintain number (potential use within the applicable 28.6 percent of the worldannual limits. The determi- wide employment-based nation of the actual monthly preference level, plus any cut-off dates is subject to fluctuations in applicant fourth and fifth prefer-India: At this time it demand and a number of ences. other variables. Unless indicated, those categories professions preference numbers will with a "Current" projection advanced degrees or perallow for movement of this will remain so for the fore-

First: (F1) Unmarried first preference. marily by those who are sons and daughters of US upgrading their status from citizens: 23,400 plus any numbers not required for fourth preference.

Second: Spouses and sons and daughters of perresidents: A. (F2A) Spouses and overall second preference

B. (F2B) Unmarried sons and daughters (21 years of age or older) of permanent overall second preference

Fourth: $(\mathbf{F4})$ Brothers and

EMPLOYMENT-First: Priority workers: targeted rural or highnumbers not required for 610 of Pub L 102-395.

sons of exceptional ability: 28.6 percent of the worldwide employment-based Queens College (CUNY) (BA), FAMILY-SPONSORED preference level, plus any numbers not required by

Third: Skilled workers.

residents: 23 percent of the professionals, and other workers: 28.6 percent of the worldwide level, plus any Third: (F3) Married sons numbers not required by gories (potential monthly likely to happen during each zens: 23,400, plus any num- ences, not more than 10,000 Fourth: Certain special immigrants: 7.1 percent of

> Fifth: Employment crethan 3,000 of which reserved for investors in a unemployment area, and 3,000 set aside for investors in regional centers by Sec

Editor's Note: Allen E Kave is Second: Members of the an attorney who has practiced holding United States immigration, naturalization, visa and consular law in New York City for the past 30 years. He is a graduate of Columbia University Law School (JD) and New York University Law School (LLM).



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Dance festival held in Aurora, Illinois

A CORRESPONDENT

n Indian dance festival, Nrithya Samarpanam, was held at the Sri Venkateswara Swami Temple in Aurora, Illinois, June 8-9. The more than 150 participants included members of Midwest dance schools and visiting troupes from across the country and India. A highlight was a performance by J Suryanarayana Murthy, a seventhgeneration performer-teacher belonging to one of the 15 original traditional Bhagavatula families of dancers and teachers from Andhra Pradesh's Kuchipudi village.

A Bharata Natyam performance by Sujatha Srinivasan, artistic director, Shri Kalaa Mandir, and Shriya Srinivasan, was another highlight.

Students of Vanitha Veeravalli, artistic director, Bharatam Academy of Dance Arts, also performed Bharata Natyam.

The emcees were cultural committee members Srilakshmi Dronamraju, Shree Gurusamy and Nalini Yedavalli.



A snapshot from the festival

Arizona real estate body fetes Kuldip Verma

A CORRESPONDENT

The Arizona Real Estate Awards has conferred its Philanthropist of the Year 2013 award on Kuldip Verma, founder and chief executive officer, Vermaland, LLC, one of the largest land owners in Phoenix, Arizona.

Verma Legacy Trust, a Vermaland subsidiary, recently made charitable donations of real estate worth \$1.2 million through the Verma Charitable Foundation - at the Arizona Community Foundation. The gift will be used to establish scholarships for underprivileged students and to build a religious retreat center in the Phoenix metro-area with facilities for yoga and meditation.

Kuldip Verma and his wife Binu Verma are trustees of the Verma Legacy Trust. Their daughters, Anita Verma-Lallian and Jennifer Verma, established the Verma Charitable Foundation.

The foundation, said Jennifer Verma, "is the product of Vermaland's ongoing com-



Kuldip Verma

mitment to helping the community in as many ways as possible."

Verma has been involved in charitable efforts ever since the success of his company, which he started more than a decade ago. In the past he has contributed \$40,000 to the Hindu Temple of Arizona and more than \$10,000 to the India Association of Arizona. Vermaland is a wholesale buyer and seller of land and currently has the largest holdings of 50-1,200 acre parcels in Metro Phoenix. The Arizona Community Foundation is a statewide family of charitable funds that is among the top 25 community foundations in the nation with more than \$500 million in trust and endowment assets

Verma came to the US in1991. In 1987, he was awarded the Udhyog Rattan Award in electronics, presented by the vice president of India, for his accomplishments at Beltek, a family owned television business. Recently he has won a lifetime achievement award from Ira A Fulton, the founder of Tempe-based Fulton Homes.

In California, play looks at complexities of India's freedom movement

Page A22

common man. And how people from a bank guard to a businessman, a professor and a restaurateur dream of a free India and life after.

The play is set on August 8, 1942, the day Gandhi launched his Quit India movement against the British. At the same time, a group in people in Bihar plotted a campaign to blow up a bridge to show their solidarity with the freedom movement. In his play Saraf aims to show how complex the struggle against the colonialism was, and the roles of the Communists and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh over and above those of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League.

"In the play everyone was pursuing their self-interest and sometimes doing other things motivated by nobler thoughts," Saraf told *India Abroad.* "1942 was a movement, and a genius like Mahatma Gandhi, carried everybody along with him. There were people who believed in him and those who didn't. In any large organization or campaign there are some who believe in a campaign fully. But there are many who don't."

The play is based on the true story of the 1942 Keezhariyur bomb case in Malabar, Kerala, though Saraf shifted the location to Bihar. He first staged the play in 1998. This time he opted for an older cast.

"The cast is more mature and, hopefully, I am more mature... but the script is the same," said Saraf, who played the role of a Congress acolyte who hoped to get some position for himself if India gained independence.

The Bihar-born engineer got interested in theater while studying at the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi. He said in India he used to participate in a theater group outside the college along with a close friend, but things changed once they completed their studies.

"We lost touch and later, coincidentally, we found ourselves in neighboring universities," he said. "I was at University of California-Berkeley and he was at Stanford. We (*thought*) it would be lovely to recreate our theater days and we decided to stage a play."

They put together Naatak in 1995. February 16, 1996, they staged *Khamosh, Adalat Jari Hai* by noted Indian playwright Vijay Tendulkar.

Since then Naatak has hosted three shows a year and has 300 members, 50 of them registered. Most of Naatak's work is done during the weekends and evenings. For *Vande Mataram*, the team worked for eight weeks, rehearsing for about 10 hours a week.

Saraf's next production, *God of Carnage* by Yasmina Reza, is to be staged in October.

Present in the audience were dedicated Naatak fans. "They did a great job," said Vinata Karra. "I watch every play of Naatak and they come up with a very original script. I like it because they have maintained their standards."

Sarna Keswani, another Naatak follower for the past 10 years, said she missed Indian theater and Naatak's performances brought those memories back.

"I still remember going to Prithvi Theater in Mumbai," Keswani said. "Naatak performers are excellent, and I have a lot of respect for them."

A24

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A short drive from the Indian capital Delhi, Agra the city of the Taj Mahal and the sprawling city of Fatehpur Sikri, stand as poignant reminders of the glory of the great Moghuls. Almost next door, as if in tribute to the fascinating contrast of Uttar Pradesh, spreads the mythological wonder-world called Brajbhoomi the birthland of Lord Krishna with its templed towns of Vrindavan, Mathura, Gokul and Barsana.

Lucknow, the state capital, is redolent with memories of the lavish regalia of the last days of the Moghuls and the Kingdom of Avadh which ultimately faded away before the advance of the British imperialists of the nineteenth century. The tell-tale signs of India's First War of Independence in 1857 can still be seen in innumerable expressions of 18th and 19th century architecture in the region. To the east, Allahabad is the site of one of the world's largest religious fairs, when millions gather at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers to mark the auspicious occasion of the great Kumbh and Magh Melas. Along the southern borders of the state, the rugged Vindhya Mountains mark the northern end of the Deccan plateau. Once the domain of the Chandela Rajputs, the belt known as Bundelkhand harbours hidden ramparts and embattlements and inviting fortresses like the gigantic Kalinjar. The nearby fort at Jhansi remains a symbol of the India's Struggle for Independence even today.

As the Ganga weaves its way across the vast plains of Eastern UP it looks up in amazement at the holiest Hindu city of all-the sacred tirtha of Varanasi the city of eternal liberation. But Varanasi is not just that. It is also a city that has been made sacred by the Buddha who preached his first sermon at the nearby deer park at Sarnath, the gateway to the Buddhist circuit of Uttar Pradesh including Kaushambi, Sankisa, Kalpilavastu and Kushinagar, the city of Lord Buddha's Mahaparinirvana.

Uttar Pradesh is however more than just places...When it comes to festivals and fairs few destinations can be powerfully evocative it terms of the grandeur of celebration as Uttar Pradesh. Few spectacles can match the glitter of Dev Deepawali on the banks of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Janamashtami and Holi in Braj, the Magh and Kumbh Melas at Prayag, the colourful Ramlila and so many other festivals and fairs...

An ancient land Uttar Pradesh also has many artistic expressions... Cave Art, Temple Art, Marble-Inlay, Rock Art, Sculpture and Murals. Add to that Stone Inlay of Agra, Brassware of Moradabad, Woodcraft of Saharanpur, the famed Weaves and Embroideries of Varanasi, the Pottery of Khurja, Chikan Embroidery of Lucknow... a visit to Uttar Pradesh can also be a creative experience like none other.











M87 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



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Abroad

Person

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CELEBRATING

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Amrit Singh, the senior legal officer for national security and counterterrorism at the Open Society Justice Initiative of the Open Society Foundations, is the author of Globalizing Torture: CIA Secret Torture and Extraordinary Rendition.

MARC MCANDREWS/OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION

Voice of the silenced

The emotional weight of engaging with torture victims must be overwhelming and tremendous; yet **Amrit Singh**, winner of the **India Abroad Publisher's Special Award for Excellence 2012**, perseveres. **Vanita Gupta** introduces **Chaya Babu** to the brilliant mind that lifted the veil on 'Globalizing Torture.'

hile **Amrit Singh**'s groundbreaking work in the field of human rights law was thrust into the spotlight, she has kept a very low profile.

Her report, *Globalizing Torture: CIA Secret Torture and Extraordinary Rendition*, published by the Open Society Foundations in February, received widespread attention in the international media for its close look at the global torture network. The author herself, though, is less

well-known.

"This work is not for everyone. Amrit is a real intellectual giant. But she's also probably one of the most modest and humble people I know," says Vanita Gupta, a close friend and colleague from their days at the American Civil Liberties Union.

Gupta, who secured the release of 46 wrongly accused African Americans in Tulia, Texas, when she was part of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, was the first winner of the India Abroad Publisher's Special Award for Excellence 2004, which her friend takes home this year.

Gupta's relationship with Singh began when they were both staff attorneys at the ACLU, where Gupta was working in racial justice and is now deputy legal director.

Prior to this, Gupta had heard of her through a

PAGE M88 →



M88 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M87

friend who was in an economics class that Singh was teaching at Yale in 1996; the friend was apparently completely in awe of Singh, so it was a name Gupta remembered.

At the time, Singh — the youngest daughter of India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, a renowned economist and the man credited for liberalizing the Indian economy — was still on her track of working in the space of development economics, which was initially going to be her way of fighting against injustice in the world.

Her interest in both economics and law reflect her drive to contribute to society.

"Amrit never planned on being a human rights lawyer," Gupta said. "She was really concerned, having grown up in India, about poverty and human deprivation. So, she first embarked on a study of economics, and then she kind of pivoted to law because she started to feel like it might be a better fit for her. Both came from her interest in social justice and her desire to address inequality."

When Singh first started at ACLU, she was litigating cases involving racial discrimination, but her focus evolved.

She was at ACLU for seven years, during which she litigated a number of cases related to immigrants' rights and post-9/11 abuses. Some of these included *Khouzam v Chertoff*, a successful challenge to the US government's use of anti-torture diplomatic assurances to transfer non-citizens without due process to countries known to employ torture; *ACLU v Dept of Defense*, a landmark lawsuit, which yielded the public disclosure of the 'torture memos,' among thousands of other government records exposing the systemic nature of the Bush administration's torture practices; *Ali v Rumsfeld*, a lawsuit against high-ranking officials on behalf of Iraqi and Afghan plaintiffs tortured in US custody abroad; as well as a number of other cases challenging the prolonged detention of non-citizens in US immigration custody.

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Additionally, her book with coauthor Jameel Jaffer Administration of Torture: A Documentary Record from Washington to Abu Ghraib and Beyond, was published during this period, in 2007.

Gupta described the impact of Singh's success in the ACLU vs Dept of Defense case and used this as an example of the continuity in Singh's career as an attorney there to her current tenure at the Open Society Justice Initiative.

The case involved Singh filing a Freedom of Information request for records relating to the abuse and torture of prisoners who were being held in US detention centers overseas.

"The government then released more than 100,000 pages to the ACLU, and the documents show that both hundreds of prisoners were tortured in the custody of the CIA and the DoD, and that the torture policies were actually devised and developed at the highest levels of the Bush Administration," Gupta said, men-

Voice of the silenced



tioning the Office of Legal Council memo that Singh was able to secure.

"That memo was really the seminal memo that showed that these torture policies were the product of the highest levels of the Bush Administration, and so the documents really revealed kind of the stomach of the torture program of the Bush Administration." "And when she went to the Open Society Foundations, she was really focused on two different areas of the torture issue in the national security context."

One of Singh's areas of work at the Open Society Justice Initiative, where she has been working since 2009 as senior

PAGE M91 \rightarrow

RELITERS/NASSER NUR



REUTERS/JANET HAMLIN/HANDOUT



Khaled El-Masri leaves a US Court of Appeals in 2006; Abd Al Rahim Hussayn Muhammad al-Nashiri watches courtroom proceedings in 2011; and Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, AKA Abu Omar, left, speaks to Said Haddadi, a researcher on North Africa, in Cairo. All three have been cited in Amrit Singh's report.

Clockwise from top,

M89 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



ust days before counterterrorism czar John Brennan appeared on Capitol Hill for his confirmation hearing to head the Central Intelligence Agency, a new report provided a detailed look at global involvement in the agency's secret program of prisons, rendition and torture in the years after 9/11.

In *Globalizing Torture: CIA Secret Detention and Extraordinary Rendition*, the Open Society Justice Initiative says 54 countries helped the CIA detain 136 people, the largest tally to date.

The report's author, Amrit Singh, joined *Democracy Now* to discuss her findings and Brennan's role in the expansive program she's documented.

Excerpts from the interview conducted in February:

Amy Goodman: Let's talk about John Brennan first. He goes to Capitol Hill today (*February 7, two days after the report was published*) for his confirmation hearing... What do you think of the nomination of John Brennan to be head of the CIA?

Well, I think John Brennan should be asked what he meant when he said that he was 'intimately familiar' with cases of rendition and that rendition is an absolutely vital tool in combating terrorism, because by the time Brennan made that statement in December of 2005, a number of people had been rendered to foreign governments where they were tortured.

By December of 2005, Ahmed Agiza and Muhammad al-Zery had been rendered to Egypt and subjected to electric shock.

By December of 2005, Maher Arar, a Canadian national, had been rendered to Syria and subjected to being locked up in a tiny grave-like cell and beaten with cables. By December 2005, a number of other individuals, including Khalid El-Masri, had been rendered. Khalid El-Masri was captured and kidnapped in Macedonia and transferred to Afghanistan and abused. A recent court decision by the European Court of Human Rights found that Khalid El-Masri's treatment by the CIA amounted to torture.

So, I think that John Brennan has a lot of explaining to do as to what exactly he meant.

Juan González: Well, Brennan also said (*on a PBS show*)... that the government sought assurances from the other countries to which these individuals were rendered that human rights would be respected. But you, in your report, clearly indicate that mere blanket assurances are insufficient to be able to deal with the — obviously, with the kind of abuse that occurred here.

That's correct. Maher Arar was transferred to Syria after assurances were obtained from Syria not to torture him, but he was tortured nonetheless.

Ahmed Agiza and Muhammad al-Zery were transferred from Sweden to Egypt with assurances from Egypt not to torture him, but they were tortured. They were subjected to electric shocks.

So, I think that there's a wealth of information in the public domain that shows that these diplomatic assurances in fact don't work. High-level Bush administration officials themselves acknowledged that there's only so much you can do once a prisoner is out of your custody.

So, the onus really is on the Obama administration to explain what is its policy and how is it going to work.

AG: What do you think of John Brennan (now CIA

'There has been virtually no accountability in the US for these abuses'

Amrit Singh discusses her report, Globalizing Torture, with **Amy Goodman** and **Juan González**.



director)?

Well, I think he has many questions to answer. I think that rendition is obviously, as documented in this report, the source of grave human rights violations. It damaged the United States' reputation around the world. It co-opted as many as 54 governments into a torture program. It was flagrantly illegal. And I think it really requires a serious examination by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

JG: This issue of John Brennan saying the US has to take off the gloves, given the necessity of the fight against the war on terrorism, your response?

Well, I think that that was a sentiment that was echoed across the Bush administration.

The report opens with a quote from Vice President Dick Cheney saying that we have to go to the dark side, and was repeated by a number of counterterrorism officials in the Bush administration... The fact that this report documents as many as 136 cases of human rights violations, including torture, demonstrates what that paradigm led to. It was a paradigm that essentially ignored longstanding prohibitions against torture, that violated not only international but also domestic law.

JG: I'm interested — your report, in the 54 countries that you mention, mentions some countries that most Americans are not aware are cooperating in the — Zimbabwe and Iran. The particular case of Iran's involvement in some of these renditions, could you talk about that?

Yes, it's interesting. There are a number of individuals who were captured in Iran who were then handed over to Afghan authorities as part of a prisoner exchange. But the Iranians must have known at the time that the Afghans would hand them over to the US because of the ongoing hostilities in Afghanistan.

AG: So, summarize the findings in your report. It's extremely extensive. And what surprised you most as you did this research?

Well, I think, at a very basic level, just the horrific kinds of abuse that was meted out by the United States and its partners to the human beings who were subjected to these operations, that of course stands out, but also just the scale and sweep of these operations, the number of people who were put through this and the number of governments that were coopted.

And I think that, of course, the US was a ringleader. This was the CIA's invention. But moral responsibility does not rest with the United States alone; it rests also with those 54





Amrit Singh joins a discussion on 'Courtroom perspectives on the war

on terror' in 2006, when she was part of the American Civil Liberties

Union.

M90 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M89

governments that were complicit in various ways.

But I should also add that leaving aside the damage to its moral reputation, the US also exposed itself to liability and censure worldwide, because we're now increasingly seeing foreign courts pass judgment against the United States, as in the case of Khalid El-Masri. The European Court of Human Rights essentially found that the CIA's treatment of him amounted to torture.

AG: Explain his story, for people who don't know. This was an innocent guy on a bus, a case of mistaken identity?

That's correct. So Khalid El-Masri was essentially traveling on vacation in Macedonia in December of 2003, and he was abducted by Macedonian officials acting at the direction of the CIA in Macedonia, locked up, secretly detained for 23 days in Macedonian custody, and then transferred to the CIA at Skopje Airport in Macedonia. And then the CIA flew him to Afghanistan and held him for four months in further secret detention, did not permit him access to counsel or his family or a German counselor.

AG: He says he was injected. He...

Right. He was sodomized at the airport. He was beaten. He was stripped naked, and he was subjected to a range of sexual humiliation and abuse, and ultimately, after four months, was released, without explanation, without apology, in a roadside in Albania and was sort of left to make his way home back to Germany.

Khalid El-Masri has not received any kind of acknowledgment from the United States government, no apology and no compensation.

AG: Very early on, Condoleezza Rice understood this was a case of mistaken identity, but they continued to hold him because what would they do with him when he got out and told what happened to him?

Exactly.

JG: And in an op-ed piece in the *LA Times*, you raise the point that many of the - or, all of these people who were subjected to this kind of treatment, none of them has gotten any kind of compensation, acknowledgment from the US government, nor has the government sought to prosecute any of the officials that were involved or knowledgeable about the crimes that were committed here in terms of the attacks or the abuse of these folks.

That's correct. There has been virtually no accountability in the United States for these abuses. A Justice Department investigation into abuses only looked at abuses that exceeded the abuse that its own Office of Legal Counsel had authorized. And we know from the Office of Legal Counsel memos released in August of 2009 by President Obama's administration that there was a range of horrific abuse that was specifically authorized by the Bush administration. But none of those officials have been held accountable to date.

AG: I wanted to ask, finally, on that list, very extensive list of 54 countries, India was not on the list.

Right.

AG: Were you surprised by this?

Well, I mean, I - I'm a researcher, I'm a lawyer. I tell the truth. And I documented what I found. So, I represented what the facts were. It's not my - I didn't - you know, I did the best I could.

AG: Of course, there were – what's amazing is we're talking

'There has been virtually no accountability in the US for these abuses'



CIA Director John Brennan testifies before a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing in Washington, in March. Amrit Singh says he should be asked what he meant when he said that rendition was a vital tool in combating terrorism.

about almost a third of the countries in the world that were involved.

That's right, a quarter of the countries in the world. The State Department recognizes 195. Fifty-four is more than a quarter of that, yes.

AG: And in terms of that, these countries that have been involved, that you talk about being coopted, what were the deals that were made? And have countries come forth to say what they did?

Well, I think that we don't know all of the facts with respect to each government, but we do know that there were a number of bilateral agreements that were signed, and there was also a NATO framework within many of — within which many of these agreements were executed.

We know, for example, in Poland there have been reports of an agreement that was arrived at between the Polish authorities and the United States. Now, apparently, there was actually a document in Poland that bore the signature of the Polish official, but not the American official. The Americans might have been more careful in not committing their signatures to writing. But nonetheless, these were very secret operations that could not have been implemented without very

high-level authorizations from top officials in all of these governments.

JG: And have any of the governments sought to come clean and to hold their officials responsible for what maybe a prior administration in that country did?

Well, it's interesting that Canada has apologized to Maher Arar for its involvement in his extraordinary rendition to Syria. Canada supplied faulty intelligence to the United States that led to the rendition of Arar to Syria.

But by and large, most governments have not owned up to the truth. And there is evidence in the public domain to suggest that the United States has exerted diplomatic pressure on a lot of governments not to disclose information about this highly classified operation.

AG: Do you think there should be war crimes trials in this country?

Well, I think that there needs to be some measure of accountability. I mean, there has been virtually none. And





M91 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Voice of the silenced

legal officer for National Security and Counterterrorism, is to address the lack of available remedies for individual victims of torture in the US. Because the ACLU had tried repeatedly to seek damages for these victims and was denied, she pursued other avenues outside of the country to find justice.

Two examples of this were *al Nashiri v Poland* and *al Nashiri vs Romania*, litigation on behalf of Guantanamo prisoner Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri before the European Court of Human Rights, challenging the role of Poland and Romania in the CIA's secret detention program.

"It's very tough to be doing work on behalf of people who may be perceived by the public as unpopular," Gupta said, drawing on how Singh's character allows her to do what she does.

"And it's very tough to be meeting and talking and engaging with people who have been torture victims, who have been absolutely broken and tortured pursuant to government sanctioned torture. I think that the emotional weight of that must be overwhelming and tremendous, and yet Amrit is somebody who perseveres."

"She's somebody who has a very open and calm demeanor about her, and yet she is very disarming. She always possesses all of the facts, and is ready to marshal all of the evidence that she has meticulously gathered to basically blow the lid off of these very secret government programs. And without people like her who have the emotional and intellectual fortitude to do that, I think that there would be a lot less known about what governments are doing in our name in gross violation of fundamental human rights allover the world."

Singh's most recent and highly publicized contribution to exposing governments' abuse of power in the name of counterterrorism — the second piece of her current work along with directly trying to help victims of torture — is her *Globalizing Torture* report.

The 216-page report details the torture of 136 known victims and lists 54 foreign governments that participated in these operations.

Gupta — who is much respected for her advocacy and is quoted extensively on racial and criminal justice issues says Singh worked on the report for three years, but the process hardly included her being holed up in a quiet office.

Throughout the time of her painstaking research and writing, she was working around the world on the litigation in the European Court of Human Rights, speaking at conferences, continuing her data collection globally, and building up other potential forms of advocacy for victims.

One can only imagine the work ethic and dedication required.

"She meticulously, methodically, documented the way in which the US government had basically enlisted over a quarter of the countries in this world to participate in a torture program, and was able to document, country by country, what their role was, how they participated. And the



Amrit Singh makes a rare appearance at a community event to accept the South Asian Bar Association of New York's Access to Justice Leadership Award in 2006.

The attorney, who then represented the American Civil Liberties Union, was honored for her work as a counsel in the ACLU vs Department of Defense case, a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed to seek records relating to the torture of detainees held in US custody abroad. She was also recognized for her work in the Ali vs Rumsfeld case, which was filed against Defense Secretary Rumsfeld on behalf of Iraqi and Afghan detainees who were tortured in American custody.

report, because of Amrit's credibility and the amount of work that went into it, just created a huge kind of explosion in the media... all over the world. It's stunning - I don't think I've ever seen one report have that kind of impact, honestly."

What's truly stunning is that through all of this, Singh finds a way to keep a semblance of balance in her life. Her career is front and center in the public eye, but Gupta, as a friend, emphasized that she has a variety of interests outside of work, a critical element of her ability to do what she does and withstand the intellectual and emotional strain that must go into it.

Specifically, Singh is a talented singer and has a love for music. And, Gupta stressed, she is a funny person, constantly making her laugh, but also deeply genuine with no tolerance for inauthenticity.

"She will not leave any stone unturned in order to expose wrongdoing," Gupta said. "She's someone who has a very dogged commitment to human rights, and you can see that in the trajectory of her career. She is a ridiculously smart person with a very prestigious resume, but she's also one of the most fundamentally decent, kind, open human beings I know. So, it's just been a real privilege to have her as a close friend."

'There has been virtually no accountability in the US for these abuses'



that's something that cannot stand. Not only must officials be held accountable, but there needs to be further disclosure about the extent of these operations, the victims. There needs to be acknowledgement by the United States.

If Canada can apologize and compensate Maher Arar, why is it that the United States, which was the principal ringleader in all of these operations, cannot issue a similar apology, not only to Maher Arar, but a number of other victims like Khalid El-Masri who were wrongfully abducted and tortured?

This interview has been excerpted and published with kind permission from Democracy Now.



M92 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'She's blown the cover off of one of the gravest violations of human rights'

The impact Amrit Singh made with her report has been incredible, discovers Chava Babu.

few months ago, the Open Society Justice Initiative published a report, Globalizing Torture: Secret Detention and Extraordinary **Rendition**

The document, based on years of writing, research, and data collection from around the world, made public, in detail, the treatment of the 136 known victims of government-sanctioned torture post 9/11 and how the United States government enlisted 54 countries to participate.

Following the release of the report, there was an explosion in the media world -57 countries' press covered the story – about the revelations of the global torture network and its outrageous violations of international human rights law - all put forth by India-born Amrit Singh.

Singh's role in exposing these abuses of government power is tremendous. She spent years acquiring and meticulously combing through official records that show how, starting with the Bush Administration, America got foreign governments to comply, in a range of ways, with systematic abuse of terror suspects.

Vanita Gupta, Singh's friend and colleague in the field of human rights law, spoke of the unprecedented impact of the OSJI report, relating Singh's commitment to justice to its international influence.

"She's somebody who just has a very strong moral compass around her quest for justice, transparency and accountability," Gupta told India Abroad.

This is a very difficult area to be trying to do documentation in: it's an area where there is tremendous government secrecy, and it's also an area where governments have felt very justified in kind of maintaining secrecy. So, she's kind of managed to, both in the United States and all over the world, blow the cover off of one of the gravest violations of human rights. Her impact has been incredible for that reason."

Singh told HuffPost Live's Ahmed Shihab-Eldin that the dirty work was essentially farmed out to black sites, 'The whole point of secret detention and extraordinary rendition was to insulate the CIA from any kind of accountability and review, and that's why these operations were conducted outside the territory of the United States. And that's why these secret CIA prisons were in countries like Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Thailand, and Morocco. That's why these detainees were sent to other governments to be coerced and tortured into providing information that might not have been true.



MOHAMMED JAFFER/SNAPSINDIA

Amrit Singh, center, at a PEN event. She spent years acquiring and meticulously combing through official records that show how, starting with the Bush Administration, America got foreign governments to comply, in a range of ways, with systematic abuse of terror suspects.

Singh said the black sites referred to secret facilities in locations that the US had not officially admitted.

It was at these locations that 'enhanced interrogation techniques' - an euphemism for waterboarding, stress positions, water dousing, slamming people into walls, subjecting them to sexual humiliation, beating them with cables and more.

As a result, she said in the report, the US had diminished its moral standing and reputation worldwide and eroded support in its War on Terror.

She added to CNN's Christiane Amanpour, 'The whole point about counter terrorism operations today is that the

United States needs the cooperation of partners across the world. And what this CIA detention program essentially did, it was that it co-opted governments into illegal activities and exposed them to liability, exposed them to censure, both in the courts and in public opinion. And so governments today are going to think twice before they say, US, we're ready...'

'We're on board. We'll cooperate with you when you take on terrorism, because they have to think about what liability they will be subjected to.'

Much of what the American media was concerned with, and continues to be - as it zeroed in on the fresh details of a matter that has placed the US government in the hot seat since the notorious Abu Ghraib photos that surfaced in the months after the September 11 attacks — is President Barack Obama's approach.

While he has explicitly denounced torture, the question of extraordinary rendition remains murky territory, and it is unknown which practices of abducting terror suspects to black sites persist.

In January of 2009, Obama issued an executive order banning torture and established a Special Task Force on Interrogation and Transfer Policies; these findings have never been made public.

John Brennan's appointment as head of the CIA only exacerbated the unease around the issue.

Singh told Al Jazeera, 'Brennan has some serious questions to answer. That claim in December of 2005 that he made really compels the Senate to ask him some questions about what he meant by it when he said that rendition was a vital tool in combating terrorism, because by the time that Brennan made that statement Maher Arar had been rendered to Syria and locked up in a tiny grave like cell for days and beaten with cables (Canada has apologized to him for its role in this).

'By the time Brennan made that statement, Ahmed Agiza and Mohammed al-Zari had been sent to Egypt and subjected to electric shocks (while al-Zari was released without charges after two years in prison, Agiza's conviction was viewed as unfair). So, what did he mean by that? I think there are some answers there that are needed.

Globalizing Torture has emerged as the most comprehensive, exhaustive record of who the innocent victims were that were taken to these prisons, when, and what was done to them.

And as Singh told CNN, 'The fact that so many men and women were tortured and secretly detained really cries out for some kind of redress, for some kind of acknowledgement, and that hasn't been forthcoming."







For details, please Contact: Bank of India

New York:

New York Branch **(Member FDIC)** 277, Park Avenue, New York NY 10172 Tel: (646) 720-0398 /0407 Email: boiny@usa.net

San Francisco Agency:

555, California Street Suite 4646, San Francisco, CA 94104 Tel: (415) 956-6326 Email: boisfa@aol.com

www.boiusa.com



M94 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



The taint of torture

'The administration of President George W Bush embraced the 'dark side,' a new paradigm for countering terrorism with little regard for the constraints of domestic and international law.' **Amrit Singh** shook up the world with her report, Globalizing Torture.

We also have to work, through, sort of the dark side, if you will.

We've got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world.

A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we're going to be successful. That's the world these folks operate in, and so it's going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective.'

US Vice President Dick Cheney, September 16, 2001

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) commenced a secret detention program under which suspected terrorists were held in CIA prisons, also known as 'black sites,' outside the United States, where they were subjected to 'enhanced interrogation techniques' that involved torture and other abuse. At about the same time, the CIA gained expansive authority to engage in 'extraordinary rendition,' defined here as the transfer — without legal process - of a detainee to the custody of a foreign government for purposes of detention and interrogation. Both the secret detention program and the extraordinary rendition program were highly classified, conducted outside the United States, and designed to place detainee interrogations beyond the reach of the law. Torture was a hallmark of both. The two programs entailed the abduction and disappearance of detainees and their extra-legal transfer on secret flights to undisclosed locations around the world, followed by their incommunicado detention, interrogation, torture, and abuse. The administration of President George W Bush embraced the 'dark side,' a new paradigm for countering terrorism with little regard for the constraints of domestic and international law.

Today, more than a decade after September 11, there is no doubt that high-ranking Bush administration officials bear responsibility for authorizing human rights violations associated with secret detention and extraordinary rendition, and the impunity that they have enjoyed to date remains a matter of significant concern. But responsibility for these violations does not end with the United States. Secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, designed to be conducted outside the United States under cover of secrecy, could not have been implemented without the active participation of foreign governments. These governments too must be held accountable.

However, to date, the full scale and scope of foreign government participation — as well as the number of victims —

GLOBALIZING TORTURE CIA SECRET DETENTION AND EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION



remains unknown, largely because of the extreme secrecy maintained by the United States and its partner governments. The US government has refused to publicly and meaningfully acknowledge its involvement in any particular case of extraordinary rendition or disclose the locations of secret overseas CIA detention facilities. While President Bush acknowledged that the CIA had secretly detained about 100 prisoners, the US government has only identified 16 'high value detainees' as individuals who were secretly held in CIA detention prior to being transferred to US Defense Department custody in Guantánamo Bay. The United States also has refused to disclose the identities of the foreign governments that participated in secret detention or extraordinary rendition, and few of these governments have admitted to their roles.

This report provides for the first time the number of known victims of secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations and the number of governments that were complicit. Based on credible public sources and information provided by reputable human rights organizations, this report is the most comprehensive catalogue of the treatment of 136 individuals reportedly subjected to these operations. There may be many more such individuals, but the total number will remain unknown until the United States and its partners make this information publicly available.

The report also shows that as many as 54 foreign governments reportedly participated in these operations in various ways, including by hosting CIA prisons on their territories; detaining, interrogating, torturing, and abusing individuals; assisting in the capture and transport of detainees; permitting the use of domestic airspace and airports for secret flights transporting detainees; providing intelligence leading to the secret detention and extraordinary rendition of individuals; and interrogating individuals who were secretly being held in the custody of other governments. Foreign governments also failed to protect detainees from secret detention and extraordinary rendition on their territories and to conduct effective investigations into agencies and officials who participated in these operations. The 54 governments identified in this report span the continents of Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America, and include: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Lithuania, Macedonia,

Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

By engaging in torture and other abuses associated with secret detention and extraordinary rendition, the US government violated domestic and international law, thereby diminishing its moral standing and eroding support for its





M95 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M94

counterterrorism efforts worldwide as these abuses came to light. By enlisting the participation of dozens of foreign governments in these violations, the United States further undermined longstanding human rights protections enshrined in international law — including, in particular, the norm against torture. As this report shows, responsibility for this damage does not lie solely with the United States, but also with the numerous foreign governments without whose participation secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations could not have been carried out. By participating in these operations, these governments too violated domestic and international laws and further undermined the norm against torture.

Torture is not only illegal and immoral, but also ineffective for producing reliable intelligence. Indeed, numerous professional US interrogators have confirmed that torture does not produce reliable intelligence, and that rapport-building techniques are far more effective at eliciting such intelligence. A telling example of the disastrous consequences of extraordinary rendition operations can be seen in the case of Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi, documented in this report. After being extraordinarily rendered by the United States to Egypt in 2002, al-Libi, under threat of torture at the hands of Egyptian officials, fabricated information relating to Iraq's provision of chemical and biological weapons training to Al Qaeda. In 2003, then Secretary of State Colin Powell relied on this fabricated information in his speech to the United Nations that made the case for war against Iraq.

In December 2012, the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence voted to approve a comprehensive report on CIA detention and interrogation. Although the report is classified, and was not publicly available at the time of this writing, the committee chairman, Senator Dianne Feinstein, stated that she and a majority of the committee believed that the creation of long-term, clandestine black sites and the use of so-called enhanced interrogation techniques were 'terrible mistakes.' She added that the report would 'settle the debate once and for all over whether our nation should ever employ coercive interrogation techniques such as those detailed in the report.'

Despite the scale of torture and other human rights violations associated with secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, the United States and most of its partner governments have failed to conduct effective investigations into secret detention and extraordinary rendition. The US Justice Department's investigation into detainee abuse was limited to ill-treatment that went beyond what its Office of Legal Counsel had previously authorized, and concluded without bringing any criminal charges, despite ample evidence of CIA torture and abuse. Italy is the only country where a court has criminally convicted officials for their involvement in extraordinary rendition operations. Canada is the only country to issue an apology to an extraordinary rendition victim, Maher Arar, who was extraordinarily rendered to, and tortured in, Syria. Only three countries in addition to Canada - Sweden, Australia, and the United Kingdom have issued compensation to extraordinary rendition victims, the latter two in the context of confidential settlements that sought to avoid litigation relating to the associated human rights violations.

The taint of torture



A protester dressed to represent a detainee of the US government demonstrates against torture outside the White House in Washington November 22, 2005.

Moreover, it appears that the Obama administration did not end extraordinary rendition, choosing to rely on anti-torture diplomatic assurances from recipient countries and post-transfer monitoring of detainee treatment. As demonstrated in the cases of Maher Arar, who was tortured in Syria, and Ahmed Agiza and Muhammed al-Zery, who were tortured in Egypt, diplomatic assurances and post-transfer monitoring are not effective safeguards against torture. Soon after taking office in 2009, President Obama did issue an executive order that disavowed torture, ordered the closure of secret CIA detention facilities, and established an interagency task force to review interrogation and transfer policies and issue recommendations on 'the practices of transferring individuals to other nations.' But the executive order did not repudiate extraordinary rendition, and was crafted to preserve the CIA's authority to detain terrorist suspects on a short-term transitory basis prior to rendering them to another country for interrogation or trial. Moreover, the interagency task force report, which was issued in 2009, continues to be withheld from the public. The administration also continues to withhold documents relating to CIA Office of Inspector General investigations into extraordinary rendition and secret detention.

In addition, recent reports of secret detention by or with the involvement of the CIA or other US agencies remain a source of significant concern. These include reports of a secret prison in Somalia run with CIA involvement, secret Defense Department detention facilities in Afghanistan where detainees were abused, and the two-month long secret detention of a terrorist suspect aboard a US Navy ship.

Despite the efforts of the United States and its partner governments to withhold the truth about past and ongoing abuses, information relating to these abuses will continue to find its way into the public domain. At the same time, while US courts have closed their doors to victims of secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, legal challenges to foreign government participation in these operations are being heard in courts around the world. Maher Arar's US lawsuit was dismissed on grounds that judicial intervention was inappropriate in a case that raised sensitive national security and foreign policy questions. Similarly, US courts dismissed on state secrets grounds Khaled El-Masri's lawsuit challenging his abduction, torture, and secret detention by the CIA. In contrast, the European Court of Human Rights recently held that Macedonia's participation in that operation violated El-Masri's rights under the European Convention on Human Rights, and that his ill-treatment by the CIA amounted to torture. In addition, Italy's highest court recently upheld the convictions of US and Italian officials for their role in the extraordinary rendition of Abu Omar to Egypt. Moreover, at the time of this writing, other legal challenges to secret detention and extraordinary rendition are pending before the European Court of Human Rights against Poland, Lithuania, Romania, and Italy; against Djibouti before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; and against domestic authorities or officials in Egypt, Hong Kong, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

In the face of this trend, the time has come for the United States and its partner governments to own up to their responsibility for secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations. If they do not seize this opportunity, chances are that the truth will emerge by other means to embarrass them. The taint of torture associated with secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations will continue to cling to the United States and its partner governments as long as they fail to air the truth and hold their officials accountable. The impunity currently enjoyed by responsible parties also paves the way for future abuses in counterterrorism operations.

There can be no doubt that in today's world, intergovernmental cooperation is necessary for combating terrorism.

PAGE M96 \rightarrow



M96 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



The taint of torture

PAGE M95

But such cooperation must be effected in a manner that is consistent with the rule of law. As recognized in the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006, 'effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing.' Consistent with this principle, it is incumbent on the United States and its partner governments to repudiate secret detention and extraordinary rendition, secure accountability for human rights violations associated with these operations, and ensure that future counterterrorism operations do not violate human rights standards.

Recommendations

To the United States government:

1. Repudiate the CIA's practice of extraordinary rendition.

2. Cease reliance on 'diplomatic assurances' against torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as a basis for transferring individuals to foreign countries.

3. Reaffirm and extend the commitment set forth in Executive Order 13491 to close secret CIA detention facilities by prohibiting secret detention — including short-term secret detention — by or with the involvement of any US federal agency.

4. Disclose information relating to human rights violations associated with secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, including but not limited to the identities of all individuals subjected to these operations, along with available information on their detention and treatment,

current whereabouts, and diplomatic assurances secured in particular cases. The US administration and senate should work to declassify, to the maximum extent possible, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on CIA detention and interrogation.

5. Conduct an effective and thorough criminal investigation into human rights abuses associated with CIA secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations (including into abuses that had been authorized by the Office of Legal Counsel of the US Department of Justice), with a view to examining the role of, and holding legally accountable, officials who authorized, ordered, assisted, or otherwise participated in these abuses.

6. Create an independent, non-partisan commission (with authority to access all relevant documents, subpoena witnesses, and make its concluding report public) to investigate human rights abuses associated with CIA secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations (including into abuses that had been authorized by the Office of Legal Counsel), with a view to examining, and publicly disclosing, the role of officials who authorized, ordered, assisted, or otherwise participated in these abuses.

7. Create an independent, non-partisan board to review compensation claims and provide just compensation to all individuals subjected to human rights abuses associated with



REUTERS/BOGDAN CRISTEL

Romanian soldiers at the Mihail Kogalniceanu airbase near Bucharest in 2005. The airbase was indicated by Human Rights Watch as a possible location for a covert prison allegedly used by the CIA in Romania to interrogate terrorist suspects. Romania is among the 54 countries identified as helping the CIA in Amrit Singh's report.

CIA secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations. 8. Publicly disclose the report and recommendations of the Special Task Force on Interrogations and Transfer Policies (created pursuant to Executive Order 13491 in January 2009 to issue recommendations for ensuring that these policies comply with US domestic laws and international obligations) along with descriptions of measures taken to implement the recommendations, so that the public may be able to assess whether policies were revised and adequate safeguards instituted against torture and other abuses associated with CIA secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations.

9. Institute safeguards for ensuring that future joint counterterrorism operations do not run afoul of human rights standards, including by making participation in such operations contingent on compliance of all participating governments with human rights standards.

To other governments that participated in CIA secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations:

1. Refuse to participate in CIA extraordinary rendition.

2. Refuse to participate in secret detention, including at the behest, or with the involvement, of any US agency or any other government.

3. Disclose information relating to human rights violations

associated with CIA secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, including but not limited to the identities of all individuals subjected to secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations along with available information on their detention and treatment, current whereabouts, and diplomatic assurances secured in particular cases.

4. Conduct effective and thorough investigations (including, where appropriate, criminal investigations) into the full range of human rights abuses associated with CIA secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, with a view to examining and publicly disclosing the role of, and holding legally accountable, officials who authorized, ordered, assisted, or otherwise participated in these abuses.

5. Provide appropriate compensation to all individuals subjected to secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations in which the particular government participated.

6. Institute safeguards for ensuring that future joint counterterrorism operations do not violate human rights standards, including by making participation in such operations contingent on compliance of all participating governments with human rights standards. ■

This 'Executive Summary' is excerpted from Amrit Singh's Open Society Foundation report – *Globalizing Torture: CIA Secret Detention and Extraordinary Rendition.*



M97 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Valarie Kaur has become a modern-day warrior for civil rights and interfaith engagement in America.

Faith's soldier

Armed with a law degree and a film camera as her 'sword and shield,' **Valarie Kaur** is bringing the community's many faiths into the mainstream narrative.

The winner of the India Abroad Gopal Raju Award for Community Service 2012, in conversation with Arthur J Pais.

up in a farming town in California, Valarie has degrees from three of America's most prominent universities: Stanford (international affairs and religion); Harvard (theology); Yale (law).

Raju and their dog Shadi, has become a warrior on many fronts, bringing together people of dif-

In her early 30s. Valarie, who shares a home with her filmmaker and activist husband Sharat

PAGE M98 \rightarrow

PARESH GANDE



FROM THE EDITORS

For using her camera and law degree as her 'sword and shield;' for drawing wisdom from her heritage; and for being a soldier for the Sikh community.



India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012



alarie Kaur may or may not share with a visitor the dark chocolates she often offers friends, but she will certainly share stories of her fight for justice that has taken her to super max prisons, her trip to Guantanamo, and country travel soon after 9/11 that

her cross country travel soon after 9/11 that eventually led to the landmark documentary on prejudice and crime, *Divided We Fall*.

This slender, tall and delicately framed woman who lives in a modest home near Yale in Connecticut — where she conducts a workshop on using film and dramatic stories to illuminate the fight for justice — readily discusses her fighting instincts and her tenacity.

Nothing seems to deter her, not even an injury inflicted allegedly by New York police officers while filming a protest at the Republic National Convention that hurt her physically for several years and still afflicts her with chronic pain.

A third-generation Sikh American who grew

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M98 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M97

Faith's soldier

ferent faiths through Groundswell at Auburn Seminary.

Valarie, who is in her early 30s, speaks about many people, including Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King, who have inspired her. But among her biggest inspirations is someone who did not go to an Ivy League school or caught on to liberal politics.

It is her paternal grandfather who befriended many Japanese-American families in California, and traveled many dozens of miles to see them when they were interned when Japan and America went to war in the 1940s. She has also been deeply influenced by her mother's father who instilled in her the need to stand for one's legitimate rights and identity.

The following interview was conducted in person, over the telephone and through e-mail.

What was the most difficult moment of your childhood?

On Judgment Day, a golden staircase spiraled from the heavens down to the grey sea. Families hurried into boats, scrambling to get to the stair. I was so close I could almost touch it, but then where was my family? I turned back across the bank into the wood, found them in underground caverns, and urged them to hurry. My grandfather, Papaji, was missing. By the time I took his hand, the staircase was gone, and I looked at my family before the world went black.

This is one of many dreams I had as a little girl — hellfire swallowing up the world with me in it.

By all outward appearances, I had a safe and peaceful childhood. I was born and raised in Clovis, a small town near Fresno in the Central Valley of California. My father's father, Kehar Singh, sailed by steamship from Punjab to the Pacific Coast of California exactly 100 years ago. He settled in Clovis in 1913 and farmed for decades.

My parents raised me with great love on the land that he had farmed, and I felt a strong sense of rootedness in California.

I was also raised with a fierce connection to my Punjabi

heritage. My mother's father, Captain Gurdial Singh, who we called Papaji helped my parents raise my brother Sanjeev and me and connected us to our Sikh faith. But my world crumbled when friends and teachers at school divided the world into 'saved and unsaved,' and told me that I was on the wrong side of the line.

How did a girl who dreamt of hellfire become the most prominent Sikh interfaith leader in America?

Papaji helped me find my way. When I came home crying one day after my best friend told me I was going to hell and urged me to convert, my grandfather did not say a word. He simply handed me books on the history and philosophy of the Sikh religion. I began to fall in love with the pluralism and equality at the heart of the faith: *Ik Onkar*. God is One, Humanity is One.



Valarie Kaur at a protest in New York City as director, Groundswell, Auburn Seminary. She founded Groundswell to equip people of faith to lead campaigns of social change. The Center for American Progress named her one of 13 national faith leaders to watch in 2013.

"Papaji, how do I find Truth?" I would ask.

"Truth is higher than all else," Papaji quoted scripture. "But higher than truth is truthful living."

"But do you see God, Papaji?"

"Yes, my dear, even you can see God. God is everywhere, God is inside you."

"And what about good people who don't believe in God?" "To be good is to be godly."

"How am I supposed to be good?" I asked.

"We are saint-soldiers," Papaji would say solemnly. "We fight for ourselves, and we fight for others. A Sikh never hides."

How did you begin to walk this path as a young woman? As I grew older, I realized that the stories of faith, history

and culture passed down to me were nearly absent from my history books at school. Few people knew the stories of early Punjabi immigrants settling on the western shore at the turn of the century. Or the history of the Partition of India, where my great-uncle was burned alive in the mass riots that pitted Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs against one another. Or the tragedy of the anti-Sikh pogroms that consumed New Delhi in 1984.

I believed that telling these stories could deepen understanding and reconciliation across lines of difference. This is where my passion for storytelling as a tool for social change began.

In high school, I took college courses on philosophy and religion at the local university. I loved learning the teachings of the great faith traditions, especially stories of the Buddha, Jesus, Guru Nanak, Mohammad, Kabir, and Rumi. I also studied liberation movements in history – from Mahatma Gandhi's salt march to Nelson Mandela's campaign against apartheid to the Revered Dr Martin Luther King's marches from Selma to Montgomery.

Through films, plays, and papers, I spent much of high school experimenting with telling stories of resistance and moral courage from Indian and Sikh history to American audiences.

My childhood passion — to find meaning in life and ways to help change the world — drove my majors at Stanford University, Religious Studies and International Relations, and led me to graduate studies at Harvard Divinity School and Yale Law School.

Along the way, I learned how to use multiple tools — filmmaking, lawyering, and interfaith organizing — to advocate for justice.

My journey led me to found Groundswell at Auburn Seminary, where we equip people of faith to lead campaigns for social change.

Today, working at the intersection of politics and religion, spirituality and social justice, I find meaning in life through public service.

Your father's father was one of the first Indian pioneers to settle in America at the turn of the century. Can you tell us about the legacy your grandparents left you?

My father's father was born in 1893 in the village of Chand Nama in Punjab, India. We call him Babaji.

At the age of 17, he left the village to follow his older



COURTESY: GROUNDSWELL-MOVEMENT.ORG





Swadesh Chatterjee (2006)

Navin Shah (2007) Dave Kumar, Dino Teppara, Hrishi

Karthikeyan, Toby Chaudhuri, Varun Nikore (2008)

Sudha Acharya (2010)



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M100 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M98

brother Dahl Singh to Shanghai, where they worked as night watchmen for the Shell Oil Company. They followed work to Manila and boarded a steamship to the Pacific Coast). When they sailed into the port, officers refused to let them disembark without a \$5 port fee – a policy that reflected brewing anti-Asian sentiment at the turn of the century. He returned in September 1913 with the port fee in hand and stepped onto US soil — 100 years ago this year.

He and his brother labored in the fields and earned their way south until they arrived at a small farming town called Clovis. They worked in the orchards all day and slept in barns at night, twisting their bodies to fit into grape trays to keep safe from the snakes.

When Babaji received news that the Asian Exclusion Acts forbade people like him from becoming citizens or owning land or returning to America if they ever left the country to marry, he knew he had left his home behind.

So, he gave his youth to the land, drove Caterpillar tractors by his brother's side, made wine at the constable's request during Prohibition, survived early 'anti-Hindoo' race riots, and earned a reputation as an honest man who wore a turban and long beard in the farmlands of California.

During World War II, Babaji looked after the farms of Japanese-American neighbors when they were sent to internment camps and even drove a horse and buggy to Poston, Arizona, to visit them. He brought back a piece of petrified rock from his trip, which sits on my family's fireplace as a lasting reminder of my grandfather's example.

After the laws changed in 1949, Babaji returned to India for the first time in 36 years. He was a man in his 50s with a long white beard — and a bachelor.

My grandmother Dalip Kaur was 23 years old when Babaji visited her village of Fategarh in Punjab. As the youngest of eight siblings, she faced a bleak future as an unmarried woman in the village. At one time, she stood at the edge of the well, ready to jump, but a gust of wind came and she said she felt god's protection. A week or so later, Babaji arrived and asked for her hand in marriage.

In 1950, my grandmother began a new life in California, where she labored in the fields with my grandfather, wearing rubber boots with a shovel over her shoulder. They had four children, and I was the first grandchild of their eldest son.

The day I was born, Babaji saw a falcon sitting on a fence — a good omen, he told my mother. When it turned out that I was a girl, some sent my family condolences because I was not a boy. But my grandparents defended me, especially my grandmother. My birth was not a reason for sadness but for celebration. They named me Valarie after the day I was born, Valentine's Day.

My grandfather died when I was a child at the age of 94, but I remember his wiry silver beard, tall turban, and kind eyes. My grandmother died in February of this year, and I am still mourning her death. Their legacy as pioneers has been passed on to all their children and grandchildren.

Your other grandfather Papaji became a life mentor when you were young. Can you tell us more about your mother's parents?

My mother's father, Captain Gurdial Singh Gill, lived with my brother and me our entire childhood. He is the single



Left, Valarie Kaur with her maternal grandfather Captain Gurdial Singh Gill. Right, Captain Gill with his wife Joginder and their three children, including Valarie's mother, Dolly, center. Valarie says she learned from her grandparents the way she wishes to live, and the way she wishes to die.

Faith's soldier

greatest influence on my life — my guiding star and pillar of wisdom.

Papaji was born in 1921 in the village of Basupanu in Punjab, now in Pakistan. He spent his childhood playing beneath a great banyan tree, a tree I hope to find one day. At the age of 18, he joined the British Indian Army and became a mechanic in World War II, where he served bravely in Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Palestine, earning the rank of Captain. He slept through bullets raining down from German aircraft at night, because his father told him that god would protect him. He refused to remove his turban on the frontline, saying 'God gave me my helmet.' He wrapped his friend's body with the cloth of his turban when he was killed next to him. He was always proud that throughout the course of the war, he never had to fire a single bullet.

When the British left India in 1947 and upon departing tore the country in two, Papaji escaped the bloodshed that consumed the north. He saw trains filled with the dead rolling into the station and found another way across the border. He had just married Joginder Kaur, who we call Mummyji. She wore white, the color of mourning, until he reappeared on the now-Indian side of Punjab.

After Partition, my grandparents had three children; their youngest daughter is my mother.

The family was stationed in different parts of India, and my mother spent parts of her childhood in Kashmir, Sikkim, Bangalore, and Joshi Math, where my grandfather first started to write poetry near the river Ganges.

In 1979, my American father went to Punjab to find a bride - 30 years after his own father did the same. Papaji

shook my father's hand and knew instantly that he would be the one to marry his daughter. My parents were married two weeks later, and I was born two years after that.

When I was a small child, Papaji came to America to live with us, tend a garden, and write books of poems. Papaji used to wrap our schoolbooks in brown paper, cut up cantaloupe for picnics, tell us stories from Sikh history and teach us *shabads*, prayers.

To me, he embodied the ideal of the saint-soldier, someone who walked the earth fearlessly, in deep devotion to the sacred and also committed to serving those around him.

A few years later, Mummyji came to live with us too. I remember her singing *kirtan* in the mornings, making *prashad* on our birthdays, reading the newspaper daily, and giving her grandchildren love and affection. Papaji died in 2008, and Mummyji two years later. I am terribly fortunate to have known and loved each of my grandparents, helped care for them as they grew older, and held their hands in the days before they died. I have learned from them the way I wish to live, and the way I wish to die.

Your parents sound wonderfully supportive. What have you taken from your parents?

My parents are wildly loving and generous, spirited and adventurous. They filled our childhood with wonder and laughter. My father, Judge Brar, grew up working on the farm, picking peaches and plums with my grandparents in California's Central Valley. He went to Fresno State University, fell in love with the study of the ocean, and went off to sea on fishing boats as a scientist, an explorer of the ocean. He must have been one of the first Indian American marine biologists.





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M101 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M100

We grew up with stories of my father on fishing expeditions that lasted for months, sometimes jumping in wide open water to rescue porpoises caught in the tuna nets.

He traveled to India for the first time at the age of 27 to get married.

My mother Harjit Kaur, nicknamed Dolly, was 18 years old with a degree in literature from Punjabi University in Patiala when my father visited her house. She refused to serve the tea to her suitor, as was custom.

"I will not be a doll on display," she said.

The tea was sitting on the table when my father arrived.

In the first moment they were alone, my mother said to my father, "How can you come to India for the first time in your life, visit a dozen homes, and take your pick of wife? Aren't vou worried about breaking young girls' hearts?'

My father opened his mouth and closed it again. He decided he loved her

Within two weeks, my parents were married.

They built a home on the corner of the land my grandfather had farmed in Clovis and ran a small irrigation landscaping business. My parents raised my brother and me with a sense that anything was possible.

My father shared his insatiable appetite for adventure, taking us on camping trips, fishing expeditions, and stargazing in the mountains.

My mother shared her wild passion for music and art, filling our free time with arts projects and spontaneous dance parties. She chaperoned every field trip and became the envy of our friends.

As we grew older, my parents never told us what classes to choose, colleges to explore or careers to pursue. They wanted us to be anything we wanted to be - and they became co-conspirators in every project we took on. When I conducted a science experiment in our backyard, my dad constructed the hothouse out of PVC pipe. When my brother and I put on a high school play about the Partition of India, my father built the backdrop and my mother fed us during every rehearsal. They attended every recital, competition, and awards ceremony. When my cousins immigrated to America when I was in high school, they helped raise six children practically under one roof.

My parents' unconditional support continues today. They are our biggest fans at every film premiere. They call me after every television appearance. They listen to every musical composition my brother produces. And they do all this from their new home in Costa Rica, where they have started a new adventure together.

Your brother is a talented artist. Can you tell us more about your relationship?

My younger brother Sanjeev Brar is one of my best

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9/11 ignited Valarie Kaur's career. In 2004, she was wrongfully arrested at an anti-war protest while serving as a legal observer to protect against police misconduct in New York City, pictured. Those who know her say that she puts herself in danger for the things she believes in.

Faith's soldier

friends in life. When we were children, he was the one with the vibrant and sparkling imagination, and I always felt honored when he let me in.

In high school, we had long philosophical conversations into the night and took on ambitious service projects together. Our final History Day project on the Partition of India won us the national championship.

After I went to college, he went on to study astrophysics at UC Berkeley, and then pursued music and sound production after college.

Sanjeev now lives and works in Brooklyn, where he designs apps, produces music, and works on sound design. He has produced the sound and music on nearly every one of our films. It's an incredible feeling to work closely with my brother and husband on projects that ignite shared creativity.

Outside of work, Sanjeev is a devoted brother. He helped orchestrate my wedding, has taken care of me when I'm sick, and counsels me when I'm in trouble. I'm lucky to have him by my side.

How did the events of 9/11 ignite your career as a modernday warrior?

As a college student at Stanford University, my studies focused on religion and violence in history - and the art of healing through storytelling and dialogue. I had earned research grants to do an oral history project in Punjab, chronicling the stories of the Partition of India. I was about to leave for Punjab when 9/11 happened. I could not have

known that this training would prepare me to respond to the aftermath of the terrorist attacks – and launch my journey as an activist.

On September 11, 2001, I found myself crumpled on the floor of my parents' bedroom floor, watching the towers fall over and over again between images of Osama bin Laden with a beard and turban. It wasn't long before I realized that the image of America's new enemy looked like my grandfathers, cousins, and uncles. My family had experienced racism for decades, but in one instant, we became automatically suspect, perpetually foreign, and potentially terrorist in the eyes of our neighbors.

President Bush repeated that we were a country united in grief and resolve, but my inbox was flooded with emails detailing hate crimes. Someone's father had been assaulted. Someone's brother had been chased. Someone's grandfather had been beaten. They were desperate cries buried beneath the anthem of national unity.

On September 15, 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi was murdered in front of his gas station in Arizona by a man who called himself a patriot. He was

the first of at least two dozen people killed in the year-long aftermath of 9/11. My family knew the Sodhi family, so it felt as if an uncle had been murdered.

At that moment, I ran into my bedroom, locked the door and hid. I wanted to do something, but the script I was holding told me that a young woman of color without a college degree should keep her head down.

I wrote an e-mail to my Stanford adviser and professor Linda Hess with an idea to use my camera to document the violence myself. She responded:

You're in a position to enter this unique moment in history, the huge energy generated by these events, and catch the life of it. It's like entering the whirlwind. That sounds more dangerous than I want it to sound, but I mean this is a moment to connect with powerful forces that have been let loose, to be like Ramanujan's 'mystical opportunist'... To enter this field of tremendous forces and catch words, images, that will be precious and unique to this immediate time.

'Oh blessed rage for order, pale Ramon! The maker's rage to order words of the sea!' (Wallace Stevens, 'The Idea of Order at Key West').

I grabbed my camera and began a road trip with my cousin Sonny across the country to chronicle stories of hate crimes against Sikh, Muslim, and other Americans.

For the next few years, I captured more than a 100 hours of footage, documenting hate crimes, discrimination, bullying and profiling in the Sikh American community.



PAGE M102 \rightarrow



M102 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M101

I did not know how I would finish the project – until I met filmmaker Sharat Raju who became the film's co-producer and director.

Working with a team of friends over five years, we developed the project into the first feature-length documentary film *Divided We Fall*.

How did you meet your filmmaking partner Sharat Raju?

I met Sharat 10 years ago at the first-ever Sikh film festival in Toronto in October 2003. Sharat screened his critically acclaimed film *American Made*, and I showed footage from the interviews I collected after 9/11. Sharat's film captured the hopes and struggles of a Sikh American family after 9/11 through a poignant fictional narrative film. I felt it was the fictional version of what I had documented on the road.

After the festival, I asked if Sharat would help me make the film. A writer-director trained at American Film Institute, Sharat became the film's director and co-producer, brought his professional team on board, and the project went from a low-budget student video to a feature-length documentary film.

In the process of working together, we fell in love.

Sharat and I have been filmmaking partners and partners in life for the last decade. We have made five documentary films together and built a loving community of teammates, friends and family.

Sharat brings joy and laughter into everything we do together, whether working in the editing room, dancing in our living room, hosting chocolate parties for our friends, or biking along the ocean.

We decided to get married New Year's Eve 2011 and had a big beautiful interfaith wedding with our friends and family: a Hindu-Sikh Indian American wedding near my parents' home in the rainforests of Costa Rica.

Long before our wedding day, Sharat's parents, Tonse and Vidya Raju, brother Manu Raju, and sister-in-law Archana Mehta provided tremendous love and support to both of us.

Manu also happens to be a senior congressional reporter at *Politico* and frequently appears on television. Sharat and Manu's grandfather Gopalakrishna Adiga was a renowned Kannada poet whose legacy continues to embolden each of us in our careers in writing and the arts.

What was the impact of your first film *Divided We Fall*? *Divided We Fall* launched Sharat and me on a national

tour to 200 US cities and towns — high schools, colleges, universities, congregations, and community centers. People were hungry for brave new ways to talk about race

and religion in America after 9/11.

Under Sharat's direction, the film uses my personal journey across America to explore stories of racism and hate, hope and healing after 9/11. It asks the greater question: "Who counts as 'one of us'?"

On tour, we witnessed remarkable gestures of solidarity after people watched the film.

An African-American man in Chicago stood up after the film, pointed to his braids and said: "My braids are my turban."

A Japanese-American woman in New England said: "My grandparents were interned in the concentration camps during WWII. No one raised their voice. I will raise my voice for you now."



In Sharat Raju, Valarie Kaur found a professional partner and her soul mate. For the last 10 years, they have made films and run campaigns together, using storytelling for social change. In the background is their multi-faith alter.

Faith's soldier

A gay man in New York said: "I must fight for the rights of Sikhs to wear their turbans, just as I fight for the right of LGBTQ people to come out of the closet. We have to fight for one another."

In crisscrossing America, I witnessed how stories can save us; stories can help us see ourselves in one another. Just as audiences began to see themselves my story, I began to see myself in theirs. I realized that our community's struggle is bound up with the struggles of African American, Latino, American Indian, Jewish, Muslim, LGBTQ and all Americans still seeking to live, work, and worship in this country without fear.

I was inspired to find ways to work closely on justice issues with other communities, so that I could draw connections between our struggles and help network us in one greater movement for equality and dignity in America.

You learned how to use the power of storytelling to effect change as a filmmaker. Why did you then decide to go to law school?

I believe that storytelling can produce deep healing and dialogue. But I have also learned that storytelling is not enough. Lasting social change requires that we use stories strategically to challenge institutions of power. I experienced this lesson the hard way.

On August 31, 2004, I was wrongfully arrested while filming a protest as a legal observer at the Republican National Convention and injured by a police officer. I found myself behind bars in a New York City detention nicknamed "Guantanamo on the Hudson," scared, nursing my dead hand on my chest, deep blue gashes in my wrists. I stared at the bars with a revelation: I am a citizen. I speak English. I am educated. What happens to people behind prison doors without these privileges? How do we fight for them?

I thought of the female Sikh warrior-saint Mai Bhago of the 17th century who led 40 soldiers back into battle, sword and shield in hand. If the Sikh ideal is the warrior-saint, one who is deeply devoted to the divine and walks the earth standing up to injustice, then what is our modern-day sword and shield? I decided behind bars to apply to law school to learn how to become a more effective advocate.

My "sword and shield" would be my law degree and film camera.

It would be several years after my arrest before I was well enough to attend law school. The injury resulted in a chronic pain condition called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy and left me functionally disabled in my right arm for years. I switched to part-time status at Harvard Divinity School and deferred law school, so that I could focus on healing my body.

How did you manage the injury you sustained during your arrest?

Before law school, I spent nearly two years living by the sea and seeking treatments for my injury in Los Angeles.





M103 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M102

The pain was difficult to bear. Often, I wanted to cut my arm clean off to stop the pain coursing through the right side of my body like a red hot iron rod.

The turning point came when I realized that my mind played a powerful role in my own healing. Activists often embody the dysfunctions they seek to heal out in the world, operating with anxiety, frustration, neglect and sometimes cruelty toward one's own self. How many women, especially women of color, have been burned out, beaten down, or let the work happen on their backs or over their dead bodies? The pain taught me to break this cycle and treat my own body with the same compassion and care as I treat others. I learned that true non-violence begins with kindness and care for one's own body and spirit.

Today, I continue to experience flare-ups of chronic pain as a result of my arrest injury. But I remember that I am experiencing only a small taste of what others must endure when they stand up for what they believe. Some people lose their limbs; others lose their lives. I am grateful that I was given the tools, resources, and love from friends and family to heal and continue my path.

at Yale Law School?

At Yale Law School, I learned how to make stories of injustice legible in the courtroom and the halls of power. I clerked on the Senate Judiciary Committee where I worked on civil rights issues, filed landmark lawsuits as part of my clinical work on behalf of Latinos residents swept up in immigration raids, and traveled to Guantanamo, Bay Cuba to report on the military commissions.

In my proudest clinical case in law school, we represented St Rose of Lima Church, working with Latino parishioners who had the courage to challenge racial profiling and excessive use of force by local police officers. We developed a multi-pronged campaign that brought these stories before the media, the courtroom, and the government. By the time I graduated, the US Department of Justice had found a pattern and practice of profiling, discrimination and incidents of brutality, the officers responsible for the worst abuses were arrested, and the police chief removed from power. A coalition of faith communities and secular advocates ran a campaign to engage the power of storytelling and advocacy to transform a corrupt police department - and it worked.

My conviction was confirmed. When we find the stories that can change hearts and minds, and then wield those stories strategically to challenge institutions of power, we can build the movements that change the world.

How have you continued making films in the legal field?

Between the people, the police, the courts, the faith leaders, the media, that clinical case felt incredibly cinematic. It was visually and emotionally engaging, and I started to think of a way to use my tools as a filmmaker with my legal training.



What were your greatest accomplishments Valarie Kaur attends the memorial for the victims of the shootout at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin, August 10, 2012.

Faith's soldier

A few years ago, Sharat and I founded the Yale Visual Law Project at Yale Law School, where we make films and train law students in the art of visual advocacy - how to use storytelling for social change. We show students how to use film and video on behalf of clients and campaigns.

In our pilot year, we made two films: Stigma about African-American youth subject to stop and frisks in the streets of New York City and Alienation about families swept up in immigration raids in Baltimore.

We recently released our latest film The Worst Of The Worst about the practice of solitary confinement in America's supermax prisons. The film shows how supermax prisons harm all who walk through the doors by using personal stories of the people inside: a former inmate trying to rebuild his life but haunted by memories from the prison, a guard suffering from PTSD and the buddies trying to help him, and a desperate mother on a mission to support a son who spends 23 hours a day in isolation. It reflects my belief that changing the world requires more than battling individual bad actors; it requires challenging those institutions of power designed to bring out the worst in us. Within months of its release, the film has played a role in reforming the supermax prison in Connecticut and emptying its cells.

The Yale Visual Law Project is now beginning its fourth

year at Yale Law School. We have sister organizations at other law schools too. My hope is that more lawyers and advocates will partner with filmmakers to use storytelling for social change campaigns.

What made you start Groundswell?

Here's what I learned in crisscrossing the US in the last decade, listening to school assemblies, congregations, and corporate roundtables. There is a groundswell out there a groundswell of people, especially young people, who are calling upon their faith tradition or moral compass to challenge the status quo. It is sparing no area of society: campaigns as diverse as immigration reform, religious freedom, and LGBTQ equality are bound up in one struggle for justice, one movement to heal and repair the world. If we connected all these people in one powerful network, could we build the political power of one greater multifaith movement for justice?

Coming out of law school, I founded Groundswell, an initiative at Auburn Seminary that connects and equips people across many faiths and backgrounds in one network to wage campaigns. We train people to use storytelling in movements for social change using digital tools. We run campaigns responding to today's most pressing social issues, including LGBTQ equality, human trafficking, hate crimes, and gun violence. In little over a year, our base has grown to nearly 100,000 members. We now invite all peo-



PAGE M104 \rightarrow



M104 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

10

PAGE M103

ple of faith and moral conscious to use the Groundswell platform to launch their own campaigns.

You have been a leading voice in the Sikh community, especially in response to the mass shooting at the gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin last year. Can you tell us about that experience?

The last year has been an unprecedented moment in the history of the Sikh American community.

In the wake of Oak Creek, I experienced sadness and grief that felt similar to the aftermath of 9/11, when Balbir Singh Sodhi became the first of too many murdered in hate. But this time, 11 years later, something remarkable happened: The nation's cameras turned to our community. For the first time in 100 years of history, we stood at the center of the nation's attention.

In the immediate aftermath, I watched Sikh families, especially the young people of Oak Creek, in the midst of unspeakable pain and sorrow, turn to face the sea of cameras, tell their stories, and call for an end to hate, not just against Sikhs but against all people.

In them, I witnessed the true meaning of the Sikh spirit of *Chardi Kala* – in the face of darkness and unspeakable despair, everlast-

ing high spirits and hope. And they weren't alone. I joined a rising generation of Sikh Americans who stepped up to organize vigils, write op-eds, work with law enforcement, use social media, appear on television, and tell our community's stories to a public who needed to hear from us. As a result, tens of thousands of people stood with us to say that an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us.

In the weeks following the tragedy, leading civil rights organizations such as the Sikh Coalition along with Groundswell at Auburn Seminary took the community's stories into the halls of power, requesting that the US government better monitor and track hate crimes in the US and combat domestic terrorism. It resulted in a historic hate crime hearing September 19, 2012, where Sikhs led people of all colors and faiths to join together to call for an end to hate in America. Sharat and I chronicled the story in the short film Oak Creek: In Memorium.

Today, nearly a year after Oak Creek, I believe we are at a crossroads. Will we return to the old way of fighting for only our community, our own issues, and even our own organizations? Or will we embrace this new way of fighting, in a spirit of collaboration? We have much work ahead and it inspires me that we now have bold new coalitions to continue the fight for civil rights and human dignity for all people in the US.

What is the most important life lesson you give to your students?

The way we make change is just as important as the change we make.

Seva means "sacred service" in the Sikh tradition. We often think of seva as the product of our work, but I have come to believe that seva is the way we serve too. In a world



Valarie Kaur addresses a press conference, following a historic hearing on tracking hate crimes against Sikhs, Hindus and Arabs in the US in the wake of the Wisconsin gurdwara tragedy. As a result of her relentless organizing with the Sikh Coalition and others, the FBI agreed to track hate crimes against Sikhs, Hindus, Arabs and other at-risk communities to prevent such crimes in the future.

Faith's soldier

where too often people work in stress or fatigue, we must embody the wellness and joy we want our service to bring to the world. This is the path of the saint-soldier that my grandfather taught me.

'The arc of the moral universe is long,' said the Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, 'but it bends toward justice.'

I know that bending the arc toward justice is long and arduous work, and the work will not be done when we die. But if we open our hearts to the love that is always around us, I believe that we can find meaning and joy in the journey.

How do you practice this lesson in your own daily life?

Each morning, I recite shabads and listen to kirtan from the Sikh tradition at home. Each week, I dance kathak, a classical North Indian dance that weaves together Hindu and Muslim traditions and storytelling, using the whole body as an instrument of prayer.

Frequently, I visit a gurdwara to pray in community. These practices help me walk my path with intention and integrity.

But the most important practice I learned from Papaji. In the final years of my grandfather's life, I watched Papaji suffer slowly as his body shut down from Parkinson's disease. He found ways to smile and express profound joy, even when he could barely move his head or eyes. He loved being alive. He delighted in beauty. He soaked in the love he received. And he showed me how to be fearless, even in the face of death.

"Are you afraid of death, Papaji," I once asked him. "Absolutely not," he said. "There is no difference in my being here or not here. If I be, god will be with me. If I don't be, I will be with god... I have been subject to changes from unit to unit in my army service, subject to transfers. And I have been going from place to place happily. On my last transfer also, I'll go happily.

What is your last wish at the time of death?" I asked.

"I should be able to give a smile to all the people around me present at that time," he said. "This is the only wish I have. I want to go smiling to my master.'

On the day he died, Papaji smiled at each of his children around his bed. They touched his lips with amrit, the sacred waters. He waited until my grandmother Mummyji gave him amrit, took the cloth into his mouth, sighed and gazing out, died.

The night before his funeral, I finally looked up the meaning to the prayer he sung me as a child: "Tati Vao Na Lagi, Par Brahm Sharnai." It means, "The hot winds cannot touch me; I am sheltered by the divine."

My grandfather's last lesson to me was this: In life, you will endure the noise and whip of the whirlwind. But if you dare to walk the path of a saint-soldier, the deepest part of your heart will always be sheltered from the swirling hot winds. You just have to practice residing in that still sacred center.

For me, each day presents an opportunity to live boldly like Papaji, and each night to close my eyes with love and gratitude in my heart, as he did. ■



One of the times when I realized that Valarie was a very caring child, more so than children her age of about 7, was when we were visiting Los Angeles.

We were walking down the street when a homeless person approached us on the sidewalk.

When he asked for a handout my reaction would have been to ignore him and walk to the other side of the street. Valarie insisted that we help, regardless of my explaining to her why it is impossible to help everyone that asks.

Even at that age Valarie could be very persuasive and impossible to say no to. She showed a compassion and under-

standing far beyond her age that day. Valarie is an adult now, but has not

changed one bit in her concern for those less fortunate among us.

She has always been passionate about helping and making a difference.

Of course, as any father would, we wanted her to be financially secure in whatever work she decided to pursue, but when we expressed our concern in this matter, she said 'Let Sanjeev and I pursue our passion and the money will follow.' Both our son Sanjeev and Valarie, with our full support, are following their passion.

During her junior year at Stanford, Valarie decided to travel to India to interview survivors of the 1947 Partition of India. She was preparing to leave when the attacks of 9/11 happened and Stanford decided it was too dangerous to send students abroad.

9/11 and its repercussion on the Asian-American community had a deep affect on Valarie. This is when she first took on the desire to help this community, switching from traveling to India to taking on the camera, traveling across the US, and then the world, to document stories of hate crimes that were taking place everywhere.

Among her many accomplishments, which ones do you value most? And why?

Besides her high achievements in academia, her way of storytelling, making a difference, especially by inspiring young people.

For example, after watching *DWF* (*Divided We Fall*) many young students sent her e-mails, telling her how it had changed them. That is so powerful.

Her strong will and tenacity to always do the right thing for others is remark-

India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012

M105 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

TELEBRATING YEARS

'She can do anything she puts her mind to'

Valarie Kaur says her biggest fans are her parents. In an e-mail interview with **Arthur J Pais**, Judge Brar, Valarie's father, speaks about his talented daughter.

able.

Her daily living is full of meaningful, purposeful moments.

It does not matter how busy she is, she always makes time for her family and friends.

We love the way she is continuing the legacy of her grandparents. Loving them and honoring them through her work in the most profound way.

She held the very first Sikh service with kirtan at the Harvard Divinity School. She can do anything that she puts her mind to for example, taking up Kathak in college.

With the permission of her teacher, she performed a beautiful Kathak dance at her graduation ceremony at Harvard.

This is her most meaningful gift to us. It makes us very proud of the way she is embracing our heritage.

As parents, what have you learned from her?

To be tenacious, strong and open minded.

Life is not black and white; there is a lot of grey.

To empathize with others; to be more loving and compassionate.

To be courageous; to speak up even when it is not popular, and to stand up not only for ourselves, but for others as well.

What incidents from her childhood do you remember most?

When she was around five, I was driving and she was in the back seat. She was putting on her watch or doing something, and I was telling her to do it the other way, and she said, "You have your mind and I have my mind, you do it your way and I will do it my way."

Since then, her way has been the way for her!

She has an adventurous nature to



Valarie Kaur, second from right, at the premiere of her first film, Divided We Fall, in San Francisco in 2006. With her were, from left, Sanjeev Brar (brother), Sharmila Gill (cousin), Sharat Raju (husband and DWF director), Sharon Gibson (DWF story consultant), Kathy Jennings (DWF production assistant), Ravi (friend), Dolly Brar (mother), John Tebbets (friend), and Judge Brar (father).

explore. She was always a perfectionist. Be it History Day competitions, science fairs — everything she learned, she learned well and excelled at it.

Her interest led her to finding her own way to her religion and spirituality.

Always questioning every step of the way for better understanding, be it science or religion.

What is the best advice that you and your wife have given her?

Our best advice has been to allow her the freedom to pursue her passions and to do what makes her happy and content with herself, even if it means to take the road less traveled.

This advice was based on the trust we had about her intelligence and wisdom to choose wisely. ■

alarie Kaur's imagination was evident even when she was a little girl when she would watch films like Disney's *Aladdin* and pretend she was some of the characters in the film, remembers her younger brother Sanjeev

Brar. "She was always very creative, and she was shining in school not only in the arts, but also science projects," he adds.

Politics and History and a concern for her own heritage began dominating her imagination when she was just about 16.

"Valarie and I grew up in a pretty conservative home," he continues. "Our father (*Judge Brar*) was a Republican though in the later years he would change his politics. We used to have a lot

PAGE M106 \rightarrow



'SHE DID THINGS AS THEY WERE THE RIGHT THINGS TO DO'

She always followed her heart and her passion, Sanjeev Brar, Valarie Kaur's younger brother, tells **Arthur J Pais**. M106 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'Valarie has accomplished amazing things'

met Valarie in her first year at Stanford. I was offering a course on religious community and conflict in South Asia, focusing on Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. She was a freshman, but did fine in that upper level course.

She had a special interest in Partition and had already done a big research project and performance in high school that won top prize in a national competition. She was also interested in oral history and did a fine paper for the course on methods and meanings of doing history from oral sources.

From the beginning, Valarie had her characteristic energy, intensity, talent, passion to learn and create, and to make a difference in the world. We talked a lot and worked together in various ways throughout her undergraduate career, but the biggest thing was her senior honors project, which had quite an amazing trajectory.

Valarie was a double major in religious studies and international relations. She decided to do her honors thesis in religious studies, and I was the advisor.

Her plan was to go to India and do oral history with people who still remembered Partition. But 9/11 stopped that plan, and as she has explained to you, she ended up using her travel grant and video

equipment to document the rise of prejudice and hate crimes in America after 9/11.

Her footage became the material for a 'first draft' of the film that later became Divided We Fall.

Besides editing the film she did a written thesis on the social psychology of prejudice, using interviews from her fieldwork along with theory. Her thesis won a major award at Stanford.

Then when she went to a Sikh film festival to show her documentary, she met Sharat Raju. He was a talented director, a second-generation Indian American, who had recently finished film school. He was also showing a film at the festival, his prize-winning graduation project, a fiction film about a Sikh family in America and what they experienced after 9/11.

Sharat saw lots of unrealized possibilities in her film, so they teamed up to make a professional feature-length documentary, Divided We Fall: American in the Aftermath. After being working part-

'From the beginning, Valarie had her characteristic energy, intensity, talent, passion to learn and create, and to make a difference in the world,' says Linda Hess.



With the words 'this is a moment to connect with powerful forces that have been let loose,' Professor Linda Hess inspired Valarie Kaur to chronicle stories of hate crimes after 9/11.

ners for a few years, they became life partners. I had a great time attending and helping to officiate at their wedding in Costa Rica a year and a half ago.

In the last 10 years, since graduating from Stanford, Valarie has accomplished amazing things. Because of her interest in the study of religion and interfaith relations, she went for a master's degree the Harvard Divinity School. at Eventually, she graduated from the Yale Law School. But she wasn't just in school all the time. Far from it! She kept going out into the world.

She and Sharat toured far and wide with the film, screening, giving talks, holding workshops. Her academic projects often took her out into the world, and she often brought issues from the world into academia. She went to Guantanamo to report on the situation there. She and Sharat started the Yale Visual Law Project, which has produced films on important legal and human rights issues.

She volunteered as a legal observer

during the demonstrations at the New York Republican convention in 2004, which led to a lot of pain and suffering. She started Groundswell and served as its director. In the last year she become a regular commentator on one of MSN-BC's main weekend news programs.

While Valarie has far-reaching interests in justice and human rights, she also has a special relation with the Sikh community. When the killings happened at the Oak Creek gurdwara, she and Sharat took multiple trips to Wisconsin and produced a short film on the communi-

ty and its response to the tragedy.

It may sound like Valarie leads a charmed life, endowed with so much talent and privilege, a graduate of all the best schools. But Valarie's grandparents were immigrant farmers, she went to public schools in California's Central Vallev (an agricultural area), and she

Republican Convention, while standing on the sidewalk wearing official identification as a legal observer, she was violently arrested, her arms were painfully and tightly cuffed behind her back, she was handled very roughly and sustained injuries in her wrists and nerves that caused severe, disabling pain for years. Valarie often takes risks,

believes in. One other important point: Valarie's a

lot of fun. So is Sharat. What a team! They know how to work seriously, and they

Costa Rica, where Valarie's parents live now, they happened to discover a dog who lived near her parents' house and who was badly neglected and abused. Valarie tried to feed the dog and reassure her that she would not be hurt. The dog Shaadi — Wedding! ■

Linda Hess is a senior lecturer, **Religious Studies, Stanford University.**

- As told to Arthur J Pais

'SHE DID THINGS AS THEY WERE THE RIGHT THINGS TO DO'

PAGE M105

of discussion about politics and current events. There was good natured sparring, but in the end everyone agreed with my dad.

Valarie's interest in politics kept growing and she would write (op-ed) articles in the Fresno Bee. Valarie introduced new conversation when she joined college and began questioning things with greater passion. She disagreed with my father on everything."

The Brar parents never really made a big list of things their children could do – or not. "They would tell us get good grades and one day you will go to Fresno State," he recollects. Valarie surprised many by going to Stanford.

There was authenticity to everything she did, even as a school girl.

"Her goal was not do things so that she could be the Valedictorian," he said. "She did things as they were the right things to do."

It was evident even before she enrolled in college that once she put her mind to something, her resolve could not be shaken, he added. "She broke a lot of rules, she was very hot headed. She always followed her heart and her passion."

Much more than anyone else it was their maternal grandfather, Captain Gurdial Singh, who the children called 'Papaji' who made a lasting impression on young Valarie.

"He had studied engineering and he had served in the Army serving in Sudan, Ethiopia, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Palestine, earning the rank of Captain," Sanjeev said. "He always wore a turban, he had a beard, and he had all the five Ks orthodox Sikhs have."

At the same time, he made friends across ethnicities and religious barriers.

"He was quite a liberal and firmly believed that life was enriched by interacting with people of other cultures and faiths. Valarie learned a lot from him," he added, "especially not to have fear of 'otherness.'

Valarie is anything but the stereotypical career-oriented person, says her brother.

"She knows to enjoy life, she loves her home," adds Sanjeev who lives in Brooklyn. "She loves hiking, she loves classical dance, and she loves her dog, Shaadi. Whenever I go to her Connecticut home, I am sure of good meals and wonderful conversation. She is very passionate about her life, not just her political and social causes."

Sanjeev Brar is a musician.



has faced many serious struggles. Just one example. At the 2004

puts herself in danger for the things she

know how to appreciate the joys of life. During their wedding celebrations in

joined the wedding party. She changed dramatically, from being frightened and starved to enjoying the love and affection of all the wedding guests. Ultimately Valarie and Sharat took the dog back to the US, where she is now a beloved member of their household. Her name is

for better communities and leaders.

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M108 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



became aware of Valarie Kaur's work when she was a student at Stanford. She was a senior writing her thesis on the experience of Sikhs post 9/11, and she had taken a year out and done the preliminary film work that eventually became incorporated into her film (*Divide We Fall*).

As director of the pluralism project, we have, over the past 20 years, tried to document and interpret the changing religious landscape in the United States, and especially with this new Islamic and Hindu and Sikh and Buddhist communities.

This was a time obviously when Sikhs were under a certain amount of pressure, and Valarie was a young person who had addressed herself to this as a student. So, we had invited her to join us that year at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion.

Valarie presented some of her work and a pluralist project session there. That was sort of the beginning of it.

She went on to finish her undergraduate degree at Stanford, and then came to the Harvard Divinity School as a student.

During that time, she continued to work; she did independent studies with me on her ongoing work on the Sikh experience after 9/11, and she decided then to turn that into a film that she would have to go back on the road and do some more work on.

During the time she was producing the film, *Divided We Fall*, the Pluralism Project sponsored several screenings of that from a much longer form to a more edited form, with response from many of our colleagues here in the Boston area.

So, we watched that film emerge, and, of course, it's become an enormously important resource for thinking about the experience of the Sikh community in the US.

The film is very personal. It begins with 9/11 and then has a bit of a storyline of her own family and her cousin who goes on the road with her when she decides as a Stanford student that she needs to find out what's happening to Sikh communities across the country.

So, we have a bit of that journey of these two Sikh cousins from one place to another, all the way to New York. And then we have some very powerful interviews along the way that give us the insight into what people experienced those days (*post 9/11*), and subsequently, the months and years after. And eventually she is able to go onto Punjab, where she meets the widow of Balbir Singh Sodhi, a turbaned man who was simply planting flowers around his gas station in Arizona when he was killed by someone who mistook him for a cousin of Osama Bin Landen simply because of the turban.

His widow, shattered by all of this, went home to India and settled there.

So, it has a kind of circle to it that begins with her own alarm that people in the Sikh community were being harassed and killed after 9/11. But it's a film that tells stories in the voices of the people who experienced them, and that's a very important thing to hear.

Storytelling is how we communicate most effectively really. And to be able to do this on film, a film that aired on television, has an impact that we can scarcely judge.

I think that storytelling, whether through print or through film, is a very effective form of communication; it's what educates people about other people far more than theory or history that doesn't have flesh and blood people in it.

I also worked directly with Valarie; she did a number of

'Her strength is the vibrancy with which she's able to convey her own experience'

Professor Diana Eck on what makes Valarie Kaur an effective leader.



Just days after the Wisconsin gurdwara shootout Valarie Kaur speaks with Kamal Singh, left, and Harpreet Singh, the sons of Paramjit Kaur, the only woman killed in the tragedy. Valarie became a leading voice on the airwaves and on the ground to advocate for the Sikh community, bringing calm and wisdom in the wake of tragedy.

independent studies with me.

I went on to write letters of recommendation for her interest in going to law school because I think that combination of legal expertise with real concern for the religious communities of the United States is a very vital one in this phase of our American life.

Her strength really is the vibrancy with which she's able to convey her own experience and the experience of her family.

One of the most powerful things about the film (*DWF*) is that it begins in California with her own father and grandfather and her extended family in the Central Valley, where Sikhs had been settled in the US for a very long time — nearly 100 years — it's a very strong and old Sikh community. She is able to draw on that strength.

She just has a wonderful communicative vibrancy and sympathy that enables her not only to elicit some of the most important stories from the Sikh community and some of its own interlocutors — the women, the men, the mother of Balbir Singh Sodhi, but also communicates them to a wider public — to students, to people who know almost nothing about the Sikhs.

Valarie is really a very effective young Sikh leader. This is extremely important in the US because, you know, the stereotype of a Sikh is usually a man, a turbaned man, who has an Indian accent of some sort, and she is born in America, a woman, with a very broad education, and yet very deep religious roots and *very* strong sense of the importance of interfaith understanding.

It's fresh — she's a woman, she's young. And this is the case with other religious communities in the US: that their most effective interlocutors and the people most deeply involved in the new interfaith reality of America are young women and men who are Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Jain, and they are able to speak from their own experience, which is a deeply American experience.

I think they're able to articulate this in a very strong way, and they do of course represent the fact that over the last 50 years, since 1965, America has had a new wave of immigration that has come from literally all over the world and has given us what I've called 'the new religious America.'

That's an extremely important fact that we need to absorb and deal with and wrestle with in places that matter. She's really at the forefront of this.

The interfaith structure in America over the last 10 years has grown and strengthened with each passing year, and Valarie has certainly been part of that.

I think the fact that she's as well known as she is, that she's invited to many groups to speak, to college campuses in particular, is really important.

Then last summer, in the wake of the Oak Creek, Wisconsin, shooting, she was someone who was able immediately to turn to that community and do some more work in communications for a community that at that point was very much in shock in terms of what had happened to them. After the shooting people came out and were like, 'Wait, who exactly are the Sikhs? How do we know more about them?'

I think in the US our level of religious literacy is pretty low generally, and unfortunately sometimes it takes these tragedies to ask the questions we need to ask.

As a professor who teaches about issues involving Sikhs and Muslims and Hindus in the United States on a regular basis, I can say for most of my students — these are Harvard students who have had a secondary education in the best schools in the United States, and many of them have never learned anything about the Sikhs. I mean there are as many Sikhs in the world as there are Jews. So, it's an extremely important thing.

I think Valarie is doing all she can to change that (*invisibility*).





M109 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M108

I think she's someone who, having a background both from law school and from her own background in religious studies and learning about the Sikh community, would be able to do this very, very well.

Valarie stands out as someone who has come out of a particular religious and ethnic community in the US and has taken that on as sort of her main field of study really. There are others who have taken a different line, who have gone on to do Sikh graduate studies and become professors. They have become scholars for the Sikh community and of South Asia.

Valarie has done something slightly different, which is to go from a master's degree in religious studies not into a PhD in religious studies, but into a law degree from Yale. And that combination equips her for a different kind of role of a public intellectual, which I think is important for her and for the rest of us as well.

This is her area, and this is what she intends to do - to really address issues of social justice from the perspective that she speaks.

In doing so, she makes very clear that these are foundational to the Sikh community the notion of human equality, the notion of hospitality, all of this is part of what it is to be Sikh in America.

Valarie is a woman of her generation, really. I have a lot of South Asian students — I mean I'm an advisor to the South Asian student group and the Hindu student group — they are very energetic, thoroughly American in one sense, but a distinctly South Asian community. I think Valarie represents the very best of them. And perhaps one who, perhaps more so than others, is simultaneously committed to her Sikh roots.

She is an image of a young South Asian American that is very much of this generation, and she may be not typical, but very much representative of that kind of energy.

It's been a privilege to be a part of her life over the past 10 years. ■

Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and the Fredric Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard Divinity School, spoke to Chaya Babu.

'Working together fills us with gratitude and appreciation'

'She can use visual storytelling to make a positive change in the world.' Filmmaker **Sharat Raju** on his wife and work partner, Valarie Kaur.

n the way to a friend's home through the desert off Los Angeles, a student filmmaker happened to see an abandoned car.

'Could there be something suspicious about it?' he wondered. After all 9/11 had just happened, and officials were warning of anything 'suspicious.'

"That image of the stranded car triggered a lot of questions in my mind," says filmmaker and activist Sharat Raju who would soon make the short film, *American Made*.

It would lead him to meeting activist and fledgling filmmaker Valarie Kaur and making four documentary films.

Apart from *Divided We Fall: Americ*ans in the Aftermath, a chronicle of hate crimes in the United States post 9/11, Kaur and Raju, who are now husband and wife, have made three documentaries including a film on maximum sentence prisoners in America for a Yale Law School Visual Arts project.

"Valarie and I have, together, made documentaries which often by their nature, are topical and related to current events. She is a real activist, someone who can use media and visual storytelling and strives to make positive change in the world," says Raju whose maternal grandfather Mogeri Gopalakrishna Adiga was one of the legends of Kannada poetry.

"I don't claim to be an activist; I'm a filmmaker who sometimes will make something that can be used and shared by someone as passionate and as smart as Valarie to do good," Raju says in an emailed response.

"We are both very professional when we work together, but we also appreciate how unique it is to create something with someone you love, to spend long hours on a project we both believe in, and to surround ourselves with friends, family and collaborators who feel the same."

Sharat and Valarie met 10 years ago at the first-ever Sikh film festival in Toronto in October 2003 after the screening of *American Made*.

She showed him footage from the inter-



Valarie Kaur and Sharat Raju at the White House. She was invited as one of 150 community leaders for a briefing and reception in honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander heritage in 2011.

views she had collected after 9/11 and asked if he would help her make the film.

Trained at the American Film Institute, Sharat became the film's director and coproducer and that's how their journey began together.

Subsequently, the couple founded the Visual Law Project to bring together documentary filmmaking and legal scholarship into a new form of visual knowledge production.

Featured on CNN, NPR, BBC and others, *Divided We Fall* is the first documentary on post 9/11 hate crimes.

Demand for the film sent the husband and wife team on speaking and screening engagements in more than 150 towns and cities in America, Canada and several other countries.

The basic structure of any narrative, he said recently at a seminar at Yale, goes as follows: There's a person, this is what the person was up against, this is what happened, and this is the result of those actions.

Raju recalled that he was trained in narrative filmmaking, where the main question was always 'Whose story is it? Who is the main character? Who is the story told through?'

The most compelling part of making *Divided We Fall*, he revealed, was that Valarie Kaur was that character through whose journey the story was told.

"Often I'm interested in something that's going on in the world around us. But that's not how it starts – it still comes down to the personal journey of the main character or characters on the screen," he told *India Abroad*.

The couple has made a short film on last year's Oak Creek gurdwara killings in Wisconsin and how the Sikh community bore the grief.

'We are filmmakers who spent weeks on the ground with the Sikh community in Oak Creek, WI, documenting and reporting on the shooting,' they wrote in the *Huffington Post*.

'The victims' families gave us permission to enter their lives and film the aftermath of the tragedy from inside their homes and gurdwara, where media cameras were not allowed. Although we

had spent the last decade filming stories of minority communities to help advance civil rights in the US, we had never seen such depth of sorrow result in such unity, strength and hope.'

'This nine-minute film,' they added, 'presents an intimate portrait of the Sikh community in the 45 days after the Oak Creek shooting.'

The couple is working on creating a longer version of the documentary.

Asked if he would like to be described as an activist and filmmaker and how his filmmaking efforts are shaped by his wife Valarie Kaur, Raju wrote: "We are already close, but working together fills us both with a sense of gratitude and appreciation." ■

- Arthur J Pais



YEARS

M110 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'Our journey is not complete'

Valarie Kaur is an exceptional social innovator for Sikhs, for women, and for interfaith activists, says Major Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi.

first met Valarie at a White House advocacy event organized by our common friend, Anju Bhargava. She was a panel speaker talking

passionately about social change and innovation. She was telling a story, but not just any story. She spoke about her own journey towards enlightenment in the aftermath of 9/11 which took her all over the country with a video camera in hand.

She felt compelled to act, she told the audience that day. I could see the pain still echoing from behind her confident smile. As an ER doc, I have learned to understand what is often not said. I could sense that this was a form of healing for a soul filled with empathy for a community that still had no voice.

Many of us still bear scars from the unfettered hatred that ensued from that singular terrorist event. Our country was angry and in her poignant documentary, Divided We Fall, she chronicles the hate crimes suffered by Sikhs and Muslims in community in Wisconsin after the mass shooting. the burning shadows of 9/11.

Valarie did not stop there. She became an exceptional social innovator for Sikhs, for women and for interfaith activists. She explains that many young people she meets across the country are overwhelmed by the world's problems.

There is pain, suffering, hunger and thousands of desperate needs that are waiting for a solution - which one do you choose? Valarie shares some of her wisdom with me.

"I have learned that we hear our calling when our own deepest desire and unique skill set meets the world's needs. We cannot force or choose our calling... Everyone of my films or campaigns has chosen me ... "

I remember watching an interview of one of the greatest pop sensations of all time, MJ. Sorry Elvis, yes, I'm a Michael Jackson fan and, yes, the Army is okay with that. In any case, in this interview he states that his music came to him from somewhere or something greater than him.

Other great artists throughout our history, including Bach and Leonardo da Vinci, have also echoed similar sentiments about simply being conduits for the greatness that flowed through them.

Valarie Kaur has become a conduit for greatness, and she shares the secret to her successes with me:

"I believe each of us can be change makers, in small or big ways, in our communities and our own homes. We just have to listen deeply for the moments we are called to act - andnot turn away when they come."



Valarie Kaur delivers 4,000 letters of support from Groundswell members to the Sikh

I am reminded of a story my grandmother used to tell me when I was young. Guru Gobind Singhji, the Tenth Master of the Sikh religion, held high a sword dripping of blood, and asked his congregation of thousands for their heads one day. It was a challenge to his followers - as the ultimate test of faith.

The five devoted ones or 'Panj Pyaras' answered the call of faith that day and went on to become the founders of the order of the Khalsa, one of the most significant evolutions of the Sikh religion.

When I see an employer telling a young Sardar that he must choose between a job and his turban, I hear Guru Gobind Singh*ji* asking us for our heads. It's a challenge, and Valarie echoes the wisdom from our forefathers in calling upon us to have the courage to act and to stand up for each other.

While she is an exceptional public speaker, I feel her actions speak louder than her words.

Valarie founded Groundswell at Auburn Seminary in New York, she says, in order to "equip and connect people across many faiths and backgrounds in one online network.... (and) If we connected all these people in one network, could we build the political power of a multi-faith movement for justice?'

She runs campaigns responding to today's most pressing social challenges, including hate crimes, LGBT equality, human trafficking and gun violence. She helped to mobilize

the interfaith network to respond to the Oak Creek tragedy when members of all faiths firmly stood together with tears still fresh in our eyes, wearing Tshirts that read 'We are all Sikhs today.'

In her answer to the blind hatred. ignorance, violence and policies of exclusion that presumptively ban Sikh articles of faith, distancing our community from equal opportunity and the American dream, Valarie teaches storytelling as a form of advocacy.

She founded the Yale Visual Law Project at the Yale Law School so that she could show people how to use storytelling for social change. Several films have blossomed from this project which continues to inspire lawyers and policy makers.

'Our journey is not complete...' My Commander-in-Chief, President Obama, uttered that phrase during his historic and moving inaugural speech earlier this year. The FBI recently agreed to track hate crimes against Sikhs, Hindus and members of other

faiths on the basis of religion. Bullying in the educational system has been challenged and we have a safer environment for our children to learn in.

But our military still holds a decades-old ban that keeps patriotic Sikh Americans from service. Our children's schoolbooks still bear no mention of Sikhism. Our traditions, culture and values are challenged by the ignorant as being 'un-American.'

And since 9/11 our community has borne the brunt of hate-crimes committed as a backlash to attacks on 'real' Americans.

Valarie Kaur is part of a new generation of young Sikh Americans that are not afraid to break social barriers. This generation is interested in journalism, media, public service as well as the arts and entertainment industries.

Trust me, being a doctor just isn't what it used to be. I have great hope that our leaders truly recognize that for many Americans our journey is not only not complete, but is littered with pot holes, traffic jams, and cows unwilling to budge.

But along the way, I am glad I have Valarie's stories to listen to and a few of MJ's songs.

We will make a difference.

Major Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi, winner of the India Abroad Special Award for Achievement 2011, has won a Bronze Star for his service in Afghanistan.


FROM THE EDITORS

For being a pioneering community leader; for being a voice for the mentally challenged, and for his lifelong dedication to service.



India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012





For decades now, Sambhu Banik has been the go-to person whenever the community is putting together an event, be it cultural or social or political.

The Bridge Builder

His is a life that incorporates indefatigable community service, human rights advocacy, giving voice to the mentally challenged and disabled, and government service. **Aziz Haniffa** meets the winner of the **India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community 2012, Sambhu Banik.**



r **Sambhu N Banik** is a man of many facets. Although by profession he is a clinical psychologist and an adjunct university professor, his boundless energy, even at age 78, incorporates a full life of an

indefatigable community service activist, human rights advocate, champion chef, a voice for the mentally challenged and disabled, a bridgebuilder of the American and Indian people, not to mention an ex-US government official.

And, did I mention, he is also the convener of the Sham-e-Ghazal musical group in the Washington, DC area, which comprises Indian grandparents who have become a popular singing sensation ever since a handful of them had a sing-along at Sambhu and Promila Banik's home in Bethesda, Maryland.





M112 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M111

The Bridge Builder



From left, Sambhu Banik with then President Bill Clinton, then President George W Bush and then First Lady Hillary Clinton. Banik has been at the forefront of almost all pioneering organizations that have facilitated the assimilation of Indian Americans in all aspects of life in mainstream America.

Erstwhile US Congresswoman Connie Morella, a moderate and progressive Republican, who represented Montgomery County, Maryland – which boasts of a significant Indian-American population — for eight terms and then served as US ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, says, "To me, Sambhu Banik, represents what Shakespeare wrote: 'A man of sovereign parts, he is esteem'd; Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms; Nothing becomes him ill that he would well.

And, then she adds to the bard, declaring, "We wish Dr Banik well, because he's done that for others.

The Joypara, East Bengal (now Bangladesh)-born Banik, came to the United States via England and Canada in 1964.

He received his BSc and MSc in 1956 and 1958, respectively, from Calcutta University, and his PhD from Bristol University in 1964 before coming over to the US to do his post doctoral fellowship in Clinical Psychology at Norwich Hospital, Connecticut.

Then following his move to the DC area in 1971, when he joined the Mental Health Services Administration as chief psychologist and director of internship training at Glenn Dale Hospital's Mental Health Division and followed that up with a string of federal, state and city positions, he has till today, devoted every available spare minute he has to community service and organizing.

Banik is the go-to person whenever the community is putting together an event, be it cultural or social or political.

When North Carolina entrepreneur Swadesh Chatterjee constituted a US-India Friendship Council to mobilize the Indian-American community and create a critical mass to launch a massive lobbying campaign to push through the US-India nuclear deal though both houses of Congress, it

was Banik that he called to gin up the Washington, DC area folks.

Banik has been either the founder or co-founder of scores of Indian-American organizations and associations from Prabashi, Inc, which he founded in 1972 as a socio-cultural organization to develop better understanding and better relations between the people of India and the US to the Indian Cultural Coordination Committee, an umbrella organization to bring all other associations and organization under one roof to showcase India's diverse and multi-religious cultures and festivals to the larger mainstream population.

He was also one of the early co-founders of the Indian-American Forum for Political Education — the first Indian-American political organization mooted by Dr Joy Cherian, winner of the first India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community, in the early 1980s — and the National Federation of Indian American Associations, also of similar vintage, put together by Dr Thomas Abraham, winner of the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community 2011.

Banik says his zeal for community service was inspired by his father Padmalochan Banik, who had sold "my mother's jewelry and donated a deep tubewell for drinking water for the entire village as there was no drinking water facility. And, when the Hindu-Muslim riots broke out (during Partition), it was the Muslim families who saved us because of their gratitude to my father's service to the community.

In his autobiography, Born Ordinary, Lived Extra-Ordinary, Banik speaks about the open-mindedness of his father and recalls how in their home in Joypara, he would host mahotsav celebrations — a 24-hour Sankirtan (a meeting where Hindu devotional songs would be sung) followed by a large feast, and "during these events my father would feed anyone irrespective of their religion, caste, or creed."

"When my father learned that the local villagers were boycotting the mahotsav of an untouchable, he strongly encouraged us to attend. I remember the outrage that my father and my family faced after we attended a mahostav given by an untouchable named Chamar $-(a \ community)$ name that means he who collects skin from dead animals.

"I deeply respect Sambhu Banik," says Morella, "because he cares for those people who don't have a voice. He cares for the disabled, the mentally deficient. He cares for the underprivileged, he cares for the victims of violence, and he's a great leader in terms of human rights.'

"These are people who don't have voice, who don't know how to articulate their concerns, and it's wonderful to know that there is somebody there who is constantly promoting the very best to help those people. In so doing, he helps the community, he helps society, he helps the world."

Echoing her sentiments, members of the community who had interacted with Banik said he was at the same time, endearing, entertaining, humorous, down-to-earth, and a fun-loving person.

"And we all need that," Morella said. "We need that in order to even get good things to happen. We need to have that kind of backing of someone who knows that life is special and precious and friends and people are what is so important. And, so, I love him.





M113 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

The Bridge Builder

- PAGE M112

INDIA ABROAD AWARD FOR LIFETIME SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Dr **Joy Cherian** received the first India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community. He founded the Indian American Forum for Political Education, aimed to translate the community's increasing numbers into political power.

President Ronald Reagan named Dr Cherian as a Commissioner on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. He served six years on the EEOC from 1987 to1993, the first Asian-American member of a US administration, under President Reagan and, later, President George W Bush.

For his eloquent vision, his selfless generosity, and his tireless advocacy of Indian and American causes and institutions, we honored philanthropist **Sreedhar Menon** with the second India Abroad Lifetime Service to the Community Award in 2009.

For being a refuge for South Asian women facing domestic abuse and for empowering those women to live life on their own terms, **Manavi**, **Sakhi**, **Apna Ghar** and **Maitri** received the India Abroad Lifetime Service to the Community Award 2010.

For being a tireless soldier of the Indian Diaspora; for founding and nurturing a pioneering organization for the Indian abroad; and for giving voice to the community when there was none, we presented Dr **Thomas Abraham** with the India Abroad Lifetime Service to the Community Award 2011. Aruna Miller, the first and only Indian-American woman legislator in the Maryland state assembly, said, "Sambhu Banik indeed has given of himself to causes greater than himself and has tirelessly spent a lifetime making the world a better place."

She described him as an individual who is "larger than life," who always fights injustice "and strives to never stop for a moment in the quest to make a difference."

You are a fixture in the Indian-American community for the past 40 years, particularly in the Washington, DC area, and the go-to person whenever the community is organizing something or putting something together and often it is you who presides over and emcees the event.

What has kept you going in terms of this community activism over the years and always being there for the community?

I have been inspired by my father to always help human beings — humanity. I also believe in Swami

Vivekananda's words that to reach god is to serve humanity.

And the only way that you can really serve is being involved in the community and its programs, its events and activities.

Although it takes a lot of time and energy, it has some intrinsic benefits — you feel good that you have done something because in life, we come here for a short period of time and then we are going to go away.

My community is part of my own family, and community activism and working for and with the community is something I believe everyone should be involved in, because the community has done so much for us and we must give something back to it.

You are a clinical psychologist by training. You have your private practice.



Sambhu Banik with the late Mother Teresa. He saw her visiting Bhopal on the second day of the Bhopal gas tragedy and that inspired him to go to Bhopal, and do something too.

> You are also a longtime professor at Bowie State University in Maryland, for many years, one of the most respected traditional African-American colleges.

> Despite your professional and academic schedules, you always go beyond the call of duty in terms of counseling and offering succor to everyone in all communities. You don't restrict yourself just to the Indian-American community.

> What is behind this essentially selfless service?

We are living in America. This is a melting pot. It has got hundreds of ethnic groups living in a harmonious manner.

If I restrict myself only to the Indian-American community, I am missing the maximum part of the community at large, and so, I strongly believe that the only way you should feel good about yourself is when you become part and parcel of the larger community.

The community does not belong only to Indian Americans. It belongs to all other Americans all the other ethnic groups.

I've learned so much by getting involved with different cultures.

I've learnt so much about different cultures who have come and settled here — their manners and customs, food habits, music, arts. It's a tremendous enrichment of

my own self. **Do you believe that in the same**

Do you believe that in the same way, by this constant interaction and involvement with other communities, you can bring the cultures and for example, your love for cooking, the music of India, etc into these different communities and be part of an education process where your own community is concerned?

History will indicate that I was the first Indian American invited by the Smithsonian to teach a course on Indian cooking.

I have given many demonstrations after that on various occasions to raise funds for many worthy causes for several communities.

 BHU BANK
 That way we bring many other groups together and they find out about the richness of Indian culture, who we really are while at the same time we become part of the larger community.

Can you speak to how the community has grown in the Washington, DC area?

Today, there are over a couple of hundred thousand Indians living in the greater DC area and its suburbs in Virginia and Maryland, not to mention the several thousand Indian students at the area colleges.

Today we have three Indian-American lawmakers in the Maryland State Assembly, including House Majority Leader Kumar Barve.

Since you first came to the area, Indian Americans have certainly come a long way. I am so glad you asked that question bec-





M114 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M113

ause when I first came to the area, even to find one Indian on the street was a struggle.

If you met one, it would melt your heart and you would go out of your way to talk to them, invite them home, etc, because it was so few Indians at the time.

But over the years, it has grown by leaps and bounds.

The community has benefited with the influx of new immigrants from India. That has also enriched our community.

We've also got two governors now, who are Indian Americans.

Also, so many are serving in the Obama Administration and several who served in the Clinton and Bush Administrations.

Indian Americans have done a tremendous job. I believe it is the culture they come from - it makes them work very hard with one goal in mind, to succeed and achieve all they can for their children and grandchildren and of course, with the highest priority being education

There has also been with the growth of the Indian-American population, the corresponding growth of Indian-American organizations over the past few decades - regional, political, cultural, etc.

You have always been adamant and strong in your drive to make sure that the regional organizations, cultural organizations, and the other organizations do not stray from the plurality and the diversity and the secularism that is India, which you have always argued is paramount for the Indian Diaspora.

Why have you been such an active and passionate proponent and uncompromising on this issue?

India is not one country — it is many countries.

India has got so many sub-ethnic groups and when they migrated to the US, they wanted to maintain these ethnic and sub-ethnic traditions, culture and even biases and prejudices.

America, on the other hand, is one homogenous country, but it does encourage you to maintain your own identity.

You attended the 10th anniversary of AACR (American Association for Civic Responsibility) organized by Dr Joy Cherian (founder and former president of the Indian American Forum for Political Education, the first and oldest Indian-American political organization) where Norman Mineta, the former US Congressman and (Presidents) Bush and Clinton appointee (Mineta, an Asian-American icon was commerce secretary in the Clinton administration and transportation secretary in the George W Bush administration) talked about that one thing about America is that every ethnic group can maintain their own identity - they never need to lose that identity.



Sambhu Banik, back row center, cherishes the work he does with the differently abled.

This is one of the most beautiful things about this country, which has got so many different regional groups, but they bring the richness of their own culture.

By providing this variety of cultural, artistic milieu to this (American) community, they enrich us.

Although it might look somewhat like compartmentalization or provincialization, in the long run, we are living in a pluralistic, diverse society, and diversity is the hallmark of American culture.

Is that why you feel that it's important that while you maintain your individuality and identity and preserve your own culture that you may bring from your own particular region, in the final analysis, we are all Indians, we are all South Asians, and we shouldn't let some of that baggage - and when I mean baggage I mean some of the negative connotations that one may have in terms of trying to infuse religion, or communalism, etc — enter the equation?

Is that what you've fought for in terms of your community activism over the years?

Absolutely. I've been involved all the time with the national organizations (he was also one of the founders of the IAFPE and the National Federation of Indian American Organizations).

I've always believed that we must all work together — that we are all part of the same mother - Mother India - and although we may come from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, or wherever, it really doesn't matter.

COURTESY: SAMBHU BANIK

We are all Indians. So, we must all work together in a harmonious manner.

As a matter of fact, in the last four decades, we have come a long way. We are much more united.

If you see any Indian candidate running for Congress or local election, you'll see that the Indian community is now supporting these candidate in large numbers, irrespective of their party affiliation, race, religion, etc.

They forget about whether they or their parents come from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, or Madhya Pradesh, South India or any part.

You served in the Reagan Administration as a member of the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse and then during the George H W Bush Administration, you were appointed as the executive director of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation.

Were these positions you cherished because they helped you give address your passion to work toward alleviating the lot of the disabled and those afflicted by the scourge of drug addiction?

It was one of the highlights of my life that I was given the opportunity by President Reagan to serve on the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse.

I have seen how drugs have really destroyed the fabric of our society and our nations. It is such a big problem facing our nations.

If I could make a little dent - a little difference - I have done my share.

On the other hand, regarding disability issues, I was one of the few who lobbied to have the American Disabilities Act enacted.

Not only in this country, but I took this message to my motherland and to different parts of the world.

I am very proud to say that I have helped to set up many programs in Hyderabad.

I provide consultation to the Thakur Hari Prasad Institute for the Mentally Handicapped on how to improve the quality of life of these people who have the same rights as we have, the same feelings.

If my advocacy can bring some changes that is a lasting contribution, a legacy I can leave behind.

You have been in the forefront of fighting for the rights of women and girl children.

Recently when the brutal rapes in India became front and





The Bridge Builder



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M116 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M114

center, you've been very forthright and vociferous in condemning this scourge.

You recently went to India and spoke at various conferences, including in Hyderabad and elsewhere, highlighting this issue and castigating the proliferation of this phenomenon.

I strongly feel that the future of a nation — any nation — depends on how we treat our women.

They are the ones who bear our children, who one day will rule a particular country.

If we do not respect the women, then a nation cannot prosper, it cannot progress.

I have seen with my own eyes, when I was growing up, how women are mistreated — widows and female children in particular.

They are not only sexually abused, but also abused physically, and they are brought to work when they are minors, not provided education.

Seeing that, I strongly feel that as Rosa Parks stood her ground and refused to move to the back of the bus bringing Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, a person can make a difference.

So, I took a stand that violence against female

children and women must stop.

India is the land of Gautam Buddha, Mother Teresa, and Mahatma Gandhi and his non-violence, but still violence and abuse of women and female children is rampant and widely practiced. Still, women cannot walk freely, women are

treated like second-class citizens when they are known as the Mother.

If the Mother is treated so badly, how can a nation survive?

As the much beloved former US Congresswoman and Ambassador Connie Morella said in her appreciation piece about you, you were the first Western psychologist to rush to Bhopal after that terrible gas tragedy, putting your own life and health in jeopardy.

What drove you to do that almost spontaneously and ultimately, what were you able to achieve?

When I saw Mother Teresa on the second day of the Bhopal gas tragedy visiting Bhopal, I felt that if this frail lady can risk her life and go to Bhopal, then I must do something for these helpless, hopeless people, thousands of whom were dying. I am very thankful for the government of India



When I got married, I was so shy. Coming from India it was all very new, and then I met him. His community activism and playing host to so many people was sometimes too much. But I managed.

I learnt everything from him. He has taught me so much.

I am very thankful to him for teaching me everything from cooking to socializing.

I am happy about everything that he did for me and he did for the public.

And he is still doing it for the community.

Even people he doesn't know come to him, call him. He might have never even seen them, but he has helped them.

Even they (*the people who ask for his help*) might not know him. They might have heard his name from some sources and they call him and say, 'Dr Banik, we need help.'

And he says, 'Okay, I'll help you.'

And he does help. He will. He will spend hours on it. He is very loyal and very honest, be it in his community work or social life.

And that's why we are blessed.

- Promila and Dr Sambhu N Banik have been married for 40 plus years.



Sambhu Banik, left, with former Indian finance minister and now Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.



Promila and Sambhu Banik in their youth.



10 YEARS

M117 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



COURTESY: SAMBHU BANIK

PAGE M116

at the time, especially the Prime Minister's Office, that gave me permission to go to Bhopal, although I suffered the consequences of my Bhopal trip physically and health wise.

But the feeling that I have been able to make some difference in the lives of hundreds of people is what keeps this flame of community service burning in me.

I have no regrets even though I still suffer from the after effects of the Bhopal gas inhalation when I was there.

I feel that was one of the proudest moments of my life that I was able to go and help, not only the victims, but also doctors who had no clue, no idea, about the mental health aspects of that disaster on the people.

I worked 17, 18 hours a day, working with them, helping them and training them on how to counsel those people who lost their loved ones, who were feeling so helpless.

Many of them wanted to commit suicide, and how to prevent that.

We didn't want more deaths.

Thousands had died and we didn't want to have more deaths among the people, who were living but were contemplating suicide.

I made some small contribution in that and to this day, it warms my heart that at that time, I was able to be there for them.

Undeniably, this experience has left an indelible mark on your entire being...

Absolutely. As a matter of fact, after I returned from that first visit, I've been to Bhopal 20 times since.

I still follow up. Dr N R Bhandari, who was the superintendent of the Hamidia Hospital at the time, where all the victims were being taken, is a close friend of mine.

Whenever I get the opportunity I still talk about the Bhopal gas tragedy wherever I am.

Some of the children affected are still there - they are mentally retarded -- and some of them are now in the Thakur Hari Prasad Institute.

Every time I go to Hyderabad, I keep an eye on them.

I have been able to keep up with what's going on after the deadly effects of the methyl isocyanate that the Union Carbide plant created and was the worst man-made disaster in human history.

You are a Republican and have been a Maryland delegate to the National GOP conventions.

But you've always been there for Indian-American candidates, whether they be Republicans or Democrats, and you've hosted receptions, fundraisers for the likes of Kumar Barve, Aruna Miller and others - all Democrats - who adore and respect you.

What makes you be so bi-partisan?

Is it that all political aspirants from the community have to be supported?

One thing I strongly believe is that I am not a partisan animal, so to speak – a hard-core partisan animal. I do not







believe in that.

I believe in individuals. I feel that every human being has the potential, no matter whether the person is Democrat, Republican, independent.

So, especially since we (the Indian-American community) are so small in numbers – our population is small – if we can encourage some more Indian Americans to run for elected office, that is where the emphasis should be.

I hardly pay attention (to party lines), although I have been reprimanded by the Republican Party a number of times for supporting Democrats, but that is their problem, not mine.

I feel that as a human being, living in America, I have every right under the Constitution to exercise my own position. So, Below, Sambhu Banik with South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, a Republican. Left, Banik with US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, a Democrat, at a fundraiser.

'I believe in individuals... no matter whether the person is Democrat, Republican, independent.³ he says.

I have no regrets in supporting Democrats or other candidates as long as I believe they can make a difference they can bring changes.

Sometimes, I may not support a Republican candidate if I feel that person is not as good as a Democratic candidate. See, this is very important.

We are living in a free country and we have a two-party system. So, we have to elect people who will support our cause.

So, you feel it really doesn't matter if he or she is a Republican or a Democrat, as

long as the priorities and changes he or she wants to affect, are aligned with the priorities and agenda and chances that you see will make a difference in the lives of the constituents? Exactly. I was appointed by both Republicans and Democrats. I was appointed by (then Republican Governor, Robert) Ehrlick as well as by (the current Democratic Governor, Martin) O'Malley to the state's Human Rights Commission.

I was appointed by Democrats to the Human Rights Committee of Montgomery County. Also, to the Disabilities Commissions. So, it really doesn't matter.

If you are qualified and people have got good character, integrity, it always pays off.

If I can be appointed by Democrats, although I am a Republican, that shows that in the final analysis, it really doesn't matter whether a person is a Democrat or Republican, as long as you are a good human being, and I try to be a good human being.

Your wife Promila has always been at your side, including for the scores of receptions, dinners, that you have organized not only within the community but also in your own home for innumerable people from politicians to diplomats and from artists to just very good friends.

How much of a source of strength and support has she been to you throughout all of these years?

Without Promila, perhaps I would have been gone a long time ago. She is a source of strength, inspiration.

She's my best friend. She has stood by my side no matter whether I am sick, I am healthy, I am poor, or mediocre or rich. This is what my wife is.

I am so proud that I met her in Canada and that changed my life forever.

Without her, perhaps Sambhu Banik, wouldn't be what he is today.

I owe a great deal to Promila and my children, my two beautiful daughters, Sharmila and Kakoli.



M118 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

Those Reagan years

Sambhu Banik recalls how he came to serve on President Ronald Reagan's advisory council on drug abuse.

met President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan during his first Presidential inaugural ball in 1981 where 'Old Blue Eyes' Frank Sinatra was the hottest Hollywood star at the inaugural extravaganza.

In 1981 there were no such stringent security to meet and greet the President at the Inaugural Ball.

My wife Promila and me were close enough to shake his

hand and congratulate him. It was perhaps one of the most memorable highlights of my political involvement in my new adopted country.

I remember part of his inaugural speech when he eloquently stressed 'surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate as much authority as possible and do not interfere.'

This was one of my learning experiences as a manager.

I met President Reagan and the First Lady again in January 1985 when Dr and Mrs Joy Cherian, Dr and Mrs Shailendra Kumar, Dr and Mrs Chandersekharan, and Dr and Mrs Oliver Wilson and my wife Promila all attended the Presidential inaugural ball at the Washington Convention Center.

Shortly after the inauguration I met Rudy Beserra, special assistant to the President on public affairs when he spoke of the President's role in combating drug abuses in an event in Dallas, Texas.

A number of attendees attacked the President and his administration for not doing enough to curb the menace of drug abuse.

I stood up and articulated that no President and no administration alone with billions of dollars can solve the drug abuse problem unless each and every citizen takes some responsibility to unite and fight as drug abuse is an individual hoice.

Beserra was impressed with my remarks and at the end of the pro-

gram he wanted to know whether I would be interested to attend a White House signing-n ceremony by President Reagan on a bill, Say No To Drugs.

During the ceremony I got an opportunity to meet this great human being and expressed my interest to volunteer to serve him and his administration in this fight against drug war. Immediately after the signing ceremony I was informed by Beserra that there was going to be a vacancy soon at the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse, where he asked me to apply.

February 18, 1987, I was informed by the Reagan Administration that I was appointed a member of the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse to advise the President and the Secretary of Health and Human Services for a three-year term. ■



Sambhu Banik with then President Ronald Reagan.



M119 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He was willing to risk his safety to help others'

have known Dr Sambhu Banik for the past 27 years during my service as Congresswoman from Montgomery County as well as the United States Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, France.

Over the years I have had opportunities to see Dr Banik's multidimensional activities in social, cultural, political, and academic spheres.

Dr Banik is internationally known for his work in the field of mental health of children, youth, adults, geriatric and disabled populations as well as his lifelong crusades against human rights violations, especially against women, children, and persons with disabilities. He has been an outspoken advocate against women and female infanticides in India.

Politically, Banik has been very active in the Republican Party supporting the Reagan-Bush, Bush Quaylw as well as the Bush-Cheney administrations. He played a vital role in my Congressional campaigns over the years as Finance Committee Co-chair as well, serving as my primary liaison with the Indian-American community.

As a well-known leader in the Indian-American community, he successfully organized many programs for political participation and political education of minority groups. He has campaigned for voter registration drives and was elected as Alternate Delegate to the Republican Convention in New York.

Banik's community service is legendary.

He was the first Western Psychologist who volunteered to go to Bhopal, India, to help the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy, the worst man-made disaster in history. He was willing to risk his personal safety and life to help others. Over the years he has visited Bhopal dozens of times helping hundreds of children and adults affected by poisonous gas exposure.

His experiences and humanitarian services were recorded in US Congressional Records. For his selfless services to the Bhopal victims, Banik was awarded the Mother Teresa International Award and the DC Mayor's and Maharishi Humanitarian Awards, as well as other recognitions.

Banik served the Reagan administration as a member of the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse. He was the first Indian American appointed by President George H W Bush as the executive director, President's Committee on Mental Retardation. He was also appointed by President George W Bush as a member of the President's Committee on People with Intellectual Disabilities. Both Maryland Governors Robert L Ehrlich and Martin O'Malley appointed him as a commissioner on the Maryland Human Rights Commission. Montgomery County, MD, Executives Doug Duncan and Isiah Leggett selected him to serve on the Former Congresswoman **Constance Morella** has observed Sambhu Banik's multidimensional work for close to 30 years.



Sambhu Banik with Congresswoman Connie Morella.

Montgomery County Human Rights Commission. He also served as Commissioner on the Montgomery County Commission on Disabilities and the County's Drug and Alcohol Committee.

Banik is a bridge builder, an academician (teaching graduate school at Bowie State University since 1972), a philanthropist and a humanist who has dedicated his entire life to community services.

He has raised funds for the House of Ruth (an organization that helps women and children dealing with homelesslness and domestic abuse) and organizations that serve DC's youth with emotional problems, and programs of drug and teen pregnancy prevention. An exceptional cook, he has donated foods he has prepared to help raise funds for such causes.

After the September 11 terrorist attack and its aftermath of anger and hostility toward Sikhs, Muslims, and other minorities, Banik arranged meetings and visits for me as a Congresswoman to visit gurudwaras, temples, mosques, and opportunities for law enforcement officials to help prevent violence against innocent people.

Indeed throughout his life, Banik has promoted harmony and better understanding among different cultural, ethnic, and religious groups.

I am pleased and proud that our dear and loyal friend, a man of integrity and commitment, Banik, will receive the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community. He is most deserving. ■

Constance Morella represented Maryland's 8th congressional district in the US House of Representatives. She also served as Permanent Representative to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. She currently serves on American University's faculty as an ambassador in residence for the Women in Politics Institute.



M120 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Maryland Assemblywoman Aruna Miller on the many lives

that Sambhu Banik has touched.

'He spent a lifetime making the world a better place'

r Sambhu Banik is a happy man. And it's not just because he is receiving the India Abroad Award for Life Time Service to the Community 2012.

Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali Nobel Prize-winning poet, once said, 'Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of God.'

Dr Banik has indeed given of himself to causes greater than himself and has tirelessly spent a lifetime making the world a better place.

Among his many accomplishments as a public servant, he has had an extensive career in the field of psychology and mental health while serving an incredible number of posts where he provided services to those with mental and physical challenges.

In 1971, he joined the Mental Health Administration where he served the residents of the District of Columbia in various capacities, including a position as the chief, South Community Mental Health Center to the Clinical Administrator.

In 1990, Dr Banik, was given the honor of being the first Indian American appointed by President George H W Bush to serve as the executive director, President's

Committee on People with Mental Retardation, where he championed the rights of the mentally retarded and disabled individuals.

One of his defining moments in this position was the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a monumental achievement that protects Americans with disabilities from discrimination.

In his current positions as president, Banik and Associates, and adjunct professor, Bowie State and Union Universities, he continues to provide support for the community by offering guidance for graduate students in psychology and consultation on various aspects of mental health to the community and a large number of organizations and courts.

More remarkable than these professional lifetime accomplishments, it is the compassionate and artistic man with the generous soul that is larger than life.

When Dr Banik walks into a room, the air crackles, the room's energy is instantly turbo charged and the feeling of well-being magically touches everyone. He is generous with his praise, is engaging, empathetic, and full of life. If you want to an instant mood boost, the best remedy is a few moments with him.

Not only has Dr Banik demonstrated the ingenuity to find solutions to the most pressing mental and physical health issues, but the compassion to identify with those that are suffering from them the most.

His commitment to mental health and social justice has inspired a generation of people to take up the call for pub-



Sambhu Banik, center, with Aruna Miller, right.

lic action. In fact, he has devoted over 20 years to the advancement of the Thakur Hari Prasad Institute for the mentally handicapped in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

In 2011, I had the pleasure of visiting THPI. I was so struck by the level of nurturing, commitment, and dedication the staff provided to the residents. Like Dr Banik, they are committed to working hard for our most vulnerable members and speak for those with no voice.

Through his work in mental and developmental disabilities, Dr Banik reminds us that being mentally and physically handicapped does not mean that you are any different than your peers. With guiding hands each and every human being that has been given the gift of life is capable of great things and can reach their full potential with the support of their community.

In addition to improving the quality of life for the disabled, Dr Banik been a pioneer in the field of human rights, breaching divisive barriers to racial and social equality, and reminding us what it means to be male and female in a way that embraces understanding and equality.

He is the only Indian American who was appointed by the Governor of Maryland and the Montgomery County Executive as Commissioner of both the State's and County's Human Rights Commissions. He was elected as Education and Outreach Committee chairman of the Human Rights Commission to provide communitywide education on the importance of human rights in all affairs.

Since 1972, he served as a professor at a historically black

institution, Bowie State University, where he has a long history of endorsing racial equality and female empowerment while teaching students how to solve mental health challenges. As a member of the staff, he was well regarded by students and staff as a trailblazer for human progress. He received many accolades and was voted by the students as one of the university's best professors.

Throughout his career, he has also been determined to uphold the image and integrity of his home country, India, and has been instrumental in promoting India-US relations.

He was the founder and president of Prabashi, Inc, an organization created to promote better understanding and a better relationship among the people of India and USA. He was involved as the president of the India Cultural Coordinating Committee, US-Asia Foundation, Association of Indians in America, Indian American Forum for

Political Education, Karuna Charities and a host of other organizations to promote closer relationship between India and the US.

In addition to this, he has provided training and seminars to institutions in India on various aspects of disability and mental retardation and mental illness over the years as well as gave lectures to various parts of the US on India's crafts, arts, music, dances and cuisines.

It is due to his influence in Indian affairs that he was invited by the Government of India to visit Bhopal after the Bhopal Gas disaster to provide much needed mental health-related services to the families of Bhopal Gas victims.

Recently, he actively participated on the grassroots level for the passage of the historic US-India Civilian Nuclear agreement.

As an Indian-American woman, I am indebted to him for closing the divide between men and women as well as improving the health of people in India and the United States.

We owe a great deal to those individuals that are larger than life. I am moved by leaders like Sambhu Banik who refuse to accept injustice as a norm and that remind us every day that each of us is capable of making a difference in our community and that we can lay the foundation for a better society.

Aruna Miller is the first Indian-American woman legislator in the Maryland General Assembly.



M121 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He is greater than the sum of his accomplishments'

Kenneth X Robbins on Sambhu Banik from the vantage point of 40 years of friendship.

r Sambhu Banik, who has been my friend for almost 40 years, richly deserves the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community on the basis of his activities in many areas, ranging from psychological and political issues to community organization.

During a distinguished professional career on three continents, he has been a professor, a clinician, an administrator, a government official, and a policy maker. His areas of expertise have included mental health, mental retardation and intellectual disabilities, drug abuse, cross-cultural human relations, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

He is a pillar of strength in the Indian-American community where he has been a leader of many organizations. He is a bridge-builder between India and the United States and well as between Indian-Americans and their neighbors.

He has been a tireless fundraiser for

many social causes. The Indian, United States, Maryland, and Montgomery County governments have utilized his expertise by engaging him for many important positions and commissions.

Sambhu was the only foreign psychologist invited by the government of India to evaluate the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster at Hamidia Hospital. For these efforts, he was awarded the DC Humanitarian Award, the Maharishi award, and Mother Theresa International Award.

We spoke at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and at a meeting of the American Association of Psychoanalytic Physicians about the post-traumatic syndromes and psychological difficulties seen following such tragedies.

I remember thinking at the time that his basic decency and concern for the disabled and helpless was always apparent in his clinical and policy work. For example, Sambhu tireless advocacy and political work played a role in the passage of the Americans with Disability Act.

He does not shy away from difficult challenges and has produced many innovative programs for children with multiple handicaps.

He has been a commissioner of the Maryland and Montgomery County Human Relations Commission as well as the Montgomery County Commission for People



Sambhu Banik with Kenneth X Robbins.

with Disabilities. The first President Bush appointed him to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities. He was a Member of the National advisory Council on Drug Abuse during the Reagan administration.

He has raised funds for fighting domestic abuse, drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, and many other social causes. Dozens of organizations in the United States and India have, therefore, given him distinguished community service awards, ranging from the Ram Kamal Sinha Gold Medal as the best social worker in India in the field of disability to the Republican Senatorial Medal of Freedom.

When I came to Washington, the Indian-American community was only beginning to set down roots here. It was Sambhu who was an indefatigable community organizer and political activist. He reached out to other communities like Blacks and Jews.

Given a book written in Marathi for the Passover Seder, he avoided embarrassing his host and gamely tried to read it though his native language is Bengali!

I have seen him at Jewish functions, Keralite functions, Sikh functions, the Indian embassy and elsewhere but he is always the same effusive, smiling, positive presence.

Sambhu is a great man, who is even greater than the sum of his accomplishments.

He is a friend to the whole world! A huge number of Indian-Americans, Indians, and Washingtonians have benefited from their associations with him.

Sambhu is a guiding light, whose radiance makes our world brighter and illuminates the best qualities in others. He always makes sure, at any function or party, that the special unique qualities of each individual are verbalized.

In his famous home parties, ambassadors and members of the House of Representatives are welcomed, but Sambhu always makes sure to talk in detail to the entire group about the wonderful personality traits and accomplishments of each and every one of his many guests.

After hearing Sambhu's fabulous description of me, I decided I needed my own autograph.

His ability to make people feel good about themselves has made him the great psychologist he is. That is why he has been so proactive and effective in helping the disabled and the mentally

OURTESY: SAMBHU BANIK

retarded.

Of course, his friends have all benefited from his gourmet cooking and the recipes in the cookbooks he wrote. I remember the time we are both guests on a TV show. I was to talk about Indian art and Sambhu was preparing Indian food for the following segment. He once told me that, according to ancient Indian Vedic thought, all actions stem from food. Therefore, food should be honored for its ability to help a person use all his faculties. However, the pungent aromas were so overwhelming that I could not use my faculties well. I wanted to stop talking and start eating.

Sambhu educated me about the infinite cornucopia of flavors in Indian dishes. The papaya paste of his spiced stuffed chicken tenderizes the meat so it melts in the mouth. His mustard oil-based chicken curry and his creamy coriander chicken are fabulous. No wonder he has been so successful in state and national cooking contests.

My wife Joyce and I have been blessed to have spent so much time with Sambhu and his muse and wife, Promila.■

Kenneth X Robbins, MD, is a psychiatrist and independent scholar on South Asia. His major areas of interest are the maharajas and nawabs, as well as minority groups in India like the African Muslim elite and Jews.



M122 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'People look up to him'

Three well-known community leaders, all winners of India Abroad Awards for Community Service, salute Sambhu Banik.

ambhu did outstanding work with the community long, long, before I even became active.

He was a strong voice in the community, particularly in the Washington area and in the political arena.

He was the guy who helped the community in other aspects, including charity.

He definitely deserves this award.

I always take his guidance; he has always been a mentor to me.

When I needed help, he was always there. He gets along with everybody and is always available whenever anyone needs help.

He has been working in this area for so long. He started at an early stage when it was not in fashion for people to work for the community in this way.

We have very high regard for him because he has sacrificed a lot to do this work.

People look up to him. Nobody had done what he was doing when he started, so everybody in the community respected him for that.

Any time, anyone, had any function in the Washington/Maryland area, anything that happened in the community, it involved him. I have attended so many events in

Washington, and I cannot dream of an event not involving Sambhu Banik.

I am proud to have his friendship. He is a wonderful human being.

It is long overdue for him to get this award. It's absolutely wonderful news to me.

- Swadesh Chatterjee, winner of the India Abroad Community Leader of the Year Award 2006.

He has always been very dedicated to providing services to not only the Indian-American community, but to the general public.

When I was president of the Indian American Forum for Political Education, Dr Banik was one of the founding members who helped form the idea that there was a need for the Indian-American community

to move into the mainstream and make connections with the White House, Capitol Hill, different government agen-

He also provided his services as a psychologist outside the United States to help people in India and other places



Sambhu Banik has been involved in the early days of the Indian-American Forum for Political Education, the first Indian-American political organization mooted by Dr Joy Cherian; the National Federation of Indian American Associations put together by Dr Thomas Abraham, and the US-India Friendship Council constituted by Swadesh Chatteriee.

who have mental health problems.

As a professor, he thought it was good to do service for young people and prepare them to serve others.

I know him very closely; both he and his wife Promila are very dedicated to service to the community and America.

When the Bhopal disaster occurred, Sambhu was one of

the first people who went to help the victims who suffered psychological problems due to this terrible tragedy. He too suffered from health problems because he was there.

He is a community worker who went beyond the call of duty to serve the public.

He helped me to have effective White House relationships and Congressional contacts. As a result, the Indian-American community was recognized in many ways by the mainstream.

I have always thought about him for this Award. He is perfect for it.

I congratulate India Abroad for recognizing Sambhu Banik for his service.

- Dr Joy Cherian, winner of the first India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community

Dr Banik has been one of the most active community activists and leaders from the Washington, DC area since the 1970s

He started the India Cultural Coordination Committee.

He supported community activities through several organizations including the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA) and the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO).

I have known Dr Banik since 1979 when he organized a meeting of community leaders in Washington, DC to discuss the first national convention of Indian Americans to be held in New York in 1980.

He is always receptive to new ideas and has provided leadership not only to bring all community groups together in the DC area, but also motivated our community to be involved in the political process

He had made substantial contributions on the issues of Indian-American families as well on the mental health issues of our community.

He has been a pillar of the growing Indian community in the United States and truly deserves this Award.

> - Dr Thomas Abraham, winner of the India Abroad Award for Lifetime Service to the Community, 2011

> > Interviews: Chaya Babu



FROM THE EDITORS

For his enduring commitment to the spirit of India spanning 50 years; for being an articulate spokesperson for a better India-US relationship and for being an extraordinary cheerleader for India.



India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012



The Indiawallah



Scholar and diplomat **Marshall Bouton**, winner of the third **India Abroad Friend of India Award**, discusses his 50-year love affair with India in this eloquent discussion with **Vaihayasi Pande Daniel**.

n a likely warm day in August 2014, a sprightly, tall, 72-yearold, New York-born American, most likely dressed in smart casuals, will disembark at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport with his elegant India-born but American wife.

Unlike a Pope he may not kiss the tarmac on arrival, but in the deepest, softest corner of his heart he certainly would have — so special is his affection for India.

August 2014 will mark 50 years since his first visit to India. He has, he counts, made more than a hundred trips after that.

Marshall Melvin Bouton, scholar and diplomat, adopted India as his second motherland, shortly after arrival for the first time in 1964.

He landed in India, aged just 22, to work for the Ford Foundation, on a Quaker American Friends Service Committee scholarship. After a brief induction course at Delhi University, and a three-month intense course of spoken Tamil at Annamalai University in Madras (now Chennai), Bouton headed to a little hamlet 10 miles from Tanjore (now Thanjavur) on the road to Nagapattinam, in the largest rice paddy growing area in the country, to pitch in with the Green Revolution and do his bit for global food security.

His brief: To help boost agricultural cooperatives that introduced farmers to new seed varieties and farming techniques.

His idealistic endeavors were abruptly abort-

PAGE M124 →



Marshall Melvin Bouton adopted India as his second motherland, shortly after arrival for the first time in 1964.

He has made more than a hundred trips there.

M124 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M123

The Indiawallah

ed when government of India rules changed and they decided they did not want an American meddling with Tamil agricultural cooperatives.

Bouton was forced to hastily rummage around for fresh altruistic opportunities. The name of Dora Scarlett came up. This eccentric, but compassionate, British Communist social activist was running a free clinic in a remote village in the Kambam Valley, near Kodaikanal, on the then Madras (now Tamil Nadu state)-Kerala border, taking care of leprosy victims.

So Bouton ventured to Scarlett's mud hut clinic in a sleepy village. He helped around at the clinic which in addition to supplying salves and drugs to leprosy victims also provided medical care, of any variety, to the poor.

When his paperwork was set right, Bouton returned to Tanjore, spent the next 15 months dispensing advice on agricultural techniques and developed an abiding bond for South India ("in my heart I am a Southerner," he says).

Those adventurous two years in India as a young man ensured that the country was "in his blood" for good. The trip was what Bouton terms a "life-transforming experience." From then on he had a sense that India would be the focus for the rest of his life.

There is something very comfortably Indian about the man facing you, even if he is a white American, with a French surname, in a grey suit and sharp tie, sitting in an elegant Michigan Avenue, Chicago, office overlooking sparkling Lake Michigan.

Strands of his conversation are sprinkled with Tamil or Hindi words and he adopts a particular Indian intonation as he manfully ushers those Indian words with the tricky Indian Ts ("retroflex Tamil T") into the conver-

sation.

"Long story short" is an expression he leans on often in conversation and then proceeds to tell you the long story, especially when he reminisces about his sojourns in India. Like when a collector in Tamil Nadu summoned the courage to ask the 22 year old how he became a Marshall so early on in the US Army. Or like the time when he was traveling by train in India and someone asked him that though his name was Bouton (pronounced like the Himalyan kingdom), he did not look like he came from Bhutan!

After earning a master's at the University of Pennsylvania, Bouton opted to spend another year in Delhi and later did his University of Chicago PhD dissertation in Tanjore on the Naxalite movement and the absence of an Indian peasant revolt.

His India-born and schooled wife Barbara Linn Bouton and he have two



Marshall Bouton with some of the villagers he was closest to while living in Saliamangalam outside Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. He had landed in India, aged just 22, to work for the Ford Foundation, on a Quaker American Friends Service Committee scholarship. His brief: To help boost agricultural cooperatives that introduced farmers to new seed varieties and farming techniques.

INDIA ABROAD FRIEND OF INDIA AWARD

Diplomat and thinker

Strobe Talbott was awarded the inaugural India Abroad Friend of India Award in 2010 for being a key protagonist in shaping the relationship the US and India now enjoy.

Professor **Susanne H Rudolph** and Professor **Lloyd I Rudolph** were awarded the India Abroad Friend of India Award 2011 for their insightful perspective of India spanning six decades; for their deep engagement with Indian society and history; and for being steadiest friends of India. sons — Chris, a computational scientist, and Alex, a software tester and hip hop musician. Alex was born in India and Chris, he confides, was conceived in India and he tells them that they are honorary Indians.

His subsequent work — during two long stints at the Asia Society, three years at the US embassy in New Delhi and 12 rich years at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs — was faithfully devoted, through a variety of creative and innovative ways, to relentlessly enhancing and nurturing the India-US relationship.

Bouton was the scholar who took his head out of history-sociology-political science textbooks, stepped out of university corridors, to bring his love for another country literally alive.

If he, as an American, could be so fond of India, he could not see why every other American could not be, after all there were so many essential likable similarities between the cultures. Nor could Bouton possibly ever fathom why the United States, as a nation, should not have a special relationship with India and has devoted many hours of his 71 years till date to undoing the US' 1960s-1970s 'Tilt' away from India, participating in the little-step-by-little step building efforts that has brought the US closer to India, from 2000 onwards.

He fondly calls it the Ship of India-US Relations and his life's mission, as a committed sailor, probably the first officer on that vessel, has been to find robust ballast to keep the ship constantly sailing in delightfully serene waters.

How did you first get interested in India?

I was a senior at Harvard, doing history and pre-medicine and was short of a semester on non-Western history. The only course that fitted into my schedule was a course on India, then taught by the great Sankritist Daniel Ingalls and Susanne Rudolph, who was your honoree last year.

The Rudolphs (*India scholars Lloyd and Susanne*) were still at Harvard. It was their last year at Harvard. So I took the course.







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M126 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

← PAGE M124

The Indiawallah

About the same time Nehru died. There was an Indian graduate student living in my house at Harvard by the name of Ashok Khosla. I got to know him in the dining room and began to ask him questions about India.

About that time I decided I didn't want to go to medical school. I needed a break. So, I decided on a whim that I was going to go to India.

I told my parents and my mother nearly passed away. On the night before I left for India, in August 1964, she was in bed weeping inconsolably. I said: "Mom what's the problem?"

She said: "When you were a baby I stood in line and bought you lamb chops to make you strong and now you are going to go to India and will starve."

Thus began my adventure with India.

When did you go back after that first trip to India?

I completely dropped the idea of medical school. What I really wanted to do was to come back to the United States and try to make sense of this amazing experience I had had — a life-transforming experience.

To console my parents I applied to law school. I never had any intention of going to law school. I got a scholarship to do my master's in South Asia studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Along the way I met and married my wife.

She grew up in India. She is American. People often ask if we met in India when they hear about our lives. We say no we met in a course on Indian civilization at the University of Pennsylvania.

Her grandparents and parents were medical missionaries. Her grandfather (*Hugh Harrison Linn*) came to India in 1904 and wound up setting up a pharmaceutical industry to manufacture and supply at cost very basic medicines aspirin, eucalyptus ointment — stuff like that to hospitals all over the country.

He started his practice as a physician in 1904 and was living in a rural area. (*When he discovered the desperate need for pre-dosed medicines in India*) he wrote to a friend who was then working for the Upjohn company (*a Kalamazoo*, *Michigan-based company, now part of Pfizer*) to send (*him*) cast off tablet-making machines. He started making tablets for his own practice.

Then all the doctors around said we want some of those too. So, he got another two or three tablet-making machines. He was making tablets all the time. He set up a little industry. Started out near Vikarabad in Andhra (*west of Hyderabad*) and eventually he moved the (*All India Missions Tablet*) industry to a little town called Bangarpet (*it was originally Boweringpet*) 5 miles from the Kolar gold fields.

My wife's father took over the industry and ran it. He got a PhD in pharmacy in Purdue University and he moved back to India. He grew up in India, of course, and went to the Kodaikanal School (*the 102-year-old Kodaikanal International School*) as did my wife. My wife was in India until she came to college (*in the US*).

Why did you return to India?



December 1971: An elderly refugee is pushed aside by Indian troops advancing into East Pakistan, later Bangladesh, during the war. According to Marshall Bouton, during this time 'the Nixon administration was tilting to Pakistan in its infinite stupidity.'

I decided I wanted to go back to India to do my dissertation research in Tanjore on the impact of the Green Revolution on agrarian politics in India, using Tanjore as the case study.

My wife gave up her job (in *Chicago; Bouton was doing his PhD and teaching at the University of Chicago under Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph*). We gave up our apartment and moved to North Carolina to spend a couple of weeks with my mother before we went to India. Then the Bangladesh crisis began.

The Nixon Administration was tilting to Pakistan in its infinite stupidity. Mrs (*then Indian prime minister Indira*) Gandhi decided, amongst other things, that there would be no more visas issued to Americans coming to India to do research.

So, we were stuck in North Carolina. I worked as a carpenter's helper on a construction crew that was building a Holiday Inn along an interstate highway.

As the crisis developed and American policy became such a big factor, Ralph Nicholas, an anthropologist specializing in Bengal, then at the University of Chicago, decided to organize graduate students around the United States, who were working on India, to go talk in any forum they could find on why US policy was mistaken and how we should be supporting the liberation of Bangladesh, India, and not Pakistan and its very ruthless suppression of the Mukti Bahini liberation movement (in then East Pakistan).

So, I was giving speeches in South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama and North Carolina. The folks in Delhi (*must have*) got wind of this, decided I must be a good guy after all and they gave me a visa.

So, we went. Barbara's parents were still there — we spent time with them (*in Bangarpet*) and then we went to Tanjore. We rented a little house in Yagappa Nagar, a new suburb of Tanjore town. I started my research. It went on for 15 months.

Why were you studying the Naxalite movement out of Tanjore?

I became very interested in agrarian politics in India. By that time there was a lot of talk about – the expression was 'The Green Revolution is turning Red' – (how) these technologies were making some farmers poorer and some farmers richer and was creating a new divide in the Indian countryside which the Communists were exploiting.

The real Naxalite movement was in West Bengal, Andhra (*Pradesh*) and a little bit of Madhya Pradesh. I was using Tanjore as a test case because of the violence that occurred





M127 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013





there (the Kilvenmani massacre when 42 striking Dalit agricultural laborers influenced by the Communist Party of India were burnt alive in 1968).

The CPI had a base going way back to the 1930s in this particular area of Thanjavur district. So, that was one of the questions in the study. Why did the Communists have a support base there even after the rise of the DMK (*Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, a Tamil Nadu-based political party*)? What was going on here?

It was really the larger scholarly question I was trying to answer. Why did India never have a peasant revolution? China had a peasant revolution. Vietnam had a peasant revolution. Algeria had a peasant revolution. Even Indonesia in some respects had a peasant revolution although it was a little more complicated because of the way the Dutch colonized Indonesia.

India was the great glaring exception to the rule that part and parcel of the Independence movement process at some point was an uprising among the peasantry.

How did you get to be Ambassador Robert F Goheen's special assistant?

I was on the job market in 1975, but the bottom had fallen out of the academic job market. I was approached by a man named Robert Goheen (*who later became the ambassador to India*).

In (*October*) 1974 (*Henry*) Kissinger paid his first visit to India after The Tilt. The origins of this sub-commission of education and culture, that I came to work for (*under Goheen*), is called Kissinger's Penance.

Kissinger went to Delhi, and as unaccustomed as he was to doing such a thing, he accepted Mrs Gandhi's proposal that there be a joint commission (*between the US and India*) in very Soviet style!

The joint commission consisted of the Indian minister of external affairs and the secretary of state. Underneath that joint commission were to be sub-commissions, one on the economy, one on science and technology, one on commerce and one on education and culture....

The State Department approached the Asia Society, New York, and asked if it would house the secretariat for this tobe formed Indo-US sub-commission of education and culture.

The State Department invited (Vengurla, Maharashtraborn) Robert Goheen (son of Presbyterian missionaries to India and a president of Princeton) to head this. This was 1975.

Goheen was the US co-chair and the Indian co-chair was G Parthasarthy, who was sort of cut from the (*virulently anti-American Congress party leader VK*) Krishna Menon cloth.

We had one meeting of the sub-commission every year, alternately in the US and India. We created a committee on museums, a committee on universities, a this and a that, we started organizing exhibitions back and forth and we organized fellowship programs to send American scholars, who were not India scholars, to India.

Then (Jimmy) Carter got elected and he turned around



Marshall Bouton, left, with then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Asia Society in 1999. Much before Vajpayee became prime minister, Bouton had told his friends in the State Department that the Indian politician would conduct a nuclear test if he came to power. They didn't believe him.

and asked Bob Goheen to be the ambassador. Goheen asked me to become his special assistant. That was 1977.

So, we moved to Delhi and I worked as Bob's special assistant for three years.

I arrived in Delhi just before Indira Gandhi went to the slammer. Morarji Desai was prime minister. The Janata (*Party*) government was struggling.

What was it like living in India?

I had developed a passion for the place. A passion born of experience. A passion born of enquiry.

I found India to be an enormously attractive, intriguing and frustrating place...

In every way — intellectually or otherwise — I was drawn to it. There was a lot of political change going on. The economy was stuck in low gear. Early on, I became one of those people who argued for what later became the reforms and liberalization.

When I first went to India, that was the time when India was — as it is today, but in a much more complicated way — the counter balance to China.

Do you take a traditional society and modernize it under an autocratic system or a democratic system?

Which works better?

What's the fate of Asia, which is what it comes down to? The under-girding of the rock bed of my involvement with India is about two things — it is about the people and it is about the enormity of what India means to human civilization.

(*It is about having*) a civilization, which is complex, diverse, old, really modern eventually, in every important respect and to do so without violence and in a way that preserves the unique character and contributions of that civilization.

So, those are the conceptual and human connections I have had with India, through all this thick and thin of my different involvements.

How did you sustain your relationship with India over the years?

There has never been a year when I haven't been there at least a couple of times.

There were many years I was there six or seven times.

I have sort of roughly counted that I have been there probably a hundred times, apart from my periods of residence.

During the 1980s, because my job with the Asia Society was not just India — my second stint at the Asia Society began in 1981 - I spent a lot of time traveling all over the rest of Asia and taking that aboard...

I became vice president at the (*Asia Society*) and then executive vice president in 1991. My duties were broader. I had a little more discretion about how I could use my time. The





M128 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M127

combination of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the reforms in 1991 (in India, made me decide) I was going to mount a big project on South Asia after the Cold War.

It went on for two years and involved putting a big task force led by (later US Trade Representative) Carla Hills and (Ambassador) Arthur Hartman and had many, many, facets to it.

That was my first deep dive back into India and South Asia after I joined the Society in 1981. Then over the rest of the decade, as the reforms

went forward two steps, sideways two steps, backwards one step, but began to (really) take hold, we at the Society began to do a lot more.

That became more than a sideline of my role at the Asia Society.

And what did that achieve?

I became very centrally involved in the evolution of the (India-US) relationship.

Frank Wisner went to Delhi as ambassador from 1994 to 1997. Frank and I met before he went and agreed to be partners in crime, in trying to bring some new life to the relationship.

I became a kind of US conspirator and he became the Delhi conspirator and as co-conspirators we were doing lots of things together.

The Society began to do our corporate conferences in India - the first was maybe 1994-1995 in Delhi.

We became the platform for Indian leaders to come and talk – political leaders, business leaders, others

I had gotten to know Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1978 when he was foreign minister in the Janata government. He and my boss Bob Goheen liked each other. He was a very likeable man. A thoughtful man. They used have tea together, and I would be there in Roosevelt House, at Atalji's bungalow, at the office, wherever, just to talk.

Once he stepped down as foreign minister that didn't go on, but they were in touch. After he was no longer in office he used to come to the embassy and visit.

Bob Goheen was a very principled man, but a very apolitical man. He wasn't hung up on political brands or identities or labels.

What interested him was what he perceived to be the quality of the person. That is what attracted him to Vajpayee.

When I was going back (and forth) to India in the early 1980s, the Congress was back in power.

Vajpayee was the only BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) Member of Parliament. This was 1980, 1982. When I used to go to Delhi I would call on him and have

these very interesting conversations. I would say something and there would be a 40-second

silence. Brilliant (man). Not as fluent (in English). Oh yeah, (his Hindi speeches were) stem winders. He spoke pretty good English, it was not difficult to carry on a conversation with him.

When John Whitehead became chairman of the Asia

The Indiawallah



President Bill Clinton with daughter Chelsea in Rajasthan during his visit to India in March 2000. Marshall Bouton gives Clinton a lot of credit - for the persistence of his intent and for finding a way to go after India conducted nuclear tests.



President George W Bush in New Delhi in 2006. Though no big fan of Bush, Bouton, for many reasons, gives him huge credit on India.

> Society in 1988, I took him to Asia for the first time. Whitehead had come from Washington, where he had been deputy secretary of state, former head of Goldman Sachs.

I took him to see Vajpayee. We were at one of these strange meetings where there were long silences. After we left, John said to me, "Why did we see that guy?"

I said: "Mark my words, someday this man will be prime minister of India." Many years later I reminded John of that.

As the BJP started getting nearer to power in the mid 1990s I would go see Vajpayee. Two months before the 1998 elections I was in Delhi and Jaswant Singh (the senior BJP leader) took me to see Vajpayee.

I said if the BJP wins the election and you form a government, will you conduct a nuclear test. And he said: "Yes."

That's the way he spoke. I thought I know this man a little bit. I know how he speaks. He means yes. So, I came back and talked to my friends in the State Department. (I said:) "I just talked to him. He said yes." They didn't believe me! Why didn't they believe you?

Lack of imagination. I dunno. Because (India would not conduct the tests) was the conventional wisdom.

So, when India did conduct the test the relationship went into the tank. But we - Frank and I ; Frank was by then back in New York - knew that President Clinton really wanted to go to India.

Was the Clinton Administration the best for the India-US relationship?

Bill Clinton deserves a great deal of credit.

The (nuclear) tests were in May 1998. Even before that he was planning to go to India in the second term. Hillary went (during his) first term (in 1995).

Then the tests happened. US law and prevailing public opinion put the kibosh on any idea of a Presidential visit to India. All the sanctions were applied.

But we knew - Frank had served as Bill's ambassador to India — that the President was interested in India, intellectually,

Why was he interested in India?

He was interested in India, as a country, as a place, as an emerging nation, as an emerging economv.

Remember by now, this is the late 1990s and the reforms are beginning to take hold. The reforms started in 1991. Bill Clinton came to office in 1993, less than two years later.

So, Clinton's was an instinctive interest?

A combination of an instinctive interest and a sort of geo-political interest.

Frank and I put together a project, with a small group of people, largely in New York, to figure out a strategy by which the Administration could address, in the required fashion, the fallout from the tests and at the same time open the possibility of rethinking the relationship, including a Presidential visit.

Of course, it wasn't long after that that Strobe (Talbott, then deputy secretary of state and the winner of the India Abroad inaugural Friend of India Award) and Jaswant began to have their talks.

So we weren't the only ones who were thinking along these lines. But we were the main group outside of the government. We prepared a paper for the Administration. We gave





PAGE M130 \rightarrow

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M130 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M128



it to (Clinton) sometime in 1999 and laid out a series of steps that would possibly reopen the door to a Presidential visit.

We argued in favor of a Presidential visit. We thought it would be a good thing for the relationship. After all, there hadn't been a Presidential visit since Nixon and Carter.

The President went in March 2000.

Bill Clinton deserves a lot of credit - not only for the persistence of his intent and, being the very politically creative guy he is, for finding a way to go.

But then the visit itself!

I didn't go, but I was in India shortly before the visit, and shortly after the visit, and I cannot remember in my lifetime - not that I have been close to a lot of Presidential visits - a single visit by a President to another country that has had as electric an effect on the attitudes in that country, about the United States, and on the relationship, that Bill Clinton's visit did.

I remember (members of) the Lok Sabha climbing over tables to get to him! Mind you this is 2000 when Bill was through the Monica (Lewinsky) thing.

He changed the way Indians looked at America...

Yes, overnight.

And George W Bush?

George Bush, in a very different way, also deserves a lot of credit.

I am no big fan of George Bush and George Bush's Administration for a lot of reasons, but I give him huge credit on India.

Underlying or behind or impelling or motivating the civil nuclear agreement was this more fundamental proposition (by the Bush Administration).

The proposition was that India is an emerging power and that it is high time that the United States began to deal with India as responsible emerging power – not as a client or as an unruly child – and began to take steps to set that relationship on a new and better ground and (that), among other things, meant putting the whole nuclear thing behind us.

My three years in the embassy in Delhi were consumed with the United States government's concerns over nuclear issues, particularly over the fueling of Tarapur (the nuclear plant outside Mumbai).

We built that reactor in Tarapur. It was US fuel. The fuel was running out. The reprocessing rods were all stuck in the ponds. They couldn't get rid of them because they couldn't send the fuel back to the US.

It was a mess.

The United States was attempting to use this as a lever to get India to submit to full scope inspections/safeguards. Of course, India was not willing to do that.

So, Bush broke through all of that and, of course, the nonproliferation community hated it, and opposed it.

He didn't flinch and I think he was right.

Does that mean that all of a sudden (between) India and the United States - remember the old expression during the 1950s Hindi-Chini bhai bhai – that there was going to be Hindi-Yunkee (Yankee, Bouton cutely uses an Indian pronunciation) bhai bhai?

That was a naïve, at best, expectation.

The Indiawallah



President Barack Obama, right, with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi in November 2010.

Marshall Bouton believes 'You can't have a big idea every four years.' The principal task of the Obama term, he says, was to consolidate the India-US relationship that had been so transformed between 1998 and 2008.

In the 10 years since Bill Clinton went to India, the United States-India relationship was transformed more fully, than any other relationship other than the US-China relationship between 1971-1972 and 1981-1982.

And that's saying something.

So I think they both get credit.

What does it take to be a specialist on India? What special skills does it require?

I do not know that it requires special skills.

It requires a sense of connection.

This is true for anybody who specializes - whether in scholarship or in other walks of life - in a particular country, or particular region.

At some point in your life, your career, you form a connection to the place and it is usually a multi-stranded connection, part intellectual, part personal, part emotional. It is part a values issue.

I was socialized early in my first two or three experiences in

India and formed that connection in a very important and lasting fashion for me.

To follow a country — I want to hasten to add here I am a follower; it is India that is doing things, I am the follower. You need to kind of go through the ups and downs; you can't be a fair-weather friend.

I think with India you need to have an openness about it. Because the place, the society, the culture, the way it operates, they are all so complex and varied and deep that you have to be constantly open.

People sometimes ask me - people who don't know India — they say, 'Well, you must know so much about India.' I say: "Look, I feel I don't know much more than I did when I first landed 49 years ago."

Often when you think you know India, is it a mirage?

You know India in a way that I don't know India.

Is there always a moment in your relationship with India when you realize you do not know India still? All the time.

What you develop over time is more... Expect the unexpected?

That too. But you also develop a set of instincts about - and I use the word advisedly - I think they are more instincts than intellectual frameworks.

Maybe it is a little of both for how you interpret things. I have certain convictions about the place. And those are abiding. Those are developed over five decades involvement with India. Those are kind of bed rock convictions I have about the place that are huge oversimplifications of the reality of India, but for me they are pan holds on how I think about it.

I would say I never feel like - how can you? - I know India. That's a ridiculous statement.

In my 10 years here (at the Chicago Council of Global Affairs, where he has been president) I have had even less time to be there and follow it.

I have got a whole library of books in our home in Massachusetts, which is going to be our principal residence when we leave here. Those are just the books I haven't read in the last 12 years (on India) that I have been studiously collecting so that I can start reading again.

What has been your greatest contribution to a vibrant **US-India relationship?**

Let me change the question, (what has been) my participation in the relationship, rather than my contribution to it.

Number one, I am part of a generation of Americans whose life experience included early in our lives this involvement with India.

There has been nothing like it starting with the Peace Corps. Of course, Mrs Gandhi got rid of the Peace Corps (from India).

There were lots of us who went on to make the study of India a professional pursuit. So, that created a cohort of Americans, of my age and younger, who became involved with India early on in their lives and throughout their lives followed it and participated in it in some way and sought to contribute to it in a variety of ways.



PAGE M131



M131 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M130

Secondly, I was able to — in a very marginal fashion — contribute to trying to start the rebuilding of the relationship after the trauma of Bangladesh and the estrangement that set in after that, which was partly the result of the mistakes made in US policy, partly the result of the way those were manipulated politically on the Indian side.

That caused the two sides to pull away from each other, including very much on the private sector. There had been a fair amount of private sector involvement, including business involvement in India in the 1950s and 1960s.

By the mid-1970s, and certainly by the late 1970s, that was gone because (*of*) the political reactions to the Bangladesh crisis, Mrs. Gandhi's suspicions, her anti-American rhetoric. Not that that did not happen before. LBJ (*President Lyndon Baines Johnson*) would stop PIA80 food shipments to India every time Mrs Gandhi criticized the Vietnam War.

So the two sides really moved apart from each other, including in the private sector. Young scholars like me couldn't get in. The scholarship began to be interrupted. The study of India became a less attractive field to many by the mid-1970s. Then in the course of all that (*India*) threw IBM and Coke out.

They were the sort of iconic American companies — one on the consumer side, one on the capital goods side. The for-profit private sector dimension of the relationship virtually disappeared. Very few businesses stayed in India through that time. So, I guess with the sub-commission we were starting the re-building.

My mantra, my metaphor, about this relationship has been that the India-US relationship is like a ship — a sailing ship.

It has been a ship without ballast, without the ballast of private sector involvement between the two societies, business involvement, universities, museums, non-governmental organizations, people-to-people exchange, you name it.

Very little of that, for two societies so similar in their values. Every time the political storms blew up over some issue between the two governments, this little ship would get blown up onto the rocks, because it had no ballast.

After three or four years the ship would be pulled off the rocks and limp back out to sea until the next storm came along to blow it back up on the rocks again.

So, there needed to be private sector ballast put in the ship of India-US relations. That is what I think began to happen all over again in the 1990s.

The reforms made it possible for American companies to go back.

The animus following Bangladesh and all the other political alienations of the 1970s began to dim. After the (*nuclear*) tests all the think tanks in Washington suddenly discovered India; organizations like the Asia Society never forgot it.

Between 1992 and today we now see a substantial private sector relationship that continues even when the governments aren't too happy with each other.

One of my worries now is what is happening economically



Marshall Bouton with his wife Barbara and children outside her childhood home in Bangarpet, Karnataka.

The Indiawallah

in India, and policy-wise as well.

If we lose the American business in India in any substantial measure we will be going backwards.

I feel the same way about the need to have a framework for American universities and other organizations to be in India in a way that serves India's interests, but also supports the relationship over time.

So, your role has been sort of to keep track of these threads? Helping to weave the threads.

Of private sector connections between the two societies in my role in the sub-commission on culture, in my role at the Ford Foundation, in my role at the embassy, in my role at the Asia Society.

I feel those are profoundly important. I spent most of my career working with private sector institutions that seek to inform and engage Americans in understanding about other parts of the world.

Because the nature of our society is that if private citizens or private institutions aren't somehow engaged in the relationship, the governments can come and go in the way they like, but you are never really going to have a sustainable relationship. That's even more true of India, because of the character of Indian society.

How is the India-US relationship progressing now? What has been President Obama's contribution? Does he understand the nuances of the relationship?

The principal task in the first Obama term was to consolidate because the India-US relationship had been so transformed between 1998 and 2008, between Clinton and Bush and on the Indian side with the Vajpayee-BJP government and Manmohan Singh and the UPA (*United Progressive Alliance*) government.

Even governments — especially governments — have to stop and take a breath.

There was a lot of concern, right after the President came to office, that he was not paying enough attention to India, that there was lack of appropriate priority being given to India. I was never concerned about that.

Everybody said: What is the big idea the Obama Administration is bringing to the US-India relationship?

If every time was a time for a big idea, there wouldn't be such a thing as a big idea.

A big idea defines a time and then it is passed.

So, the big idea from that period - from 1998 to 2008 -





M132 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M131

was just the idea that these two democracies could actually be un-estranged, and that's what Bill Clinton started.

He demonstrated that the two societies could come to a point of mutual respect and potential affection.

And then the Bush Administration brought the second big idea — which was to normalize the nuclear relationship and in so doing, to put the overall political relationship on a better path for the future.

You can't have a big idea every four years. So, I think the consolidation was right.

I think in its second term the (*Obama*) Administration *does* need to pay some closer attention to the relationship.

I am concerned that with everything else on the President's plate, domestically as well as internationally — the Middle East is once again in turmoil — I am worried about it getting appropriate attention.

So, there is not enough stoking of the fire at this point?

The fire is burning, but it is unattended. It is not being stoked.

And there is a new Secretary of State.

Secretary (John F) Kerry is going to India this month.

I don't necessarily take it that John Kerry will neglect India compared to Hillary Clinton.

Clearly, Hillary Clinton has a connection with India going back to the early 1990s, an affection for the place and is held in high regard there.

During her time as secretary she spent a lot of time in India and deepened those relationships.

I am not yet ready to judge how the Kerry term will compare to that. I think the larger and more important question is: Will the Obama Administration have the ability to focus on the relationship?

Especially, given the two elections, first the one here, and then the one in India, have basically taken two years out of the realm of possible attention. Then we will be closing in on the 2016 election.

Why do we no longer see India experts like yourself, who got to know the country better than we do?

Why do they not make your kinds of India experts any more?

I was privileged to be part of a generation of people who had that opportunity, because of the Peace Corps and similar programs and because of, frankly, the US government presence — the number of Fulbrights, the number of exchange scholars, the number of AFS (*American Field Service*) students who were going to India at the time.

Those opportunities have diminished for a variety of reasons.

I would say going back to our conversation about the private sector ballast and the ship of India-US relations, that is still missing – the real people to people (*relationships*), particularly young (*people*).

Young Indians come here to go to school and they know America. They know America through lots of ways. One way or another, they have gotten here as young people.

That is very much not as common among young Americans. Programs like the one I participated in or high school



Marshall Bouton at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. He made his expertise available when American policy makers began to reassess the relationship with India.

The Indiawallah

exchange programs like the American Field Service, which I went on to go to France in 1959, (*don't exist for India*).

For instance, if there were more universities that had stay abroad exchange programs (*by which*) you could study in India for a year, either they have campuses, or they have joint ventures with Indian universities and students can go and study there, the way they do in Europe.

I know lots of young Americans who have studied in China for a year or half a year. It's embedded in them. (*They are*) injected with an interest in China that will last their lifetime. They don't send students to India. Very hard to place stu-

dents in India for a year of school. There needs to be more of that.

My experience is that when young Americans go to India, four out of five of them get it in their blood for the rest of their lives.

What are your plans after your retire from the Chicago Council of Global Affairs? Is India part of that picture?

Will India be a very central part of the next chapter of my professional and personal life?

Yes, for sure.

I am going to have other professional involvements, but the one that is going to be my principal vehicle for re-engagement with India will be my role as the Senior Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study of India at the University of Pennsylvania.

I was chairman of that advisory board for nine years. CASI is an absolutely unique institution in the United States. It is the only university-based research program on contemporary Indian politics, society, economy,

international relations anywhere in the United States. I hope to find other ways to be involved with India — to go back and forth.

My real dream and hope is that, over the next several years, my wife and I will be able to live in India for three months a year every year.

August 14, 2014 will be the 50th anniversary of my first arrival in India. I plan to be on the tarmac in Delhi in August 2014!

What has India added to your life?

(*Sighs exaggeratedly*) Do you want to start the interview all over again?!

An enormous richness, a passion, I am sure you can discern.

I have a passion for the place. Ultimately, our lives - if we don't have some passions in our lives - are pretty dry stuff.

India has given me a source of endless intellectual engagement, but I really want to underscore this: The personal relationships, the friendships I have developed in India over 50 years have been far and away the greatest reward I have had.

To me, that has been the most constant and stimulating and enjoyable and fulfilling aspect of my relationship for five decades.

I count that very, very, high among the great pleasures of my life. \blacksquare



M133 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

An exceptional friend of India

Few Americans — indeed few Indians — have developed the combination of deep historical knowledge while keeping abreast of the rapid changes in contemporary India that Marshall Bouton has, says **Devesh Kapur**.

t is only fitting that Marshall Bouton be recognized for *India Abroad's* Friend of India award coming as it does almost 50 years since he first went to India.

As a pre-med student at Harvard, Marshall was intent on going onto medical school. However, he was fed up with going to school and by chance happened to take a course on South Asian civilization in his last semester at Harvard taught by Daniel Ingalls, the great Sanskritist at Harvard, and Susanne Rudolph, one of the most incisive political scientists on India. As he recounts, he just fell into the idea of going to India on a program run by the American Friends Service Committee.

Marshall was born and brought up in New York City and wound up spending two years (1964-1966) in rural Thanjavur, living in a village of 1,000 people, 200 miles south of what is now Chennai and totally fell in love with it. Thanjavur is not only the rice bowl of South India but because of its long history of natural irrigated paddy cultivation, it was one of the rich-

est rural regions in all of the South and gave rise to a rich cultural heritage, including magnificent temples, bronzes, paintings, and literature. It is the Dravidian heartland.

When Marshall first went to India, back-to-back droughts had created food shortages and his mother thought he was going to starve to death. Instead the transformative experience changed his life, leading to two long-term career interests: Asia in general and India in particular; and agriculture and food security issues, interests he has sustained since.

After returning from India, Marshall went on to do a Master's in South Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, studying under political scientist Francine Frankel, who — a quarter century later — would establish the Center for the Advanced Study of India, the first research center in the United States with a focus on contemporary India, and whose international advisory board Marshall would go on to Chair with singular distinction.

Marshall earned a PhD at the University of Chicago, studying with Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph who deservedly were conferred the Friends of India Award last year by *India Abroad*.

Marshall's dissertation became the foundation of his landmark book *Agrarian Radicalism in South India*, published by Princeton University Press.

The book, based on careful fieldwork in Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu, examined agrarian radicalism, an issue of considerable importance at the time amidst fears that the



COURTESY: MARSHALL BO

Marshall Bouton at a small dam in Saliamangalam, Tamil Nadu, in 1995. He helped build the dam.

Green Revolution might turn red.

The book challenged the prevailing fashion of locating agrarian radicalism in external factors such as global capitalism and imperialism and demonstrated that local factors, and in particular variations in agro-ecological zones, were more important in shaping differences in political choices.

Subsequently Marshall served as executive secretary for the Indo-US Subcommission on Education and Culture; special assistant to the US ambassador to India; director for policy analysis for Near East, Africa and South Asia in the Department of Defense; and executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Asia Society, where he edited/co-edited several editions of *India Briefing* (published by Westview Press/ME Sharpe), in the 1980s when interest in India was low.

Marshall Bouton arrived in Chicago in August 2001 to take the helm of the city's premier international affairs organization. On his watch, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations changed its name to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs reflecting Marshall's international outlook.

As Marshall remarked in an interview with the magazine *Chicago*: 'Now in the globalizing world, what does the word foreign mean? Foreign is often used as a pejorative, "so foreign to us".... We're a nation of immigrants; we're a nation of foreigners. We just felt that the name was anachronistic in the 21st century. And the second reason is that... our agenda ought to embrace a wider spectrum... beyond the typical for-

eign policy, foreign relations topics; beyond national security and diplomacy. We ought to be looking at things like immigration and migration, like food security, like women's rights.'

Marshall's vision transformed the organization, and it grew five-fold under his leadership. During this period he continued his passion to raise Americans awareness about the world, through an ongoing teaching commitment at Northwestern University, periodic surveys on the American public's views on foreign policy and co-authoring *The Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders but Don't Get*, which was awarded the American Political Science Association Gladys M Kammerer Book Award in 2007.

And critically (and happily for this author), in 2004 Marshall agreed to take over the chairmanship of the International Advisory Board of the CASI, at the University of Pennsylvania. He succeeded his mentor, Robert Goheen, former President at Princeton University, who had served as ambassador to India.

Over the next eight years, Marshall invested a remarkable amount of time, energy and commitment in CASI before stepping down in

September 2012 (Chip Kaye and Sanjiv Sobti have subsequently taken over the co-chairmanship of CASI) on the occasion of the Center for the Advanced Study of India's 20th Anniversary.

Marshall's leadership has most decidedly helped make CASI the vibrant center of research it is today. During his tenure as chair of CASI's International Advisory Board, CASI became an eminent national resource on Indian politics, society and economy.

Marshall will continue to be a Senior Fellow at CASI working on issues that he has been passionate about: sustainable agriculture and food security; strengthening Indian institutions; and closer US-India relations.

Over the past half century few Americans (indeed few Indians) have developed the combination of deep historical knowledge while keeping abreast of the rapid changes in contemporary India that Marshall has.

His empathy for India combined with a clarity and depth of understanding of its multiple challenges, has made him an exceptional friend of India. But perhaps even more it is his warmth and giving nature, his sheer decency and wise counsel that make him a rare human being — and why the Friend of India honor is so richly deserved.

Devesh Kapur is the Madan Lal Sobti Associate Professor for the Study of Contemporary India, and Director, Center for Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania.



M134 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



A cherished friend of India

e have known Marshall Bouton as a student, colleague and most especially as a cherished friend for 50 years. This means that we are involved with Marshall's connection to India.

The connection started in late1963 when Marshall was a senior at Harvard; his major was American history. He was told by his advisor, the future renowned historian, Gordon Wood, that he could not graduate unless he took another semester on non-Western history.

The only course that fit his schedule was one given by Daniel Ingalls, Harvard's Sanskrit scholar, and Susanne Rudolph, then a young lecturer in History. As Marshall tells it, taking the Indian civilization course was the beginning of 'getting hooked on India'.

A few months after graduating with honors he signed up with the Quakers to go to India as a volunteer. He arrived for the first time in August 1964. He was put through orientation at Delhi University and language training in Tamil at Annamalai University before spending a year-and-half in Saliamangalam, a village in Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu.

The experience transformed his life goals. He gave up the idea of going to medical school. Instead, he went to the University of Pennsylvania for South Asian Studies. After his MA, he decided to pursue a PhD in Political Science at the University of Chicago where we had recently joined the department. He

postponed taking up his studies to spend a year with the legendary Douglas Ensminger the Ford Foundation's Representative in New Delhi as a "development associate." Marshall Bouton has had three distinguished careers related to India, one as a scholar; one in the public sphere; and one in government. He brings to his scholarship and work imagination, enthusiasm and intellect,

Lloyd I Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph point out.



COURTESY: MARSHALL BOUTON

Marshall and Barbara Bouton at a friend's home in Tamil Nadu.

While at the University of Pennsylvania, he met Barbara in Royall Weiller's Indian Civilization class. His 'pick up' line according to Barbara was 'I hear you have lived in India.'

Indeed she had.

Her father was born in 1915 in Vikarabad in the princely state of Hyderabad, then moved as a boy with his family to Bangarapet, a village in Mysore, where Barbara's paternal grandparents are buried.

Barbara's mother came to India when she was 14 years old. Before marrying her father, her home was in Bengaluru in the princely state of Mysore. After finishing his Ph D in the US at Purdue University, her father with his wife and six-month-old Barbara returned to the family village of Bangarapet. Bangarapet remained the family home until Barbara's father and mother retired in 1980. Barbara's father, an aunt, three sisters and Barbara went to the Kodaikanal School.

In 1972, Marshall returned to Thanjavur district to do two year's of field work under a National Science Foundation Dissertation Research Fellowship. A revised version of his dissertation was published by



Tam delighted that my friend and colleague Marshall Bouton has been selected to receive the Friend of India Award from *India Abroad*.

A dedicated 'India-*wallah*' for more than 50 years, Marshall is not only an incisive scholar of India's political scene, but a genuine India lover.

I had the pleasure of working with Marshall for more than a decade at the Asia Society, and had the opportunity to be with him in a variety of circumstances.

To see Marshall in action, in a small village in Tamil Nadu relishing Rasam and speaking fluent Tamil, or discussing the impact of civil nuclear energy deal on the US-India relations with the India national security advisor, was to experience the profound knowledge and love he holds for the country.

More than a friend, Marshall is like a family member who is able to see the strengths of the country, but also does not shy away from

'A genuine India lover'

Marshall Bouton is like a family member who can spot the strengths and flaws of India, notes **Vishakha Desai**.

pointing out the barriers that keep India from achieving its full potential.

It is not a surprise that his advice is sought by the United States policymakers and Indian leaders alike.

Marshall caught the India bug early in his career, leading him to pursue his doctorate in political science with a focus on south India, and marrying Barbara, a daughter of US missionaries, who was deeply connected to India.

As he continued to reach new heights in his career, at the Asia Society and later at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, he never lost his focus on India, but now with a broader global perspective.

Marshall has often been ahead of other scholars in thinking about India in this enhanced context.

He organized one of the first conferences on the Indian-American experience and sought to partner with other Indian organizations, including *India Abroad*, to empower the nascent Indian-American presence in the country.

Similarly, Marshall saw the importance of the IT sector in projecting the new image of India on the global stage early on. Thus, Marshall was one of the first American leaders to host N R Narayana Murthy as he developed Infosys as a global company.

As Marshall Bouton prepares to retire from his important position as the president of Chicago Council on Global Affairs where he oversaw the rapid expansion of the institution and its reach, one can expect a renewed focus on India from this great member of the Indian global family.

I know Indian and Indian Americans are fortunate to have people like Marshall Bouton who contribute so significantly to the global understanding of India with deep love and knowledge.

Dr Vishakha N Desai is Special Advisor for Global Affairs to the President, and Professor of Practice at Columbia University.

She served as President of Asia Society from 2004 through 2012.



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and all the nominees of the "Person of the Year Award 2012" for their efforts and achievements.



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M136 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



From one old sherpa to another

Many descriptions will fit Marshall Bouton, but the most appropriate would be 'Friend of India', says

T P Sreenivasan.

I have a career-long interest in Asia and India, in particular', said Marshall Bouton, as he was preparing to leave the presidency of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs recently. His early interest in India had brought him to New Delhi in the late 70s as the special

assistant to Ambassador Robert Goheen. As the special assistant, the gate keeper and shuffler of papers to the then foreign secretary of India, Ambassador Jagat Mehta, it was my pleasure to work with Marshall Bouton and his peers in the various diplomatic missions.

Marshall was the most striking of them all and I recall the many times I met Marshall to discuss important issues. I noticed how thoughtful, sensitive and efficient he was as a diplomat.

More than anything else, what moved him was his interest in and involvement with India. One issue we worked together was making arrangements for supply of red sandstone from Rajasthan for the Asia Society building in New York.

After those early beginnings, I watched Marshall growing into an authority on India and indeed on world affairs.

During my various assignments to New York and Washington, I had several opportunities to interact with him on a wide variety of issues. Many descriptions will fit him, but the most appropriate will be 'Friend of India,' the way *India Abroad* describes him to honor him for his contribution to India-US friendship.

From an old sherpa to another, I congratulate him and wish him success in his future endeavors. ■

T P Sreenivasan is a former Indian ambassador.

No one in America knows India as well as Marshall does

India could not have a better spokesperson, an articulate and sincere advocate, and an extraordinary cheerleader than Marshall Bouton, notes **Tarun Das**.



The Boutons in India. Bouton has the benefit of connecting with Indians from diverse backgrounds, and he synthesizes the views and feedback and comes through with his own perceptions and views, analysis and comments.

OUDITIEUT. MARCHAEL DOUT

have known Marshall Bouton forever and ever. He has been the same for several decades except for the thinning on top!

No one in America knows India as well as Marshall does.

From his early days of living in the country, he has sustained his connection, built friendships and relationships which are long-term and enduring.

He has the benefit of connecting with Indians from diverse backgrounds, and he synthesizes the views and feedback and comes through with his own perceptions and views, analysis and comments.

Underlying all of this is Marshall's commitment to India. Be it at the Asia Society or at the Chicago Council for Global Affairs as President, he has been constant in his support for, and friendship towards, India.

He is, in fact, India's unofficial ambassador to the USA and, indeed, to the world.

India could not have a better spokesperson, an articulate and sincere advocate, a cheerleader extraordinary who is constantly seeking out India's positives and putting aside India's many challenges as overcome-able than him.

In the history and evolution of India-US relations from the Cold War to now, Marshall has seen it all. The distance and distrust between the two countries to start with, which lasted over 50 years.

And, then, the warming of relations with President Clinton's visit in March 2000, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's quick return visit the same year, the leadership provided by President Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

From a very limited trade and investment relationship, India and the US, today, have charted, together, new avenues of partnership. Investment has become a two-way street with Indian companies increasing their presence, investment and employment in the USA.

Higher education cooperation is the new potential with over 100,000 Indians students at US universities plus the increasing presence of US institutions in India.

The civil-nuclear agreement, which has been a huge turning point for bilateral ties and the advancement of one nuclear project led by a US company.

The defense links, starting from a big zero to \$10 billion of purchase of defense equipment by India from the US with, at least, another \$5 billion in the pipeline.

The whole area of energy — from oil, gas, power, renewables, battery technology, etc — is leading to partnerships where none existed.

And, in so many other areas like health care, space, manufacturing, services, to mention only a few.

Marshall's lifetime contribution spans all of this.

He has not only seen it all, he has played a key role in making all of this happen.

His continued involvement is important because the potential is limitless and far from being realized.

He will surely have a hand in pushing new ideas into the system, especially one which he cherishes: A deeper bilateral engagement in agriculture.

In saluting Marshall for his incredible role, spanning several decades, it is clear that a few individuals, working in, and leading, key institutions, with commitment and vision, can make a huge difference between nations.

Marshall Bouton leads this band of believers.

Tarun Das is an active crusader for the promotion of Indian industry. He headed the Confederation of Indian Industry for over three decades.



M137 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

'He pointed out how the US-India relationship needed broader support'

was pleased to learn that *India Abroad* is honoring Marshall Bouton for his long-standing commitment to India and to the understanding of its great civilization, and current realities in this country.

Bouton's involvement with India goes back decades. He lived in India as a young man and he learned Tamil. In the years which followed, he has lost no occasion to deepen his understanding of India and spread awareness of it to scholars, businessmen, the media and the United States government.

Bouton and I began our collaboration in 1997, shortly after my return from India, where I served as Ambassador. At the time, he was a senior officer in the Asia Society, an institution devoted to building bridges between the nations of Asia and the United States.

Thanks in large part to Bouton's influence, the Asia Society gave particular priority to India. Under his guidance the Asia Society lost no occasion to explain India's foreign policy perspectives to Washington.

The voice of the Asia Society was particularly important at the time since relations between the US and India were occasionally fraught. Bouton made his expertise available when American policy makers began to reassess the relationship.

He played an important role in an early study sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relation. Shortly thereafter, he put the authority of the Asia Society behind a second study of the US role in South Asia, and he led the participants in the study to the region where he organized high-level exchanges in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

Bouton made a particular contribution to the policy debate when he pointed out how badly the US-India relationship needed fresh perspectives and broader support, worthy of our growing interests in each other and the challenges the two nations faced in the wake of the Cold War. He argued for 'ballast' so that the ship of the relationship would not be blown off course when the inevitable crises in foreign affairs



COURTESY: MARSHALL BOUTON

Marshall Bouton has lost no occasion to deepen his understanding of India

In recent years, Bouton has continued his involvement in building and expanding the Indian-American relationship as president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. He has been an active member in other exchanges with India, notably those organized in the aegis of the Aspen Institute.

Over the years, Bouton has emerged as one of this country's leading experts on India and South Asia and a key point of reference in the design of American policies. He is regularly consulted by businesses contemplating investments in India; he, as well, is a strong voice in the American academic community.

In the latter regard, he has played a particularly important role with the University of Pennsylvania in sponsoring the study of modern Indian politics and economics.

At the same time, Bouton has become a key contact for Indian political leaders, senior officials, businessmen, media and scholars with interests in the US.

India and the US are fortunate to have a strong, articulate and wise player in Bouton. His devotion to the understanding of India in this country, and thoughtful advice to Indian friends, and his commitment to the relationship make him nearly unique.

He serves all of us well. ■

Frank G Wisner has served as Ambassador to Zambia, Egypt, the Philippines, and India. He also served as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and as Under Secretary of State for International Security Affairs. He is currently International Affairs Advisor, Patton Boggs, LLP.

← PAGE M134

Princeton University Press in 1985 as Agrarian Radicalism in South India, a path breaking study that combined quantitative and behavioral analysis with cultural and historical interpretation.

Marshall has had three distinguished careers related to India, one as a scholar where his publications on domestic and foreign policy are varied and extensive; one in the public sphere at the Asia Society (1981-1990) and the Chicago Council and Global Affairs (2001- 2013); and one in government where he served as special assistant to US Ambassador to India (and former president

A cherished friend of India

In other words, Bouton made the point that the relation-

ship with India need to be broadened, deepened, and built on

more than a Washington policy, which highlighted non-pro-

liferation. He saw the vital importance of business and

investment in the relationship. He also made certain that a

From right, Marshall Bouton with Indian President Pranab Mukherjee,

Indian Ambassador to the US Nirupama Rao, USIBC President Ron

Somers and a delegate. Bouton made the point that the relationship

with India need to be broadened, deepened, and built on more than a

Washington policy, which highlighted non-proliferation.

of Princeton) Robert Goheen (1977-1980), and director for policy analysis for Near East, Africa and South Asia in the Department of Defense (1980 -1981).

broke out.

Marshall brings to his scholarship and work imagination, enthusiasm and intellect. He sparked the highly influential India Briefing Series. His *Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders but Don't Get* (co-authored with Benjamin Page) won the American Political Science Association's Gladys M Krammerer Book Award. At the Asia Society he added to its outstanding cultural programs a distinguished and influential public affairs program and expanded its focus from East Asia to South Asia. His tenure at Chicago Council in Global Affairs produced quantum leaps in influence on national policy discourse, programs, outreach, staff size and budget.

Marshall heads a distinguished cadre of University of Chicago PhDs in political science with careers in Indian-related public service — Walter Andersen, director, South Asia Program, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University; Ashley Tellis, senior associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and Barnett Rubin, director of studies and senior fellow, Center on International Cooperation, New York University.

It is fitting and proper that *India Abroad* should recognize Marshall Bouton's distinguished career in public service and his outstanding contributions to America's understanding of India by honoring him with its Friend of India Award.

Professors Lloyd I Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph were awarded the India Abroad Friend of India Award last year.



M138 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

Few have contributed more to deepen the understanding of India

t is a privilege to join the many voices that are congratulating Marshall Bouton for being selected to receive the prestigious India Abroad Friend of India Award.

India Abroad, a highly respected newspaper, provides an outstanding focus on Indian news and business issues that are of keen interest to the Indian Diaspora and to those of

us paying close attention to India. It has earned a stellar reputation for its credibility and outstanding research. The Economist has rightly called India Abroad 'a publication of unusually high quality.'

The selection of Dr Marshall M Bouton for the award also demonstrates India Abroad's superb judgment, for few individuals have contributed more to deepen and broaden the understanding of India, its policies, its successes, and its challenges.

Bouton has had a remarkable impact on business leaders, scholars, and policy makers. Over the years he has brought to a variety of his endeavors - teaching, writing, government service, and policy discourse - his keen intellect and clarity of thought over a broad range of critical issues, including those concerning India.

In June, after a dozen years of outstanding work, he stepped down as president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, a leading non-partisan organization committed to influencing discourse on global policy.

Lester Crown, chairman, board, Chicago Council, issued a statement

saying: 'Marshall's vision, energy and execution have taken the organization to new heights of impact and relevance in Chicago and well beyond. Under his direction, the Council has not only greatly strengthened its historic role as Chicago's forum for the discussion of world affairs, it has also become a widely respected contributor of information and insight to the national and international discourse on the great issues of our time.

One cannot discuss important international issues without considering India, the world's largest democracy. It affects and is affected by all of the tough global challenges we face today, including economic growth, poverty eradication, open trade, national security, climate change, food and energy security, health, and much more.

During Marshall's tenure, the agenda of the Council expanded to cover a range of programs which discussed India and South Asia in context of the important issues we



He has brought his keen intellect and clarity of thought over a range of critical issues, including those concerning India, points out Carla A Hills.



Marshall Bouton, sitting front row center, with a Chicago Council on Global Affairs group in Agra in 2007.

face in today's increasingly globalized world.

Marshall has accumulated enormous experience from the variety of positions he has held over the years. He came to the Chicago Council from the Asia Society where he served as executive vice president and chief operating officer. Over his 20 years of association with the Asia Society, he earned a superb reputation as one of the most knowledgeable scholars on India.

Prior to his years at the Asia Society he served in government as a director, policy analysis for Near East, Africa, and South Asia in the Department of Defense. He also served as special assistant to the US Ambassador to India, which gave him an in-country view of the key issues confronting our two nations.

Earlier he served as executive secretary for Indo-US Sub-Commission on Education and Culture, an organization formed in the 1970s by the US State Department to book award.

When he announced that he was leaving the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, he stated that he was 'going to put together a package of activities' and that he wanted 'to do different things.

At every post he has expanded

Marshall has a knack for spotting an

His book Agrarian Radicalism in

Don't Get was awarded the American

Political Science Gladys M Kemmerer

I and all of my colleagues, which includes Ambassador Thomas R Pickering who served as US Ambassador to India, are so very pleased that one of the things that Marshall will be doing in the future is working with us to provide advice to business leaders doing business in India and Southeast Asia.

In short, Marshall will continue to share his wisdom and experience in very constructive ways. ■

Carla A Hills is Chair & Chief Executive Officer, Hills & **Company, International Consultants and former US Trade** Representative (1989 to 1993).



M139 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Nithin Tumma began his foray into research in the eighth grade.

Master Discovery

P Rajendran discovers the wondrous world of Nithin Tumma, winner of the Intel Science Talent Search Contest and the India Abroad Special Award for Achievement 2012.

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ow long does it take a 17 year old to to find one possible way to fight breast cancer, and to explain clearly how HIV gains a grip as it prepares to breach the citadel of an immune cell?

In Nithin Tumma's case, the answer would be eight weeks.

The first little job earned Nithin the first prize in the Intel Science Talent Search Contest 2012, which had the added perk of bringing along with it a check of \$100,000.

Of course, Nithin was no academic ingenue when he walked into mentor Berhane Ghebrehiwet's Stonybrook University laboratory in New York.

In fact, Nithin began his foray into research in the eighth grade, working first at a microbiology lab at the local Port Huron hospital where his mother Kavita worked.

"I became interested in higher level research," said Nithin who contacted professors in many

universities and was admitted to do research work in oncology at the University of Michigan between his ninth and tenth grade, though he finally did most of his research at Wayne State University, where he first worked on breast cancer research.

PAGE M140 →



M140 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



PAGE M139

The few years of research were not always easy.

"This is a 2-, 3-year effort. Almost every day some thing goes wrong," Nithin said, adding that it is only when collecting all the successful experiments for a science fair that he realized he had made much progress.

"It doesn't seem like you've done a lot. Half of the Western blots (a method to detect specific proteins) were not right," he said.

And yet, he still had some results - indomitable survivors that withstood the storm of empirical testing.

Though he had school to attend, principal Charles Mossett and counselor Janet Smith eased restrictions and let Nithin take online classes to make it easy for him to head out to the lab, which was more than an hour's drive away.

His parents provided a driver to pick him up, so that the sleep-deprived youngster could catch up on a few of the 40 necessary winks.

Nithin said his parents were able to intelligently discuss topics as long as they were framed correctly.

They're obviously not academics; they're physicians. Some ... molecular features they didn't know much about. They must have learned these things 20-30 years ago, and, obviously, ... much has changed."

But when Nithin was writing his papers they were able to read the primary source material, give suggestions and critique what he was saying.

So (they were) not only talking about the project, but making it happen," he said.

Nithin came into his own when he became a James Simon Fellow at the laboratory of Berhane Ghebrehiwet, an immunologist who, along with his wife, had isolated gC1qR, a protein that proved to be a gift that kept on giving

Nithin had approached the Ghebrehiwets himself, after researching their work on the Internet.

Coming in on a Simons Summer Research Fellowship, he had already read all of Ghebrehiwet's papers on the topic.

"Everyone in the lab was very kind. That's always the case with high school students," he said, pointing out that almost all of them had eight years of lab experience.

Then he made a mistake that, in some other place, may have snuffed his hopes right there

Probably because he did not wash his hands with a pipette, Nithin contaminated a lot of samples.

"Most people would not go back and give people the same access after that," he said.

Ghebrehiwet had a chat with him, during which Nithin apologized profusely. Luckily, Ghebrehiwet was more into nurturing than censuring.

'Everyone makes mistakes, but don't be discouraged,' he told Nithin.

"Ghebrehiwet was awesome. He allowed me to do whatever he wanted, even let me work late (alone)," Nithin said, adding, "He trusted me probably more than I deserved."

In time, the duo developed a strong working relationship.

INDIA ABROAD SPECIAL AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT

Vijay Balse, Aadith Moorthy and Anamika Veeramani stunned us with their unique talents and razor sharp minds. They were the recipients of the inaugural India Abroad Special Award for Achievement in 2011.

Major Kamaljeet Singh Kalsi and Captain Pratima Dharm, for being role models and patriots who make us proud; and Sukanya Roy for inspiring the next generation won the India Abroad Special Award for Achievement 2012.

Given Nithin's tight schedule, he reserves his reading time for books related to research, but has less stringent standards when it comes to **Master Discovery**

"He would take a few hours to talk to me. It was important for him that I understand the details," Nithin said.

Fortunately, their experiments were successful. "But, regardless of whether it worked or not, he was focused on making sure I understood the theory, not just the techniques," Nithin said. And that is important to the Harvard freshman, who is now trying to use his never-flagging love

for computer science to fuel research

through a start-up. In school, he had worked awhile on a robotics team. He is now working with friends accepted to a program in California - Summer@Highland, a venture capital firm for student founders based in the Bay Area.

The team has already been given \$80,000 to get the firm off the ground.

PAGE M142

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Nithin's school eased attendance restrictions and let him take online classes to make it easy for him to head out to a lab





entertainment. He enjoys House and Scrubs on television and listens to almost all popular music - rock, hip-hop and R&B. But not country.

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M142 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Master Discovery



It is building a platform for little activities or games in which people playing games actually do menial research tasks while scoring points.

One of these involve getting people to find out how much they know about their friends.

No matter who wins, the game, which requires social media to log in, could provide details of what people want.

"The purpose is not to be fun, but to get a lot of work done through games," said Nithin, who plans to major in computer science.

For now, he has a bunch of projects going, including Butucu with fellow freshman Neel Patel, which the Web site describes as a 'platform for brick-andmortar stores to connect with their in-store customers.

And yet, Nithin maintains his interest in biology.

While he had no plans to follow his parents into traditional medicine, Nithin hopes to finally work in biotech "or to understand how to use computers to solve big problems in medicine."

Given Nithin's tight schedule, he reserves his reading time for books related to research. At the lighter end of the spectrum - though never wandering into the realm of fiction – are DNA, the Secret of Life, by James Watson, the codiscoverer of the DNA, A Brief History of Time by John Gribbin, and popular science works by Harvard-based physicist Lisa Randall.

Nithin has less stringent standards when it comes to entertainment.

"I watch a lot of dumb stuff like *House* and Scrubs," he said, adding that the portrayal is not quite (medically) accurate." He listens to almost all popular music - rock, hip-hop and R&B. But not country. Not that.

The extended family, particularly those on Nithin's mother's side, meet up often.

Nithin talks about everything he does with Pranav Santapuram, his cousin, a pre-med student at Vanderbilt University who is a year older. He also wags a communal jaw with uncle Raj Mahankala and maternal aunt Madhavi Santapuram.

But with research, start-ups, and schoolwork at hand, he may not have as much time for all that for a while.

'I will not be surprised if 20 years from now he wins the Nobel'

Mentor Berhane Ghebrehiwet tells P Rajendran why Nithin Tumma impressed him from the beginning.

hings can get done fast and dirty in the real world, where only results matter.

Things are a little different in the scientific arena, and so when things got messy Nithin Tumma was lucky enough to be working with Berhane Ghebrehiwet, his immunologist mentor at the State University of New York-Stonybrook.

Of course, Ghebrehiwet was impressed by Nithin right at the outset.

For when Nithin first walked in as a fellow of the Simons Summer Research Program, he had already read

all of Ghebrehiwet's papers and, but for actual work experience, seemed theoretically all ready for the fellowship of six weeks.

Ghebrehiwet was impressed by Nithin's intelligence and dedication, noting particularly, "He stayed oneand-a-half weeks beyond the call of duty."

He was so impressed that he suggested that some time down the line, he could introduce Nithin to Nobel Prize-winning geneticist Hargobind Khurana.

"He almost fell from his chair," rec-



Nithin Tumma, second from left, came into his own as a James Simon Fellow at the laboratory of Berhane Ghebrehiwet, an immunologist who, along with his wife, isolated gC1qR, a protein that proved to be a gift that kept on giving.

alls Ghebrehiwet.

Khurana died a few months later, so the meeting could not be organized.

Ghebrehiwet is an easygoing mentor, and offered Nithin two choices: 'Design an experiment or choose a project you are interested in.'

Nithin said he would take on whatever was given to him.

Ghebrehiwet and his wife Ellinor Peerschke, currently at Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York, had discovered an interesting protein while they were on sabbatical.

"It led us into many adventur-ous fields of biology," he said later.

Ghebrehiwet gave Nithin two projects to do based on the protein's properties.

The first involved the gene for the protein that appeared to become highly active in breast cancer tumor cells - even though the gene kept company with tumor-suppressing genes, all on the short arm 17th of a human's 23 pairs of chromosomes (they are numbered according to length, from the longest to the shortest).

When active, the gene produced a protein, the pithily named gC1qR.

Ghebrehiwet asked Nithin what would happen if he could cut down the protein by making them attractive - and so ripe bait – to immune cells.

If the protein aided and abetted the growth of tumor cells, reducing the protein available



PAGE M143 →



M143 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'I will not be surprised if 20 years from now he wins the Nobel'



PAGE M142

should inhibit the growth of the tumor, too - at least, in theory.

Outside that lab, a lot of claims could be made, but putting up testable evidence for it quite another thing.

To Ghebrehiwet's pleasure, Nithin got answers confirming the theory, so that any scientist could describe the results with that top adjective for trustworthiness: 'reproducible.'

The next labor of Nithin involved gC1qR's role in HIV infection.

A protein on the HIV's surface, gp41, tends to bind to gC1qR on special white blood cells and sets off a cascade of events that makes those very white blood cells targets for immune attack.

Nithin's task was deceptively simple: Find exactly where gp41 attaches itself on gC1qR.

"Nithin is a brilliant computational biologist," Ghebrehiwet said. "Using computational wizardry, he ventured to find out where the interaction between gC1QR and HIV occurs." (For those particularly interested, gp41 plugs itself to amino acids 171-180).

In retrospect, Nithin's success may all sound good, but there were a few hairy moments for him two weeks in when he made his big mistake, contaminating a great many cells.

There are mentors out there who toss erring juniors out on their ear, but Ghebrehiwet was a little more mature.

In fact, later, Ghebrehiwet appeared to have real difficulty recalling the incident, until, details provided, it all came back to him.

vided, it all came back to him. "That's how people learn," Ghebrehiwet said, charitably. "We all make mistakes.... I told him to clean it up." He argued that such mistakes are not deliberate, but a result of a lack of knowledge.

"Growing cells in the lab, if you are not experienced it's cumbersome. We have to teach them and correct the process. People like Nithin are so bright, we can tell them without admonishing them... and they blossom. There are mentors who scream at them. I'm not one of them. I kill people with kindness," he said. "All we need is to give them a push."

Still, Ghebrehiwet had a word of caution for Nithin when he was leaving.

'Remain very humble,' Ghebrehiwet recalled himself as telling Nithin. 'I know — everyone knows — you are brilliant. Let everybody talk about you; don't talk about yourself.... Remain focused in your work.'

Still, Ghebrehiwet himself takes some pride in his charge. "I will not be surprised," he says, "if 20 years from now (*Nithin*) wins the Nobel Prize." ■

'Nithin is clearly above the benchmark'

Family and friends tell **P Rajendran** what makes Nithin Tumma so special.

Nithin Tumma has just become an adult, but he has changed how his extended family sees itself, particularly leaving an enduring impact on his cousins, his maternal aunt Madhavi Santapuram feels.

"He has changed the dynamics of everything," says Madhavi, who was the first relative to see Nithin after he was born, and who he loved and even feared a little for a long time.

As a child, he once asked his elder cousin — Madhavi's son — and close friend, 'Pranav, do you really love her? Because she is so strict.' Madhavi walked in just then and the boys kept looking at her, not knowing quite what to say.

Nithin used to spend so much of his summers at their home that he was not sure where his immediate family ended and the Santapuram family began.

"He thought for a long time that Pooja (*Madhavi's daughter*) was his sister. And he kept asking his parents (*why she lived away*)," Madhavi remembers.

According to family friend Sapna Reddy, "He is talkative. He is driven, but he is not abrasive. There is a fine line. We would go to his house during Christmas (*where he would*) speak of his work. He would (*go and*) come back from his computer from time to time. That phase — it was amazing to see how much he multi-tasked."

Reddy, who went to the same medical school as his mother Kavita and who works in Toledo, Ohio, describes Nithin as very inquisitive and someone wanted to always stand apart.

"My boys are also bright, but Nithin is clearly above the benchmark," she says, describing how her son Arjun once pointed out that he was surprised to see an investment almanac in Nithin's collection of books.

The boy was not just into science and research, she says.

"He would not want most predictable



COURTESY: JULIANNE MCCALMON

Nithin Tumma, standing back row center, with the science club that he set up at the Fort Gratiot Middle School. His teacher Julianne McCalmon still remembers how influential he was.

things. He always wanted to pick and come up with a different outlook," she says, pointing out that while most middle school children usually follow what the teacher said, "Nithin wanted to take it a step ahead."

Nithin was not really into the details says Madhavi Pammidi, another friend of his mother. "But what is different is that this kid thinks out of the box: Why not change the temp? Why not put it somewhere else?"

According to Pammidi, "Thousands of kids are followers. A kid like this would be wasted on mundane things. He must do innovative things."

Sapna Reddy described how Nithin drove himself, taking AP biology in middle school, over his mother's strenuous objections.

His father Dr Suresh Tumma did not mind because Nithin seemed eager and so helped him when the boy floundered a bit.

Teacher Julianne McCalmon, of the Fort Gratiot Middle School, described how Nithin had set up and developed a science club at his old school.

"He was so influential with so many

kids," she says, describing him as thorough, asking open-ended questions, while still being very respectful.

"Many students worked around him so that they could learn from him," she said, adding that the children would wait for Nithin in her room, looking out of the window for him to drive up.

Nithin would tell them stories about something that happened to him and discuss their project with every student.

"He's the driver of the club. I just sat back," Julianne said, describing how, at the science fair held at the end of the year, children crowded to have pictures taken with him.

Besides academics, Nithin found time for competitive sports too.

Julianne described how Nithin, when he realized he could not get to the trials for the tennis team on time, asked the coach if he could hold his — Nithin's trial a little later.

Because of his sterling credentials, the coach agreed. Nithin was good enough to qualify.

"He was a quite an asset to the team," Julianne says. ■



M144 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



ithin Tumma may not have been able to discuss research with his parents, but it was they who taught him the benefits of education, exploration, critical thinking, and the relief provided by reasonable self-doubt.

Suresh and Kavita Tumma, both physicians, were alumni of the Osmania Medical College in Andhra Pradesh, but did not know each other before their families arranged their marriage.

After marriage, Kavita came to the US first, in 1990, and Suresh two years later.

They both did internal medicine in Detroit where Nithin was born. They moved to Port Huron in 1999.

His mother Kavita saw some early signs of Nithin's precocity when, at four, while visiting her cousin Bharati Reddy in India, the boy took a fancy for a bottle of Coke in the house.

Shy of directly demanding it, he asked for something to drink. Asked what, he replied that he wanted a liquid.

Intrigued by the response, the adults inquired further, to learn that he had a definite and abiding thirst for a liquid, though of a dark color.

It was early, but Kavita could see her son knew how to get his way.

For Nithin there was no shortage of intellectual stimuli: Trips to a variety of museums, to places like Hawaii, and further afield, to Switzerland, France, England, Mexico, and, of course, India.

Nithin's maternal grandfather, Sughanatha Reddy, a plant pathologist in India, may have done his bit to stoke his grandson's interest in science, show-

ing him the planets through a telescope. Back home in Port Huron, Nithin announced that he wan-

ted to make a telescope for his third grade project at the Keewahdin Elementary School.

Kavita suggested they start reading up. She had her own trouble understanding the concepts of reflection and refraction and they took the matter to a local optometrist.

Nithin did not win a prize, but he had learned how to learn - an art that escapes many older than him, many ostensibly wiser than him.

For the next project, Kavita put her foot down.

'I am only going to help you in typing,' she told him, asking him to do the research. She did buy him all the material required, though.

He never won a prize in the third, fourth or fifth grades.

Nithin was doing well academically, doing his advance placement biology in his sixth grade. He was already influenced by *DNA: The Secret of Life*, by James Watson, the codiscoverer of that molecule.

He later met Watson at an Indian physicians' meeting in New York. That, Nithin said, influenced him to get into genetics.

That same year, he put together a project about environment and global warming from scratch. But it was no go. And his luck did not change the next year, either.

Nithin began getting more intense by the eighth grade, and went on, powered by a doughty and perhaps bitter cussed-



A family celebration of Nithin Tumma's achievements. With Nithin's intellect, he can make a difference, his father believes.

'Want him to lead a life that makes a difference'

Kavita and Suresh Tumma share their experiences of raising a winner with **P Rajendran**.

ness.

"He would never copy from anyone. It was all himself," recalls Kavita.

Still, Nithin was beginning to learn that in the real world form often and convincingly triumphed over substance.

'This is not right. Everyone is copying off from Google,' he would tell Kavita. And she would sagely respond, 'The most important thing

in life is doing it by yourself?

Perhaps a little mollifed, Nithin started work on a microbiology project at the Port Huron hospital, where she worked, trying to find if bacteria became resistant to soap after repeated exposure to disinfectants.

Luck joined talent and perseverance and he won the first prize. So the next year, he worked on a more complex microbiology project, that saw him go for an international science fair in Reno, Nevada.

According to Kavita, "That is when he changed as a person." He saw children working in a lab there and came back to tell his parents of that novel vision.

'We live in such a small town; we need to work in a lab,' he

told them, before getting down to send email to doctors and professionals in Detroit and Ann Arbor.

He was admitted to one program, but two weeks in he was told that he was too young to stay on. In the 11th grade, he went to Raymond

In the 11th grade, he went to Raymond Novak, then at Wayne State University's (Detroit) pharmacology department, his mentor for six months, and reportedly told him, 'I have read all your papers. Can I do my own project?'

According to Kavita, in the 10th and 11th and 12th grades, Nithin went to school at 7 am.

When his projects began, the family got a driver to take the under-aged researcher to Detroit. That was when he caught up on some sleep.

Along with academics and research, he made time to organize a science club in middle school, and to participate in varsity tennis and a quiz bowl.

'Oh my god, when is he going to sleep?' Kavita remembered asking herself.

"Nithin was exceptionally talented in terms of intellect. Way ahead of other students. Some friends would say, 'Nithin is going to become president of the US," says Suresh, describing how the boy would demand books on Visual Basic and C++ even in the fifth grade and go through it even if he did not understand everything.

"He used to buy so many books and read only 10 pages," Kavita said, adding that as parents, they had the responsibility to provide Nithin with opportunities.

"We have not only exposed him, but given him all the info he needs," she says.

With his younger brother Neehal, Nithin would play basketball, ping pong and watch games together.

"When younger, Neehal would run down to the basement to help on the global warming project," recalls Suresh.

While Nithin had many friends, Kavita says he was not dependent on them.

"He quickly can turn himself (*away*). If he finds himself too busy, he won't meet friends for a month," she says, adding that Nithin would never waste time on the phone. And he never texts.

'Texting is addictive. If I do that, I can never do what I'm doing,' she remembered him telling her.

While proud, the family have more modest expectations of Nithin.

"I want him to lead a life that makes a difference," says Suresh.

"The first generation is always absorbed in our struggles. The focus is on training, fellowship. It is so insecure. It's a new place, you don't have anything," says Suresh, pointing out how different things can be for the second generation.

With Nithin's intellect, he can make a difference, his father believes.

"Not just someone who becomes just successful in a monetary way," stresses Suresh, "but someone who makes a real difference. He is probably on that road. It is difficult to say (*what will happen*) but so far he is." \blacksquare



The Young Scientist

FROM THE EDITORS

For being America's top young scientist; for her innovative solution for purifying water; for pursuing an idea that can save millions of lives across the world.



India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012





Science, with a healthy mix of martial arts, music and hugs from her little sister, keep America's Top Young Scientist 2012 going. **P Rajendran** explores the fascinating mind of **Deepika Kurup**, winner of the **India Abroad Special Award for Achievement** 2012.

nlike most adults, many children who wrestle with intransigent problems often lack the maturity, the necessary depressive realism, to know some things just cannot be done.

Which is perhaps why, after seeing children drinking dirty water during her vacation in India, **Deepika Kurup**, then 14, decided to try and "find a solution for the global water crisis."

Oddly enough, she did and, for her pains, the girl from Nashua, New Hampshire, won the 2012 Discovery Education and 3M's Young Scientist Challenge, thus earning the title of America's Top Young Scientist, \$25,000 and a trip to Costa Rica.

In the following months she not only met President Barack Obama in New Hampshire, but also showcased her work at the White House Science Fair.

Now, for those who didn't know it, the water problem bedevils intra-planetary discussions, worries the world's important decision makers, and makes military strategists mull dark thoughts as they plan future water wars.

Deepika Kurup explains her work to President Barack Obama. She won the 2012 Discovery Education and 3M's Young Scientist Challenge for her novel cost-effective water purification system.





M146 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



← PAGE M145

"I learned that one-sixth of the population (*of the globe*) lacks access to clean water. We wanted to help these people. Which is why we got into water purification," she said.

The problem clearly was not the dearth of water, only that of the potable kind. And the usual answer, for a long time, has been to find new sources — until those are depleted or exhausted.

Deepika's solution, though, does not directly invoke subtle diplomacy or getting into battle gear, merely two widelyused nontoxic pigments and sunscreens — titanium dioxide and zinc oxide — each of which retails at about a dollar per ounce, and the power of the sun, which, last heard, still comes free.

Her model improves on something already out there, and is a technological solution: Get water cleaned fast, and at a price affordable to almost everybody.

A technological solution was a natural to Deepika, who was always interested in science and math. Her family encouraged her — and her younger sister Anjali, now 11 -to learn more about the world about them.

"Whenever I'm studying or doing research, they tell me to keep going," the now 15 year old said.

For scientific and mathematical problems, Deepika went to her father Pradeep, a chemical engineer and a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell.

Her current interests lie more in biology than in physics and math, which means dad cannot help much.

"I resort to (*help from*) books and the Internet to get knowledge," she said. "Nowadays... I pretty much do everything by myself."

As she worked at the problem, she said, sister Anjali, then 10, provided the hugs she said she drew much sustenance from, and mother Meena provided her own mix of comfort and common sense.

"Mom is always very supportive and (*ensures*) that I'm not stressed too much, sit in my room and study too much. She makes sure I have fun in life."

'Fun' means hanging out with friends Rebecca Berube and Sophia Jordan among others, and going to the movies.

And for times Deepika felt feisty, there was martial arts, which she has been at since she was 5. She has a black belt in Shaolin temple kung fu and taekwondo.

For a more mellow mood, she relied on the clarinet and the saxophone, at least in middle school, where she was also president of the music honors society.

She did learn Carnatic music too, until her schedule got overwhelming.

Deepika always had an interest in the sciences, which has been of much help.

"In my family, education is very important... Also, I like math. So, my parents encouraged me to enter different math competitions, which I've won."

In fact, in the eighth grade at the Fairgrounds Middle School in Nashua, she captained the MathCounts team to first place in New Hampshire.

She has also been participating in the

The Young Scientist



Deepika Kurup was a fast learner, talking at 18 months and reading by age 3. Her family ensures she has fun too, with martial arts, below, and travelling, above.

COURTESY: THE KURUPS



contests organized by the North South Foundation since she was in fourth grade, including the math, science vocabulary essay-writing and public speaking bees.

In 2012, she ranked in the science, vocabulary, essay-writing and public speaking bees.

Deepika has stuck with the career resolve she made last year.

"I want to be a neurologist because I'm really interested in the brain and how it works," she said. "Human beings are always learning what's around us. In reality, it's the brain that's teaching us, and it's changing in order for us to absorb more knowledge. So, I want to do more in-depth research into the brain."

She seems particularly focused on psychopathologies like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, epilepsy.

"Perhaps when I get older I⁷d try to find a cure for all of these," she said, with no trace of hubris.

She found high school very supportive, particularly chem-






M148 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

The Young Scientist

← PAGE M146

istry teacher Linda Polewarczyk, who threw a party for her before the competition. She also put Deepika before some advanced classes so that she could practice her presentation.

Deepika said she is most inspired by Benjamin Franklin, a polymath who dabbled in science, journalism and politics. But there's also Albert Einstein, who started the work on a theory of everything in physics.

Unlike many of the second generation, she has maintained strong ties with the family back in India.

"It's fun visiting my cousins and my grandparents and my family there," said Deepika, who spends most summers there, while not missing travels to other spots, including Malaysia and Britain. "My relationship with relatives in India is very close because I can speak Malayalam, which is my mother tongue. I can speak to my grandparents very easily — which kind of connects us more."

And the family there takes much pride in her victories. In fact, she said, inspired by her achievements, her cousin Malavika, 12, put up Deepika's picture on the wall of her room.

Deepika admits that people there might think she lacks a true Indian background, that a non-resident Indian is somehow not kosher.

"That's definitely not true; my parents instill that in me," she said, addressing a problem she may find more intractable than the world's shortage of potable water.

Deepika's water-purification prototype

ne gram^{*} of zinc oxide, 4 grams of titanium dioxide, 25 grams of 3M Glass Bubbles and 100 grams of cement. That's the ratio for the material Deepika used to clear dirty water of germs and other organic material.

She knew of SODIS (solar ultraviolet water disinfection), in which the inside of plastic bottles were coated with titanium dioxide, which acts as a catalyst that breaks down water in the presence of sunlight into products that damage the organic molecules, the kind found in germs.

She started with one prototypic idea, but over the summer of 2012, she worked long distance

with Jim Jonza, a scientist at 3M, modifying and honing her model. They dropped the idea of titanium dioxide on

the inside walls of the container since it blocks light, thus reducing the amount of water broken down. In addition, the material tended to leach away, reducing the efficacy over time.

Deepika's later models relied on a rod with a carefully picked mix of titanium dioxide and zinc oxide bound to cement. But finding how heavy cement was, she and Jonza worked in some 3M Glass Bubbles (hollow glass balls), too. The result was a lightweight cylindrical rod that could be placed at the center of a plastic bottle and get

enough direct sunlight to start catalysis in the water around it.

Her final model brought down certain intestinal bacteria down from 8.000 to 50, and wiped out *Escherichia coli* from over 1,000, all in eight hours.

She admits she was nervous during the final presentation, at the 3M Innovation Center in St Paul, Minnesota.

But then she had been up since 4 am - after having got to bed the night before at 11.30 pm.

She had learned only on the final day of two other challenges she had to take, in both working with partners she had met but the day before. And her own presentation was at 4 pm.

While Deepika was talking, one of her exhibits of the 3M solar film she used fell over with a clatter. But since this wasn't *Dancing with the Stars*, that might not have affected her score.

Ultimately, she came through — and while seeing her hold the trophy may have been gratifying to those who knew and rooted for her, if her model finds a market, millions more may be able to thank her for ensuring that the water they drink does not kill them. ■

* For those discomfited by science and/or the metric system, one gram is about 0.035 ounces.





M149 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'Deepika thinks nerds are cool'

And knowing that all this studying will pay off later, she doesn't mind being one, her parents tell **P Rajendran**.

Deepika does not mind being a nerd. She thinks nerds are..." mother Meena laughs and hesitates, searching for the right word. And Pradeep interjects with suitable language: "They're cool." Over the last few years, their home has been

witness to long-drawn abstruse discussions, involving both Deepika and Pradeep.

Does Meena feel befuddled with all the science about her? "I definitely do. I'm the odd one out here. It's always science." She laughs, and adds, "My younger daughter (Anjali) is more like me. She likes to have fun and she's not too academically motivated. She likes playing with her friends, watching TV, going out and things like that...

"I like science, too," Anjali protests in an injured voice. "She likes science, too," Meena repeats, conciliatorily, ever the peacemaker. Her own degree, in home science, is from the Women's College, Thiruvanthapuram.

The couple is product of an arranged marriage, the result of a matrimonial advertisement in the Mathrubhumi newspaper. It helped that their grandparents knew each other as lawvers.

They were married in 1994 in Thiruvananthapuram. Meena came over two weeks later to join Pradeep, who was doing a PhD at Louisiana State University.

Deepika was born in 1998, and Anjali in 2001.

Deepika was a fast learner, talking at 18 months and reading by age 3. By kindergarten she was into Harry Potter, but has not outgrown that, her parents said.

Family friend Joydeep Mukherjee learned how little Deepika thought by eavesdropping on her conversation with his own children when they were just six or seven.

"She was straight and sharp with her answers. And her interests did not always rhyme with other girls of her age at that time," he says. "She was always clear ... always able to hold a conversation at that age when other children are shy and tend to hang around with their own age group.

That difference endured as Deepika grew older and Mukherjee drove them all to taekwondo classes.

When you have a bunch of kids in the car, they keep talking. You hear a very different conversation with Deepika than with other children," he says.

By middle school, when Deepika was in the eighth grade, Pradeep had helped her start the first national science bowl team at Fairgrounds Middle School, Nashua. He was also the coach for the team, though all the students worked on their own, he says.

The team competed at the state, regional and national level, winning third place in the regionals. Deepika captained the team.

Maternal uncle Girish Nair describes Deepika as a "always a very good kid," but also as "very determined, very focused.

"Anything she went for, she would be in the top three or four." he says. "She was very interested in science and



The Kurup family with President Barack Obama.

math. And then when she started this exercise (working on the Discovery 3M project), I did not think it would go to the length it did. I saw it happen before my eyes."



Science has held deep fascination for Deepika from childhood.

"I didn't tell my colleagues (of Deepika's success). The only time they came to know was this year," says Pradeep, speaking of how he basked in reflected fame when John Ting, the vice provost for enrollment, asked him about it.

Deepika exhibits a maturity beyond what many of her peers may exhibit, Meena adds.

"Deepika's not into cool clothes and all that," her mother points out, "She more into studying... She doesn't want to go and party all the time. She thinks (her hard *work*) will pay off later. She has a much brighter future - she thinks like that. We don't have to really tell her too much.'

Girish describes Deepika "as geeky, but not completely geeky. She is friendly to people. She can express herself. She is very friendly and respectful to elders."

Deepika also had a can-do attitude and is confident, he says, describing her as an inspiration.

"I always tell my daughter Diya to look up to her," he said

And as Joydeep puts it, "It generally hits you that this child knows exactly what she wants and what her focus needs to be."



M150 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



'She's exceptional!'

'She had a depth of understanding well beyond her years,' mentor James Jonza tells **P Rajendran**.

Jonza describes Deepika's efforts to get the titanium dioxide into a form that could be stuck on film.

The idea was to get titanium dioxide to break down the organic material in the presence of light coming either directly or off reflectors. ture: 3M GlassBubbles) to the cement, titanium dioxide and some zinc oxide.

The final unit was a set of serpentine tubes with a cement cylinder coated with the catalyst mix in the middle. The water flowed through it, thanks to gravity, and highly reflective polymers and the refractive glass spheres ensured

hen Deepika Kurup's model for killing germs in water made it to the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge final, she was given a mentor, James Jonza, a staff scientist at 3M.

"I was immediately struck by how intelligent she was, how well-spoken she was," said Jonza, a first-time mentor at the competition. "She had a depth of understanding well beyond her years."

Deepika was 14 then.

Jonza saw that Deepika was working on a variation of a theme that relied on using titanium dioxide the stuff sunscreens are often made of — to kill bacteria in the presence of sunlight.

Jonza is an expert on polymers — large molecules with many units and so was a little intimidated about having to deal with something beyond his academic ken — germs.

"I have shied away from anything biological," he said. It's a big challenge for me —mentoring somebody in biology." He warned Deepika about the controls needed, the statistics to be

done. To his relief the teenager came more than prepared.

"She knew so much about bacteria —what kills them — and about different kind of

bacteria," said Jonza, that when there was a problem, he could direct her to a microbiologist without feeling a twinge of guilt.

Deepika also had a good idea about what happened during catalysis in the presence of light, how exactly it damaged DNA, which made Jonza's task even easier and helped him to work on the problem instead of going over the basics.

Soon realizing that Deepika wanted to destroy organic material along with the germs, he pointed out that germs might be easier to deal with than all organic matter.



Inset, James Jonza with Deepika Kurup. He mentored her from the finals to victory at the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge.

give her water purifier to save from a messy death balked at the word 'chemical.'

While she could not dispense with the titanium dioxide, she was trying to ensure that her model was absolutely safe. She tried to get water to flow over a titanium dioxide stuck on a film but that would not work.

Finally she began coating cement balls with titanium dioxide, but soon found that cement would be a little heavy to toss into standard plastic bottles.

With Jonza, she decided to add some some highly refractive — and lightweight — glass spheres (official nomenclathat there was plenty of light to power the process.

"Part of the project was to come to St Pauls (*Minnesota*) and think on your feet," said Jonza, adding, "She did a fine job of explaining physics behind things."

I told a colleague (*who also a mentor for another student in the competition*) Deepika is exceptional; she is going to win."

Deepika justified his confidence in her.

"What's very unusual is a combination of a wonderful personality and speaking ability," said Jonza. "A lot of time we get a person who's nerdy kind of shy. But she's exceptional." ■





M152 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



n my elementary and middle-school years, not many students paid attention to a girl interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), especially when compared to my peers who excelled in sports and drama. In 8th grade, I helped start my school's first-ever science

In 8th grade, I helped start my school's first-ever science bowl team. I was extremely excited because I had always been passionate about science, and I thought the best way to share this was to get others in my school involved as well. Only five kids showed up.

I was dismayed to see that in a school of about 300 students only five kids showed interest in joining the science team.

On the other hand, many students come to basketball and cheerleading try-outs. This, I feel, is mainly because science doesn't have the 'coolness factor' sports has.

Most kids my age want to follow their sports and television celebrities who have rich, luxurious and famous lives.

Recently I've been seeing a change in this attitude. Even President Obama compared Super Bowl winners to sci-

ence fair winners in his 2011 State of the Union Address. Take a closer look at the classic 'sports vs science' example.

The average NFL player makes more than \$1 million a year while an average scientist only makes \$75,000. Now don't get me wrong, I understand that all NFL players have put their heart and soul into football and have practiced hours on end to be where they are now.

But then what about the scientists, who are unraveling the mysteries of our world, to better humankind?

So, why are sports stars paid so much more than scientists?

The answer to this question I still haven't found, but I can say that kids like me are slowly starting to receive more recognition and opportunities for pursuing our passion in science.

My own interest in STEM began early on in my life.

When I was younger, I always loved to build things. I can vividly remember helping my dad assemble book-

shelves and bicycles, and building motorized windmills out of K'NEX and Legos.

I was always curious about what was happening around me, and science always had an explanation for all my questions.

I realized that science is everywhere.

Science has the enormous power to help people find solutions to problems we never thought could be solved.

In the past few months, I have been trying to use science to solve one of our world's biggest challenges: The global water crisis.

I was exposed to this problem at a very young age during my visits to India where I frequently saw people, especially children, drinking dirty water.

About one-sixth of all the people in the world lack access to clean drinking water. In order to help solve this problem, I spent my entire summer vacation developing a green sustainable cost effective system to purify water using solar energy.

I submitted my innovation to the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge and won the grand prize of \$25,000 and the title of 'America's Top Young Scientist.'

From science to the White House

'Now, not only Super Bowl winners are invited to the White House, but science fair winners as well,' says **Deepika Kurup**.



Deepika Kurup at the White House Science Fair.

All of a sudden, I started receiving a lot of attention.

Perhaps it was because I won the \$25,000 grand prize, or maybe it was because I got an opportunity to discuss my science project with President Obama.

Or, perhaps it was because I was invited to the 2013 White House Science Fair to exhibit my invention for purifying water.

I had wanted to participate in this fair (in my opinion, the coolest science fair in the nation) ever since it was launched in 2011. Of course, I had only dreamed that this wish would actually come true.

In late April, when I got a phone call from Discovery Education informing me that I was invited to the 2013 White House Science Fair I was extremely excited and overjoyed.

I met many kids who were enthusiastic about using STEM in coming up with solutions to problems that affect our world.

During his formal remarks, President Obama mentioned

that we were young scientists who dream, create and innovate.

I truly believe him when he said that we are the participants in this long line of inventors and creators that have made America the most dynamic economy and the most dynamic country on earth.

I also got the opportunity to present my project to key administrators, renowned scientists and other celebrities like Bill Nye (the Science Guy), Kal Penn and Bobak Ferdowsi (NASA's Mohawk guy).

Interestingly enough, I was also able to meet NFL player Victor Cruz of the New York Giants. Of course, his salary is still much greater than that of the average scientist, but in some ways, the playing field was starting to even out.

Now, not only Super Bowl winners are invited to the White House, but science fair winners as well. Surely there is a shift in attitude! ■

Surcry there is a shift in attitude.

Deepika Kurup wrote this for the Huffington Post.



Wizard of Words

FROM THE EDITORS

For being a wizard of words; for continuing an Indian-American winning streak and for consolidating a tradition of excellence.



India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012





Snigdha Nandipati celebrates with her brother Sujan after conquering the word 'guetepans' to win the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee in 2012.





hen Arvind Mahankali clinched the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee this year, Snigdha Nandipati, down in San Diego, California, was in mental

Last year, when Arvind bowed out with a misspelt 'Schwanomma,' Snigdha had grimaced in empathetic pain.

As in the midst of her pleasure at seeing him eat up 'knaidel,' it all came back to her.

"As I was watching it, I was recalling the memories of the time I was on stage, she says. "It is still a wonderful experience. I'm still, like, really happy. Sometimes I can't believe I really won."

Gentle reader, cast aside any doubt young Snigdha may have raised here.

For she *did* win – and handily, too – by spelling the final word, 'guetepans.'

She set off with a nervous sigh of a 'G' and, doing her furious double blink, worked her way through that very literal trap - by intent and definition.

Snigdha first began working on earn-





M154 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Wizard of Words



ing her \$30,000 and the associated goodies that came with the award during her pre-kindergarten years, while in the back of the family car.

Her father Krishnarao would ask her the spellings of words on passing billboards and the little girl would try to work out those squiggle clusters into a semblance of meaning.

"I would read and spell out the words," she said, adding that father and daughter soon got into a routine that strengthened her vocabulary.

One word that came up often then was 'design,' a word she may perhaps not find as difficult today.

She passed her first school interview at three-and-a-half, but, within a week of joining, the authorities at the Mission Bay Montessori in San Diego asked if her parents could find a place that allowed young Snigdha a little more activity, given the sedateness of their own setting.

'She's not ready for this kind of environment. She needs to be more subtle and not active,' they told the bemused Nandipatis.

[•] Snigdha next went to the Torrey Pines Montessori preschool, which turned out to be an academic blessing.

"She liked the environment," Krishnarao recalls.

Besides the school being more tolerant of the child's 'irrepressible' (a winning word for Snigdha in an earlier Bee) energy, it also built her observation skills, encouraged her to touch and feel and otherwise learn from her senses.

There she also learned phonics and pro-



G



Left, Snigdha Nandipati at the San Diego Spelling Bee. While her father provided backend support, her mother held her up emotionally. Right, the Francis Parker School, where Snigdha studied when the family seriously began considering a go at the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee.



Snigdha Nandipati at her first spelling bee in the third grade. A good showing there encouraged her to keep her nose to the dictionary, and in the fourth grade she won the Long Beach Spelling Bee.



PIONSHIP



M156 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Wizard of Words

PAGE M154

nunciation, and thus the nascent crystallization of the techniques that would fuel her future obsession.

Though Snigdha's parents had planned to keep her there for a few months till she adjusted to school, they kept her there for two years before taking her back to Mission Bay Montessori.

Snigdha entered her first spelling bee in the third grade. A good showing there encouraged her to keep her nose to the dictionary, and it helped that in the fourth grade back, you know, in 2009 - she won the Long Beach Spelling Bee.

It was dawning upon Snigdha that there was more to this than stringing up letters, thus giving the lie to criticisms honestly intended or envious - against spelling bees.

Words are not just spellings. A spelling reveals the evolution of the word. When you dissect a word into roots, you can see how it was formed," she said as she argued that words give us glimpses into geography, history, bygone cultures, and more.

Once in Francis Parker School, she and her family seriously began considering a go at the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee.

She had already watched Spellbound and Akila the Bee and knew a little of the kind of preparation involved. She thought she had a chance, but her school did not participate in spelling bees.

The family importuned the authorities, and thanks to some help from middle school principal Dan Lang, brought the school on board.

Snigdha was dealing with some serious handicaps. San Diego county only permitted participation in the seventh and eighth grade.

This, despite the 2005 win by Anurag Kashyap (winning word 'appoggiatura,' music to his ear), from the city of Poway, also from the same county. This meant that Snigdha had but two chances to go for a win. (Many other counties do not put such strictures on the number of times a candidate can compete for the competition.)

Also, the senior Nandipatis were not as comfortable in English as the parents of many of the other participants.

Snigdha's father provided backend support using science and his can-do attitude, including his computing skills; her mother held her up emotionally when she despaired.

"I really like to study spelling, but at times you need special encouragement," Snigdha admitted. When she came in 27th, falling to 'kerystic'

(pertaining to preaching), a little doubt may not have been misplaced. But in retrospect, Snigdha says it was all good.

"I learned so much from (*the competition*)," she said

Still, the Nandipatis switched strategies. She had known the word, but her reliance on flash cards had failed her, given that she appeared to be less of a visual learner but one who relied on experience and exploration.

We changed study tactics. We took some words - put them in a test pdf file. So that file had all the info I needed to spell the word... I kept doing the test words over and over





PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: THE NANDIPATIS

On the Spelling Bee circuit, Snigdha Nandipati found inspiration in interactions with past winners Kavya Shivashankar (2009), top, and Anamika Veeramani (2010), above.

again so that it stayed in my mind."

She also browsed through Wikipedia and other sites to learn the words, their history and etymology.

The father and daughter went over the same pdf again and again, keeping aside words she got wrong so that she would go over them again, until the list became first manageable, then negligible, then infinitesimal.

"There were a lot of hard words, I have to admit," she says. Snigdha remembers how the preparation paid off during the semifinals, when she came upon 'compas' (Haitian music, a blend of the Cuban and African).

She asked if it came from French and was told its roots lay in Creole.

Because she had spent time on research, she knew that the Creole spoken in Haiti had ties with Latin languages. So she spelt the word, without adding a superfluous 'S.

She gave the example of what happened to another redoubtable speller in the contest, Nicholas Rushlow who came across 'vetiver' (a fragrance extracted from an Indian grass), which has its roots in Tamil.

"Once it comes from Indian languages the spelling changes, the pronunciation changes," she said.

It was the spelling that mattered, and Nicholas could not use background information to guess it right.

"At that point it is just luck. Each one of the finalists were very talented. They were all amazing," she said.

"As a speller I know how another speller feels. There's more of a bonding," she said. I did feel really (bad) when a speller was eliminated. They were so good and one word had knocked them out," she said.

"There is some guilt involved," she admits, agreeing that, like gladiators amid bloody-minded spectators, the spelling bee contestants understood each other perhaps better than the audience did.

Given the attention it draws, it is easy to unjustly assume that spellings alone define Snigdha.

For Snigdha has been playing the piano for nine years, the violin for three.

She particularly likes music by John Williams (remember, Jaws, Star Wars, Jurassic Park, et al? Though she mentions (William's) Remembering Carolyn, the theme from Presumed Innocent). She also likes Shakespeare and Jane Austen.

"I have been reading Pride and Prejudice and I really like that, she said. "The vocabulary is very rich. What vivid descriptions she uses!'

And yet, she likes non-fiction books, particularly those encyclopedias, including the last print edition of the Brittanica - part of her spoils from the Bee victory.

The eighth-grader does not get to hang around with friends since they live far away. She enjoys her mother's food (all vegetarian, and including "really good Tomato Dal" Dosa and Idli) and is learning how to make them.

And yet, though life has to gone on, she admitted, "at certain times I felt like (life is over)."

But perhaps there's still a little left over for the 15-year-old to do more things

For now, she is preparing for the Brain Bee, looking at summer internships where she can focus on neuroscience (University of California boasts the redoubtable Indian stars Villayanur Ramachandran and Ajit Varki).

Neuroscience is a promising career in the next few decades," she said.

Perhaps there is life after a spelling bee victory after all.



M157 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



sight a Nandipati was good. But, if that were possible, even more than in the case of other contestants in the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee, she could not have done it without her parents.

Father Krishnarao has a degree in engineering, mother Madhavi in commerce, neither of which particularly prepare one to teach spelling bee contestants who need to know roots and origins and histories and — excuse us our excesses here — the esoteric conventions of exotic and extinct languages.

They were there to introduce her to the joys of spelling in the pre-kindergarten days and, like most parents, to send her to schools that nurtured her talents.

Also, like them, they drove her to achievement and console her when low.

But it was in the run-up to the spelling bee that they came into their own.

"We have to cover the whole dictionary. There's no option but that," says Krishnarao, adding that he realized, and Snigdha concurred, that she needed to be on an accelerated path to succeed.

Aware of his limitations in the language, Krishnarao relied on technological advantage.

So he wrote a program that had files of words with different languages of origin in separate files. But each list was pared down to a sensible size by removing words that were obvious – as deemed by Snigdha.

Pushed for real numbers, Krishnarao said though the programming was done in about 300 hours, the whole process took three months.

He then loaded the information into a database that would make flash cards his daughter could study from, the program ensuring that details about the word — pronunciation, parts of speech, definition, synonyms and antonyms — would print on the back of the same flash card if printed on a two-sided printer.

Krishnarao went to the local Kinkos to print out the cards - eight per page. Given that there were 20,000

cards, he printed out 2,500 leaves of paper in all. The Kinkos employee who helped him get them sorted and

cut was baffled by this behavior. 'Why are you printing all this?' he asked Krishnarao, who

patiently explained what his daughter was trying.

'For spelling words, you only need words, why do you need all these? Why do you need all these complicated words? Is she in college,' the inquistor asked, clearly still bewildered.

It took some time to explain the details, after which things went swimmingly.

Still for Krishnarao there was the money factor to consider. "Sometimes I printed on cardboard I (*bought*) from outside — Kinkos gets expensive — and sometimes on normal paper," he said.

But when Snigdha came in 27th in the 2011 contest, failing on a word she was familiar with, the Nandipatis marshaled their resources and gauged their strengths and weaknesses anew so they could come up with another plan.

When they concluded that Snigdha learned less by seeing than by exploration and experience, Krishnarao put together another program.

"I generated 5,000 words in a test pdf, (*complete*) with pronunciation and meaning. She would take the test on the (*software*)," he said.

Whatever she missed was loaded on to a database Snigdha

'When you're an underdog, you have to prepare fully – just like any athlete'

Krishnarao Nandipati worked almost as hard as his daughter Snigdha before the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee contests, reports **P Rajendran**.



could use for research.

Using a variety of sources, including the encyclopedia and online options like Wikipedia, she learned everything she could about the word.

"She likes random fact-finding," says Krishnarao. "That is what gave her enjoyment."

He admits that she had not enjoying working on flash cards as much, but the new approach was just right for her.

After all the work and the preparation, Snigdha was finally ready for her eighth grade push.

"We knew she was an underdog. The other kids (*had been*) coming there three-four times. When you're an underdog, you have to prepare fully — just like any athlete," says Krishnarao, undoubtedly the coach.

After Snigdha's win there was a sudden market for his software: Bee contestants — along with orbiting parents — eager to replicate the Nandipatis' success.

He has thought of putting together an iPad app "so people can listen to the pronunciation. Many kids have trouble reading pronunciation marks," he says, pointing out how some such children, unaccustomed to the correct pronunciation, get confused when hearing Jacques Bailly, the official pronouncer at the national spelling bee.

While Krishnarao provided the push, his wife Madhavi provided the kind of support he perhaps could not.

'If you don't win, Snigdha, it's all right; you're learning,' she

remembers telling Snigdha.

So there she was, providing solid and comforting support every time Snigdha felt low.

Madhavi describes Snigdha as a hyperactive child who has difficulty showing restraint, though she never tries anything dangerous.

As far as interests go, the family gets together to watch Telugu movies once a week, Chiranjeevi films being a favorite.

She remembers the draw of *Krissh*, *Om Shanti Om*, *Taare Zameen Par* and *3 Idiots*, in particular.

"Nowadays she likes shopping...," she began. Then stopped at a muffled complaint from Snigdha. "Oh, you don't like it?!" She then explains: "I roam around the shops. She doesn't like that."

Snigha is close to Sujan, 11, though he is more of a tennis player who does dabble in spelling bees.

Madhavi had her own worries when Snigdha worked on the bee.

"I remember they way I studied.... I didn't like studying in India. We did tests, but we didn't learn even one percent," she says, adding that the bee ensures dedication, discipline, planning, even schoolwork.





M158 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



Snigdha Nandipati with her mother Madhavi and brother Sujan on a trip to India.

'She is pleasant, easygoing and a very smart girl'

To family friend Ravi Meda, Snigdha Nandipati is the female blend of Leonardo da Vinci and St Francis.

Snigdha's grandparents flew in from India to watch her compete. And Sujan tracked her like the paparazzi, after taking the camera away from his father. He shot picture after picture of her victorious moments



Oh wow, this is too daunting a task.' That was what Ravi Meda thought when he first heard Snigdha Nandipati was having a go at the national spelling bee.

He knew Snigdha, the daughter of his friend and then colleague Krishnarao, was impressive, perhaps even formidable: She is proficient with the piano, plays the violin, goes for geography, math and science bees, and is very good at Spanish. She also volunteers at the Sharp Memorial Hospital, helping in the front office.

While Ravi did not mind describing Snigdha as something of a teenaged, female blend of Leonardo da Vinci and St Francis, his mind still balked at the idea of her literally taking on millions of other competitors.

Nandipati told him how she was preparing for the contest and what he was doing to help.

"Since childhood, she has been goal-oriented. She is very methodical and she also knows her area," Ravi said, describing why he thought Snigdha had a chance.

"I'm very impressed with her dedication. Basically, she has got a goal. At that early age it's tough to do that," he said.

While good at her work, Snigdha was not supercilious with those who lacked her knowledge, Ravi said.

With his young children – Akhil, 6 and Advit, 2 – Snigdha



is very patient, he said.

Snigdha tries to engage them, so they should feel cozy when she's around with them. She does basically whatever the kids like - tic tac toe."

In short, Snigdha is not the quintessential swollen-headed brainiac, in fact, she is a very pleasant person to have around, a view also taken by family friend Laxmi Gollapudi.

Laxmi worked at the Sharp Memorial Hospital, where she knew the people in the volunteers' office that took on Snigdha.

"She was pleasant, easygoing — a very smart girl. She is nice! And very mellow. She respects her elders and listens to her parents.

In short, the model child.

Snigdha calls her Ammamma (grandma in Telugu) and her husband Thata (grandfather), perhaps because the families met in a movie theater when Krishnarao's parents, whose ages are comparable with the Gollapudis, had come over from India.

"She'll go to medical school, no doubt about it. She works hard like my sons did," Laxmi said, adding that Snigdha particularly looked up to one of them, Raghu, now an interventional cardiologist.

Ravi said he knew Snigdha was into medicine.

"She has been saying that during her preparation she got to know a lot of medical terms — she explored those terms. She likes the human brain and all that sort of thing," he said. He is full of praise for his friend, too.

"Krishnarao saw the talent and explored (it). He is very methodical, very goal-oriented. He found a pathway for her to explore things. And the kid also (responded correctly. It was) two things coming together."

— P Rajendran

'When you're an underdog, you have to prepare fully - just like any athlete'



She finds the situation in India too competitive.

"There is too much pressure on the kids. The parents compare themselves with each other," she says, before reconsidering: "If I live in India I may think like that."

Given the comparably tough schedule, Snigdha relied on the piano to relax.

"She forgets everything and gets so peaceful," Madhavi notes, adding that even Dale Warstadt, her piano teacher, was a calming influence, "a second mom" for Snigdha.

She finds no reason to push Snigdha to do anything in particular.

"Anything is fine for me as long as she's on the right path. Which direction they go, it doesn't matter. When they go into real life, (*it will be*) hard for them to choose where to go," she says.

True. In Snigdha's case, she may be spoiled for choice.



THE TREHAN FOUNDATION CONGRATULATES THE India Abroad Person of the Year 2012 & all the India Abroad Awardees 2012

M160 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013





'She has the hallmarks of a true champion'

'What impressed me the most was her meticulous approach to breaking down the word she was asked to spell,' notes **Arvind Mahankali**, winner of this year's Spelling Bee.

y interaction with Snigdha Nandipati during the 2012 Scripps National Spelling Bee was very pleasant and friendly.

During the competition, Snigdha displayed several qualities that are the hallmarks of a true champion. She showed very good sportsmanship, and was very modest about her accomplishments after the competition.

While the onstage competition was happening, she exhibited her intelligence with several words, such as 'compas.'

When I came to know that Snigdha came prepared with a victory speech to the finals, I marveled at her confidence.

This was one speller who had a positive attitude to the competition.

The reason for her confidence became evident once she informed the press that she studied for six hours every weekday, and up to 12 hours on the weekend.

With that kind of hard work, she rightly earned her spot at the top. I was impressed by her demeanor throughout the competition.

She was cool and composed. During the oral rounds, she was always cheerful. If she was feeling any anxiety or pressure, it didn't show. I felt that she actually enjoyed competing.

When I heard her laugh while repeated the word 'ajimez' (an Arabic architectural term), I could sense that she liked the words, and that she had pleasant memories of studying the words being asked.

What could be a better way to get the best out of what the Scripps National Spelling Bee has to offer?

Preparation, hard work, and cheerful attitude all worked in her favor, but what impressed me the most was her meticulous approach to breaking down the word she was asked to spell.



The finalists at the Spelling Bee in 2012. Snigdha Nandipati, standing second from right, displayed several qualities that are the hallmarks of a true champion. She showed very good sportsmanship, and was very modest about her accomplishments, says her then competitor and later successor in victory, Arvind Mahankali, sitting second from right.

This was evident from the way she handled 'compas' (a popular music of Haiti). I admired the way she tackled the word, asking pointed and very unconventional questions that ultimately helped her obtain very helpful clues involving the spelling puzzle. In addition to that, she was able to use her good knowledge of word roots to break down certain words.

All in all, Snigdha earned every bit of her championship prize, with her cool demeanor, hard work, and intelligent analysis. ■





For his emphatic dominion on the map of the world; for his wide-ranging interest across cultures and for being a phenomenal contender.





When Rahul Nagvekar went into the National Geographic Bee last year, he was the dark horse. More than the competition, he says he was drawn to Geography itself, an interest that began when he was 3 or 4 years old.

The Globe Spinner

India Abroad Person Of The Year 2012



hile some pride and a sense of accomplishment are natural in most winners, **Rahul Nagvekar**, then 14, who won the 2012 National Geographic Bee, does not appear to be one of them.

It was an educated guess that won Rahul the grand prize — coming when he guessed the right answer to the Bavarian city on the banks of the Danube that was the legislative capital of the Holy Roman Empire from 1663 to 1806.

Unlike in the National Spelling Bee, where contestants can dodge a bullet if someone else gets the question they themselves cannot answer, here both Rahul and Vansh Jain — the finalists in the contest — had to write down the answer, giving them the chance of both being The journey that began when **Rahul Nagvekar**'s parents gifted him a globe pinnacled at the Geography Bee last year. Yet, for the winner of the

India Abroad Special Award for Achievement 2012, the journey is really just beginning, finds **P Rajendran**.

right and thus keep fighting. In this case, Rahul hazarded Regensburg,

while Vansh, the remaining standing contestant, went for Passau.

As guesses, both were reasonable.

Both Regensberg and Passau happen to be in

Bavaria and on the banks of the Danube.

PAGE M162 \rightarrow



M162 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



The Globe Spinner

← PAGE M161

Passau also boasted a big Roman presence at one time and was an important center for all Catholics for a long time. It just happened that the right answer was Regensburg.

The upshot: Rahul earned \$25,000 and a traditional winner's trip to the Galapagos; Vansh went home with \$15,000, perhaps wondering why, given this was his own third time in the final and his background in the Bee, he had not been able to thrash this first-time finalist.

When Rahul went into the competition, he was the dark horse.

The boy from Sugar Land, Texas, had been foiled two years in a row in the state level. He faced formidable competition in 2010 and 2011 at the state level, with the winners of that contest, Eric Yang and Tine Valencic, respectively, going on to win the national contests.

More than the competition, Rahul says he was drawn to geography itself, an interest that began when he was 3 or 4 years old, when his parents bought him a globe.

"Spinning the globe (*there was*) the fascination of seeing the different colors, lands," he says, while admitting that he would have been too young to appreciate or, thus, be inspired by what those mysterious patterns meant. But he was getting familiar with the language of geography.

A year or so later, his parents gave him an atlas. With help from his parents, he began getting an idea about what the maps contained.

Along with that, and some reference books, Rahul got an idea about a world, on the surface of which his home town of Sugar Land was relatively but a scintilla of a smidgen of a microscopic dot.

Rahul had some material, including reference books, to begin his vicarious explorations, even though he didn't know the names of countries and their capitals.

By the time he was in Walker Elementary School's fourth grade, the first year entry is permitted, Rahul entered himself in the Geography Bee - and became the first fourth-grader to make it to the state bee. That was in 2008.

He made it to the state level the next three years, but could not break through.

In 2012, now in the eighth grade at Quail Valley Middle School in Missouri City, Rahul decided to tighten things up.

"I realized I had only one more year (*to participate in the competition*). I realized I needed to learn more. I went through lots of info," he says, adding that he focused on one particular problem.

"I think one major thing I overlooked was the states and provinces of other countries. (*Learning about those*) was very helpful."

It taught him not just about administrative divisions, but

PAGE M164

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Rahul Nagvekar enjoys the outdoors. Even as a child when the family drove on trips, he never tired of them.









M164 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



The Globe Spinner



also the land forms and water bodies associated with it. Besides, there were copies of the *National Geographic* magazine

to pore over, and the Internet to mine more details from. Rahul also participated in local math and science contests, including the University Interscholastic League, and at universities in the area, such as Texas A and M and Rice University. All that math made it easier for him to remember geographical locations, too.

He tried to be as detail-oriented as possible this time around, going over the material again and again and thinking about it. He would make sure he knew exactly where places were, too.

"I looked them up on a map so it was easier to visualize (*them*)," he adds.

And unlike Aadith Moorthy, the Geography Bee winner in 2010, who used a network of details to remember diverse material, Rahul did not rely on specific connections.

He says his parents helped a lot.

"My mother spent a lot of time going through atlases, Wikipedia and reference books to find info. Together, we would find out a way for it to stay in my head. My father would make up questions by looking up *National Geographic* magazines, atlases, etc, and make up difficult questions with few clues," Rahul says, then, considering the idea again, suggests that maybe his mother spent more time on teaching him.

He admits that all that learning did cause the heat to go up at times, especially since he was involved in many more academic activities.

"We did get stressed. Not possible to do something for five years and not get stressed," Rahul says, stressing that his victory was still a collaborative effort.

"When talking to reporters, I said we, not I," he says.

Since he is not into sports — not even the indoor kind — he had to find a safety valve of sorts. That came in the form of Karen Fisher, his piano teacher (He goes for classical music).

Friends at school, teachers, and Fisher were incredibly supportive — "cheering me on, even if they weren't there at the competition," he says.

While some contestants can tell you their future plans till retirement and beyond, Rahul says he prefers to keep learning, and later pick a field to work in.

"Going to Ivy League school is what most people want to do rather than go to a college (*to learn*) a subject you're interested in," he says. For now, he prefers to get some more exposure to biology, physics

and chemistry. He has taken biology already, and plans to take AP biology and

chemistry next year. But, he stresses, it is just a matter of what one likes.

"Even the Geography Bee - I was passionate about it. The best way to be motivated is to have interests," he says.

But, given the 5 to 6 million competitors he pipped to the post, "interest" seems a mild word to use.

But then, Rahul is a mild-mannered lad — until academically roused. \blacksquare





Above, Rahul Nagvekar, left, answers the winning question. Below, On the traditional Geography Bee winner's trip to Galapagos





UNIEST. THE NAGVERAN

M165 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013

A prodigy on their hands

hen Rahul Nagvekar went to Washington, DC, for the Geography Bee, he had reason to feel a little insecure, to not provide aid and comfort to competition snapping at his heels.

Rahul, at the Bee for the first time — and certainly the last time — had cause to be worried, but, unlike

his time worldly competitors, he helped everyone younger than him, giving them learning tips, even at the risk of undermining himself, says Manoj Nagvekar, Rahul's father, who accompanied him there.

Manoj and his wife Urmila Sabnis found out early that they had a gifted child. Before he was barely able to speak he could identity different models from a book of fancy sports cars that his mother owned.

The couple may have been justified in putting down their high opinion of Rahul's intelligence to parental pride.

But even Sandeep, Manoj's brother who came over from Mumbai and who could perhaps be a little more objective, was amazed by Rahul's keen eye in distinguishing between very similar cars.

It perhaps helped that Sandeep is an ophthalmic surgeon.

When Rahul was three, he attended a magic show with his class.

The magician pulled out a flag from his hat and inquired if it was indeed the US flag.

Rahul bucked the trend and said it certainly was not — this one had blue strips and red stars, as no selfrespecting American flag would.

The teachers let his parents know something they were aware of - that they had a prodigy on their hands.

Manoj also remembers how, while at the Crème de la Crème preschool, Rahul, then 4, got bored of his French teacher going over words with the class.

He had got it, and did not know why the point needed to be belabored.

So, when the teacher asked him something, Rahul responded, perhaps a little rudely, 'You're not teaching anything new.'

Probably a little piqued, the teacher asked him the names of

the colors — in French. He repeated them back to her perfectly.

Because she was just (even though justifiably annoyed),

By the time Rahul Nagvekar was 3, his teachers had acknowledged his intellect, parents Manoj Nagvekar and Urmila Sabnis tell **P Rajendran**.

Rahul Nagvekar with mother Urmila and father Manoj. His parents say they discovered out early that they had a gifted child.

had happened.

the teacher headed off to tell the

principal that this four-year-old

deserved something a little more

advanced than her preschool class.

She also let the parents know what

Manoj, who grew up in what was

then Bombay, got an engineering

degree at the Indian Institute of

Technology in Delhi before coming

to do his masters and his PhD at

the Pennsylvania State University.

Urmila came to the US from

Sholapur, Maharashtra, in 1986 to

study at the University of Houston.

chemical engineering and soft-

ware, respectively - both have been deeply engaged with Rahul

After Rahul got first hooked to

Geography, thanks to influences

busy at their different jobs

at work and at play.

And though the couple has been



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: THE NAGVEKARS

from a globe and then books on the subject — "He would just open the maps and atlases and he loved to look at stuff," Manoj said — his family encouraged him when he expressed interest in the National Geographic Bee.

Rahul had academic help from his parents (Manoj hands over the credit to Urmila: "If anybody was a coach, his mother was"), fourth-grade teachers Michelle Sebesta and Betsy Neicheril at Walker Elementary School.

As for planning for the contest, Rahul did that all himself. Still, as his academic life got more demanding,

Rahul had less time for swimming, and so stopped it in his fifth grade. Over time, he got away from basketball, too, Manoj said.

With Manoj playing unofficial coach of his Quail Middle School team, Rahul participated in the National Science Bowl.

The team went to the nationals three times and ranked in the first 20 twice, and the first 10 once. Rahul also took part in several math competitions.

While interested in the sciences, Rahul was also into world affairs, listening to the BBC and visiting the BBC Web site.

As he grew up, Rahul also learned about places around the world that Manoj visited as part of his job at KBR's energy division.

Until Rahul's schoolwork got especially demanding the family regularly went on camping trips to national parks.

Rahul likes the outdoors and particularly enjoyed two camping trips in recreation vehicles in Alaska, but also had fun when the family went to Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Tetons and other places.

Though the family drove from Houston on trips within the borders, Rahul never tired of them, despite the long journeys, Manoj said.

Now, given that he is entering his teens, while quiet, Rahul has shown incipient rebellion, Manoj said.

"We didn't grow up here, so we don't know how things are," Manoj rationalized. "He feels our advice may not be appropriate for the school system here."

When pointed out that many bright and thoughtful children, exhausted by the mundane and the inane, tend to withdraw into themselves — a possibility foreshadowed in the preschool French class experience — Manoj said fortunately Rahul went to the Academy for the Gifted and Talented at his school, and so was continually challenged by the company he kept.

"He finished five high school courses before he graduated from middle school.

In credit requirements, he could finish high school in three years," Manoj said.

When told that Rahul tended to downplay his abilities, even arguing against the need to go to an Ivy League school to make his case — an undoubtedly legitimate argument — Manoj put it down to his son's innate modesty.

For, in his seventh grade Rahul had written a short biography expressing an interest to study at Oxford.

Clearly, not someone who aims low.



M166 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



n a world where the bumptious and the brassy, the bossy and the self-promoting triumph, Rahul Nagvekar may have the chance of a snowflake in a blast furnace. Fortunately for the unassertive winner of the National

Geographic Bee, his mentors know him better. "With his background, the way he was brought up is quite different from other children," says Karen Fisher, his piano

teacher from the second grade onward. "He is a young man with a lot of determination and character. He works very hard," she says, adding that while Rahul had interests, he did not play favorites with them. "It is all

had interests, he did not play favorites with them. It is all important to him." She also noticed that while other children played soccer or while densities the same many forward on advant

relied on other diversions, "he was more focused on education"

This was a problem his teacher Michelle Sebesta also had to deal with.

"I had to encourage him to play outside," she says, adding that Rahul preferred the library or the computer. "He was different from children of his age."

He is still very different from children his age.

When asked about people *India Abroad* could speak with about him, he sent over the names, complete with full names, contact details, the context in which he had dealt with them, even the best times they could be called.

But he also named great mentors besides these.

Patricia Hardy and Marci Deal, the coordinators of the Texas State Geography Bee, and his teachers in middle school, especially Lisa Francis and Lawrence Anderson, who both organized the school geography bee every year he was there.

Francis traveled to Washington, DC, and was there when he won.

Then there was Pete Yackus, the social studies coordinator in Fort Bend Independent School District,

who moderated four of the five school geography bees he took part in.

And Donald Simmons, with who Rahul took competition math club classes, and who let him use time in his class to prepare for the Geography Bee nationals.

Fisher believes a lot of what Rahul is achieving is thanks to his parents.

"His parents are very supportive — very supportive. He comes every week for an hour's lesson and (*at least one of*) his parents are here the whole time," she said, adding that while other parents did love their children, they would go about their lives during the music lessons. "They like to know what I'm telling him to do and why."

It perhaps goes without saying that anytime Rahul plays music in public, they go with him.

The family is into classical Western music, often taking season tickets to attend classical concerts.

"I'm very proud of him. This is a young man who has top

'Rahul always had a thirst for knowledge'

The teenager — who one teacher calls a very special young man — has made a unique place for himself in the hearts of his teachers and mentors, says **P Rajendran**.



Rahul Nagvekar's teacher Lisa Francis, right, traveled to Washington, DC, and was there when he won.

grades at school and still can go into all these competitions," Fisher said.

Rahul always attended the free performances Fisher organized at nursing homes and retirement homes. Because she was not good at it, he would diligently type up the music programs of these recitals, she said, adding that parents, who often accompanied him, would join in, too.

The families were close enough for Rahul and his parents to attend the surprise birthday party Fisher's daughters organized for her.

"When he actually made progress through different levels (*of the Geography Bee*), his father called me long-distance to tell me," she said.

Rahul was always an avid reader, Fisher said, a view that has Sebesta's backing.

"Rahul always had a thirst for knowledge," Sebesta said. "He was always opening a book or asking questions."

And many of those related to geography.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: THE NAGVEKAR

Karen Fisher, Rahul's piano teacher from the second grade onward, adores her student for the fact that despite his talent 'he is not a young man with a great ego.'

Sebesta described Rahul as extremely gifted in all subjects.

"Back when he was in the first grade he was able to present a PowerPoint presentation based on family experiences," she said. Rahul was six then, adding to the chorus of comments about his precocity. "He was gifted beyond his years. I think his ability to present his knowledge to others was unique. Children would ask him if he would be a professor some day — because he was knowledgeable in so many different areas."

Sebesta also ran a choral production at school, where Rahul would have the longest speaking part and open and close the shows. He was picked purely because of his willingness and ability to speak before an audience.

Fisher is perhaps still his biggest fan.

"Rahul is just a very favorite, special young man for me," she said. "He is not a young man with a great ego. He does not think overly highly of himself. He is just a very nice, *nice* young man."



M168 INDIA ABROAD, JUNE 2013



There are only two kinds of people in the world: Those who avidly shun cartograms and those who can't take their eyes off them.

For a young Rahul Nagvekar, a geographical craze caught his fancy early. Therefore, unlike most his age, he actually enjoyed studying geography!

Particularly, studying was never really 'work' for him, but was more akin to having fun.

Studying as hard as a mariner, he secured 18th place in the state bee that year, motivated to do better next year. This was an incredible endeavor, particularly in a state

that produced three national champions in four years.

In May of that year, he was merely in front of his television instead of Washington, DC to watch the finals and to be inspired by fellow Indian American Akshay Rajagopal winning the competition.

In the subsequent years, akin to a countdown timer, he never gave up, relentlessly edging towards his goal, placing 4^{th} , 3^{rd} , 2^{nd} and finally 1^{st} to represent the Lone Star State in the national competition.

At first, contrary to what one would expect, Rahul seemed like he was not really concerned about winning. He just wanted to try his best to answer all the questions fired at him.

In the national prelims, he managed to dodge each question with the grace of a swan until he encountered the dreaded analogy question. In an unfortunate set of circumstances, he answered incorrectly!

However, not allowing this impediment to debilitate his composure, Rahul sailed through the rest of the ocean.

With the preliminary rounds completed, he progressed to the tie breakers with the confidence of a peacock and then to the National finals, competing against seasoned veterans.

He respected his experienced fellow competitors and seemed never truly concerned with competing with them, just wanting to do his personal best.

An unexpected development for Rahul was the format of the new final rounds.

As he had seen on TV in previous years, each participant used to have a lifeline, the ability to miss one question, before he or she became eliminated. However, he was immediately informed that it was no longer the case.

That the finals would be run on a point scale alleviated his fear of being eliminated from missing two questions.

Rahul had always dreamt of meeting Alex Trebek. It was an exciting experience for him to meet the famed Canadian-American TV host in person: a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Furthermore, the day of the National preliminaries turned out to be his birthday, making the Bee his worldencompassing birthday gift!

Armed with only his self-confidence and brainpower, Rahul steered his ship on, finally making it to incognito territory: The Championship round against veteran threetime National Top-Ten Finalist Vansh Jain.

He never expected to make it that far, but nevertheless he was excited at doing so.

Rahul confronted eight more obstacles on his path to victory until he reached the final maelstrom: 'What Bavarian city on the Danube River was the legislative seat of the Holy Roman Empire from 1663 to 1806?'

He was not sure of the answer and he had to make a critical decision: One that would determine the course of the

Quest of a champion

2010 National Geographic Bee Champ Aadith Moorthy on 2012 National Geographic Bee Champ Rahul Nagvekar.



Rahul Nagvekar walked in the footsteps of Charles Darwin, continuing the voyage of victory that Darwin began more than 150 years ago and was picked up by the previous National Geographic Bee champions, including Aadith Moorthy.

rest of his life.

Would he find the Golden Fleece or would he be ship-wrecked?

Rahul wrote down his guessed answer and was genuinely surprised at the result. What an apropos birthday present! The rest is history.

Throughout his preparation for the Bee, Rahul's parents, teachers and friends actively supported him.

When he later returned to his school after his great feat, much to his astonishment, all his friends and teachers were chanting his name and clapping.

His parents were especially thrilled. For the past five years, the Nagvekar family had been deeply immersed in the geography.

The Argonauts' effort to navigate to the national title had finally paid off.

Despite his entry into the limelight, Rahul has remained modest: He humbly states that his life has not really changed since he won the Bee.

Nevertheless, now he is a champion and will always be looked up to as one.

This particular journey of Rahul's has culminated with his trip to the Galapagos Islands of Ecuador.

He walked in the footsteps of Charles Darwin, continuing the voyage of victory that Darwin began more than 150 years ago and was picked up by the previous National Geographic Bee champions, including yours truly.

However, his voyage did not end there. Rahul, who is at Dulles High School, plans to achieve the

ultimate success once again - as a scientist. He is definitely the kind of person we should watch out

for in the future!

Aadith Moorthy is the 2010 National Geographic Bee Champion and winner of the India Abroad Award for Special Achievement 2010.



M167



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Padma or Lotus is the symbol of purity. It's seeds

🗞 Padma-assana 🐠

while the beautiful flowers bloom above the

sprout in the murky bottom of a pond

your mind, body and soul. While some consider it a very spiritual experience, everybody agrees

it's one that is truly incredible.

R

surface, unspoiled by the muddy water. The Lotus also inspires Yoga, which cleanses

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