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September 19, 2025  
Chicago, IL.  
Vol. XXIX, No. 38  
[www.desitalkchicago.com](http://www.desitalkchicago.com)

Published by  
**Parikh  
Worldwide  
Media, LLC.**

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**IN CHICAGO**



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**Colorful Festival of Joy 2025 transforms downtown Bloomington, Illinois**

PHOTO: ASIAN MEDIA USA

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Sunset :  
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# Festival Of Joy 2025 Transforms Downtown Bloomington, Ill., With Color, Culture, And Community

By BHAILAL M. PATEL

**D**owntown Bloomington, Illinois, came alive in a kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, and flavors as more than 1,500 attendees gathered on September 7, 2025, at Museum Square for the 15th annual Festival of Joy – Sri Jagannath Ratha Yatra.

From 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM, the streets echoed with music, dance, and devotion, celebrating a 3,000-year-old Indian tradition brought vibrantly to life in the heart of the Midwest.

Organized by the Hare Krishna Community of Bloomington-Normal, inspired by ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), the festival blended spirituality, culture, and community into an unforgettable experience of unity and joy.

The centerpiece of the festival, the Ratha Yatra Chariot Parade, drew inspiration from the legendary street festival of Jagannath Puri in India. Bloomington's Main Street was transformed into a spiritual procession, with a flower-adorned chariot carrying the deities of Lord Jagannath, Balaram, and Subhadra. Accompanied by the beats of clay drums, cymbals, and chanting, the parade united children, elders, and families in a moving celebration of devotion.

The festival opened with a warm welcome from emcees Surabhi and Vikhyath, followed by community leaders including Bloomington Mayor Dan Brady, Police Chief Jamal Simington, and His Holiness Romapada Swami. Mayor Brady symbolically swept the streets in an act of humility, honoring the ancient customs of Ratha Yatra. Chief Simington highlighted the city's commitment to public safety and community partnerships, while Romapada Swami



PHOTOS: ASIAN MEDIA USA

Scenes from the Festival of Joy held in Bloomington, Ill., September 7, 2025.



Attendees, organizers, and performers at the Festival of Joy, September 7, 2025, in Bloomington, Ill.



Colorful collage of programs at the Festival of Joy in Bloomington, Ill., September 7, 2025.

delivered an inspiring keynote on the spiritual significance of the celebration.

The community also honored Mandava Venkateswara Rao and Manasa Rao for decades of dedicated service to Bloomington-Normal.

Throughout the afternoon, Museum Square was alive with interactive cultural activities: henna artistry, sari and turban draping, arts and crafts, yoga sessions, and the "Check Your Spiritual Quotient" booth. The Taste of India food court delighted visitors with authentic vegetarian cuisine, while a free dinner service provided more than 900 complimentary meal boxes.

Colorful performances on stage included dances by the Bhakti Kids, traditional devotional dramas, and a Bharatanatyam and Carnatic vocal recital by Sita Vakkalanka. Classical dances, mridanga drumming, and a closing kirtan brought the crowd into collective mantra meditation.

The festival's success was made possible with the support of partners including Sewa International, whose volunteers have served refreshments at the event for over a decade, along with contributions from local institutions such as the McLean County Museum of History, Visit BN, and area businesses.

Since its modest beginnings in 2010, the Festival of Joy has blossomed into one of Bloomington's most anticipated cultural celebrations. Its move downtown in 2023, backed by Mayor Mboka Mwilambwe, expanded its reach and diversity, drawing visitors from across Illinois and beyond.

As festival co-organizer Prakash Chincholikar reflected, "We have a lot more in common than what divides us." Fellow organizer Poorvi Shah added, "Make sure you participate—that's when you truly feel the joy."

## CITY VIEWS

# Northside Democracy For America Endorses Bushra Amiwala For Congress From Illinois' 9th District

By A STAFF WRITER

**N**orthside Democracy for America (NDFA), a progressive coalition in the Chicago area for the past 30 years, has endorsed Bushra Amiwala in the race for Congress in Illinois' 9th district. Numerous Democrats have thrown their hats in the ring to vie for the party's support in the primaries scheduled for March 17, 2026.

"I'm honored to accept NDFA's endorsement. For the past thirty years, this group has stood for the same progressive values I champion: uplifting people through access to education, housing and healthcare," Amiwala is quoted saying in a September 11,

2025, press release.

Amiwala, who is an elected Skokie School District 73.5 Board Member, went on to say, "The endorsement process was competitive. Many of my opponents addressed the group as well, and voting members had no shortage of ideas and policy platforms to choose from. It's gratifying to see their validation of my consistent track record in the community and their appreciation of my vision to increase federal education funding and champion universal healthcare. I look forward to working alongside NDFA to engage voters in Chicago and across IL-9."

Amiwala is seen as the frontrunner in a crowded field, with twenty candidates running to represent Illinois' 9th district as of mid-September, the campaign noted in the press release.

PHOTO: AMIWALA'S TWITTER PROFILE IMAGE



Bushra Amiwala won her race for the District 73.5 School Board in Cook County, Chicago.



# Indian American Named The First-Ever President Of PETA International

By A STAFF WRITER

Indian American Poorva Joshipura, a member of the board of directors of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals-India, PETA India, has been named the first-ever President of PETA International.

Joshipura, who is the author of *For a Moment of Taste: How What You Eat Impacts Animals, the Planet, and Your Health*—was brought up in Suffolk, Virginia. Her book was the first-ever in-depth exposé of how animals commonly used for meat, eggs, and dairy are treated in India.

Now, as the first-ever president of PETA International, Joshipura will be overseeing its projects and operations in Europe, Asia, and parts of the Middle East.

After starting her career at PETA's headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia, Joshipura has championing the cause of animals for more than 25 years in countries worldwide through provocative protests, undercover investigations, and strategic work with corporate and government leaders.

"Years ago, in a slaughterhouse where I was recording how badly cows are killed for leather, I locked eyes with a frightened calf who was pinned to the ground, aware of his pending death, and at that moment vowed to dedicate my life to animal liberation," Joshipura is quoted saying in a press release September 10, 2025.. "For more than 25 years with PETA entities, from undercover investigator to leading international campaigns, I've been true to that pledge."

Born in Philadelphia to parents from Gujarat, India, Joshipura was raised in Suffolk and graduated magna cum laude from Old Dominion University with a degree in psychology.



Poorva Joshipura

She joined PETA as an intern in its Norfolk office in 1999. Her more "public-facing" work, as PETA calls it, includes being jailed for disrupting a New York fashion show in protest of Michael Kors' use of fur (which he later banned); burned in effigy by an angry mob after she helped achieve an Indian Supreme Court ban on the use of bulls for entertainment; and "caged" in Nairobi to

highlight the plight of chickens killed for food.

As president, Joshipura's priorities include using technology and scientific innovation to eliminate animal exploitation, including replacing elephants allegedly chained in Asian temples with mechanical ones, and using animatronic animals to help educate and encourage children's natural empathy toward animals, PETA noted in its press release. She also aims to educate the public about what PETA says, is "the inextricable link between animal exploitation and pandemics, antibiotic resistance, and the climate catastrophe."

"I'm deeply honored to help shape the global future of animal liberation and put compassion on every map in my new role," Joshipura said. "I will seek to harness technological solutions for animal protection, apply cultural intelligence to advance liberation, and promote the unshakable truth that how we treat animals defines us."

PETA counts among Joshipura's achievements — convincing Mercedes-Benz to be the first automobile retailer to offer leather-free interiors by special order; stopping a US-based laboratory-animal supplier from setting up a facility in Europe; leading successful efforts to ban testing cosmetics and their ingredients on animals in India; and ending the use of horse-drawn carriages in Petra and Mumbai. She is also the author of *Survival at Stake: How Our Treatment of Animals Is Key to Human Existence*.

"Poorva has been an unstoppable force in the animal liberation movement," says PETA Founder Ingrid Newkirk. "Her extraordinary drive and determination are invaluable in extending our vital efforts to help animals everywhere."

## TIME Magazine Names Indian American 2025 Kid Of The Year

By TIME PRESS RELEASE

TIME and TIME for Kids revealed the 2025 Kid of the Year, on September 9, 2025, "recognizing one exceptional young person making the world a brighter place."

The choice this year is "17-year-old digital defender Tejasvi Manoj from Frisco, Texas."

Manoj is recognized for her service work teaching digital literacy to protect seniors from cybercrime.

"I started volunteering in sixth grade...I think it's really important; if you're lucky yourself, you want to make sure other people feel loved and lucky too. It just makes me feel really happy, knowing that I can make a difference," Manoj told TIME.

TIME's Senior Writer Jeffrey Kluger praising Manoj's work, is quoted saying in the press release, "The unnamed cyber criminals trying to scam seniors out of their money got more than they bargained for when they targeted Tejasvi Manoj's grandfather back in February, 2024...Tejasvi, then a 16-year-old junior...began researching how common such scams—especially ones targeting older Americans—are. Very common, it turns out...Within the year she had built and launched Shield Seniors, a website and, soon, mobile app, designed to educate the 60-plus demographic about what online scams look like, analyze suspicious emails and messages

users upload, and, if the communications prove fraudulent, provide links to report them."

"At TIME, we regularly profile world leaders and next-generation changemakers. Kid of the Year elevates the very youngest, recognizing their accomplishments as they chart a course toward a brighter future," said TIME for Kids Editor-in-Chief Andrea Delbanco. "We're giving kids a platform, and watching them use it to inspire other young people to follow in their footsteps."

To select the 2025 Kid of the Year, TIME editors and writers conducted research to identify stand-out kids in the U.S. ages 8-17. For the first-time, TIME also evaluated submissions to the TIME for Kids Service Stars program, which honors young leaders who are making the world a brighter place. Service Stars, developed in partnership with The Allstate Foundation, supports all young people to serve and improve communities and shines a light on kids who are positively impacting others.

The 2025 TIME Kid of the Year is made possible by exclusive partner The Allstate Foundation, a nonprofit that is committed to empowering youth ages 5 to 25 to serve and improve communities.

The 2025 Kid of the Year is available on time.com now and will appear in the September 29 issue of TIME, available on newsstands on Friday, September 19. It will also be featured in the TIME for Kids Service Stars special issue, in classrooms and online at timeforkids.com starting September 25.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ZERR MULLISH FOR TIME

TIME Kid of the Year shows Tejasvi Manoj on Front Page.



# President Trump Condemns Gruesome Beheading Of Chandra Nagamallaiah

BY A STAFF WRITER

**P**resident Donald Trump made a strong statement condemning the recent killing of Chandra Nagamallaiah, a hotel manager September 10, in Dallas, TX, by an employee of the establishment.

Praising Nagamallaiah as “a well respected person in Dallas, the President posted the following statement on his social media platform, Truth Social:

**I am aware of the terrible reports regarding the murder of Chandra Nagamallaiah, a well respected person in Dallas, Texas, who was brutally beheaded, in front of his wife and son, by an ILLEGAL ALIEN from Cuba who should have never been in our Country. This individual was previously arrested for terrible crimes, including child sex abuse, grand theft auto, and false imprisonment, but was released back into our Homeland under incompetent Joe Biden because Cuba did not want such an evil person in their Country. Rest assured, the time for being soft on these Illegal Immigrant Criminals is OVER under my watch! Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Border**



**Czar Tom Homan, and many others in my Administration, are doing an incredible job in, MAKING AMERICA SAFE AGAIN. This criminal, who we have in custody, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law. He will be charged with murder in the first degree!**



Nagamallaiah, 50, a motel manager in Dallas, Texas, was killed on the morning of Wednesday, Septem-

ber 10, 2025, by Yordanis Cobos-Martinez, 37, an employee who was cleaning a room along with another employee who was a witness to the horrific crime at Downtown Suites motel. Nagamallaiah came to the room to tell the workers not to use a broken washing machine.

Cobos-Martinez, according to news reports quoting from the affidavit, became angry at not being addressed directly by Nagamallaiah, and returned to the room with a machete with which he began slashing the hotel manager. The latter ran screaming to the motel office where his wife and son were. The killer pushed aside the mother and son, beheaded Nagamal-

laiah and dumped his head outside in a dumpster.

## Congressman Subramanyam Condemns Hate Crimes Against Hindus, Demands Action

BY A STAFF WRITER

**C**ongressman Suhas Subramanyam, D-Virginia, condemned violence against Hindus and their faith establishments, in a speech September 9, 2025, on the House floor, calling for a comprehensive response. (<https://youtu.be/sYxyZDkOk84>)

“Hate has no place in our communities and that’s why I condemn the recent hateful attacks on Hindu temples and mandirs all across the country,” Rep. Subramanyam said, listing specific incidents over the last year. “From the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Indiana to the Shri Radha Krishna temple in Utah, sacred spaces for faith communities have been targeted with acts of hate, vandalism and desecration,” he added.

According to the Indian American lawmaker, “These are not isolated incidents. It’s part of a rise in violence. It’s a part of a rise in division in our country. It’s not just happening to temples. It’s happening to all places of worship.”

The Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), in its press release, thanked Subramanyam for drawing attention to the issue.

“In just 18 months we have seen 7 physical attacks - mostly vandalism under the cover of “anti-India speech,” targeting temple after temple. Even temples



Congressman Suhas Subramanyam speaking on the House floor September 9, 2025, drawing attention to hate crimes against Hindu Americans.

founded and run by Hindus from the Caribbean and those born and brought up in the US are not safe-making it clear this is religious bigotry masquerading as political speech,” CoHNA said.

It also faulted law enforcement, alleging it had not taken visible steps to tackle the issue, nor study the problem.

“This absence of action, is the most glaring example of Hinduphobia,” CoHNA claimed, urging other lawmakers to also raise the issue and demand action.

CoHNA also provided a “broader” list of anti Hindu attacks which are available on

its website at [cohna.org](http://cohna.org). Following is the list it provided in its press release.

- IN-Aug 10, 2025: Vandalized with messages like Death to Hindus, Death to India’
- UT-June 18, 2025: Gunshots fired at Krishna Temple near Spanish Fork
- CA-March 8, 2025: California’s Largest Hindu Temple near LA Vandalized
- MN-Dec 20, 2024: Man Threatens Sri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple Complex
- CA-Sept 25, 2023, CA: APS Swaminarayan Mandir in Sacramento Vandal-



### Appeal for Peace

We are deeply saddened that on the night of Aug 10, 2025, the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Greenwood, IN was desecrated and vandalized with a message of hate and intolerance. We have reported this hate crime to law enforcement.

We sincerely appreciate the support of neighbors, public officials, community members, and leaders against all forms of hate. We will continue to pray for peace and harmony amongst people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

Om shanti shanti shanti.



BAPS issued an Appeal for Peace.





Published weekly  
Founded in 1997  
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# Commentary: PM Modi's 'Next-Gen' GST: A New Dawn For India's Economy

By TARUN CHUG

In a decisive and visionary move, our government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has delivered on its promise of a "double Diwali" for the nation with the landmark approval of Next-Generation GST reforms. This sweeping overhaul, which simplifies India's tax system into a modern two-tiered structure, is a testament to the Prime Minister's steadfast commitment to citizen welfare and economic growth. Far more than a technical adjustment, these reforms represent a bold reset of India's fiscal architecture, one that is politically astute, economically potent, and socially inclusive. Industry bodies such as the Confederation of Indian Industry have hailed this move as a visionary step that empowers businesses while directly benefiting consumers through a simpler, transparent, and growth-oriented tax regime. Citizens will feel the impact in their household budgets, while businesses will gain from predictability and reduced compliance burdens.

The idea of GST itself has a long history. It was first proposed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee's NDA government in 2000 when an empowered committee of state finance ministers was established to reform the sales tax regime. But the reform languished for years without serious follow-through. It was only with Prime Minister Modi's conviction and consensus-building approach that the dream of "One Nation, One Tax" finally turned into reality. Within two years of being tabled in Parliament in 2014, the GST-related 101st Constitutional Amendment was passed and ratified by the states, paving the way for the midnight launch of GST on July 1, 2017. This reform stitched together India's fragmented indirect tax system, subsuming more than 17 taxes and 13 cesses into a single system. It eliminated the cascading tax-on-tax effect, eased interstate trade, and created a unified national market, fulfilling Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's dream of building an economically integrated India.

By its 8th anniversary on July 1, 2025, GST had proven its worth. India's taxpayer base expanded from 66.5 lakh in 2017 to 1.51 crore in 2025. Revenues doubled in just four years, touching Rs. 22.08 lakh crore in FY 2024-25, with an average monthly collection of over Rs. 2 lakh crore compared to just Rs. 82,000 crore in 2017-18. Compliance improved, evasion dropped, and MSMEs found formalization easier. A Deloitte survey revealed that 85 percent of respondents, including small enterprises, expressed satisfaction with GST, marking it as one of the most widely accepted structural reforms of the last decade.

The recent reform marks the most ambitious rationalization since its introduction. At the 56th GST Council meeting, a historic consensus was reached to collapse the complex multi-slab structure into just two principal rates: 5 percent for essentials and 18 percent as the standard rate. Certain necessities have been exempted entirely while a special 40 percent rate will continue for sin and super-luxury goods. This new structure will be implemented from 22nd September 2025 and is nothing less than a re-engineering of the Indian tax system. Nearly 99 percent of items previously under the 12 percent slab are moving to 5 percent, and about 90 percent of goods taxed at 28 percent will now fall under 18 percent. This reform is not tinkering at the margins but a wholesale simplification that aligns India's tax regime with global best practices, ensuring long-term stability, predictability, and direct relief to citizens.

The timing is as significant as the substance. India today faces global trade headwinds ranging from volatile oil markets to tariff wars. Instead of retreating, the government has leaned into India's biggest strength, its



PHOTO: NARENDRA MODI/NEWS

robust domestic consumption engine which makes up 61 percent of GDP. The GST cuts are designed as a consumption-led booster shot to increase household disposable income, drive demand, and cushion external shocks. Rolling out just ahead of the festive season is deliberate and strategic, ensuring immediate benefits to consumers and stimulating spending during India's peak demand cycle. The virtuous cycle that follows—higher consumption leading to higher production, larger tax base, and stronger revenues—will sustain the broader growth story.

Economic projections validate this optimism. NITI Aayog, along with independent institutions such as EY, Standard Chartered, and HSBC, places India's GDP growth this fiscal at 6.5 percent, consistent with government targets. The incremental impact of GST reforms, while modest in percentage points, is highly directional and underpins medium-term stability. The inflation impact is equally critical. With GST reduced on nearly 300 essential items, the State Bank of India projects headline CPI inflation will moderate by 25 to 30 basis points this year, with further relief of 40 to 45 basis points from rationalization of services. Together, this means inflation easing by 65 to 75 basis points over two years, a substantial relief for citizens that translates into more affordable living.

For households, the relief is visible and immediate. A wide array of daily-use essentials has shifted to the 5 percent slab or nil rate. Soaps, toothpaste, hair oil, shampoos, and shaving products are now cheaper. Packaged food like namkeens, biscuits, chocolates, jams, pickles, juices, and coffee have all dropped in rate, as have kitchen staples like butter, ghee, cheese, sugar, and dry fruits. Educational supplies such as exercise books, pencils, crayons, erasers, maps, and atlases have been brought to zero tax, making education more affordable for families. For the aspirational middle class, consumer durables such as air conditioners, refrigerators, dishwashers, and large TVs have shifted from 28 percent to 18 percent, while services like hotels, gyms, salons, and yoga sessions are now at 5 percent, boosting both affordability and sectors like hospitality and wellness.

Sectors across the economy have been targeted with precision. Farmers benefit directly with tractors, harvesters, and irrigation equipment all moved down to 5 percent, reducing their input costs and stabilizing food prices. Medicines and life-saving drugs for cancer and rare diseases are now fully exempt, while all other medicines including Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha are taxed at just 5 percent. Diagnostic kits, thermometers, and essential medical devices have also seen major reductions. For households, health and life insurance premiums have been exempted entirely, advancing the government's long-term vision of Mission Insurance for All by 2047. Automobiles are another big winner, with two-wheelers up to 350cc and small cars now taxed at 18

percent instead of 28 percent. Three-wheelers, passenger vehicles, and auto components have all seen similar reductions, providing a much-needed push to both domestic demand and exports.

MSMEs, textiles, and handicrafts stand to gain immensely. Labour-intensive sectors like man-made fibres and artisan goods see duty corrections and lower rates, improving competitiveness and preserving rural livelihoods. Renewable energy adoption too will accelerate as solar heaters, cookers, bamboo flooring, and eco-friendly building materials now fall under the 5 percent slab, aligning fiscal incentives with India's COP climate commitments. Construction inputs like cement have been cut from 28 percent to 18 percent, reducing costs for housing and infrastructure, while materials like granite, particle boards, and wooden pallets have also seen reductions, easing the burden on small builders and the construction industry.

The reform is not just about rate cuts but about fixing long-standing structural issues. Inverted duty structures, which trapped working capital and hurt MSMEs, are being corrected. A new technology-driven GST registration scheme ensures approval within three days for 96 percent of low-risk applicants, cutting red tape for small businesses and startups. Exporters, who previously faced months-long delays in receiving refunds, will now be reimbursed within seven days under a new enhanced mechanism. The introduction of E-Way Bill 2.0 with real-time synchronization guarantees zero downtime for logistics operators, strengthening India's digital backbone for trade and transport.

Politically, the reforms showcase the Modi government's ability to build consensus. Despite diverse political and fiscal interests, the GST Council unanimously backed the new framework, a true reflection of cooperative federalism in action. Economically, it demonstrates the maturity of India's institutions to create a predictable, simple, and globally competitive tax system. Socially, it underscores the government's faith in people-led growth, where every rupee saved in household budgets can fuel national prosperity.

From Vajpayee ji's pioneering idea in 2000 to Prime Minister Modi's historic rollout in 2017 and now this bold rationalization in 2025, GST embodies India's journey of economic integration. It is the story of moving from a fragmented tax system to a unified and modern regime aligned with the dream of Viksit Bharat, a developed India. The Next-Gen GST is not just about simplifying tax rates, it is about reducing household burdens, spurring industry, encouraging MSMEs, empowering farmers, and making healthcare affordable. It is about stability, predictability, and fairness in taxation. Above all, it is about building a nation where growth and prosperity are shared by all citizens.

These reforms will be remembered as a landmark in India's economic journey. They consolidate eight years of progress, double down on citizen welfare, and set the foundation for a stronger, more resilient economy. By simplifying processes, reducing compliance burdens,

and easing the cost of living, the Modi government has once again placed the common man at the heart of reform. The Next-Gen GST is not merely a fiscal reset but a historic step that will leave behind a lasting legacy of affordability, inclusivity, and prosperity for generations to come.

**The author is the National General Secretary of Bharatiya Janata Party.**



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# Gujarati Literary Academy Of North America Hosts Successful 13th Biennial Convention

By A Staff Writer

The Gujarati Literary Academy of North America (GLAONA) hosted its 13th Biennial Convention starting Friday, September 5, and ending September 7, at the Sheraton Edison Hotel. The three-day event brought together hundreds of community members, writers, artists, and dignitaries who celebrated Gujarati literature and culture in the diaspora, a press release from organizers said.

The convention commenced September 5, with a prayer by Darshana Zala, followed by a warm welcome from President of GLAONA Ashish Desai, and Gini Malavia, and a guest introduction by Babu Suthar.

The inaugural session featured an inspiring keynote address by Chief Guest Dr. Khevana Desai from Mumbai.

An awards ceremony was also held the same day conducted by Apexa Dave, where:

The Shri Chunilal Velji Mehta Award 2025 was conferred upon Kishor Desai,

The Shri Ramesh Parekh Award 2025 was presented to Navin Shah, and

The very first Lifetime Achievement Award 2025 was bestowed upon eminent diaspora poet Panna Naik.

The concluding session attended by some 175 people was "An Evening with Poet, Speaker, Storyteller, multitalented Shri Dr. Raees Maniar," moderated by Gini Malavia.

Saturday began with a thought-provoking session "Hu ane Maru Sarjan" (Me and My Creation), moderated by Natwar Gandhi, featuring diaspora and Gujarat-based authors including Madhu "Rye" Thaker, Dr. Nimitt Oza, Jayesh Bhogayata, Nilesh Rana, Ashok Vidas, and Suchi Vyas.

This was followed by a Granth Vimo-chan (Book Release) session, led by Gini



PHOTOS: GLAONA

From left, Manilal Patel, Madhu Rai, Jayesh Bhogayata, Dr. Raees Maniar, Dr. Nimitt Oza, Krushna Dave, Anil Chavda, poets and authors on stage at the Gujarati Literary Academy of North America's 13th Biennial Convention held in Edison, NJ.



Dr. Nimitt Oza, right, a poet who spoke at the event.



Ashish Desai, president of the Gujarati Literary Academy of North America.

Malavia, with contributions from Manilal H. Patel, Panna Naik, Madhu Rye, Prarthana Jha, Rekha Sindhal, Jayshree Merchant, Arvind Amin, along with the announcement of numerous other diaspora authors' recent publications.

In the afternoon, the convention

hosted "21st Century Challenges in Literature," chaired by Dr. Khevana Desai, with speakers including Dr. Nimitt Oza, Jayesh Bhogayata, Babu Suthar, Arpan Yagnik, and Manilal H. Patel.

The poetry session "Mari Kavita, Mari Olakh" (My Poetry, My Identity), was mod-

erated by Jayesh Bhogayata, and featured recitations by Raees Maniar, Krushna Dave, Anil Chavda, Jayshree Merchant, Asharaf Dabawala, and Madhumati Mehta.

The evening concluded with Vachikam (dramatic readings), coordinated by Prarthana Jha Bhatt, including "Chatushkon" (an adaptation of A. R. Gurney's play by Madhu Rye) performed by Vijay Thakkar and Durga Bhatt, and "Clean Bold" written and performed by Dr. Khevana Desai.

On Sunday, the final day, began with a Reflections session, moderated by Babu Suthar, with insightful contributions from Rambhai and Bhanuben Gadhavi, Manilal H. Patel, Dr. Nimitt Oza, Jayesh Bhogayata, Raees Maniar, Krushna Dave, and Durga Bhatt.

This was followed by a lively Diaspora Poetry Reading, led by Raees Maniar, featuring Mona Nayak, Anil Chavda, Prarthana Jha, Asharaf Dabawala, Jayshree Merchant, Nilesh Rana, and Madhumati Mehta.

## CULTURAL & COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to literary sessions, the convention also showcased Gujarati Sugam Sangeet performances by Krushanu and Diti Majmundar from Washington, D.C.

Attendees praised the convention for its diverse programming, warm hospitality, and seamless organization, the press release said. "This convention is not just about literature—it's about celebrating our roots, building bridges across generations, and keeping Gujarati alive in our hearts," said Ashish Desai, President of GLAONA.

GLAONA extended its gratitude to all partners, including ITV Gold (Parikh Worldwide Media), sponsors, volunteers, authors, poets, and community who together made the 13th Convention a success.

## FDA Official Vinay Prasad Regains Chief Medical Officer Title

By Rachel Cohrs Zhang

Top Food and Drug Administration regulator Vinay Prasad has regained his role as the agency's chief medical and scientific officer after he abruptly departed and then came back to the agency, according to an update on the agency's website Thursday, September 11, 2025.

Prasad returned as the agency's top regulator for vaccines and gene therapies as head of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research on Aug. 9. The additional chief medical officer role expands his influence and includes representing the agency's perspective on medical and scientific matters. The position is also listed as having a leadership role in choosing which companies will benefit from a program to accelerate some drug reviews if they align with the agency's priori-

ties.

Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson Rich Danker confirmed that Prasad had resumed his position as chief medical and scientific officer.

Prasad unexpectedly left the agency on July 29 after a conservative backlash in part over his handling of safety issues with Sarepta Therapeutics Inc.'s gene therapy. Laura Loomer, an ally of President Donald Trump, had said he was not aligned with the president's agenda and aggressively lobbied against his return.

Though Prasad was in his role for less than three months before his ouster, he managed to stir controversy at the agency. He demanded more studies of Covid vaccines, overruled his own scientific review staff and took a confrontational approach that gave critics fodder to claim he could stymie scientific innovation.

-BLOOMBERG




PHOTO: FDA.GOV

Vinay Prasad, FDA's Director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research.




ASTROLOGY




This week for you

By DR. PREM KUMAR SHARMA


E-mail: psharma@premaastrologer.com Contact No - 01147033152/40532026




**ARIES:**Your financial condition looks promising, especially in the early part of the week, with profits surpassing expectations. However, property-related matters within the family may create unease, so handle them with patience. Try not to withdraw into yourself; maintaining open connections with friends and relatives will help. Jumping into a rebound relationship may not be wise at this stage. Students exploring options abroad must carefully consider the financial responsibilities involved before committing.




**TAURUS:** Expert advice can guide you closer to achieving your fitness aspirations. Speaking confidently may help you present old ideas in a refreshing way. Monetary gains seem likely as planetary support strengthens your prospects. A romantic getaway to a scenic destination may rejuvenate couples. This week also holds scope for a family gathering or celebration, offering you cherished bonding moments.




**GEMINI:** Efforts you make this week can nurture harmony in personal relationships. Discussing worries with your partner may bring clarity and comfort. A spontaneous spiritual journey with family could leave lasting memories, provided you remain open-minded. Engaging in hobbies may also benefit your overall well-being. When it comes to property dealings, ensure that proper documentation is maintained to prevent future disputes.




**CANCER:** This is a favourable time to channel your savings into a productive venture. Strong sales growth can support professional transformation. Domestic matters may gradually stabilize, allowing you greater control. Romantic ties appear warm, ensuring cherished moments with your partner. Negotiations regarding leases could end on a positive note. If travel seems overwhelming now, postponing it would be the best option.




**LEO:** To outshine competitors, careful planning will be essential. Your creativity may pave the way for success in areas others doubt. Travel is likely to bring new opportunities and encounters worth cherishing. Pursuing activities that inspire happiness and progress will prove beneficial. Staying committed to a nutritious diet and fitness can secure long-term health. You may also feel drawn toward offering contributions to a spiritual cause.




**VIRGO:** Well-analysed investments may yield exceptional financial gains this week. On the romantic front, your efforts are likely to bring encouraging results. A disciplined fitness routine could uplift your mood and energy. Striving for excellence may lead to remarkable achievements. Fresh graduates may secure employment that aligns with their skills. Taking time to acknowledge loved ones will strengthen bonds, while your growing presence in social circles enhances popularity.




**LIBRA:** Smart investments may start delivering rewarding results, boosting your financial prospects. Handle interactions with senior




family members respectfully to avoid conflicts. For singles, social events and family outings may present opportunities to meet someone special. Avoid acting hastily in matters of importance, as it may lead to setbacks. Pay close attention to your well-being, especially during long work-related journeys. Postpone major real estate commitments for now.




**SCORPIO:** Prioritizing a consistent exercise regime will positively impact your health. Improved finances may allow you to purchase a luxury item you have long admired. A seaside vacation with family promises relaxation and fun. Property-related matters and financial negotiations look favourable, raising the possibility of acquiring your dream house or land. Though challenges may arise, the overall outcome of the week appears positive. Meeting someone inspirational could influence your future path profoundly.




**SAGITTARIUS:** Strong commitment in relationships promises stability and long-term happiness for couples. Your positive outlook can encourage family members to resolve past disagreements. Professionally, focusing on performance will help you excel. Financial security also looks attainable with careful planning. Open discussions with your partner about money matters can ensure greater gains. Prioritizing health may bring swift improvements. The week holds the potential for effortless progress and recognition.



**CAPRICORN:** Your earnings may grow steadily, promising stability over time. Creative approaches at work could bring opportunities and recognition from seniors. For those in long relationships, the possibility of marriage becomes stronger. A big purchase, such as a car or property, may soon materialize. While chasing opportunities is wise, avoid distractions that don't serve your growth. Staying practical will ensure smooth progress this week.



**AQUARIUS:** Avoid committing to agreements that could burden your finances in the future. Practicing moderation in spending is essential now. Some couples may receive good news regarding parenthood. Setting out on a solo trip may be rewarding and trouble-free. Unexpected encounters on a holiday could spark instant romantic connections. Do not ignore even minor health issues—early care will prove beneficial. Adopting a more open mindset may bring peace within the family.



**PISCES:** Family tensions may arise if elders insist on unanimous decisions. For important assignments, extra effort will be needed to ensure success. Trusting your instincts will lead to favourable outcomes. Wedding prospects may brighten for couples in long-standing relationships. Work-related travel can expand your professional network and bring useful contacts. Before making significant choices such as property purchases, seek advice from experienced mentors to stay safe.

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# World Hindi Foundation Holds 25th Annual Convention

BY A STAFF WRITER

The World Hindi Foundation held its 25th Annual Convention September 6, 2025, at Royal Albert's Palace, Fords, NJ.

The event attracted a large gathering and included the Ganesh Vandana and other cultural program including a Kavi Sammelan featuring Anoop Bhargava, Abhinav Shukla, and Dr. Bhuvan Mohini. The Navrang Dance Academy and Nataraja Dance Academy performed colorful dances.

There was also a Hindi play performed by Amy Meta of the Prayog Theater Group.

There was also a health session on metabolic syndrome. The event was a celebration of language, culture and community.

Among the distinguished guests was Woodbridge Township Mayor John McCarthy. Introduced by organizers as the longest-serving mayor in New Jersey.

Padma Shri recipient Dr. Sudhir Parikh, Chairman of Parikh Worldwide Media, was a guest of honor, and among those recognized with an award. Dr. Parikh thanked the Mayor for attending the community attempt, calling it an honor. The Mayor also presented a recognition plaques to entrepreneur Nitin Seth, "title sponsor" of the event, and to Savitri Kailash Sharma, who along with her husband founded the World Hindi Foundation.

The Mayor who said he was invited by Sharad Agarwal, read a proclamation recognizing the World Hindi Foundation, founded in 2000, for "maintaining the mission of promoting global awareness



Special Guests at the World Hindi Convention Sept. 6, in New Jersey, including Mayor of Woodbridge Township John McCarthy.



Padma Shri recipient Dr. Sudhir Parikh, chairman of Parikh Worldwide Media, getting an award from World Hindi Foundation, being presented by Woodbridge Mayor John McCarthy, Sept. 6, 2025.



A section of the audience at the World Hindi Foundation Convention Sept. 6, 2025, in New Jersey.

of Hindi, support economic development, and preserve cultural identity among Hindi-speaking communities. The proclamation praised WHF for hosting annual Hindi conventions with cultural programs and youth engagement, publishes a Hindi magazine, provides scholarships and academic support to Hindi students throughout partnership with universities to establish Hindi programs."

Seth, speaking in Hindi to ITV Gold, noted that Hindi was the mother tongue of those at the gathering. He noted that while everyone was born in India, and is now in the US, Hindi is the lifeline and a link to their culture. In a globalized world, he said, it was important to protect one's own heritage.

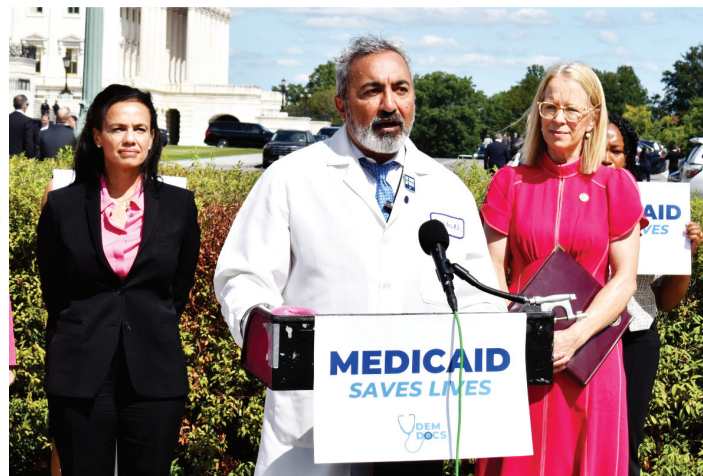
## Rep. Ami Bera Denounces Medicaid Cuts; Lauds Work Of Planned Parenthood

BY A STAFF WRITER

Congressman Dr. Ami Bera, D-California, on September 9, 2025, joined fellow members of the Democratic Doctors Caucus and Planned Parenthood Federation of America President and CEO Alexis McGill Johnson, to warn against cuts to Medicaid, describing them as having a "devastating" impact on access to affordable, high-quality care provided by Planned Parenthood health centers across the country.

"Since President Trump's 'Big, Beautiful Bill' was signed into law, its provision blocking Medicaid patients from receiving care at Planned Parenthood has been temporarily halted by the courts. If reinstated, the provision could force up to 200 health centers to close, putting the health care of 1.1 million Medicaid patients at risk, the press release from Bera's office said.

"What Planned Parenthood does is so much more than just reproductive health care. They're a leader there in reproductive health care. But in many communities across this country, they're the sole provider of



Congressman Ami Bera on Capitol Hill September 9, 2025, speaking during a press conference on changes to Medicaid.

primary care services to women and men," Representa-

tive Bera is quoted saying in the press release.

Lawmakers noted that for many individuals in rural and underserved areas, Planned Parenthood centers are often the only accessible source of care for people in rural and underserved areas for critical primary and preventive care services, such as cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, chronic disease management, and general wellness visits.

"And what Donald Trump's bill — the big, ugly bill that House Republicans passed — does is it takes away that primary service, those community health center services, from so many Americans, particularly Americans in rural America," Bera added.

At an open press conference on Capitol Hill, Dr. Bera was accompanied by several Democratic doctors as well as the CEO of Planned Parenthood. He was there he said, "Cause we're going to fight. We're going to fight every day. And don't mess with Planned Parenthood — that's why I got my boxing glove on here."

Bera went on to praise Planned Parenthood for doing more than just providing reproductive health care services, but rather it was the sole provider of primary health care services in many communities around the country.



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# Narendra Modi At 75: A Statesman Bridging India With The World

By JAGDISH SEWHANI

**A**s Prime Minister Narendra Modi turns 75 on September 17, 2025, it marks more than a personal milestone. It offers a moment to reflect on how one of the most consequential leaders of the 21st century has shaped India's journey and global standing.

Born in Vadnagar, Gujarat, Modi's rise—from a modest childhood to becoming India's longest-serving prime minister in recent decades—is a story of grit, vision, and unrelenting drive. Over the past decade, he has redefined India's engagement with its diaspora and elevated its voice on the world stage in ways few leaders before him have managed.

## \*STRENGTHENING THE DIASPORA BOND\*

Among his most defining initiatives has been a heartfelt outreach to the global Indian community. Modi recognized early that the diaspora was not just a cultural bridge but a strategic partner in nation-building.

In July 2025, during his visit to Trinidad and Tobago, he extended Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) eligibility to sixth-generation descendants of the Indian diaspora—recognizing communities that left the subcontinent more than a century ago yet preserved language, culture, and traditions with devotion. A similar announcement in Mauritius earlier in March extended OCI privileges to the seventh generation of Indian-origin citizens there.

Coupled with the launch of a modernized OCI portal in May 2025, these moves underscored a clear message: India no longer views its diaspora from a distance. It embraces them as stakeholders in the country's rise.

## \*GLOBAL RECOGNITION AND DIPLOMACY\*

Parallel to this people-centric approach has been Modi's transformation into one of the world's most decorated leaders. In 2025 alone, he became the first Indian to receive Mauritius's highest civilian honor, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. He was awarded Cyprus's Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III. These joined a growing list of honours from nations as varied as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Dominica—signals that the world now views India as both a rising power and a responsible partner.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

But Modi's diplomacy is not about accolades. It is strategic and forward-looking. His historic visit to Cyprus—the first by an Indian prime minister—paved the way for cooperation in energy and technology. In London, a landmark trade deal with Prime Minister Keir Starmer promised to expand markets for Indian textiles and automobiles while deepening collaboration in services and innovation. Across the Indo-Pacific, Modi has carefully positioned India as a stabilizing force amid shifting geopolitical currents.

## \*BUILDING CONSENSUS ON THE WORLD STAGE\*

At moments of global division, Modi has shown skill in forging consensus. The 2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi was a notable example. Amid rifts over the Russia-Ukraine war, he steered member states toward a joint declaration rooted in cooperation. India's presidency also saw the African Union inducted as a permanent member of the G20—widely hailed as historic and emblematic of Modi's commitment to amplifying the voice of the Global South.

From the launch of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor to the Global Biofuel Alliance, Modi

has consistently positioned India as a driver of sustainable and inclusive growth.

## \*TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION AS DIPLOMACY\*

Under Modi, India's technological achievements have become a key instrument of soft power. National Space Day has highlighted India's milestones in lunar and interplanetary exploration, advanced propulsion systems, and semiconductor development. Meanwhile, India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has found adoption in countries like Mauritius and Trinidad & Tobago—an example of Indian innovation shaping global financial systems.

## \*A PHILOSOPHY OF GLOBAL SOLIDARITY\*

Perhaps most enduring has been Modi's emphasis on compassion and global solidarity. The Vaccine Maitri initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic—through which India supplied over 160 million doses to nearly 100 countries—cemented India's role as a lifeline in crisis, rooted in the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (“the world is one family”).

## \*THE MODI LEGACY AT 75\*

As Narendra Modi celebrates his 75th birthday, his legacy extends beyond India's borders. For the diaspora, his initiatives have brought renewed pride and belonging. For the international community, his leadership has made India a trusted partner, a mediator in turbulent times, and a visionary for a more equitable global order.

This milestone is not just about one man's life. It is the story of a nation's ascent under a leader who built bridges: between India and its diaspora, the Global South and developed world, tradition and modernity, aspiration and achievement.

At 75, Narendra Modi stands as both a symbol of India's journey and a steward of its future—embodying the confidence of a country determined to shape, not just witness, the course of world affairs.



PHOTO: PROVIDED

Jagdish Sewhani  
President, The American India  
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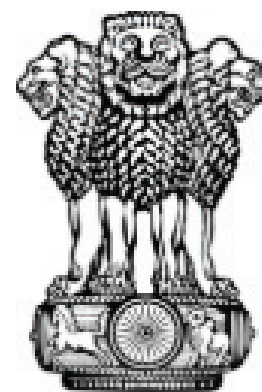
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### Statement On Visit Of Team Led By Assistant US Trade Representative To India

**A** team of officials from the office of United States Trade Representative led by Chief Negotiator, India US Bilateral Trade Agreement negotiations Mr. Brendan Lynch visited India on September 16, 2025. They held discussions with officials from Department of Commerce, led by Special Secretary, Department of Commerce on India-US trade ties

including on the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement.

Acknowledging the enduring importance of bilateral trade between India and the U.S., the discussions were positive and forward looking covering various aspects of the trade deal. It was decided to intensify efforts to achieve early conclusion of a mutually beneficial Trade Agreement.



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## How Employers Can Prepare for a USCIS Site Visit

By David H. Nachman, Esq

IN MEMORIAM



Michael Phulwani David Nachman Ludka Zimovcak Snehal Batra  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has increased its focus on employer compliance, and one of the most visible tools is the unannounced site visit. These inspections are conducted by officers from the Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) directorate and are designed to confirm that the details in immigration petitions match what is happening in the workplace.

With the expansion of compliance programs and the implementation of the H-1B Modernization Rule in 2025, employers should expect more frequent and detailed site inspections. For companies that employ foreign nationals, being prepared is not optional – it is essential.

### Why Site Visits Happen

USCIS conducts site inspections to:

- Verify that employees are working in the roles, locations, and conditions described in their petitions.
- Confirm that the employer is a legitimate, functioning business.
- Detect possible fraud or misrepresentation.
- Ensure compliance with wage and work location requirements, including remote and hybrid arrangements.

In some cases, site visits are random. In others, they are triggered by data analysis, complaints, or specific risk factors.

### What to Expect During a Site Visit

FDNS officers may arrive without notice. Once on-site, they typically:

- Review immigration petitions and supporting documentation.
- Ask to see I-9 records.
- Interview HR staff, managers, and the sponsored employee.
- Visit workstations and take photographs of the premises.
- Confirm wage and job duty information.

These visits may also extend to third-party client sites if the employee is placed offsite.

### Steps to Take Before a Site Visit

Preparation should begin long before an officer arrives:

1. Keep records current: Ensure that all immigration files, including job descriptions, wage documentation, and worksite addresses, are accurate and accessible.
2. Train reception and staff: Front-desk employees should know how to politely greet officers, verify identification, and immediately notify the appropriate internal contact.
3. Designate a point of contact: Employers should have a clear chain of responsibility, with a primary and backup contact for site visits.
4. Coordinate with counsel: Have a protocol in place to notify your immigration attorney as soon as a visit begins. Legal counsel can guide you on how to respond to requests during the inspection.

### What to Do During the Visit

- Stay calm and cooperative: Professionalism goes a long way in minimizing disruption.

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- Verify officer credentials: Always ask for identification and a business card.
- Engage the right staff: Only designated personnel should interact with officers regarding immigration matters.
- Take notes: Document the officer's name, contact information, the questions asked, and any documents or photos requested. Share these notes with counsel immediately after the visit.

### Why Preparation Matters

Unannounced site visits have become a regular part of USCIS's compliance strategy. A lack of preparation can result in delays, unnecessary confusion, or even negative findings.

By contrast, maintaining organized records, training staff, and involving legal counsel can demonstrate good faith compliance and help protect both the employer and the sponsored employees.

### Final Thoughts

For companies that employ foreign nationals, immigration compliance must be part of day-to-day operations – not an afterthought. A well-prepared organization can manage site visits efficiently and reduce risks.

At NPZ Law Group, we help employers prepare for FDNS inspections, train staff on response protocols, and ensure petitions remain compliant with USCIS requirements.

For guidance on site visit preparedness, contact us at **201-670-0006** or visit [www.visaserve.com](http://www.visaserve.com)

### Top 5 Tips for Employers Facing USCIS Site Visits

1. Train your front desk staff – They are the first point of contact.
2. Verify officer ID – Always ask for credentials before providing information.
3. Notify your attorney immediately – Involve legal counsel as soon as the visit begins.
4. Keep records ready – Job descriptions, wages, and I-9s should be accurate and up to date.
5. Document the visit – Take detailed notes for your records and share with counsel.

### Contact Information

If you or your family members have any questions about how immigration and nationality laws in the United States may affect you, or if you want to access additional information about immigration and nationality laws in the United States or Canada, please do not hesitate to contact the immigration and nationality lawyers at NPZ Law Group. You can reach us by emailing [info@visaserve.com](mailto:info@visaserve.com) or by calling us at **201-670-0006 extension 104**. We also invite you to visit our website at [www.visaserve.com](http://www.visaserve.com) for more information.



# Shanker Krishnan's Debut Album, A Fusion Of Carnatic And Western Classical Music

By ARCHANA ADALJA

**J**uxtaposing Indian classical Raga and Western classical Counterpoint, composer Shanker Krishnan's upcoming debut album, "Confluence: Raga and Counterpoint" creates a harmonious musical experience.

Releasing September 26, 2025 on the largest Indian arts platform, "IndianRaga" label, the Confluence: Raga and Counterpoint (the Confluence hereafter) comprises of the multi-movement works of Fugue-Kriti and Concerto-Kriti. The album explores the integration of Counterpoint with Carnatic music.

Composed by Krishnan, the Confluence contains solo performances by Shraddha Ravindran on violin, K.R. Shrivats on veena, R. Thiagarajan on flute and Mannarkoil J. Balaji on mridangam.

Oxford Encyclopedia of Music describes Kriti in Carnatic music as a devotional musical composition with a three-part structure of pallavi, anupallavi and charanams.

Fugue is a complex contrapuntal composition usually involving two or more independent melodies, each with its own distinct rhythm and contour while interacting harmonically.

A concerto is a composition for a solo instrument or a small group of solo instruments accompanied by a full orchestra.

## WHAT INSPIRED THE CONFLUENCE?

Speaking to News India Times in an exclusive interview, Krishnan said he had wanted to pursue integrating Carnatic and Western classical music at a deep structural level from the time he first heard Western classical music in 1982. Especially as the combination of complex Counterpoint with Carnatic music has not been similarly explored, he added.

"For me, the complexity of Bach's Counterpoint evokes the same response I feel when I hear the intricate Gamakas of T. Brinda," he said. "I've explored other traditions along the way, but Carnatic and Western classical have been closest to me throughout my life," Krishnan said.

## EARLY EXPOSURE AND INFLUENCE OF CARNATIC MUSIC

Krishnan and his family lived near the Shanmukhananda Sabha and the Bharatiya Music & Arts Society, which were major centers of Carnatic music in Mumbai and Krishnan often attended vocal performances there with his family, he said.

At home, his sister Geetha Raja had become a professional Carnatic musician and his parents were deeply involved in it. There were regular family Carnatic music concerts at home, which were recorded on a tape recorder and he kept listening to his favorite musicians, Krishnan said.

Of the Carnatic singers, two have left lasting impressions on Krishnan, influencing him deeply. Krishnan had been listening from childhood to T. Brinda, known as Brindamma, and loved her "subtle gamakas," he said. He was also influenced by the kirtans for Vitthala by the fifteenth century saint-composer Purandara Dasa. The Kriti form in which Krishnan composes descends from the kirtana developed by Purandara Dasa, he said.

## INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

After getting his undergrad degree in engineering from IIT Madras in 1982, Krishnan came to UC Berkeley for a master's in applied math, taking Western classical music courses along with math. Krishnan also has an MBA and a master's in development economics from



Shanker Krishnan

Stanford.

It was at Berkeley that Krishnan first heard Hungarian composer and pianist Bartók and French composer Claude Debussy who was the founder and leading exponent of musical impressionism. "The piano was very important – I learned it for many years to absorb lessons in harmony, and as a tool for composition," he said.

The Confluence explores the Baroque era Counterpoint, which is described by Oxford Music as characterized by the simultaneous melodic interaction and interplay of two or more independent, yet harmonically interdependent melodic lines, often expressed through complex forms including the fugue.

From the most prominent Baroque musicians and composers including Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel, and Antonio Vivaldi, Krishnan has been influenced the most by Bach whose fugues perfected the counterpoints.

## THEMES AND COMPOSITION OF THE CONFLUENCE

Both Carnatic music and Baroque Counterpoint,

although very different cultural and musical traditions, are forms of worship. The Confluence has been created from influences of these two different forms.

Much of the music in the Confluence is based on the Bhagwad Gita, on themes of time, war, victory, righteousness and non attachment.

The Confluence features a Concerto-Kriti – the Field of Dharma, a Pallavi movement – Arjun's lament, an Anupallavi movement – the Field of Battle, a Charanam movement – the Dilemma, and a Swaram movement – the Realization.

A Concerto is a composition for a solo instrument or a small group of solo instruments accompanied by a full orchestra, according to Oxford Music.

Krishnan described the first three movements of Field of Dharma follow Arjuna's emotional struggle and his dilemma over the right path. The fourth movement draws on key teachings including unattachment to results of action.

## DEEP EMOTIONS

The emotional depths are conveyed through Krishnan's use of Phrasing and notes and Gamakas which are described in Oxford Music as microtonal embellishments between notes adding depth and expressiveness to them.

Gamakas are at the heart of Carnatic music, Krishnan said. He said he has brought subtlety in shifting moods by changing Harmonic Progressions and Counterpoint. "Varying the instrumentation in the Concerto-Kriti brings in entirely new colors," he said.

## AN INTEGRATED FUSION

"For me, the integration is architectural, built from within both (Indian classical and Western classical) traditions, drawing on my long training in each," Krishnan explained. "For each Phrase that I compose, I keep moving between the two systems," he said.

Krishnan said his pieces are driven by a single, unified compositional vision. Towards this end, Krishnan has made use of both the Fugue and the Kriti. "Using them together provides a gateway for listeners from either tradition without having to know the technical details," he said.

## INSTRUMENTS IN THE CONFLUENCE

"From the Carnatic tradition, I've chosen the instruments most common in concert performance: the flute, violin, and veena — spanning high to low registers. For percussion, I used the mridangam, with its wide array of expressive tones," he said.

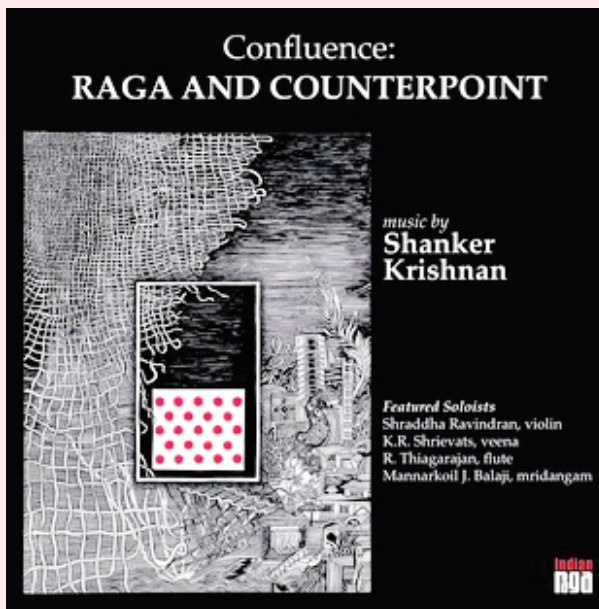
Krishnan has focused on the trumpet and the harp, and to a lesser extent the oboe and cello for the solo Western instruments, he said. Together, they offer a broad range of timbres and sonic colors that contrast and blend with the Carnatic instruments, he added.

## FUTURE PLANS

Krishnan had been an investment banker at Morgan Stanley, and an economist at the World Bank. Then he was the deputy treasurer at the IFC, the World Bank's private sector arm, setting up treasury functions and launching new financial products to fund areas like microfinance, infrastructure, and education.

Krishnan has devoted the past fifteen years to study music composition and creating the album. He continues to follow his passion. "My hope is to showcase the richness of Indian music and culture," Krishnan said.

The Confluence will be available at <https://indian-raga.com/>



Front Cover THE CONFLUENCE.



The Washington Post

# 'It's not weird': The people who love to stare at airplane flight maps

By Hannah Sampson

Nicole Sunderland doesn't have to ponder the in-flight entertainment options when she looks at the screen on the plane seat in front of her. She'll be watching the map, thank you very much.

*"I'll fly to Qatar for 14 hours and that map will be on the entire time,"* said Sunderland, 41, a content creator and consultant who splits time between the D.C. area and Phoenix. Flight attendants don't always understand: "Sometimes they'll reach in and be like, 'Do you want us to turn it off?' And I'm like, 'No, no. Leave it on.'"

She's part of a robust group of fliers who keep their eyes on the plane's progress. The practice got a blast of publicity last year amid a social media trend that featured travelers - mostly men - staring straight ahead at maps or blank space during long trips to prove ... something.

## 'Raving map fans'

Moving in-flight maps, which first appeared on passenger planes in the 1980s, boast broad appeal beyond the brief trend.

According to FlightPath3D, an in-flight map provider for more than 90 airlines, about 68 percent of passengers open the map on seat-back screens and 20 percent view only the map. Delta Air Lines has said the flight map is the top piece of content, with 45 percent of passengers engaging with it during flights.

Duncan Jackson, president of FlightPath3D, has a name for the fans: flight pathers. He said there are now options built in to explore animated previews of destinations, global route maps and animal-filled kids' maps. Last year, he said, 400 million passengers used the product.

"There's comfort in it. For some, it's almost meditative," he said. "They just love to see where they are, how long's left, watch the progress of the aircraft across the flight plan. There are just raving map fans."

Sunderland's interest - obsession even - in pinpointing her location in

She loves seeing the elevation and what city she's flying over.

Seminara said she felt "seen, honestly" when flight map fixations went viral last year.

"I was doing this, and it's not weird, because clearly people are doing it," she said. "They're just coming out now."

Nick Kosir, who is known as the Dancing Weatherman on Fox Weather, was talking to his manager about a recent flight a couple years back.

"It was awesome: I just sat there, stared straight ahead and didn't do anything for five hours," said Kosir, who lives in New York City. "He goes, 'Dude, that's a serial killer trait.'"

When the trend started to go viral the following year, he sent an example to his manager and said "I found my people."

"You just gonna sit there staring at the back of the seat?" Elaine Benes asks her on-again, off-again boyfriend David Puddy in an oft-referenced episode of "Seinfeld." "Yeah," he replies, staring blankly ahead with a satisfied look on his face. The name of the trend is too crude to spell out in a family newspaper (think: uncooked canine). In some cases, according to news articles that questioned whether participants were "heroic or foolish," travelers shunned drinking water or even bathroom visits. Some commenters hailed the "ultimate dopamine detox" while fliers bragged about reaching a new personal best. Whether it was a true endurance challenge or a merely a bit, the internet had a blast with it. "The mind is capable of amazing things," the text over one apparently tongue-in-cheek TikTok says. "My mind knows no limits. I am operating in a different spiritual realm."



Photo: Dreamstime

the sky dates back to a turbulent flight between the Bahamas and Florida in 2017. Now, she keeps her eye on the elevation to see how much the plane has dropped in shaky air. She will try to sleep on an overnight, pick up a book and may occasionally watch her comfort movie, "Crazy Rich Asians." But her eyes return to the map whenever there are bumps.

"All my travel companions make fun of me, every single one," she said.

She once took a long flight with a friend who watched four or five Harry Potter movies in a row.

"My anxious self ... I was watching the speed, the elevation, the flight path," said Sunderland.

## Cheaper than buying WiFi

Manu Seminara said watching maps on a plane is "almost like a hobby." The London resident works for a marketing agency and posts travel content on TikTok, where she shared a video of people around her watching movies and TV shows on a plane while she adjusted her view of the map.

"I try to put on a movie and I'm like, 'This is more interesting,'" she said.

Kosir made his own video showing himself watching the flight map.

He said he spends so much time online every day that he welcomes an escape. Sometimes he just tries to focus on creative ideas or deep thinking before the plane lands. On the flight he put on TikTok, he wrote he counted to 1 million twice.

"On a plane, I'm too cheap to buy the WiFi so it actually is peaceful in my mind and I truly enjoy that," he said. "If there's nothing in front of me, I just stare blankly into the cosmos."

But if the flight map is available, he's a fan.

"I weirdly like watching the flight tracker just because it's cool to me; it's cool to see how fast the plane is going, it's cool to see what state you're over," he said. "Something about it is oddly comforting."



# Arundhati Roy Recalls Her Brilliant Mother, Both Teacher And Tyrant

By BECCA ROTHFELD

**Mother Mary Comes to Me. By Arundhati Roy. Scribner. 330 pp. \$30**

For as long as the Indian novelist, Booker Prize winner and activist Arundhati Roy can remember, her mother was – or pretended to be – dying. A chronic asthmatic with a flair for drama, Mary Roy kept her children in line by warning them that any misbehavior on their part might trigger a fatal attack. “Anything I said those days ended in a storm of insults and anger. And asthma. And blame about being the cause of Mrs. Roy’s impending death,” Arundhati Roy recalls in her new memoir, “Mother Mary Comes to Me.” “As a consequence, I had more or less stopped talking.” She needn’t have done so. Mary never actually died, of course, at least until she did. And when she finally passed, in 2022, the cause was not her daughter’s insolence or obstinance but only her own advanced age.

Even in death, her eccentricities and moods loom large. As Roy puts it mournfully, she remains “taller in my mind than any billboard.” When she was alive, she was on the verge of expiring; now that she is dead, she is more inescapably present than ever before. It is a contradiction worthy of a woman who played so many sharply conflicting parts throughout her eventful life.

In the small Syrian Christian community where Roy spent much of her childhood, she watched her mother “unleash all of herself – her genius, her eccentricity, her radical kindness, her militant courage, her ruthlessness, her generosity, her cruelty, her bullying, her head for business, and her wild, unpredictable temper.” She founded a famed coeducational school and fought for equal rights for Syrian Christian women – yet she blasted her daughter for promiscuity in decidedly sexist terms. She was gentle and patient with her pupils – yet she was sharp and sometimes violent with her own chil-

dren. On one occasion, she beat Roy’s brother viciously because his report card deemed him an “average student”; on another, she shot Roy’s dog, who had transgressed by mating with a mutt on the street. Even when she was not outright abusive, she could be cold and unfeeling. To avoid the appearance of favoritism, she instructed her children to call her “Mrs. Roy,” just as her students did. “To me,” Roy writes, “she still is more Mrs. Roy than mother.”

But if Mrs. Roy is the reason her daughter became a lifelong “vagrant,” as Roy puts it, she is also the reason her dreamy child would grow up to become the first Indian citizen to win the Booker Prize. Mrs. Roy is the one who introduced her daughter to “Shakespeare, Kipling, and A.A. Milne” and gifted her a typewriter. In a culture in which most women dared aspire to nothing more than a suitable marriage, Mrs. Roy was bent on assuring her rebellious daughter “that if she put her

mind to it, she could be anything she wanted to be.” Roy took this lesson to heart – so much so that she moved to Delhi, three days’ travel from her small village, to pursue a degree in architecture at the age of 16 and stopped coming home, even for vacations, two years later. Throughout her chaotic and bohemian youth, she worked odd jobs, took even odder drugs and lived, among other places, in a storeroom in a studio at the architecture school. After several missteps and many bouts of demoralizing poverty, she found her footing as an actress, a screenwriter and, finally, a novelist.

The international success of her 1997 debut, “The God of Small Things,” freed her to turn her attention to politics, and for the past several decades she has devoted herself to writing barn-burning commentary and staging protests against Narendra Modi’s far-right regime. “Mother Mary Comes to Me” often feels like two books sutured together: a tender and ambivalent memoir about the difficult Mrs. Roy and a withering polemic about India’s political ills.

Roy is disdainful of those who suggest there is any

tension between these two projects. “I was soon being called a writer-activist, a term I found absurd because it suggested that writing about things that vitally affected people’s lives was not the remit of a writer,” she writes. It is true that writing is generally about people, and it is true that people are political beasts. But perhaps the commentators who label Roy a “writer-activist” are not objecting to her choice of political topics, much less proposing that writers feign detachment or disinterest, so much as noting that her political writing is much cruder and more scolding than her fiction (or, in this case, her straightforward reminiscences as a memoirist). The problem is not that Roy has chosen to write about politics but that she has done so with all the subtlety of a pamphleteer.

The incongruity of her two modes – the one searching and tentative, the other didactic and doctrinaire – becomes especially conspicuous when they appear side by side as they do here. On one page, she notes that she both loved and hated her mother; on the next, she describes a half-finished dam that destroyed a local ecosystem as “a monument to greed and irresponsibility.” For what it’s worth, I think she is right about the dam – but that does not make the observation any less predictable or “Mother Mary Comes to Me” any more cohesive.

Still, this memoir is full of precise imagery and blistering emotional intelligence when it treats human relations. It is no accident that Roy is at her most meticulous and probing when she focuses on the person who taught her that a woman, too, can be a full-fledged human being – both a marvel and a monster, both a teacher and a tyrant. “Perhaps even more than a daughter mourning the passing of her mother,” Roy muses, “I mourn her as a writer who has lost her most enthralling subject.” Mrs. Roy is not only this book’s eponym but its heroine, and by far its most interesting character.

Happily, the example that she set endures. After all, she was a teacher, and her lessons are bound to outlive her. When Roy visited her mother’s school, she often found herself “wishing I were her student and not her daughter.” I think she is underselling herself. At her most captivating and her least homiletic, she is both.

-THE WASHINGTON POST

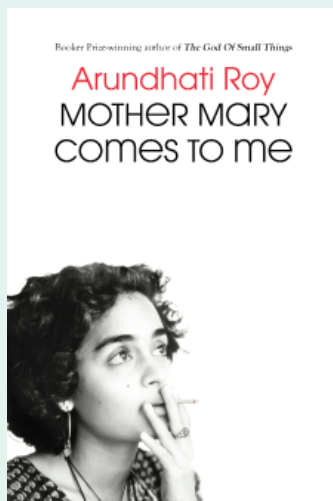


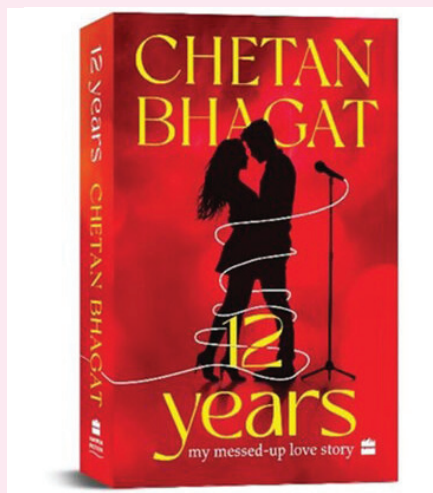
PHOTO: SCRIBNER VIA THE WASHINGTON POST

## Harper Collins India To Publish Chetan Bhagat's New Romance

HarperCollins India is publishing a new novel by Chetan Bhagat, a love story that marks his return to romance after the stunning success of his previous books. Written in his signature style, it has humour, heart and hope in equal measure. The book is available on preorder and will release on 1st October 2025.

Talking about the book, Chetan Bhagat says, “After more than 10 years, following the success of 2 States and Half-Girlfriend, I have written a love story. 12 Years: My

Messed-Up Love Story is extremely close to my heart and is one of my best books — if not the best book I have written so far. It’s funny, emotional, thought-provoking, and a whole lot more. At its core, it tries to answer a timeless



Book jacket of Chetan Bhagat's latest novel.

question: How do you know if the special someone in your life is ‘the one?’”

Poulomi Chatterjee, Executive Publisher – HarperCollins India, says, “In book after book, Chetan has captured the hearts of millions of Indian readers with stories that resonate closely with their lives. I’m delighted that his new novel, 12 Years: My Messed-up Love Story, brings him back to writing about the trials of love. In Chetan’s inimitable style, the story is as tender as it is passionate, and as laugh-out-loud funny as it is sharply observed. We at HarperCollins are so glad to be bringing it to readers everywhere — this book is guaranteed to entertain and keep them hooked, and that’s a promise!”

**About 12 Years: My Messed-Up Love Story**

He’s 33. She’s 21. He’s a struggling stand-up comic. She’s a rising star in private equity. He’s divorced. She’s never had a boyfriend. He’s Punjabi. She’s from a conservative Jain family. They shouldn’t be together. But they can’t stay apart. Welcome to 12 Years: My Messed-Up Love Story.

Saket and Payal couldn’t be more different—age, background, beliefs. Yet, they’re drawn to each other in ways they can’t explain. Is it just chemistry, or something deeper? Is it madness and lust, or is it love?

-ANI



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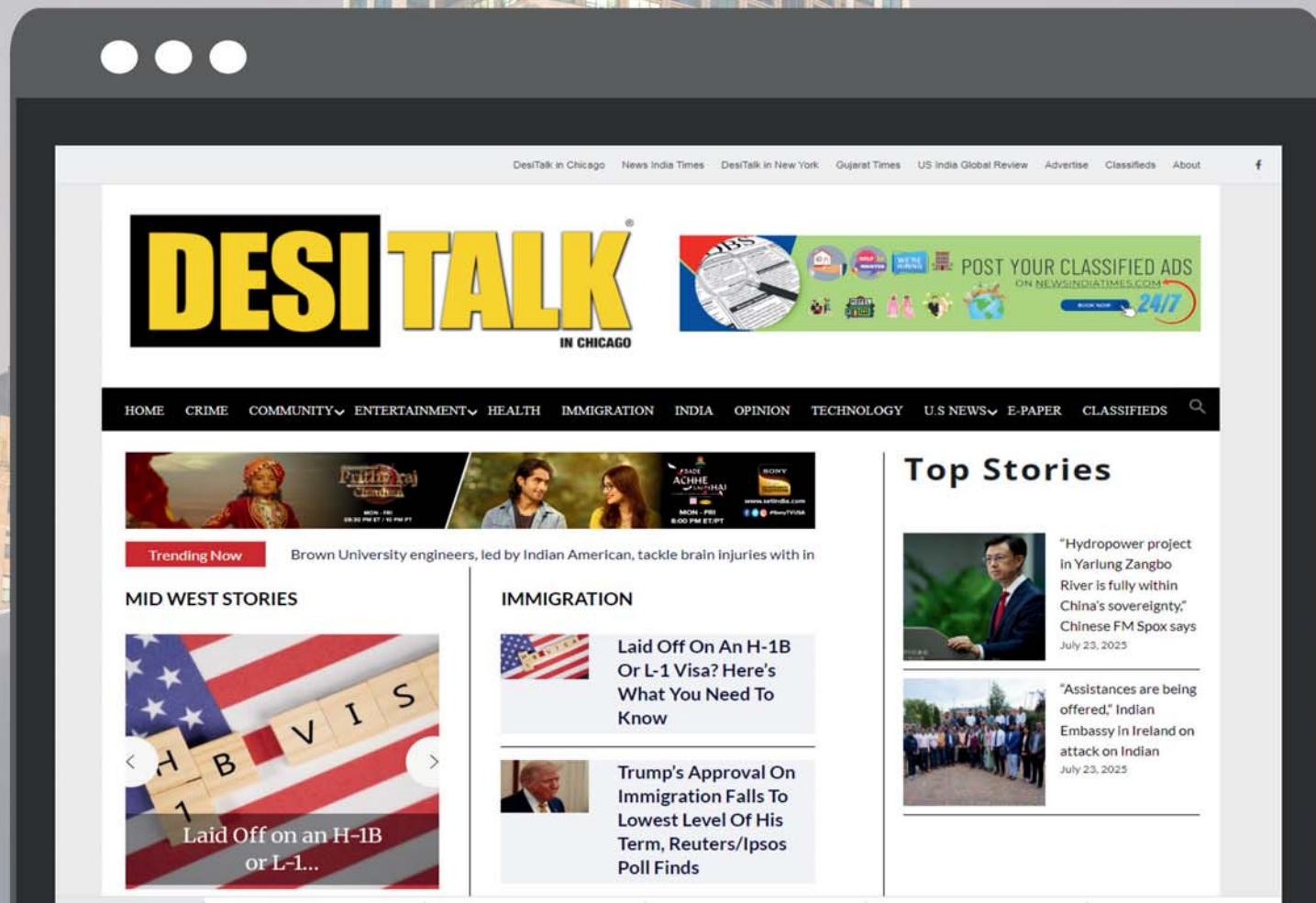
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