

# DIASPORA BI-WEEKLY

Federation of Indian Associations NY-NJ-CT. 501(C)3  
The Largest Non-Profit Grassroot Umbrella Organization in the Tri-state of NY-NJ-CT

Sunday / October 11, 2020

Issue: 20

An initiative by FIA

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Tribute to Bharat Ratna,  
Former President Pranab  
Mukherjee



FIA Congratulates Prime  
Minister Narendra Modi  
in his 70th Birthday



Significance of Adhik  
(Purushottam) Maas in  
Hindu Culture

## Navratri: A 9-Day Festival Dedicated to Goddess Durga

By Chandrakant Trivedi

Navratri is a popular, auspicious, religious and cultural festival that spans nine nights and ten days and is celebrated every year in the autumn (September/October). It symbolizes unity in diversity as is evident by the way it is celebrated in different parts of India.

According to Hindu philosophy, lunar calendar and age-old traditions, there are four seasonal Navratri. However, in practice, it is the post-monsoon autumn festival known as Shardiya Navratri which is the most-observed. The festival, which is celebrated in honor of the Divine Goddess Durga, falls in the beginning of the Lunar month of Ashwin.

According to ancient Hindu scriptures, Shardiya Navratri is associated with the prominent battle that took place between Goddess Durga and Demon King Mahishasur. It signifies victory of good over evil.

### The 9 Days of Navratri

Historically, Goddess Durga and her nine avatars - the Navadurga - have been given special significance, and are assigned different names for each day for these nine days of the festival.

- Day 1: (Starts on the first day of Ashwin Shukla Paksha): Shailaputri (daughter of the mountain): Incarnation of Parvati and Mahakali.
- Day 2: Brahmacharini: Another incarnation of Parvati. Is worshipped for moksha and endowment of peace and prosperity.
- Day 3: Chandraghanta: Another form of Parvati.
- Day 4: Kushmanda: Believed to be the creative power of the universe.
- Day 5: Skandamata: The mother of Skanda (Katrikeya).
- Day 6: Katyayani: Incarnation of Durga. She is a form of Maha Lakshmi, the warrior Goddess.
- Day 7: Kalaratri: Incarnation of Goddess Durga, who killed the demons, Sumbha and Nisumbha.



She is the most ferocious form of Goddess Durga.

- Day 8: Mahagauri: Four arms with the fairest complexion of all the Durga Shaktis. Peace and compassion radiate from Her being and She is often dressed in a white or green sari. She holds a drum and a trident and is often depicted riding a bull.
- Day 9: Sridhidatri: Sitting on a lotus, she is believed to possess and bestows all types of Siddhis. Also known as Shri Lakshmi Devi.

These nine manifestations of Goddess Durga that are worshiped with fervor during Navratri, are believed to lift divine spirit in us to help us overcome obstacles and get liberated from unnecessary qualities to be filled with new freedom and purity. All these nine names of Goddesses are described in "Devi Kavacha" of the Chandipatha scripture. Also called "The Devi Mahatmyam" or "Devi Mahatmya" ("Glory of the Goddess") it is a Hindu religious text describing the victory of the goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasura. As part of the Markandeya Purana, it is one of the Puranas or secondary Hindu scriptures, and was composed in Sanskrit around c. 400-500 CE, with authorship attributed to the sage (Rishi) Markandeya. "Devi Mahatmyam" is also known as the "Durga Saptashati" or "Chandi Patha." The other important work that focuses on veneration of the divine feminine is "Devi Bhagavata

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Purana" ("The Old Book of the Goddess"), also known as "Shrimad Devi Bhagvatam" or the "Devi Bhagavatam."

### Different Types of Navratri

We are normally aware of two types of Navratri: Chitra Navratri and Shardiya Navratri. But, Navratri falls four times in a year.

**Shardiya Navratri:** The most popular and significant of all Navratris, it falls in the months of September or October (Ashwin). It is celebrated for nine days, and culminates in Vijaya Dashmi. This Navratri is also known as Maha Navratri and Sharada Navratri. Shardiya (Sharada) means autumn and forms a major part of crop harvesting time.

**Chaitra Navratri:** It is the second most famous Navratri whose name represents spring. It is observed during Chaitra month that is during March and April. This nine days long festival starts from the first day (pratipada) of the first month of the Hindu Lunar calendar Chaitra. It is also known as Vasant Navratri and Rama Navratri. Rama Navami, the birthday of Lord Rama usually falls on the ninth day during Chaitra Navratri. Most of the rituals and customs are the same as followed during the Shardiya Navratri. All nine days during Navratri are dedicated to nine forms of Goddess Shakti.

**Magha Navratri:** This is the Navratri which falls in the winter season. It is more popularly known to people as Vasant Panchami. This falls during the months of January and February.

**Ashada Navratri:** This falls in the month of June and July and comes during the hail of monsoon.

### How Navratri is Celebrated Across India

Navratri is celebrated in different ways throughout India. Some fast, while others feast. Some revere the same Mother Goddess, but different aspects of her, while others revere avatars of Vishnu, particularly Ram.

In the north eastern and eastern states, it is celebrated as Durga Pooja, where the form of Mahakali is revered. In West Bengal, Durga Puja is the most important annual religious festival as well as a social and public event.

Some regions celebrate Navratri in worshipping the more peaceful forms as Saraswati, the Hindu Goddess of knowledge, learning, music and the arts.

In North India, Navratri is marked by the numerous Ram Leela events. In Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and New Delhi, this form of celebration is more common.

At the end of Navratri comes Dushehra, the celebration of Lord Rama's victory over Ravana.

People burn effigies of Ravana. Artists perform Ram Leela on stage.

Navratri in Gujarat is the state's main religious, cultural and social festival. It is celebrated with pomp and fervor by the young and the old, the rich and the poor. The traditional celebrations include fasting and worshipping Navdurga. During the nights, Raas-Garba is held on the streets, on open grounds, in big halls and in private clubs. Professional singing groups with orchestra, regale the participants, mostly girls, women and young boys, who are dressed in colorful, traditional clothes, and dance in circles with rhythmic claps and dandiyas. In fact, Raas-Garba is the unique identity of Gujarat and Gujaratis worldwide.

Navratri is also celebrated in Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir with their centuries-old traditions.

It has emerged as an extremely popular, devotional mega event exhibiting India's rich cultural heritage of music, dance and singing.

### Navratri Festivities in the U.S.

In the United States, Navratri is celebrated nationwide by the young and the old alike.

Whether it's Durga Puja or Raas-Garba, Indian Americans come out in large numbers to mark the occasion.

While Bengalis congregate for Durga Puja celebrations across the country, the festival is mostly identified by the various Raas-Garba programs held at various venues. Hosted at community halls, school gymnasiums, temples and big houses, the Raas-Garba festivities are not just restricted to the Gujarati community; they are popular among Indians from all states.

Renowned singing groups from Gujarat and Mumbai keep the dancers engrossed till late night.

The India Cultural Society in Wayne, New Jersey, was a pioneer in promoting Raas-Garba in the state in the 1970s. Similarly, the Indo-American Cultural Society, under the leadership of Peter Kothari, made Navratri famous by organizing large-scale Raas-Garba events in New Jersey. Another leader in organizing celebrations during the nine nights of Navratri is the Gujarati Samaj of New York encouraging Raas-Garba. Many temples organize religious activities during Navratri as well.

This year, because of the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the organizations have cancelled the public celebrations of Navratri. However, some temples may keep the devotional aspects on a limited basis, conforming to the guidelines set up by the Federal government and the CDC.

# Get Well Soon President Trump and First Lady



The Federation of Indian Associations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut wishes President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump a speedy recovery from COVID-19. Timely hospitalization and a successful treatment by renowned doctors has ensured that President Trump could hit the campaign trail soon. He seems energized and reinvigorated. It becomes evident that the pandemic will affect anyone and everyone alike. FIA urges all to follow the CDC guidelines, always wear a mask, maintain social distance and wash your hands.

# Tribute to Former Union Minister Jaswant Singh



**By Chandrakant Trivedi**

The Federation of Indian Associations of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut (FIA Tri-state), joins Indians worldwide in mourning the death of former Cabinet minister, Jaswant Singh. Singh died of cardiac arrest on Sept. 27 at the Army hospital in New Delhi. He was 82. He is survived by his wife, Sheetal Kanwar, and son, Colonel Manvendra Singh Jasol.

One of the longest serving Parliamentarians in the country, Singh was close to former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. He served in both Houses of the Parliament and is the only person to have served as India's finance minister, foreign minister and defense minister. Singh headed six core ministries of the Government of India, chaired many important committees of the Parliament like Public Accounts, Estimates, Energy, and Environment and Forests and served as the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission.

As external affairs minister, Singh skillfully pacified the U.S. Government after India conducted the nuclear tests in 1998. As the U.S. imposed sanctions on India, Singh was the lead negotiator for talks with the then deputy secretary of state, Strobe Talbott. He also dealt with the Kandahar hijacking case, and had escorted Mulana Masood Azhar and two other terrorists in lieu of the release of hostages on board Indian Airlines IC-814 that was hijacked on Dec. 24, 1999.

Between 2004 and 2009 Singh was the leader of Opposition in the Upper House.

He was the candidate for the post of vice president for the NDA in 2012. He lost to Hamid Ansari who was the UPA's vice presidential candidate.

Singh was born on Jan. 3, 1938 in the village Jasol, in Barmer district, Rajasthan in a Rajput family. His father was Thakur Sardar Singh Rathore of Jasol and mother was Kunwar Baisa. Singh earned his BA and BSc degrees at Mayo College, and later joined the Indian Army as a cavalry officer. Singh served in the Indian Army from 1957 to 1966, and retired as a Major to join politics sometime in early 1970s. In the Army, Singh participated in two major wars: the Sino-Indian war of 1962 and the war with Pakistan in 1965. Singh's experience in the army came in

handy during the Kargil war, where he played a pivotal role in ensuring India's victory.

After leaving the army, Singh joined the Jan Singh and later was one of the founding members of the BJP, which was established in 1980. Singh contributed immensely in strengthening the BJP. Singh was elected to the Rajya Sabha for He was elected on a BJP ticket to the Rajya Sabha five times (1980, 1986, 1998, 1999, 2004) and to the Lok Sabha four times (1990, 1991, 1996, 2009).

Singh quit the BJP in 20014. He spent the last few years ill.

Singh has authored twenty-three books (in English, Hindi and Dingal), of which one was translated in French. Following his best-seller "Audacity of Opinion," he published "India at Risk – Mistakes, Misconceptions and Misadventures," which was released in November 2013. He has contributed widely to Indian and foreign magazines, newspapers and journals on international affairs, security and development issues.

After the news broke of Singh's, condolences poured in from several political leaders. President Ram Nath Kovind, in a tweet, wrote: "The demise of veteran soldier, outstanding parliamentarian, exceptional leader and intellectual Shri Jaswant Singh is distressing. He combined many difficult roles with ease and equanimity. My heartfelt condolences to his family and friends"

Similarly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote: "Jaswant Singhji will be remembered for his unique perspective on matters of politics and society. He also contributed to the strengthening of the BJP. I will always remember our interactions. Condolences to his family and supporters. Om Shanti. In another tweet, Modi wrote how Singh served the nation "diligently," first as a soldier and later as a politician. "During Atalji's government, he handled crucial portfolios and left a strong mark in the worlds of finance, defense and external affairs," he wrote. "Saddened by his demise."

The FIA has had the distinct pleasure and privilege to welcome and host Singh, along with Vajpayeeji, on several occasions. One such event was the historic community reception hosted in New York, under FIA's leadership, on Sept. 27, 1998.

## Kal Penn is Targeting Young Voters in His New Election-Themed Series



Indian American actor Kal Penn wants young voters from both sides of the aisle to watch his new political show, "Kal Penn Approves This Message." Penn is hosting and co-producing the election-themed series, which debuted on Freeform and Hulu on Sept. 22. The first episode is timed to coincide with National Voter Registration Day. The series was created by Penn and Romen Borsellino, who also serve as executive producers, with Dan Spilo as well as Michael Davie and Julia Cassidy of Embassy Row. According to the Deadline report Penn met Borsellino in 2007 during a visit to Borsellino's Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, Iowa, for a campaign event on behalf of Young Americans for Obama. Borsellino introduced Penn and the two developed a friendship and later worked on an event during Obama's reelection campaign.

Penn was a co-chairman on the Obama campaign and served as an associate director in the White House Office of Public Engagement. He was a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Penn, of the "Harold and Kumar" and "The Namesake" fame will next be seen in the CBS drama series "Clarice," a sequel to "Silence of the Lambs." It is set in 1993, six months after the events of Thomas Harris' "The Silence of the Lambs." It tells the personal story of FBI Agent Clarice Starling as she returns to the field to pursue serial murderers and sexual predators while navigating the high stakes political world of Washington, D.C.

## Priyanka Chopra, Deepika Padukone, Shah Rukh Khan, Virat Kohli and Modi Among 'World's Most Admired'



Priyanka Chopra and Deepika Padukone are among the 'world's most admired women 2020' list released by YouGov, a London-based public opinion data analytics firm. The poll surveyed over 45,000 people in 42 countries and territories. Joining Chopra, who is at the 15th spot, followed by Padukone, is Sudha Murthy, chairperson of the Infosys Foundation, and wife of Infosys co-founder, N. R. Narayana Murthy. Murthy is a new addition to

the list. Among the 'world's most admired men' are Prime Minister Narendra Modi at number 4, cricketer Virat Kohli at number 16, followed by Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan. Topping the women's list is former First Lady Michelle Obama, while her husband, former president Barack Obama leads the men's list. Since first starting the poll in 2014, this is the first time former President Obama topped the list over Bill Gates and other political and economic leaders, according to YouGov.

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/international/articles-reports/2020/09/23/worlds-most-admired-2020>

## Vir Das Enlists Talent Agency UTA to Represent Him Worldwide



Indian actor and comedian Vir Das has enlisted talent agency UTA to represent him worldwide in all areas. The multi-talented performer is no stranger to global audiences. In 2017, Das became the first comedian from India to land a Netflix special with "Vir Das: Abroad Understanding." A year later, he was seen on the streaming platform with "Vir Das: Losing It" and "Vir Das: For India," which premiered this January. After making guest appearances on "Conan," Das made his U.S. television debut on "Whiskey Cavalier" in 2019. Das was a series regular on the ABC drama, which starred Scott Foley and Lauren Cohen. The same year, he launched the Amazon Prime Video series "Jestination Unknown," an unscripted reality series where the comedian (who also created the show) would bring his stand-up act to different parts of India. In Bollywood, Das, who was named to Variety's "10 Comics to Watch" list in 2017, has starred in films like "Delhi Belly," "Badmaash Company," and "Go Goa Gone." Das also guest-starred on ABC's "Fresh Off the Boat" and just announced a socially distanced comedy tour, titled "See You Outside," scheduled for later this year in India. Also a musician, his career highlights include serving as the vocalist for comedy rock Alien Chutney, which released the album Mauritian Chutney in 2012.

## Freida Pinto and Logan Marshall-Green to Star in Netflix Thriller 'Intrusion'

Freida Pinto will star alongside Logan Marshall-Green in a new Netflix thriller "Intrusion." Pinto and Marshall-Green play a husband and wife who move to a small town and suffer a home invasion that leaves the wife traumatized and suspicious

that those around her might not be who they seem. Adam Salky will direct the film, from a script by Chris Sparling, who will also produce, along with Kyle Benn via Creator Media Entertainment, Josh Weinstock for Sea Smoke Entertainment, Alexandra Milchan for EMJAG Productions, Matthew Myers for Outlaw Productions and Russell Hollander.

The Mumbai born and raised Pinto rose to prominence with her debut film — Danny Boyle's drama "Slumdog Millionaire." She won the Breakthrough Performance Award at the Palm Springs International Film Festival and was nominated for various awards at the British Academy Film Awards, the MTV Movie Awards and the Teen Choice Awards.

Post "Slumdog Millionaire," Pinto has appeared in several American and British productions, often playing supporting roles. In 2008, she auditioned for the part of Bond Girl Camille in "Quantum of Solace," but lost the role to Olga Kurylenko.

Pinto's biggest commercial success came a few years later with the 2011 science fiction film "Rise of the Planet of the Apes." The same year, she also received attention for portraying the title character in Michael Winterbottom's "Trishna" in 2013. The same year, she was seen in the music video for Bruno Mars' single "Gorilla." Although she was criticized for appearing in the music video, a year later, her performance in the biographical drama "Desert Dancer" received

The following year, she was seen in Terrence Malick's "Knight of Cups," an experimental film that featured an ensemble cast including Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett, Natalie Portman, and Antonio Banderas. Pinto played Helen, a model with whom Bale embarks on a "dalliance." It premiered at the competition section of the 65th Berlin International Film Festival in 2015, and received mixed reviews from critics.

Pinto was among the 100 narrators of "Unity" a 2015 documentary that explores the relationships between Earth's species. She also starred in the Colombian action film "Blunt Force Trauma," opposite Ryan Kwanten and Mickey Rourke as a woman looking for her brother's murderer. Then came Andy Serkis' "Mowgli: Legend of the Jungle," where she played the role of Mowgli's adoptive mother Messua.

Last year, she was seen in "Slumdog Millionaire" producer Tabrez Noorani's debut directorial venture, "Love Sonia," about Indian girls being sex trafficked, also starring Bollywood actresses Mrunal Thakur and Richa Chaddha. She was also seen in "Only," a post-apocalyptic romance film, directed by Takaschi Doscher and starring Leslie Odom Jr. It premiered at the 2019

Tribeca Film Festival.

Pinto recently worked with Netflix in romantic comedy "Love Wedding Repeat" and is set for the Netflix drama "Hillbilly Elegy" from director Ron Howard. She will also star in and produce "The Henna Artist," based on Indian American author Alka Joshi's best selling debut novel of the same name. Pinto will produce the film through her Freebird Films, along with executive producer Michael Edelstein for Miramax TV.

Pinto is also roped in for "Mr. Malcolm's List" along with Constance Hu, Sam Heughan, Sope Dirisu and Oliver Jackson-Cohen. The romantic period drama will be directed by Emma Holly Jones. The script is written by Suzanne Allain, based on her novel of the same name.

## Radhika Apte and Vijay Varma's Miniseries 'OK Computer' to Release on Disney+Hotstar



Radhika Apte and Vijay Varma will play the lead roles in a new science-fiction comedy to be released on Disney+Hotstar. Titled "OK Computer," the series is produced by Anand Gandhi. According to a synopsis, the series "will take the audience on a journey to a parallel world that is advanced and has never been experienced before at any level." Varma told the Press Trust of India that he plays a police officer in the series. "I play a police officer in the future," he said. "It is something that has never been attempted before in India."

Apte was recently seen in the Netflix film "Raat Akeli Hai," opposite Nawazuddin Siddiqui. Varma, on the other hand, was seen in Tigmanshu Dhulia's film, "Yaara," which was released on Zee5 this year. This is the first time, both the actors are working together on a project. The release date of the series is yet to be announced.

## Actor Parvesh Cheena Stars in NBC's COVID Comedy 'Connecting'



Indian American actor Parvesh Cheena returned to NBC in the comedy series "Connecting," one of the few television series set to debut on a broadcast network during this COVID-stricken fall TV season. The series received an eight-episode order

from the network in June, is created and executive produced by Martin Gero, his frequent collaborator Brendan Gall and Universal Television. The show, which premiered on Oct. 8, centers on seven friends in isolation, communicating with one another via Zoom at different times during the pandemic, from the beginning of the shelter-in-place era in March 2020 through election season. The show was filmed using iPhone 11s at the actors' actual homes, with the performers handling their own setup, makeup and other production work. Cheena plays Pradeep, who loves his kids, but is not used to being around them this much. Cheena previously starred as Gupta in the comedy "Outsourced," which aired for one season on NBC. He has also recurred in CW's "Crazy Ex-Girlfriend", CBS' "All Rise" and ABC'S "The Goldbergs."

### 'Delhi Crime,' 'Four More Shots Please' and 'Made in Heaven' Receive International Emmy Nominations

Three Indian series have been nominated for an International Emmy, it was announced on Sept. 24. They are among 44 nominees across 11 categories and 20 countries. Winners will be announced at a Ceremony produced from New York City, on Nov 23, details of which will be announced in October. Nominated among best actors is Arjun Mathur of Amazon Prime's "Made in Heaven," for his portrayal of Karan, a Delhi-based wedding planner, who is gay. The series also featured Sobhita Dhulipala, Jim Sarbh, and Kalki Koechlin in important roles, and was written by Zoya Akhtar, Reema Kagti and Alankrita Shrivastava. Also nominated are Netflix's "Delhi Crime" for best drama series, and "Four More Shots Please" for best comedy. "Delhi Crime," which starred veteran actress Shefali Shah, was based on the brutal Nirbhaya gang rape in 2012. The series is pitted against "Charité 2"- Season 2 (Germany), "Criminal UK" (United Kingdom) and "El Jardín de Bronce" (The Bronze Garden) – Season 2, from Argentina. "Four More Shots Please," is directed by Anu Menon and Nupur Asthana and produced by Pritish Nandy. Starring Sayani Gupta, Kirti Kulhari, Bani J, and Maanvi Gagroo, the Indian version of "Sex and the City," it revolves around the lives of four women in Mumbai, who support each other through the ups and downs of their lives. It is listed along with UK's "Back to Life", "Fifty" (Israel) and Brazil's "Ninguém tá Olhando" (Nobody's Looking).

Last year, Radhika Apte was nominated in the best actress category for her performance in "Lust Stories." The anthology had also received a nomination in the TV Movie/Mini Series category, and "Sacred Games" was nominated in the best drama category.

## M. Night Shyamalan's New Film 'Old' is Inspired by a French Novel



M. Night Shyamalan has revealed the name of his latest film. In a tweet on Sept. 26, the filmmaker tweeted a photo of himself standing in a field during a shoot. "Feels like a miracle that I am standing here shooting the first shot of my new film," he tweeted. "It's called Old."

Although Shyamalan didn't reveal details about the film, Collider reported that "Old" is inspired by a French graphic novel, "Sandcastle," by Pierre Oscar Levy and artist Frederik Peters. Quoting an unnamed source, Collider said Shyamalan had received "Sandcastle" as a Father's Day gift, and he loved the premise so much that he purchased the rights to the novel. Cast will include Eliza Scanlen, Thomasin McKenzie, Aaron Pierre, Alex Wolff, Gael Garcia Bernal, Rufus Sewell, Embeth Davidtz, and Vicky Krieps. In addition to directing "Old," Shyamalan served as its writer as well as a producer, alongside Ashwin Rajan, Marc Bienstock, and executive producer Steven Schneider. The film is scheduled to release in July 2021.

## Yale Indian American Researcher Recognized for Theoretical Quantum Discoveries



Indian American researcher Shruti Puri was named one of the finalists at the 2020 Blavatnik Regional Awards for Young Scientists. The awards honor outstanding postdoctoral scientists from academic research institutions across New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut and recognize researchers in three scientific categories: Life Sciences, Physical Sciences & Engineering, and Chemistry. Named as a finalist in the Physical Sciences and Engineering category, Puri, a postdoctoral researcher at Yale University, has recently been promoted to a tenure-track position at Yale University. She was recognized for her extraordinary theoretical discoveries in quantum information storage and quantum computing. Puri has a B.Tech from the Indian Institute of Technology and a PhD from Stanford University.

## Four Indian Americans Among Recipients of Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes

Four Indian Americans are among recipients of the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, which celebrates inspiring, public-spirited youngsters. Established by author T. A. Barron, the Barron Prize annually honors 25 outstanding young leaders ages 8 to 18 who have made a significant positive difference to people and the environment. Fifteen top winners each receive \$10,000 to support their service work or higher education.

Indian American winners are Kavi Dolasia, 18, of California, co-founder of Reaching Out with Robotics, a student-run program that works to increase technology literacy for underserved youth; Kavi Gandhi, 17, of Pennsylvania, who leads the Yash Gandhi Foundation and has raised more than \$460,000 to help find a cure for I-Cell, a rare, genetic childhood disease.; Madhvi Chittoor, 9, of Colorado, who founded Madhvi4EcoEthics to reduce plastic and Styrofoam pollution and inspire others to do the same; and Viraj Mehta, 17, of Arizona, who develops technologies for the prevention, early detection, and treatment of cancers.

Over the past two decades, the Barron Prize has honored nearly 500 young heroes from across the U.S. and Canada. They have helped the hungry and the homeless, invented life-saving technologies, protected our oceans and endangered species, and addressed climate change, among myriad

other initiatives, and have raised more than \$24 million for their causes.

## Cornell Researcher Dr. Saurabh Mehta and Team Win NIH Prize for Mobile Phone-based Saliva Test



A team of Cornell University researchers, led by Dr. Saurabh Mehta, received a \$100,000 National Institutes of Health Technology Accelerator Challenge prize for a quick, non-invasive, mobile phone-based system to detect infectious diseases, inflammation and nutritional deficiencies in saliva. The NIH's prize challenge encourages the development of new, non-invasive diagnostic technologies important for global health. Mehta is an associate professor of global health, epidemiology and nutrition in the Division of Nutritional Sciences, in the College of Human Ecology (CHE), and the Department of Global Development in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). Mehta told the Cornell Chronicle that "technologies using salivary biomarkers could revolutionize how conditions such as malaria and iron deficiency are identified and addressed, especially in settings where access to primary health care and traditional, laboratory-based tests is limited." for the group's saliva-based test, a small 3D-printed adapter is clipped to a mobile phone and synced with a mobile app. The app uses the phone's camera to image test strips to detect malaria, iron deficiency and inflammation, which results in under 15 minutes. The proposal builds on the FeverPhone and NutriPhone platforms developed by the team at Cornell's Institute for Nutritional Sciences, Global Health and Technology (INSIGHT). Mehta's team included David Erickson, the SC Thomas Sze Director and Sibley College Professor in Cornell's Sibley School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering; Julia L. Finkelstein, associate professor of epidemiology and nutrition in the Division of Nutritional Sciences and in Global Development; research associate Balaji Srinivasan; and postdoctoral associate Bryan Gannon.

## Twitter Hires Indian American Cyber Security Expert Rinki Sethi as Chief Information Security Officer

Twitter has named Rinki Sethi as its chief information security officer to oversee the company's information security practices and policies. In her new role, In a tweet announcing the appointment, Sethi said she will work with Nick Tornow who is the platform lead at Twitter. "So excited to be a part



of the team," she tweeted. In her new role, she will oversee the company's information security (InfoSec) posture, which includes areas like Enterprise Risk, Security Risk, Application Security, and Detection & Response.

Sethi's appointment comes a few months after a massive security breach on Twitter in July. Reuters reported that hackers accessed its internal systems to hijack some of the platform's top voices including U.S. presidential candidate Joe Biden and reality TV star Kim Kardashian and used them to solicit digital currency. Prior to joining Twitter, Sethi worked as vice president and chief information security officer at cloud data management company Rubrik. According to a company press release issued during Sethi's appointment, Sethi was responsible for leading efforts to protect Rubrik's information and technology assets, and "advised on the company's continued product innovations in the security space." She also served as the vice president for Information Security at IBM and held the same position at the cyber-security firm, Palo Alto Networks, as per her LinkedIn profile.

Sethi has also held cybersecurity roles in companies like Walmart and eBay. She has worked as the director and head of Product Security at Intuit. Recognized by CSO Magazine & Executive Women's Forum with the "One to Watch" award, and in 2010, Sethi led a team at eBay to receive the "Information Security Team of the Year" by SC Magazine. For almost six years, she has served on the advisory council for SecureWorld, one of North America's most vital cybersecurity conferences. Sethi earned her BS in Computer Science Engineering University of California, Davis and MS in Information Security from Capella University in Minnesota. She lives in Cupertino, California with her husband and two children.

## Anu Gupta as Chief Strategy & Transformation Officer



Bed Bath & Beyond Inc. has named Anu Gupta as its Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer, effective Oct. 5. Gupta will be responsible for the company's comprehensive strategy and transformation program, including continuing to develop and implement strategic growth initiatives across the company.

"Gupta's recruitment caps off a series of new-hire announcements, pointing to matters

that weigh on CEO Mark Tritton." Within the past month, the company has also named a new chief technology officer, a new chief supply chain officer, and a new store optimization head.

Gupta joins Bed Bath & Beyond from JYVE Corporation, a leading retail technology platform, and talent marketplace. As the Chief Operating Officer at JYVE, Gupta led the implementation of its Future of Work platform, as per her LinkedIn page.

Previously, Gupta was the senior vice president, Strategy Execution, and Operational Excellence at Target Corporation. In that role, she was responsible for a multi-year initiative to restructure Target's product portfolio, digital and operational capabilities, and go-to-market processes. She has also held leadership positions at private equity firm Hellman & Friedman, The Michaels Companies, Inc., and Safeway Inc. She serves as a member of the Board of Directors of H&R Block, Inc.

## Indian American Amazon Employee and Family Charged With Insider Trading

A former senior manager in Amazon's tax department was charged with insider trading along with two of her family members. According to a Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) press release, 36-year-old Laksha Bohra of Bothell, Washington, ran an insider trading scheme in which she, along with her husband, Viky Bohra, 36, and father-in-law, Gotham Bohra, 63, made \$1.4 million buying and selling stocks and options ahead of the company's earnings announcements. Laksha Bohra, joined Amazon in December 2012, as a Transfer Pricing Manager in the company's Tax Department, as per information in the legal complaint filed by the SEC. She was promoted to senior manager in May 2018, Amazon suspended her employment on or about Oct. 25, 2018, and she resigned shortly thereafter.

The SEC's complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, charges the Bohras with violating Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 and Rule 10b-5 thereunder. Under the terms of the SEC settlement, the Bohra family will pay back approximately \$1.5 million in illegal profit, and pay additional penalties of \$1,106,399. In a parallel action, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington filed criminal charges against Viky Bohra. Beginning in January 2016 and continuing through July 2018, Laksha Bohra allegedly acquired, and tipped her husband with highly confidential information about Amazon's financial performance, as per the SEC complaint. It alleges that Viky Bohra and his

father, Gotham Bohra, traded on this confidential information in 11 separate accounts maintained by different members of the Bohra family. The complaint further alleges that “Laksha Bohra disregarded quarterly reminders prohibiting her from passing material nonpublic information or recommending the purchase or sale of Amazon securities.” As alleged, the family reaped illicit profits of approximately \$1.4 million from their unlawful trading in Amazon securities. The legal complaint filed by the SEC says Viky and Gotham Bohra traded in 11 separate brokerage accounts with the same brokerage firm based, at least in part, on inside information provided by Laksha Bohra. These accounts were owned by Laksha Bohra, her husband, her father-in-law, her mother-in-law, and her sister-in-law. “Despite repeated reminders from Amazon that it was illegal for someone in her position to buy and sell company stock, Bohra engaged in a flurry of phone calls and text messages to tip her family off about upcoming earnings announcements,” the complaint notes. The family used the insider information to buy Amazon shares at favorable times, but also to sell put and call options.

## Ohio Pain Clinic Doctor Gets 10 Years in Prison for Running Pill Mill

An Ohio doctor was sentenced to ten years in prison for illegal distribution of controlled substances, health care fraud and violating the anti-kickback statute. Nilesh Jobalia, 55, who owned and operated a pain clinic in Hamilton, must also pay near \$2.2 million in restitution to Medicaid, Medicare and the Bureau of Workers Compensation for health care fraud. According to a Department of Justice press release, Jobalia ran the Cincinnati Centers for Pain Relief from March 2013 to December 2017. It operated almost exclusively as a pain clinic but it wasn't licensed as one, as per U.S. Attorney David DeVillers. Patients were prescribed fentanyl, oxycodone, methadone, morphine and other controlled substances on many occasions without actually being seen by the doctor. Jobalia's practice also billed Medicare, Medicaid and the Bureau of Workers' Compensation for medically unnecessary prescriptions and services not rendered. Jobalia also received more than \$103,000 from a pharmaceutical company for purported speaking engagements about a fentanyl spray, a medication intended for breakthrough cancer pain. The speaking engagements were actually sham programs, though, in which many attendees were not medical professionals permitted to prescribe the fentanyl spray. Usually, Jobalia, some of his staff and the pharmaceutical sales representative

were the only people present at the engagements, which were held at fine dining restaurants in the Cincinnati area.

## California Woman Sentenced to Over 15 Years on Human Trafficking Charges Related to Forced Labor of Foreign Nationals

A California woman who was found guilty by a federal jury last year of using intimidation and abuse to force her foreign-born housekeepers has been sentenced to 15 years and eight months in prison for forced labor violations. Sharmistha Barai, a former psychiatrist in Stockton, and her husband, Satish Kartan, were convicted on March 14, 2019, following an 11-day trial on charges of conspiracy to obtain forced labor and two counts of obtaining forced labor. Kartan is scheduled to be sentenced on Oct. 22. In addition, Kartan was found guilty of fraud in foreign labor contracting. Barai is also ordered to pay more than \$15,000 in restitution be paid to the victims, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California.

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, between February 2014 and October 2016, Kartan and Barai hired workers from overseas to perform domestic labor in their home in Stockton. In advertisements seeking workers on the internet and India-based newspapers, the defendants made false claims regarding the wages and the duties of employment. Then, once the workers arrived at the defendants' Stockton residence, Kartan and Barai forced them to work 18 hours a day with limited rest and nourishment. Few of them were paid any wage. The defendants kept their domestic workers from leaving and induced them to keep working for them by threatening them, by creating an atmosphere of fear, control, and disempowerment, and at times by physically hitting or burning them. Victims flew from India and Nepal to testify. According to evidence presented at trial, the defendants struck one worker on multiple occasions. Barai threatened to kill her and throw her bones in the garbage, backhanded her across the face for talking back, and slammed her hands down on a gas stove, causing her to suffer first and second degree burns on her hands from the flames. The defendants also threatened several other victims to coerce them to keep working, including by telling the victims they would report them to police or immigration authorities if they tried to leave. Throughout the victims' time in the defendants' home, they were deprived of sleep and food. The defendants subjected the victims to verbal abuse and harassment in an effort to intimidate them into continuing to provide labor and services.

## Parimal Garg Named Chief Counsel to N.J. Governor Phil Murphy



New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy has appointed Parimal Garg as his next Chief Counsel. Garg, who is currently the Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor will replace Matt Platkin who will depart the governor's

Office later this month to pursue an opportunity in the private sector.

"I've relied on Parimal's counsel for more than four years, and I consider him one of the sharpest legal minds in New Jersey," Governor Murphy said in a press release announcing Garg's appointment. "As we continue to manage the challenging issues presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, I know Parimal will continue to provide the invaluable counsel he's brought as an integral member of my senior team."

Prior to his appointment as Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor in January 2018, Garg served as a Senior Policy Advisor during then-candidate Murphy's gubernatorial campaign, helping to formulate the campaign's substantive positions. Prior to joining the campaign in August 2016, he clerked for New Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice Stuart Rabner. He previously worked as an attorney at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP in Washington, D.C., where his practice focused on antitrust matters, financial investigations, and appellate arguments.

Garg received his B.A. from Georgetown University, magna cum laude, and J.D. from Harvard Law School, cum laude.

## Satya Nadella Elected Chairman of The Business Council



The Business Council, an association made up of the CEOs of the world's largest, global companies, has added a new board chairman: Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. He succeeds Nike President and CEO John Donahoe in the role. "The Business Council has always

played a critical role in helping the world's business leaders connect with and learn from each other," said Nadella. "While the start of a new decade brings hope and excitement, we quickly saw the world come to a near standstill at the start of the year. This community has been invaluable in helping CEOs navigate and lead through this unprecedented time in history." Joining Nadella in the 2020-2021 Executive Committee of the council is Shantanu Narayen, Chairman, President and CEO of Adobe Inc.

## Third Edition of Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz 2020-21

'Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz' (BKJQ) contest is one of the important initiatives of the Government of India to engage Indian diaspora.

The third edition of BKJ Quiz will be organized online and will have four rounds. The quiz will be held for three categories of participants: PIOs, NRIs and foreign nationals [in the age group of 18-35 yrs].

The first round (Welcome Round) will be open for everyone in the above mentioned categories. Winners of the first round will be given gold, silver and bronze medals in each country depending upon the number of participants.

These winners will be eligible to participate in the second round. The top 10 contenders of the Second Round will participate in the third round (30-participants). The top 7-contenders of the third round will participate in the fourth round (21 participants). Top 5 contestants of the fourth round will be awarded gold, silver and bronze medals with two consolation prizes. These 15 participants will be invited to India for Bharat Darshan after COVID.

The Registration for the quiz opened on Sept. 30, and will remain open till the start of the first round of the quiz. There will be a mock quiz for participants to practice. The dates for mock quiz and the first round will be announced shortly. All the four rounds of the quiz will be held on the portal [www.bharatkojaniye.in](http://www.bharatkojaniye.in).

For more information visit the portal [www.bharatkojaniye.in](http://www.bharatkojaniye.in).