

KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

JANUARY 2021

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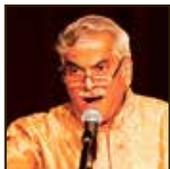
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Inside:



Stream This!
'Tandav'

3



Guest article
Radharaman Kirtane tribute

6



Classifieds
Matrimonial

8



Immigration
Processing fees up

10



Motoring
Jeep Gladiator

12



Florida News
New Miami dean

16

FIA OF TAMPA BAY TO HOLD VIRTUAL REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION JAN. 24

The Federation of India Associations (FIA) of Tampa Bay will hold a virtual event to celebrate India's 72nd Republic Day on Sunday, Jan. 24. This year's FIA officers are President Jigisha Desai, Republic Day Event Chair Ramnarayanan Mani and Republic Day Event Co-Chair Rini Mishra.

There will be cooking, rangoli, fancy dress and youth art and essay competitions, 2020 high school graduates scholarships and a spirit of freedom blood drive. There also will be cultural programs and duets of FIA-music contests. Register at www.fiatampabay.org For information, email FIA_TPA_Cultural@googlegroups.com or see ad on page 6.

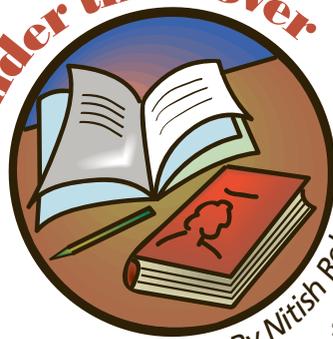
In related news, FIA provided six graduate students from India with financial assistance (\$500/student) during COVID-19 on Sunday Dec. 6.



Top row: Vidya Takkalaki, FIA Treasurer-2021 and USF graduate students **Bottom row:** Vijayan Nair, FIA Treasurer-2020, Jigisha Desai, FIA President-2021, Bhanu Prakash Dhulipalla, FIA President-2020, Dr. Kotha Sekharam, FIA Trustee Board Chair-2021-2022 and USF graduate students.



Under the Cover

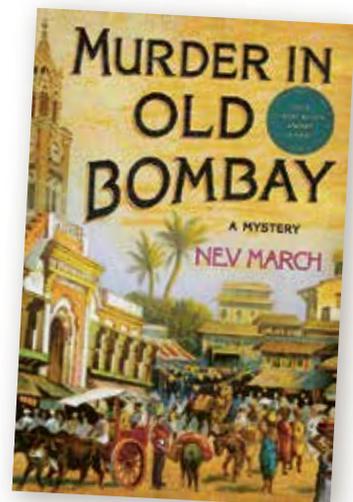


By Nitish Rele

BOOKS

"Murder in Old Bombay" (390 pages; \$26.99) by Nev March; published by Minotaur Books (www.minotaurbooks.com)

1892 Bombay serves as the backdrop for this riveting mystery that featured Captain Jim Agnihotri of mixed heritage (Indian and British perhaps). As he lays in a Poona military hospital recovering from injuries suffered in a skirmish in the wild northern frontier, he chances to read about the bizarre deaths of two Parsi women who either fell or were thrown from the Rajabai university-clock tower. Yearning to play and inspired by Sherlock Holmes ("In Conan Doyle's imagination, Holmes could hope up for hours, smoke his pipe and scrape at his fiddle"), the captain pays a visit to Adi Framji, widower of one of the dead women and the cousin of the other. "Bougainvillea danced in the breeze beside fluted pillars, and scattered pink petals over smooth marble," notes the author as Agnihotri visits Framji Mansion. Before he realizes it, he is hired to investigate the deaths, which Framji believes weren't suicide but murder.



Continued on page 2

ASTROLOGY
What's in your forecast for January 2021?
Read what columnist Pankaj Kohli has to say
Page 14

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Dear Readers:

Happy New Year. Here's to a new year filled with hope and good health. If you know of a community group holding activities, virtual or otherwise, please let us know. Thank you to those who have recently subscribed or sent contributions to sustain our publication. To subscribe, see page 2. We welcome your story ideas, sponsorships and support. Checks can be addressed to Khaas Baat, 8312 Windsor Bluff Drive, Tampa, FL 33647. Payment can also be made via PayPal to PP ID: nitishrele@gmail.com

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WHO'S WHO

Khaas Baat is a monthly publication that has been in circulation since August 2004. Issues are direct mailed to subscribers and also are available at South Asian grocery stores and restaurants. It presents exclusive, informative and relevant news about the Indian American community in Florida to its readers.

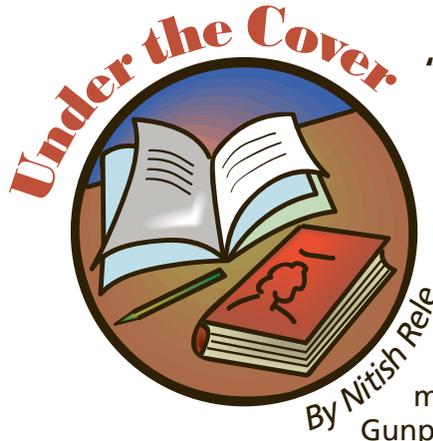
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SIGNIFICANT DATES

JAN. 14: MAKAR SANKRANT/PONGAL/MAGHI
JAN. 20: GURU GOBIND SINGH SAHIB BIRTHDAY
JAN. 26: INDIA REPUBLIC DAY



"Murder in Old Bombay"

Continued from page 1

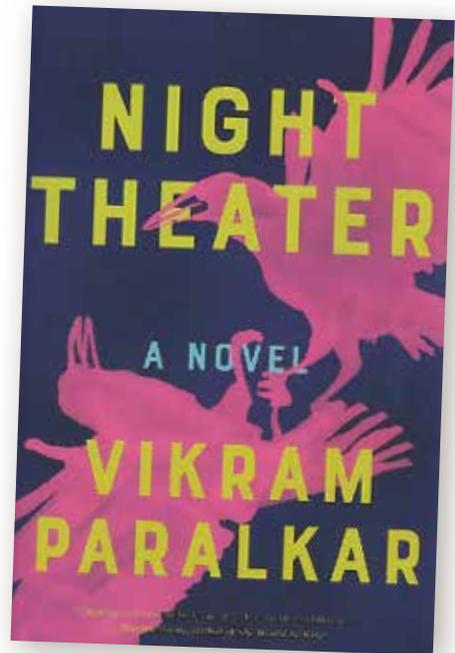
Donning his Sherlock cap, Agnihotri takes off on a journey to Simla, Pathankot, Lahore and battle memories of "Karachi Port ... A horse shrieking.

Blood on a turbaned face, eyes vicious, pouring hate ... Dirt scraping my face. Clouds of dust, dense, white. Gunpowder's sharp reek, choking me.

Cannons growling. Walls splintering. Smoke. Fear." Adding romance and spice to the probe is Diana, sister of the widower, who falls head over heels with the captain, as well as exposés about another Indian family's governing the princedom Ranjpot where British Raj does not reach. All is well that ends well, as they say. British Raj is on full display in the book with its highlighting British civil servants, Indian kings and ranis, Afghan villagers, dreadful criminals, etc. Describing the city of Lahore, then a key military supply post, March writes, "The smokestacks of the brick factory, squat against the sky, blocked out a swath of stars. Seeing a glimmer ahead, we slowed and disembarked before a cluster of low-hatched hours lit with kerosene lanterns." For a debut book, the talented author has sketched a fascinating story of intrigue, love, despair, hope and murder that we sincerely hope will turn into a mystery series with Captain Agnihotri at the helm. We can't wait long enough for the next mystery from you, Ms. March!

"Night Theater" (218 pages; \$16.95) by Vikram Paralkar; published by Catapult (<https://catapult.co/>)

It is no easy task addressing morality, faith, death and afterlife but the physician-scientist at the University of Pennsylvania takes the heavy subjects head-on. To aid in the endeavor, he uses magic realism ... and it works. A surgeon, marred by scandal, flees from the city to a village where he has been running an ill-equipped health clinic for three years. "These menial chores—draining abscesses, treating coughs and diarrhea, extracting rotten teeth, and now, another great feat, squashing cockroaches. All for what? To live in this hovel?" wonders the sad and gloomy Doctor Saheb, whose only company is a female pharmacist. The story takes a turn one night when a teacher, his pregnant wife and 8-year-old son with severe wounds arrive at the doorsteps of the clinic. Apparently, the trio was murdered in a violent robbery attack and claim that if the surgeon can fix their wounds ("torn blood vessels," "internal injuries") before sunrise, they have been given another chance at life by an angel. With no anesthesia, medical equipment or proper medication at hand, Doctor Saheb gets to work. Left to his own conscience and thirsty for answers, he is surprised to learn from the dead man that just like on earth, the afterlife too is run by bureaucrats. "There are probably more officials in the afterlife than there are dead people ... The officials have different conditions for rebirth. Some say our lives are important, others our deaths. Some go through our sins, other talk about our penance," he learns. Though this thriller of a book is a speedy read, it will leave you with questions about life, death, sin, resurrection, and hereafter. A greater admirer of novelist Franz Kafka, Dr. Paralkar understandably uses all his medical skills and expertise to provide a blow-by-blow account of surgeries – entrails, incisions, et al. So, if you are queasy, some of those passages could be troubling. At one point, Doctor Saheb offers this insight: "We hope that before we die we'll find some final truth, a magic bulb to switch on and make all the wrong paths disappear. Until then, all we can do is walk through thorns and try not to trip."





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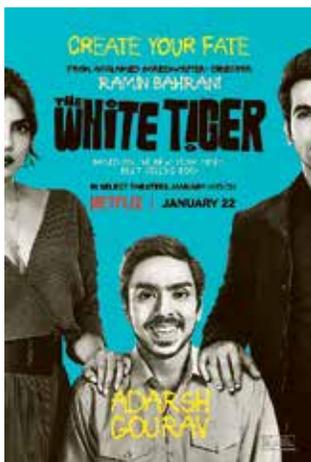
NEW SHOW/MOVIE TO WATCH:



“Tandav” (Amazon Prime, releases Jan. 15)
Saif Ali Khan plays a youth leader in this nine-part political drama series. Directed by Ali Abbas Zafar of “Tiger Zinda Hai,” “Bharat” and “Sultan” fame, set in Delhi, “Tandav” aims to take viewers inside the “closed, chaotic corridors of power and uncover the manipulations, charades as well as the dark secrets of people who will go to any lengths in pursuit of power. In an interview, Khan mentioned parallels with the political drama “House of Cards.” “As you watch the show, you’ll realize that there is no right or wrong, there is no black or white; world of power is about the world of greys. I believe that content must be backed by credible performances,” the director said. Dimple Kapadia, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Kumud Mishra, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Kritika Kamra and Gauhar Khan also star.

“The White Tiger” (Netflix, releases Jan. 22)

Adapted from 2008 Man Booker Prize winning novel by Aravind Adiga, the drama follows a man’s taxing and twisted journey from chauffeur to successful entrepreneur in India. Cunning and ambitious, Adarsh Gourav stars as Balam Halwai, who jockeys his way into becoming a driver for Ashok and Pinky, played by Rajkummar Rao and Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who have just returned from America. Society has trained Balam to be one thing — a servant — so he makes himself indispensable to his rich masters. But after a night of betrayal, he realizes that will go to corrupt lengths to trap him and save themselves. On the verge of losing everything, Balam rebels against a rigged and unequal system to rise up and become a new kind of master. Directed by Ramin Bahrani and produced by Priyanka Chopra Jones, Mahesh Manjrekar, Ansuman Bhagat, and Vijay Maurya are also featured.



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<div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">IMPORTANT</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">- Puja services have been resumed with guidelines - Please follow CDC guidelines when visiting temple - For private puja at Temple or at your place, please contact Temple or Pandit Ji.</p> </div>	




CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC – PART VIII MORE ABOUT VACCINES

By **M.P. RAVINDRA NATHAN, M.D., FACC**



Let us welcome the New Year with a resolution to observe all pandemic prevention precautions and wipe out SARS-Cov-2 infection. And let us also remember the tremendous sacrifices our healthcare providers have made at enormous personal risk. Their acts of courage and kindness shine through.

Finally, triumph for science! The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for prevention of the infection are here – light at the end of the long, dark tunnel. U.K. inaugurated the new vaccine by giving it to a 91-year-old, the first step in the long, painstaking

campaign to control the pandemic that has killed about 1.7 million people globally. Soon, FDA granted emergency use authorization of Pfizer vaccine after proper review of safety and efficacy data, without cutting corners. And a few days ago, Moderna vaccine, the second one, was also approved for use in the U.S., increasing the number of available doses, which we need desperately to fend off this pandemic. Several top leaders like VP Mike Pence and Surgeon General Jerome Adams already got vaccinated. Some of my friends, physicians and nurses, have also received the first dose, without experiencing any major side effects.

Till a few months ago, we didn't think the vaccine would actually arrive before Christmas but now the dream has become a reality. Vaccination is our only hope to put an end to this pandemic. Recommendation is to take one dose initially, followed by a booster shot three weeks later. Here are a few facts about vaccines to keep in mind.

1. Efficacy of the vaccine will be much higher in the first few months after completing vaccination because of invariably high antibody counts but may taper off in the later months. Hence, we may have to take the vaccine every year like the flu vaccine.
2. Short-term safety of vaccines is now well-established because these vaccines have been tested in tens of thousands of people. The only exception would be those with severe allergic tendencies to the point they have to carry 'EpiPen' Auto-Injector for emergencies.
3. Remember the vaccine is not a magic bullet to put an end to the pandemic. That will depend on how many people in a given community actually receive it. As I mentioned before, about

70 percent of the population need to develop immunity to stop the infection. So if you use a vaccine that has 95 percent efficacy at least 75 percent of the population needs to be vaccinated.

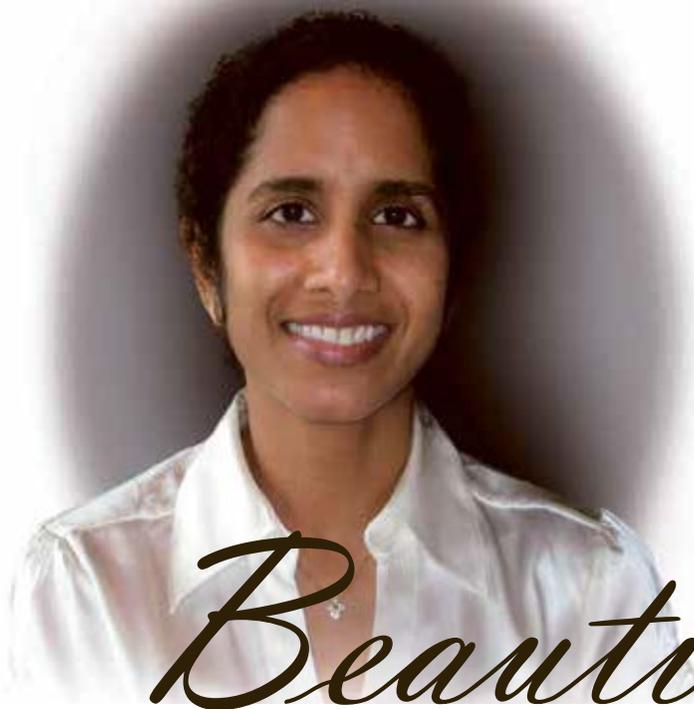
4. What about those people who are reluctant to take the vaccine? Undoubtedly, they will be at a higher risk and it will take a longer time for the development of herd immunity and lessening of the pandemic. Fear and lack of knowledge are the main factors that stand in the way. To overcome this vaccine hesitancy, they need to learn the facts first.
5. Unlike measles and chickenpox, people who have been infected once with SARS-Cov-2 virus can get infected again and re-infections have already been reported. So, you need to take the vaccine that can protect you for up to a year. It's still possible to get infected after vaccination but the infection is likely to be mild and asymptomatic but it's an important factor in transmission of infections.
6. Even if you have underlying disease that makes you vulnerable to infections, you can still take the vaccine since this is not a live attenuated virus vaccine. It's primarily derived from the spike protein of the coronavirus and hence safe enough.

With the pandemic continuing to surge at unprecedented levels, in addition to vaccination, one still need to observe primary prevention protocols with masking, social distancing, hand hygiene and environmental disinfection. Widespread vaccination will help to establish herd immunity, reducing the risk for severe infections, hospitalizations and deaths, bringing a safe end to this pandemic. And a gentle reminder to those who are still skeptical about vaccines: "Risk of dying from the disease is more likely than the risk from vaccination."

For more information, visit <https://www.onmanorama.com/lifestyle/health/2020/12/09/covid-19-vaccines-facts-hype.html>

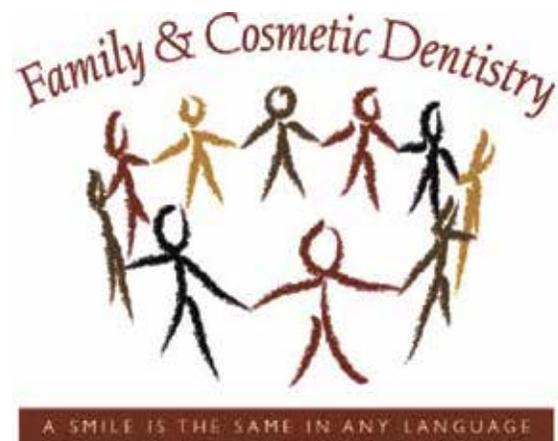
To be continued ...

M.P. Ravindra Nathan, M.D., is a cardiologist and Emeritus Editor of AAPI Journal. For further reading, "Second Chance - A Sister's Act of Love" by Dr. Nathan from Outskirts Press, can be found at www.amazon.com



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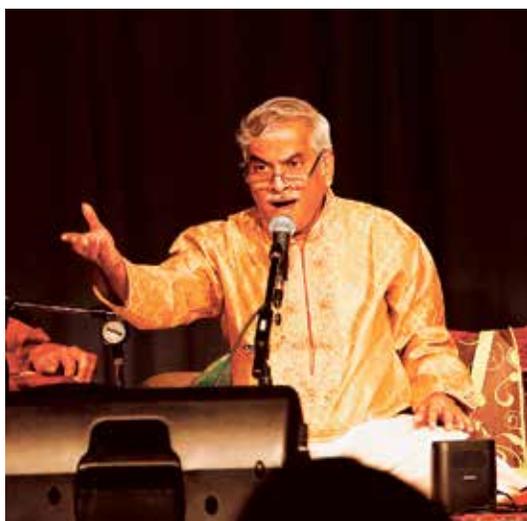
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A TRIBUTE TO PANDIT RADHARAMAN KIRTANE – INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC GURU IN U.S.

Originally written in Marathi by Meghana Sane, M.A., M.Phil (Mumbai University)
Theatre and Film Artist

I was happy to have met Pandit Radharaman Kirtane as a result of our musical show performance for the Marathi Mandal of Tampa Bay. While searching for a local female singer, we were put in contact with Janhavi Kende, a student of the Pandit Jasraj School of Music, Tampa. She proved to be a beautiful accompanist for our show. Afterward, she introduced us to her guru, Pandit Radharamanji, a student and senior disciple of Sangeet Martand Pandit Jasraj. Back in the days in India, Radharamanji and I were both theater artists for the Natyasampada company, and we recognized each other. However, Radharamanji has been in America for the last 16 years, carrying the responsibility of being director of the Pandit Jasraj School of Music, Tampa.



Radharamanji's journey in life is one to be marveled upon. Growing up in Mumbai, his family lived near the Shivaji Mandir theater in the neighborhood of Dadar. Radharamanji was born with innate musical talent, in a family which loved the musical arts. The atmosphere in their house was filled with music; everyone listened to musical drama programs on Aakashvani radio.

His teacher, Manorama Phatak, used to teach music at Samrath Vidyalaya in Dadar. Radharamanji learned the basics of music from her. As he grew a little older, he started singing the musical drama songs of the great singer, Ramdas Kamat, in a voice that exactly replicated the original. Laxman Gavde of Natyasampada discovered Radharamanji and gave him the opportunity to play the role of 'Chhota Sadashiv' in the famous musical drama "Katyaa Kaljaat Ghushali." Famous singers like Vasant Rao Deshpande used to sing in the same musical drama.

Radharamanji gave more than 200 performances in this drama while still attending school. After that, he played various roles in Natyasampada's dramas like "Sant Tukaram" and "Maharani Padmini." Radharamanji was growing as an artist alongside great artists such as Vasant Rao Deshpande, Bhargavram Acharekar, Shankar Ghanekar, Prasad Savkaar, Atul Vyas, Faiyaaz, Baalakram, Dinkar Panshikar, etc. The actor and noted classical

singer, Pandit Baalakram, encouraged the development of Radharamanji into a great artist, and arranged for music lessons from his own Gurubandhu, Pandit Vasant Rao Kulkarni. There, Radharamanji started receiving systematic education in classical music, which began shaping his own art.

It was around this time that Radharamanji first heard a recital by Sangeet Martand Pandit Jasraj. He was mesmerized by his performance, and developed a great desire to become his disciple. In 1977, on the auspicious occasion of Akshay Tritiya, Radharamanji and his mother went to meet Pandit Jasraj. They brought flower garlands and a coconut to honor his teacher. He also carried some money in an envelope as a good omen. Pandit Jasraj accepted the garland and coconut, but refused the money saying, "I do not accept money to teach music." It proved to be the biggest turning point of Radharamanji's life.

Radharamanji also became experienced in audio recording and other aspects of the field. He researched music for Doordarshan (TV) programs, mentored singing stars who participated in Reality Music shows, judged singing contests and sang cue tracks for famous singers, Hari Om Sharan, Anuradha Paudwal, Anup Jalota, Saadhana Sargam, Suresh Wadkar and Shridhar Phadke, under the guidance of music arranger Appa Wadhavkar, tabla player Kedar Pandit and music composers Prabhakar Pandit and Nandu Honap as well.

One day, Pandit Jasraj unexpectedly sent a message that Radharamanji should go USA and teach at his Tampa school. Radharamanji took this as his master's orders, and started packing for America. His passport and visa were ready. But then he was in a serious bus accident, which caused considerable injury to his vertebral column. Dr. Vinod Ingalhallikar from Thane treated him so he could come to America!

Pandit Radharaman Kirtane has been teaching students in America since 2004. He teaches according to the 'Gurukul' tradition, much like the way in which he was taught. Students often spend a few days at the school to receive more in depth training, which is a rare opportunity.

In 2019, Radharamanji organized a Shibir, a music camp, for the circle of female students in Tampa. The Gurukul has also held programs and workshops for visiting artists from India and across the USA. Students who come to learn Indian music are Indian, Chinese, Pakistani and American. To learn Indian classical music is their common culture. "Classical music is a global language and so I can teach this to anyone," he says.

Translated to English by Sayali Kelkar

Edited by Christine Ghezze

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Abishek Ramnarayanan
Adhitya Srinivasan
Keerthana Muthukumar
Manasa Jaishankar
Sahil Vaswani
Wamikka Duzianthan

HS Graduate Scholarships

Dr.Kotha Sekharam
Dr.Madhavi Sekharam

Contact:
fiatampabayse@googlegroups.com

Cultural programs

Ramnarayanan R Mani
Rini Mishra
Keerthana Muthukumar

Youth Art and Essay Contests

Abhay Vaswani and Sahil Vaswani

Register online. For questions reach out to
FIA_TPA_youth@googlegroups.com

Contest Date : Sun, Jan 17 2021

Fancy Dress Competition

Uma Setty
Abishek Ramnarayanan

Contest Date : Sat, Jan 16 2021

Sprit of Freedom Blood Drive

Ramesh Pusala

For inquiries:
FIA_TPA_Wellness@googlegroups.com

Duets of FIA—Music

Ramnarayanan R Mani
Jigisha Desai
Manasa Jaishankar

Contest Date : Sat, Jan 16 2021

Cooking Competition

Aparna Srinivasan
Wamikka Duzianthan

Contest Date : Sat, Jan 09 2021

Rangoli Competition

Pavithra Muthukumar
Wamikka Duzianthan

Contest Date : Will be communicated

FIA Youth Committee is looking for 10 High School youth volunteers who are ready to serve the community and join our team.

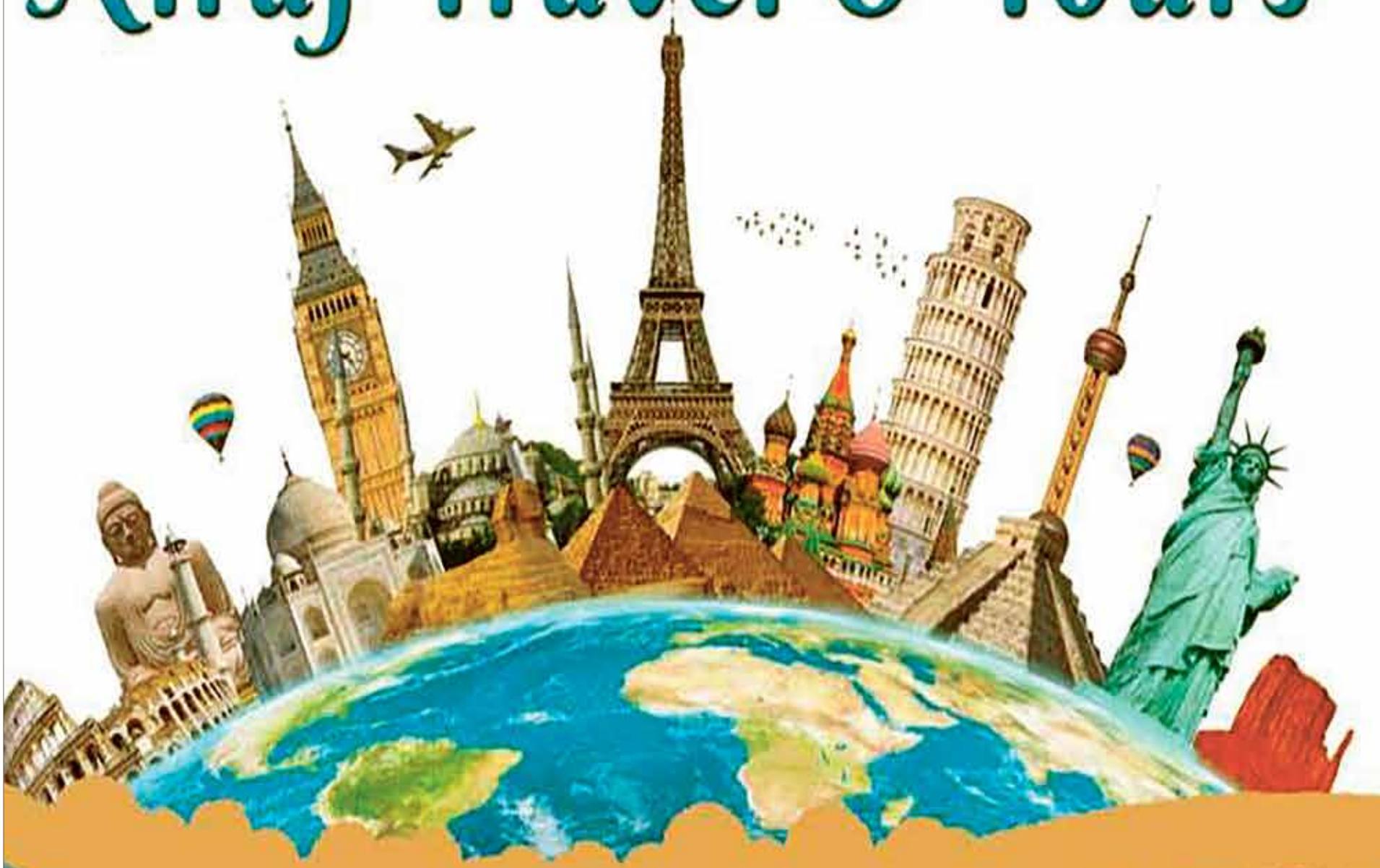
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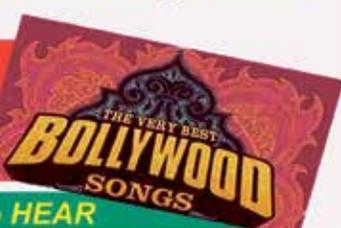
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PREMIUM PROCESSING FEES INCREASE FOR ALL PETITIONS

By **DILIP PATEL**



Effective Oct. 19, premium processing fees increased, from \$1,440 to \$2,500, for benefit requests that are already eligible for premium processing through Form I-907 (Request for Premium Processing), except for H-2B and R-1 petitions, which are only increasing from \$1,440 to \$1,500.

Provisions relating to premium processing — increasing fees and expanding services — were included in the stop-gap Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, signed into law on Sept. 30, which funds the government through Dec. 11, 2020. Included in that Act is language that requires U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to permanently expand premium processing. While the Continuing Appropriations Act took effect immediately, changes to premium processing do not take effect until USCIS is able to implement them. The increase noted above is the first measure in the legislation to be implemented by USCIS.

Other provisions relating to premium processing but not yet implemented by USCIS include expanding premium processing services to: (1) employment-based nonimmigrant petitions and associated applications for dependents; (2) Form I-140 petitions currently not permitted to be premium processed; (3) Form I-539 used to extend of change nonimmigrant visa status; (4) Form I-765 used to request work authorization; and (5) any other immigration benefit type deemed appropriate by the Secretary. The legislation provides clear guidelines on the maximum

amount of fees that can be charged for these expanded categories.

Pending Removal of Conditions (I-751) and Filing for Naturalization

Because USCIS takes well over a year to process a Form I-751, Petition to Remove Conditions on Residence, conditional permanent residents married to U.S. citizens find themselves eligible to file for naturalization — even though their removal of conditions case remains pending. These individuals are permitted to file both cases, assuming, of course, the applicant is eligible.

What is the process? Sometimes, the removal of conditions case will be adjudicated while the naturalization case is pending and before any scheduled interview, but sometimes not. If the naturalization case is scheduled for an interview before the removal of conditions is adjudicated, the U.S. citizen spouse is advised to attend the naturalization interview with the foreign national. This is because the USCIS officer first will adjudicate the removal of conditions, and then conduct the naturalization interview.

It should be noted that if the foreign national spouse entered on an immigrant visa after consular processing abroad, there should always be an in-person interview for the removal of conditions application. Historically, this has not been USCIS practice, but it is now. (If your I-751 case has a receipt number that starts with NBC, then this is a good indicator that your case ultimately will be scheduled for an interview.) In all other instances, it is the service center's discretion to decide whether to schedule an in-person interview. That decision is based on the quality of evidence submitted and whether a

determination can be made based upon a review of the documentary evidence alone.

Finally, it should be noted that sometimes USCIS mistakenly issues a two-year conditional green card when it should have issued a 10-year card. If a foreign national has been married to the U.S. citizen spouse for at least two years at the time of admission, residency should be granted with no conditions attached and no requirement to file for removal of conditions. If you believe that you were issued conditional residency when you should have been granted residency with no conditions, you can file a Form I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card, choose reason 2.d (USCIS error), and include a copy of your marriage certificate proving the date of marriage. If you have already filed for removal of conditions based on a wrongly issued conditional resident green card, USCIS should recognize the error, administratively close the case, return your filing fee, and instruct you to file the I-90 for a corrected green card.

Because the removal of conditions takes so long to process, in most instances it is recommended that a person file as early as possible in the 90-day window. Further, there is no reason to wait to file for naturalization if eligible and the removal of conditions case is still pending. A naturalization application can be filed as early as 90 days before the three-year anniversary of conditional residency. You can be in line for both benefits at the same time.

Dilip Patel of Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC, a board-certified expert on immigration law, can be reached at (813) 222-1120 or email dilip.patel@bipc.com

DO YOU NEED TO TAKE THE SAT?

By **ROBERT A.G. LEVINE**



The high school class of 2021 faced unforeseen challenges with COVID-19. Month after month, SAT's, ACT's and subject tests were cancelled, often without prior notice. As a result of health issues as well as social issues, most U.S. universities went "test optional" in

the admissions applications, not requiring standardized testing.

However, many of those schools announced that the change would be for this year's admissions class only. If you are in the high school class of 2022, will you need to take standardized tests?

No, and yes.

Although our colleges have not yet decided on next year's admissions requirements, at UCA we anticipate that many schools will remain test optional. It is good business for them, as "test optional" typically increases applications by roughly 30 percent. Nevertheless, for you, taking standardized tests may still be the best strategy.

First, let's distinguish between "test optional" and "test blind." When a school says "optional," it means "not required." It does not necessarily mean that the school will not consider test scores submitted by other applicants. In fact, even this year, many scholarship and honors program opportunities remained contingent upon evaluation of test scores ... even at "test optional" schools. Certain colleges, however, went "test blind." That term means something entirely different than "test optional." For test-blind schools, they will not consider any scores submitted by any applicants. Essentially, "test blind"

universities act as if their applications have no place whatsoever to insert test scores.

We don't think that "test blind" will be a popular trend among U.S. schools.

A few months ago, I interviewed over a dozen admissions professionals, from deans to supervisors and representatives and officers and even student volunteers. Every one of those who had evaluated applications over the years seemed to sigh from melancholy regret. They were accustomed to using test scores in their holistic application evaluations, and since standardized tests were the only universal data set, they worried that high school transcripts, lists of honors and activities, and essays would not be enough for a complete admissions evaluation. More than one of the admissions professionals I spoke with bemoaned how they would have to place undue emphasis on admissions essays.

Besides, they said, it's not like they don't know which applicants are first-generation or low socio-economic candidates. They can tell your situation from the rest of the application, and for years, they have been taking different opportunities into account when evaluating prospective students. Most people in admissions offices consider themselves community builders, and access to exceptional education is something they want for everyone. They believe in diversity on their campuses.

When test scores are not considered, extra emphasis must necessarily be placed on school grades when evaluating academic potential. For those who simply do not test well (in real life, not as an excuse for lazy test preparation), omitting test scores can be a good strategy.

But in our experience, only a minority of strong candidates falls into the "poor test-taker" category.

The truth is this: an application is an opportunity to impress an admissions officer. Each piece of the application provides a chance for a candidate to look good. If you skip the testing opportunity, you are limiting your chances to impress someone who might hold your future in their hands.

What does UCA recommend?

If you can prepare for SAT or ACT, and if you can safely take the test, then make the effort and take the test. If your score is not what you wanted, you can retake the test. Try to get your best possible score (but realize that, after three attempts, the likelihood of a great result is small). However, if you cannot achieve a score that fairly reflects your academic brilliance, consider applying without test scores (if the school allows). Also, remember that you may provide test results to some colleges, but not others.

Of course, if you can achieve perfect or near-perfect test results, you are in the running for the greatest universities in the world.

Basically, try to get your score on either SAT or ACT and decide whether to report after you get your results. Just remember that high test scores do not guarantee admissions success. They can be part of a brilliant overall presentation, but without strong extracurricular activities and compelling admissions essays and interviews, superior test scores by themselves simply will not launch you into the Ivy League or other top colleges.

Robert Levine is the founder and CEO of University Consultants of America, an independent educational consultancy assisting students around the world with applications to colleges, universities and graduate schools. For more information, call University Consultants of America, Inc. at 1-800-465-5890 or visit www.universitycoa.com

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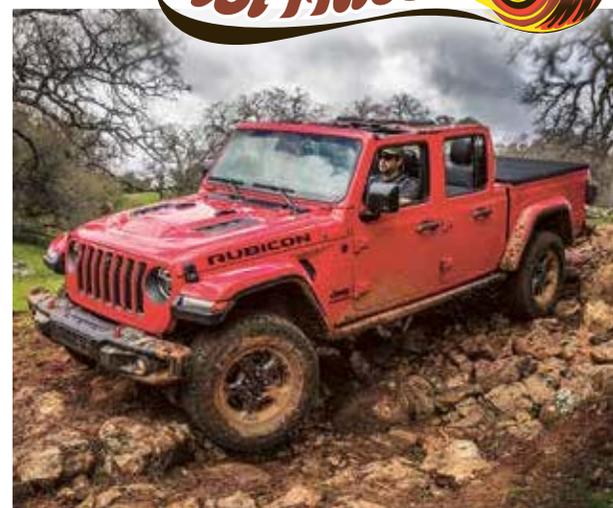
Just a year ago, Jeep had dispatched over its then all-new, gas-powered Gladiator Rubicon to us. Recently, we had the opportunity to test the diesel version of what is the only four-door 4X4 convertible in the market. Like to climb, trail and crawl, or haul tons of cargo, go water fording? In an open-air vehicle? Then this should be your ride! Under the hood of the body-on-frame 2021 Gladiator sits the optional 3.0-liter turbo-diesel V-6 engine (\$4,000) putting out 260 horsepower @ 3600 rpm and 442 pounds-feet of torque @ 2800 rpm. The go-anywhere capable vehicle, with high and low transfer case gears, is mated to a typical 8-speed auto gearbox.

Our test drive, the Overland, was a standout dual three-piece hardtop and a soft top with removable doors, exposed hinges, fold-down windshield, front/rear hooks and tubular side steps. That this is a Jeep is even more apparent from the traditional seven-slot, keystone-shaped grille, flanked by rounded halogen headlights, square tail lamps, and a flat, clamshell hood reaching down to trapezoidal fender flares. The 4X4 is designed for off-road conditions such as traction, ground clearance, maneuverability, articulation and water fording. Skid plates will protect the front, transfer case and fuel tank.

The cabin sticks to the original Jeep's handy capability with 103 cubic feet of interior room. Storage cubicles are scattered throughout, including a bin under the rear seat floor. As are several 120-volt outlets. The instrument cluster is simply laid out with rounded speedometer, tachometer, temperature, fuel, oil and volt gauges. Also included are dual a/c, manual tilt/telescopic steering column, cloth seats, six-way manual driver and four-way front-passenger seats, push-button start, 7-inch UConnect touchscreen, leather steering wheel, lockable console and door armrest, and a 5-foot cargo bed. A roll-up tonneau cover is available for \$595.

Standard safety features are dual front and side airbags, side curtain airbag, four-wheel antilock brakes, electronic stability, traction and trailer-sway

GLADIATOR (OVERLAND)
Tires: 255/70R18 all-season
Wheelbase: 137.3 inches
Length: 218 inches
Width: 73.8 inches
Height: 75 inches
Suspension: independent 5-link coil system
Steering: electro-hydraulic power-assist
Weight: 4,742 pounds
Tow capacity: 6,500 pounds
Fuel capacity: 18.3 gallons
City: 22 mpg **Highway:** 28 mpg
Base price: \$40,395
Price with options: \$61,730
Web site: www.jeep.com



control, anti-roll system, rearview camera, hill start assist, tire pressure monitoring system and daytime running lights.

Except for slightly loud road noise and engine, diehard Jeep aficionados will love the amazing talents of the rugged Gladiator. Simultaneously, the quintessential SUV with over seven decades of tradition is adept on neighborhood streets. Its off-road or on-road prowess makes the diesel version a remarkable and much-needed addition to the Jeep roster.

CADDY XT4 IS AN ENTERTAINING COMPACT CROSSOVER

Close on the heels of the three-row luxury crossover XT6 some months ago, came its smaller sibling, XT4, from Cadillac. Debuting in 2019, it sits on a car-like framework but with all the bells and whistles you would find among competitors such as the Audi Q3 or the Volvo XC40.

The XT4 is packed with ample power, oodles of it, and luxury that only a Cadillac can offer. Under the hood resides a 2.0-liter inline-4 cylinder engine that cranks out 237 horsepower @ 5000 rpm and 258 pounds-feet of torque @ 4000 rpm. The front-wheel-drive SUV is mated to a seamless 9-speed auto gearbox. A MacPherson strut front and a five-link independent rear work well to absorb unpleasant road bumps or curves. Steering response with the electric power rack-and-pinion is swift and accurate. Tow capacity is a satisfactory 3,500 pounds. And you can pick tour, sport and snow/ice drive modes.

Bright Galvano accents on the front grille, satin-aluminum window moldings and chromed door handles lend the compact XT4 a classy appearance. Vertical L-shaped LED headlights and tail lamps further enhance the bold look. The crossover boasts an upscale and luxurious



interior with exceptional fit and finish, gloss levels and materials. An 8-inch color touchscreen in the center stack includes capacitive controls, haptic feedback, gestures and voice recognition (yes, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are available). Replacing the redundant knobs is a rotary dial controller with a new jog function. There is plenty of room – 48.9 cubic feet with rear seat folded; and total passenger volume is a worthy 100.6 cubic feet. Standard goodies are dual auto a/c, eight-way power driver and six-way front-passenger heated seats, manual tilt/telescopic three-spoke steering wheel ambient lights, piano black accents on the new gear

XT4 PREMIUM LUXURY
Tires: P235/60R18 all season
Wheelbase: 109.4 inches
Length: 181.1 inches
Width: 83.5 inches
Height: 64.1 inches
Fuel capacity: 16.3 gallons
City: 24 mpg
Highway: 30 mpg
Weight: 3,691 pounds
Base price: \$39,795
Price as tested: \$48,935
Web site: www.cadillac.com

shifter, satin aluminum roof rails, 7-speaker Bose audio, remote start, 60/40 rear seat, hands-free lift gate and hands-on CUE (Cadillac User Experience).

Dual front and side airbags, side curtain airbag, four-wheel antilock brakes, alerts for forward collision, rear-cross traffic, lane change and side blind zone, front/rear park assist, stability and traction control, rearview camera, auto emergency brakes, tire pressure monitoring system and daytime running lights are standard.

Seating five people in comfort, the XT4 is tough to beat if you consider performance, substantial cargo capacity, impressive fuel economy and a reasonable price. Competitors in the luxury crossover segment should be wary of this highly capable and enjoyable ride.

'TRAVERSE' AND ENJOY THE LANDSCAPE IN THIS CHEVY CROSSOVER

Numerous three-row SUVs compete vigorously in the market but among the standouts is the Traverse. Sharing its design with the Buick Enclave and GMC Acadia, the body-frame integral structure of this Chevrolet will boost the confidence of any driver. It is equipped with a 3.6-liter V-6 engine putting out a healthy 310 horsepower @ 6800 rpm and 266 pounds-feet of torque @ 2800 rpm. That is plenty of clout to propel this nearly 4,400-pound SUV toward its destination briskly on challenging roads.

Power routed through the crisp-shifting 9-speed auto gear box delivers adequate performance. Standard active noise cancellation isolates occupants from road sound and imperfections in this front-wheel or all-wheel-drive ride.

Of course, it's in the passenger/cargo department that the Traverse truly shines. Have a seat up front in the muscularly-styled SUV and you will notice that the center stack offers MyLink with a 8-inch color touch screen for hands-free phone and audio. Underneath the infotainment system are large illuminated climate control knobs. The instrument cluster of two gauge binnacles hosting readings for speedometer, tachometer, water temp, battery and fuel, as well as a driver information center, is simple but clear.

Thanks to tri-zone auto a/c, the driver and all passengers can control their own individual temperature settings. The 60/40 second-row folds via a lever while the 50/50 third-row seat can be power operated. That opens up 98.2 cubic feet of stowing area. Simply put, throw in a stroller, numerous pieces of luggage, backpack, ice chest, cooler, etc. into the cargo hold and the Traverse laps it all up. Lest we forget, there is a huge storage bin underneath the cargo hold.

Dual front and side airbags, side curtain airbag for both rows, front center airbag, four-wheel antilock brakes with brake assist, antiskid system, stability and traction control, remote vehicle start, rearview camera, rear park,



TRAVERSE (HIGH COUNTRY)
Tires: P255/55R20 all-season
Wheelbase: 120.9 inches
Length: 204.3 inches
Width: 78.6 inches
Height: 70.7 inches
Suspension: MacPherson strut independent front; 5-link rear
Steering: electric variable power
Tow capacity: 5,000 pounds
Fuel capacity: 21.7 gallons
Highway: 25 mpg **City:** 17 mpg
Base price: \$53,100
Price as tested: \$54,295
Web site: www.chevrolet.com

rear cross traffic and forward collision alerts, lane keep and hill start assist, tire pressure monitoring system and daytime running lights are standard.

Go ahead and 'Traverse' the landscape in the Chevy crossover. There is abundant power to ensure a quick but silent and smooth ride with superb handling and cornering balance. A solid chassis and exceptional people- and cargo-hauling capabilities in this virtually full-size SUV will serve the needs of large households quite well.



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JANUARY FORECAST

By PANKAJ KOHLI



ARIES / Mesha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (March 21-April 20) Mars Sign – Stars covered Ashwini, Bharani, Kritika (1st Part) The month promises monetary gains owing to influential planetary transits. Better time ahead, with all money matters and finance; one

may have more disposable income than expenses. Prosperity and peace rest assured. Finance and commerce weigh positively.

TAURUS / Vrushabha (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (April 21-May 21)

Venus Sign - Stars covered Kritika (last 3 parts), Rohini, Mrigashira (first 2 parts)

Planetary influence brings remarkable recovery from illnesses for chronic and serious patients. Few planets may create marital discords and problems for some. Move with caution, solve problems, do not procrastinate. Face issues as they come and create a success story.

GEMINI / Mithuna (Air sign, ruling planet is Mercury) - (May 22-June 21)

Mercury Sign - Stars covered Mrigashira (last 2 parts), Ardra & Punarvasu (first 3 parts)

Your sign lord promises personal, professional, relationship success. However, some planetary influences bring undercurrents on the domestic front. Take care of heart- and stress-related problems as well. Professionally, the situation is lukewarm.

CANCER / Kataka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22-July 22)

Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha

Majority planets are positively placed. Health, wealth, peace, prosperity and love look favorable. One feels courageous, bold and outgoing. It is a great time to start new ventures in your spheres. Do not let this time slip; try to recover all losses. Professionally, it is time to see some success.

LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23-Aug. 22)

Sun Sign – Stars covered Magha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni (1st part)

This is a positive time in most spheres. One feels enthusiastic with high spirits and looks at being a winner in almost everything. Natives may do well on domestic front, personal happiness and professional changes are on the rise. However, proper medical care should be given at slightest provocation. Money matters will be positive.

VIRGO / Kanya (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Mercury) (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22)

Mercury Sign – Stars covered Uttara Phalguni (last 3 parts), Hasta, Chitra (first 2 parts)

This month brings positive results in finance, job, growth and recovery. Only be careful as loss in speculative activities seen! Domestic issues need maximum attention in first half of the month. Unexpected positive real estate deals, house or land deals may materialize in second half. Recovery of old debts and outstanding dues can be expected soon.

LIBRA / Tula (Air sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

Venus Sign – Stars covered Chitra (last 2 parts), Swati, Vishakha (first 3 parts)

Your sign lord brings personal success; hence, you are encouraged to march ahead with full courage and positive approach. Rich gains in love and financial success are possible, but you may have to work hard to achieve. Rahu's presence in 7th house shows some undercurrents in matrimony or alliances.

SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)

Mars Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha

Domestic and financial conditions, material comforts are expected to improve with gains. Commercially this is a good month. However, professional change is not advisable. Business partnerships may work in your favor. Be careful in what you do.

SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23-Dec. 21)

Jupiter Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part)

It is time to rise and shine, a great and promising month ahead. There is overall improvement with regards to finance, family, love and profession. Overall, it is a good time. However, due precautions should be taken on health grounds as negative afflictions are seen too.

CAPRICORN / Makara (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Saturn) - (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Saturn Sign – Stars covered Uttara Shada (last 3 parts) Shravana, Dhanistha (first 2 parts)

Overall, it is a gainful time on most fronts as Mars, Saturn and Sun bring good effects on wealth, family and spouse relationship. However, be careful on health grounds as some expenses are seen.

AQUARIUS / Kumbha (Air sign, ruling planet is Saturn) – (Jan. 21-Feb. 19)

Saturn Sign - Stars covered: Dhanishta (last 2 parts) Satabhisha, Purva Bhadra Pada (1st 3 parts)

On the one side, income potential increases; on the other hand, expenses could increase in different proportions as well. Practically, this is a favorable time on family, wealth and domestic front. Love life is on the go, make best use of it.

PISCES / Meena (Water sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Feb. 20-March 20)

Jupiter Sign - Stars covered: Purva Bhadra Pada (last part) Uttara Bhadra Pada, Revathi

Barring slight health issues, your time period is excellent on almost all fronts. Domestic, personal, love life, wealth – all these channels are open for you. One will be happy in all respects as this is a highly beneficial month for all other material comforts.

For detailed horoscope analysis and chart reading, courtesy Pankaj-Astro Jyotish, call Pankaj Kohli at (905) 910-1441 or e-mail Pathofastrology@gmail.com

NEW SEASON BRINGS STRIKING CUSTOMARY FABRICS

By KIRAN BAHL



Happy New Year! It's 2021, a new chapter in the book of our lives – let's make this year count big, especially after the shocking year 2020 gave us. Let's leave last year behind and think that all of the world has gone through a refresh of sorts. And where to rebuild from?

Tradition.

Indian fashion, after a brief hiatus during Covid-19, has resurrected itself from its foundations. Beautiful traditional fabrics and workings are all over new season looks, having us covet every new collection.

Smooth sensual silks

Gorgeous sarees, lenghas and suits are everywhere right now, especially in silk. Banarasi, crepe and raw silk fabrics embellished with gold, and silver zari work are oh-so-pretty! A royal blue lengha with allover gold threadwork and lace appliques is beautiful for any fancy occasion. Even

a simple silk suit in gray with silver zari design is just right for a smaller gathering or pooja. Colored threadwork is also in style, contrasting against vivid colors for the season. A black saree with purple work or red saree with baby pink work will stand out lovely!

Particularly capturing my attention are bridal looks from ages gone. Sindoori silk red lenghas with gold embellishments from every angle literally sparkle. Maroons and pinks are also trailing ahead on the tradition wagon in raw silks with even both gold and silver zari intertwined!

Lenghas with longer tops

Lengha styles are changing! Those tiny crop top, bikini looking 'cholis' are fading away, making room for longer yet fitted looks.

A pink lengha with longer top is pretty with stonework. A navy blue one will shine with mirror work! Cholis though are longer, waist length or even longer. Fitted throughout, they are perfect to outline an hourglass figure. Even a style fitted through the waist but flared at the hip gives a smoother look, flattering all the way around!

Too covered of a feeling? Try sheer paneling along the shoulders of the top or even the sides. The best version? A completely open back, or at least a very low one. A corset tie back is just as beautiful!

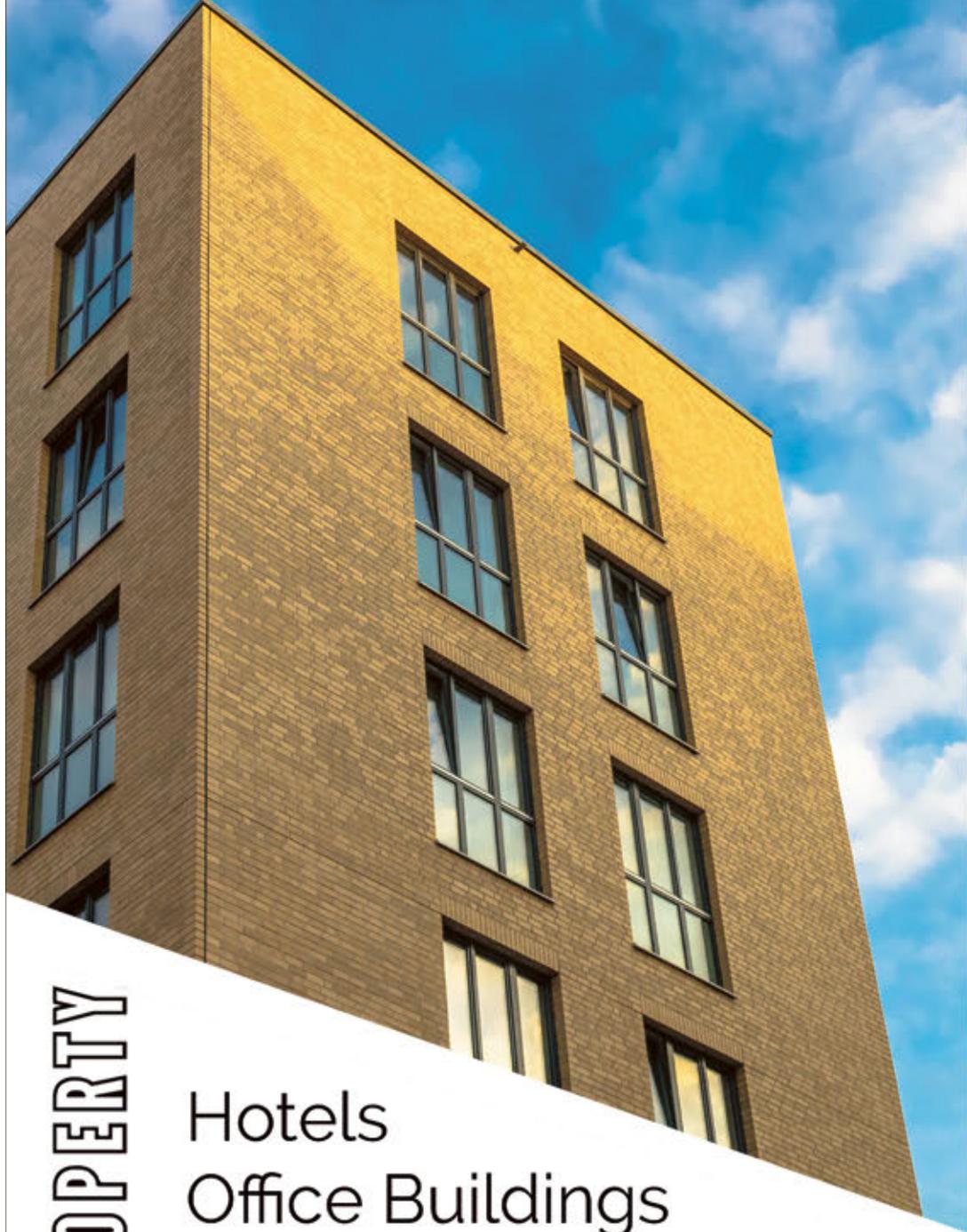
Jewelry

Jewelry is just as traditional in trends too and gorgeous! From large stones embedded in gold chokers and polki/uncut kundan in silver, the styles of old are now the new again!

Try longer necklaces for a statement look against your saree palloo. Or a choker against your suit. Kadas are in too, winning over its bangles counterpart in this season's race. Big chunky earrings and anklets, too, are the sparkles to wear.

Once again, Happy New Year to all our readers!! Remember, along with your new year's resolutions to also strive to spread light and share love with one another. And, as always, remember to grow with style!

Kiran Bahl of Gro Styles, an Indian Boutique (www.grostyles.com), can be reached at (813) 843-9040 or kiran@grostyles.com



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AEROSOL SCIENTIST PRATIM BISWAS NAMED DEAN OF U. OF MIAMI COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Story, photo provided by University of Miami

Raised on the campus of the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay by a father who was a professor of chemistry at the institute and a mother who was a mathematician, Pratim Biswas grew up with STEM infused in his DNA. As a young boy, he admired the field of engineering, often marveling at how those who practiced the discipline could solve intractable problems.

This fascination served Biswas well, as he would go on to become one of the world's leading authorities in aerosol science and engineering. He is renowned for his work in applying aerosol science to energy and environmental nanotechnology, solar energy use, air pollution control, medicine, and other areas. Now, he is bringing his expertise, vision, and organizational skills to the University of Miami.

Biswas, the Lucy and Stanley Lopata Professor in the McKelvey School of Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis, has been named dean of the University of Miami College



of Engineering. A member of the prestigious National Academy of Engineering, Biswas will assume his new post in January 2021.

At Washington University, Biswas served as assistant vice chancellor for international programs and chair of the Department of Energy, Environmental and Chemical Engineering.

He arrived at Washington University 20 years ago to rebuild an environmental engineering science program that had been dismantled

30 years prior. Six years later, he created the Department of Energy, Environmental and Chemical Engineering, the first program of its kind nationally — which currently has 146 undergraduates, 30 master's-degree students, and 110 Ph.D. students; 24 tenured, tenure-track, teaching, and research faculty members; and \$8 million in annual research expenditures. Biswas is proud of his more than 55 doctoral graduates of the Aerosol and Air Quality Research Laboratory, and he has published more than 425 peer-reviewed journal papers with them.

During his stint at Washington University in St. Louis, Biswas orchestrated numerous national and international collaborations. He served as the university's ambassador to the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, and directed the McDonnell Academy Global Energy and Environmental Partnership, a consortium of 35 universities worldwide in which scholars collaborate on research and new educational initiatives.

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