

KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

DECEMBER 2022

WWW.KHAASBAAT.COM

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'GODS AND LOVERS: PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES FROM INDIA' EXHIBIT OPENS AT THE RINGLING IN SARASOTA

Story provided by The Ringling

"The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota presents its latest exhibition, "Gods & Lovers: Paintings and Sculptures from India," in the Pavilion gallery of the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Center for Asian Art. The display runs through May 28, 2023, and showcases works of art from private collections and The Ringling's permanent collection. The paintings were created by artists affiliated with royal courts across northern, central and western India between the 16th and 19th centuries. "This exceptional group of paintings offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore a range of devotional and secular subjects and to better understand India's rich artistic heritage," explains Rhiannon Paget, Ph.D., The Ringling's Curator of Asian Art.

Drawing from Hindu scripture and literature, classical music, and court culture, the paintings weave together tales of divine love, earthly splendor, heroism, desire and vengeance.

It includes delicate and elaborately detailed paintings produced in the royal ateliers of the Mughal rulers, a Muslim dynasty of Turkic-Mongol origin that controlled large parts of northern India between the 16th and 19th centuries. Mughal court artists seeking new patronage brought their styles to Rajasthan in the northwest, where they blended them with local traditions. Also well represented in the exhibition are paintings from the mountainous Pahari region, in India's extreme northwest, which almost exclusively depict Hindu subject matter.

Continued on page 2



The Goddess Kali in the cremation ground, ca. 1850 Northern India, Pahari region
Opaque pigments with gold on paper
Sheet: 10 1/4 x 7 3/16 in. (26 x 18.3 cm)
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Museum purchase, 2022.17

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DESANTIS LIGHTS DIWALI LAMPS IN GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Story, page 12

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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EVENTS

TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER

DEC. 8: BANQUET; Hillsborough County Sheriff's Indian Advisory Council Awards Banquet; dinner, drinks, performances, DJ, raffles, auction; 6:30 p.m.; pre-sale \$75 or \$100 at door; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; for information, call Ajay Patel at (813) 786-7046 or email siactampa@gmail.com



PHOTO CREDIT: HCSO

DEC. 8-10: MANDIR ANNIVERSARY; three-session Ramayan Yagna to celebrate Shree Raam Mandir 10-year anniversary; 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.; Shree Raam Mandir, 7411 E. Comanche Ave., Tampa; for information, call Angela at (813) 265-3268.



DEC. 13: HANUMAN CHALISA; second Tuesday of month; Vishnu Mandir Tampa, 5803 Lynn Road; 7 to 9 p.m.; for information, call Deo Gajadhar at (813) 817-9714.

Disclaimer: Event details are subject to change. Please check with local organizers. Event submissions are free, e-mail information to editor@khaasbaat.com by the 20th.

'GODS AND LOVERS: PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES FROM INDIA' EXHIBIT OPENS AT THE RINGLING IN SARASOTA

Cont'd from page 1

To reflect upon the history of Indian art at The Ringling, several Indian sculptures acquired by John Ringling between 1926 and 1930 are also on view. The objects, comprising Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain examples created between the 4th and the 14th century, represent a range of beliefs and artistic styles. Highlights of Indian sculpture from the John Ringling Bequest are on permanent display in neighboring galleries of the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Center for Asian Art.

The exhibition will be the subject of a lecture by guest speaker Wes Ervin, a specialist in Indian painting in the Mughal Period. Dr. Ervin will lead a visual exploration of each painting. For more information on this lecture Dec. 8, visit <https://www.ringling.org/events/gods-and-lovers-paintings-and-sculptures-india>

The Ringling is at 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota.
For more information, visit www.ringling.org



The Goddess Durga, ca. late-18th century Eastern India
 Cream sandstone with some red pigment
 54 1/2 x 16 1/2 x 8 1/2 in.
 Bequest of John Ringling, 1936. SN5409

DEC. 21: ICC SENIORS GET-TOGETHER; India Cultural Center, 5509 Lynn Road, Tampa; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; free seminar, lunch and entertainment; no age restriction; for information, text email address along with your name to Bhikhu Nayi at (631) 560-2718 to receive details about seniors gathering every month; or call Mahesh Modha at (813) 476-1540.

ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY

DEC. 10: HOLIDAY GALA; organized by Indian American Business Association & Chamber; awards, banquet, entertainment; Caribe Royale Resort, 8101 World Center Drive, Orlando; 5 p.m.; for tickets and information, visit www.iabausa.com

DEC. 11: YEAR-END PARTY; presented by HSCF Age Group; noon; Gateway to India, 790 E. State Road 434, Longwood; karaoke, bingo; annual paid members pay \$10 per gratuity; non-members \$26 per person, plus gratuity; RSVP to hscfnewagegroup@gmail.com

SOUTH FLORIDA (POMPAÑO BEACH/PALM BEACH)

DEC. 31: NEW YEAR 2023 DINNER & DANCE; organized by Palm Beach India Association; \$65 members, \$100 non-members; Hilton Palm Beach Airport, 150 Australian Ave., West Palm Beach; 7:30 p.m. onward; for information, call Gunjan Patel at (561) 801-3540.





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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4 (5:30 PM to 7:00 PM) • SHRI JAGNNATH BHAJAN	EVERY TUESDAY - 7:00 PM • SUNDARKAND • HANUMAM KATHA
MONDAY, DECEMBER 5 (6:30 PM to 8:00 PM) • SOM PRADOSH VRAT SHIV PUJA	EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00 PM • SAI BABA SATSANG • MAHA PRASAD
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8 (7:00 PM to 8:00 PM) • GURU DATTREY JAYANTI PUJA BHAJAN	 Pandit Manikya Sharma 813-484-9568 Pandit Rushi Vyas 813-503-3388 Pandit Pranav Bhatt
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10 (5:30 PM to 8:00 PM) • MATA DI CHOWKI (Sponsorship Available, Please contact temple)	
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11 (5:00 PM to 6:00 PM) • SHRI JHULAY LAAL BHAJAN	

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CHOLESTEROL – WHAT’S NEW? PART 2 HEART DISEASE IN SOUTH ASIANS

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



The major news during the past month among the Indian community was the sudden death of a 48-year-old prominent Indian physician practicing in Orlando. Apparently, he died in his sleep, presumably from a heart attack. Reactions in the Indian community varied from “How could this happen to such an educated professional at such a young age?” to “We are not paying attention to our own health amidst this crazy, stressful life.” Well, now is the time to discuss this burning issue – high incidence of coronary artery disease (CAD) that leads to heart attacks and death among South

Asians, Indians included, and explore preventive measures.

Let us first define ‘South Asians’ who account for a quarter of the world’s population. They are people whose lineage can be traced to India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan and often collectively referred to as South Asians. Yes, we share similar genetic composition, skin color, looks and other bodily features. So, it would be

logical to conclude that we may suffer from similar health problems as well.

In the early 1980s, Dr. Enas A. Enas, a prominent practicing cardiologist in Chicago, observed that many young patients of Indian origin were being admitted to the hospital with massive heart attacks and many of them succumbing to the first heart attack. “Coronary Artery Disease in Indians (CADI): A Cause for Alarm and Call for Action!” wrote Dr. Enas in 1990. Soon, there were similar reports coming from other countries such as Malaysia, Bangladesh, United Kingdom, etc., about CAD in patients of South Asian origin. Since then, there has been a lot of research on this very issue, especially the landmark CADI study by Dr. Enas and colleagues. “Indians around the globe have the highest rate of CAD despite the fact that many do not indulge in red meat, a lot of them are predominantly vegetarians, and generally have low body weight and waist circumference index. The death rate from CAD among overseas Indians has been 50 to 300 percent higher than Americans, Europeans, Chinese and Japanese, irrespective of gender, religion or social class. Conventional risk factors fail to explain this difference completely,” he concluded.

Initially, there was some skepticism about these findings but more research and reports started coming in, confirming his findings. According to the latest study from the U.K. involving nearly 500,000 subjects, South Asians had double the number of heart attacks compared to whites, even after adjusting for various risk factors associated with CAD.

Just to refresh your memory: Coronary atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries of the heart), the main cause for heart attacks and death, is a condition associated with narrowing of the diameter of the arteries, mostly medium and large-sized arteries, due to buildup of plaques primarily composed of bad cholesterol or LDL. When arteries are sufficiently narrowed such that they reduce the flow of oxygenated blood to heart muscle, it leads to heart attacks. You already know the conventional risk factors like high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus –Type 2 (T2D), smoking, obesity, family history and a diet high in saturated fats. According to the latest data from the Mediators of Atherosclerosis in South Asians Living in America (MASALA) study, the prevalence of T2D in Asian Indian adults in the U.S. is 23 percent compared to 13 percent for whites and 7-8 percent among Indians in India.

Among the various risk factors, high cholesterol appears to be the most important factor followed by T2D, especially among Indians. Often, they have mild to moderate elevation of total cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL but most have generally low HDL, sometimes called the good cholesterol. Lately, HDL has lost its importance as the protection fraction of cholesterol and hence all emphasis is on how to deal with high LDL. In addition, the level of a sub-fraction of LDL called Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a), which is at least twice as atherogenic as LDL, is significantly elevated in South Asians. Lp(a) level is genetically determined and 25 percent of South Asians have elevated Lp(a); this makes them genetically predisposed to early heart disease. According to Dr. Enas, Indians do not have small coronary arteries as some Indian studies reported previously but the extensive plaque buildup throughout the coronary arteries may masquerade as smaller-size coronary arteries.

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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LUXURIOUS INFINITI QX50 SUV WILL PAMPER YOU!

Test-drive story by **NITISH S. RELE** motoringtampabay@gmail.com

For 2022, Apple CarPlay compatibility and ProPilot Assist are standard on all Infiniti QX50 trims along with some minor updates. Otherwise, it's the same midsize luxury SUV as before. Which is just fine with us.

A 2.0-liter variable-compression 4-cylinder turbo engine develops plentiful 268 horsepower at 5600 rpm and 280 pounds-feet of torque at 4800 rpm. The slick and smooth continuous variable transmission shifts effortlessly. Ensuring stability at quick turns and bumps on the road is a MacPherson strut front and a rear multilink suspension. The variable-assist, direct adaptive steering conveys an unswerving feel. Braking duties are handled exceptionally well by 13-inch vented front and 12.1-inch rear discs. Four drive modes are offered: standard, eco, sport and personal.

Based on a steel unibody structure, QX50 is undoubtedly a boldly attractive vehicle beginning with a long clamshell hood that meets up with a double-arch black-metallic grille, surrounded by horizontal LED headlights and fog lamps. The aluminum roof rails are standard as are the chrome dual exhaust tips and rear tail lamps that connect to the chrome strip. The cabin is crammed with extravagance and luxury features such as aluminum accents on the center console, dashboard, doors, push-button ignition, 60/40-split rear seat, eight-way power front seats, dual auto a/c, 8-inch upper touch screen for navigation and a 7-inch lower screen for climate, audio and phone controls. InTouch, a rotary knob in the center console, controls the dual screens. The familiar Infiniti double-wave instrument panel lights up with electroluminescent gauges. A mix of leather and aluminum on the short but easy-to-grip



QX50 (ESSENTIAL AWD)
Tires: 235/55R19
Wheelbase: 110.2 inches
Length: 184.7 inches
Height: 66 inches
Width: 74.9 inches
Fuel capacity: 16 gallons
City: 22 mpg
Highway: 28 mpg
Weight: 4,105 pounds
Base price: \$48,950
Price as tested: \$49,975
Web site: www.infiniti.com

shifter knob gives a classy touch. As for roominess, there is plenty with a total interior volume of 135.8 cubic feet, and 64.4 cubic feet with the rear seat down. There also is a substantial hidden under-floor bin.

Dual front, side and knee airbags, side curtain airbag for both rows, four-wheel antilock brakes with electronic brake distribution and brake assist, vehicle dynamic and traction controls, antiskid system, front/rear crumple zones, front seat active-head restraints, blind spot and lane departure warnings, rear-cross traffic alert and tire pressure monitoring system are standard. Looking into the future of autonomous transport, ProPilot Assist helps drivers to maintain their lane, and set vehicle speed and distance to a car ahead.

Evidently, this carlike crossover is no gas sipper but the QX50 does offer oodles of extravagant treats to coddle its occupants. And the nimble Infiniti is quick on the road, touting a first-rate ride and commendable handling.



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DECEMBER 2022 VISA BULLETIN BRINGS BAD NEWS FOR EMPLOYMENT-BASED IMMIGRANTS CHARGEABLE TO INDIA QUOTAS

By DILIP PATEL



The Employment Based First Preference Category is for the brightest and best in the world (as well as outstanding professors and researchers and managers and executives of multinational entities). It defies common sense that we would make Nobel Prize winners wait for a Green Card just because they happen to have been born in India or China, but that is the current state of our broken immigration system.

According to the December 2022 Visa Bulletin, the State Department is predicting that the demand is going to exceed supply and therefore a quota-based waiting list is likely to be imposed in the coming months.

They say that increased demand and number use in the Employment First category, combined with decreased visa number availability for Fiscal Year 2023 compared to Fiscal Year 2022, will most likely necessitate the establishment of waiting lists for China and India in the coming months to hold number use within the maximum allowed under the Fiscal Year 2023 annual limits.

The U.S. Department of State publishes the monthly Visa Bulletin, which is used to determine when beneficiaries of immigrant petitions can take steps to complete the permanent residence (green card) process. Individuals in the permanent residence process can check the Visa Bulletin to find out when they can apply for an immigrant visa or adjustment of status and when such applications can actually be approved.

The December 2022 Visa Bulletin provides some insights into the availability of employment-based green cards for December as well as in the coming months. We provide some of the other notable highlights that may potentially affect certain employment-based applicants.

Employment-Based Preference Annual Limit for Fiscal Year 2023

Preliminary consolidated number use by the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for all of Fiscal Year 2022 shows there were approximately 57,000 unused family-sponsored visa numbers. As a result, the estimated employment-based annual limit will be 197,000 for Fiscal Year 2023.

Visa Availability in the Employment First Category for China and India

Employment First category (EB-1) includes Individuals of Extraordinary Ability (EB-1A), Outstanding Professors and Researchers (EB-1B), and Multinational Managers and Executives (EB-1C). Individuals planning to apply under these categories should prepare for this potential establishment of final action and application filing cutoff dates and act accordingly.

Establishment of Employment Second Preference Final Action and Application Filing Dates

For December 2022, the U.S. Department of State established a worldwide Employment Second Preference final action and application filing dates effective in December to hold number use within the maximum allowed under the Fiscal Year 2023 annual limit. Except for China and India, all countries are

subject to a final action date of Nov. 1, 2022, and an application filing date of Dec. 1, 2022. This situation will be continually monitored, and any necessary adjustments will be made accordingly.

This category includes Professionals holding Advanced Degrees or Individuals of Exceptional Ability. This category also includes individuals applying for a National Interest Waiver and the establishment of a final action date and application filing date prevents such individuals from submitting a concurrent application for adjustment of status with an I-140 petition unless they have a priority date earlier than Dec. 1, 2022. Those subject to India or China quotas, are already painfully aware of the delays for EB2 Green cards.

Retrogression of India Employment Second Preference Final Action and Application Filing Dates for December

For December 2022, the Final Action Date for India is set at 08 October 2011. The State Department explains that due to heavy applicant demand and significantly lower visa number availability for India Employment Second Preference category for Fiscal Year 2023, corrective action was taken in October to keep number use within the maximum allowed under the Fiscal Year 2023 annual limits. However, higher than expected levels of demand in the Employment First and Employment Second categories has materialized this year, and as a result, fewer additional numbers will be available to India in the Employment Second category than originally estimated when the October and November final action and application filing dates were established. Therefore, further corrective action has been necessary to ensure that the limited supply of visa numbers is allocated by priority date. The situation will be continually monitored, and any necessary adjustments made accordingly.

EB3: Forward Movement of China and India Employment Third Preference for December

According to the December 2022 Visa Bulletin, the India Employment Third Preference category (EB-3) Final Action will advance by more than two months to June 15, 2012, and the Dates for Filing cutoff will advance by one month to Aug. 1, 2012. In addition, the EB-3 China Professional/Skilled Workers category will advance by six weeks, to Aug. 1, 2018 for Final Action, and to Sept. 1, 2018, for Dates for Filing.

USCIS has announced that individuals who qualify for Adjustment of Status can submit their employment-based forms I-485 during the month of December based on the "Dates for Filing" charts.

Individuals applying through the above-referenced employment-based categories should continue to monitor the Visa Bulletin in the coming months and consult with an experienced immigration attorney to determine the best action in anticipation of the above developments.

Dilip Patel a partner at the Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney Law Firm is a Florida Bar Board Certified expert on immigration law and can be reached at (813) 222-1120 or dilip.patel@bipc.com



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SANTA FE HYBRID WILL SAVE BIG BUCKS AT THE GAS STATION!

Test-drive stories by NITISH S. RELE motoringtampabay@gmail.com

Introduced just a year ago, the Santa Fe hybrid is an excellent addition to the Hyundai midsize SUV lineup, thanks to its bold styling, inviting cabin and best of all, better gas-sipping capabilities than the regular version.

Our test-drive Limited model was equipped with a 1.6-liter inline-4 turbo engine putting out a total of 226 horsepower (beating the Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4 hybrids) and 258 pounds-feet of torque. That is plenty of power for passing or merging into peak office-hour traffic. Finding help for that extra energy is a 44-kw electric motor backed by a 1.49 kWh lithium-ion battery pack with max output of 64 kWh. A 6-speed auto gear box with paddle shifters is competent and, of course, fuel efficient.

The all-wheel-drive Santa Fe, which has center-locking differential capabilities, distributes power between front and rear wheels depending on road and driving conditions to result in a safe and comfortable ride. A MacPherson strut front and multilink rear suspension ensure that the SUV handles the rigors of daily driving with comfort. The motor-driven power steering is quick and precise. Want to save fuel? Switch to eco mode from smart or sport.

Up front is a three-dimensional horizontal wide grille flanked by noticeably slim LED T-shaped headlights. Our Limited edition was

SANTA FE LIMITED (AWD)

Tires: 235/55 R19

Wheelbase: 108.9 inches

Length: 188.4 inches

Height: 66.3 inches

Width: 74.8 inches

Weight: 4,204 pounds

Fuel capacity: 17.7 gallons

City: 33 mpg

Highway: 30 mpg

Web site: www.hyundai.com



packed with such fine goodies as 8-way power heated/cooled front leather seats, 10.25-inch LCD touch screen for nav, phone and audio, Bluetooth phone capabilities, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, 60/40 rear seat, suede headliner, panoramic sun roof, Harman Karmon sound system, surround-view monitor, tilt/telescopic steering column and dual auto a/c. Well-placed storage bins/cubbies abound throughout the cabin, which flaunts 146.6 cubic feet of space.

The Santa Fe comes standard with Hyundai SmartSense, which includes blind-spot, forward-collision avoidance, safe exit and lane keep assists; smart cruise control; and of

course 10 air bags. You also get rear cross-traffic collision avoid assist, rearview monitor, four-wheel antilock brakes, rollover sensor, electronic stability, traction and downhill brake controls, hill-start assist, daytime running lights and a tire pressure monitoring system.

Base-priced at \$40,160, the Santa Fe hybrid is a splendid combination of performance, practicality and fun. In our week of city driving this commendable SUV, we eked 37.1 mpg beating EPA estimates of 33. And Hyundai's five-year, 60,000-mile basic, and 10-year, 100,000-mile power train and hybrid component/battery warranties should convince you to sign on the dotted line.

THIS 'ROGUE' IS THE 'ONE' YOU WANT TO KEEP!

Guess which is Nissan's top-selling vehicle in the United States? No, it isn't the popular Altima sedan. It is the Rogue, a compact crossover that has delivered a cozy well-damped ride while targeting youthful and active lifestyles.

For 2023, the 1.5-liter DOHC turbocharged engine develops 201 horsepower @ 5600 rpm and 225 pounds-feet of torque @ 4000 rpm. It is coupled with a continuous variable transmission, which can be noisy at times. The electric power rack-and-pinion steering conveys a solid on-center feel, willing to change directions when hustled along on the road. An independent strut with coil springs makes up the front while the rear is equipped with a multilink suspension. The all-wheel-drive system distributes torque evenly to the wheels irrespective of road conditions.

Ensnared on the unibody-type structure is a V-motion black grille with chrome accents, and LED headlights and daytime running lights. Offered at no extra cost on the Platinum trim are dual auto a/c, 9-inch touchscreen for infotainment controls, eight-way driver and four-way front-passenger power and heated seats, quilted semi-aniline leather seats and shifter, tilt/telescopic steering column, push-button start, 12.3-inch digital instrument panel and a 10-speaker Bose premium audio system. Ingress and egress is effortless with the 60/40-split rear seat, which when folded, ekes out 74.1 cubic feet of space. And passenger volume is



an admirable 105.4 cubic feet. An under-floor cargo area tray can come in handy to store soaked belongings. Need to haul extra luggage/belongings? The roof rack capacity can hold up to 220 pounds of weight.

Dual front and side airbags, front-center airbag, side curtain airbag for both rows, four-wheel antilock brakes with electronic brake distribution and brake assist, vehicle dynamic control, antiskid system, front seat active-head restraints, rear cross traffic alert, front/rear crumple zones, hill start assist, blind spot warning, lane-departure warning, auto emergency brake with

ROGUE AWD (PREMIUM)

Tires: 235/55R19

Wheelbase: 106.5 inches

Length: 183 inches

Width: 72.4 inches

Height: 66.5 inches

Weight: 3,713 pounds

Fuel capacity: 14.5 gallons

City: 28 mpg

Highway: 34 mpg

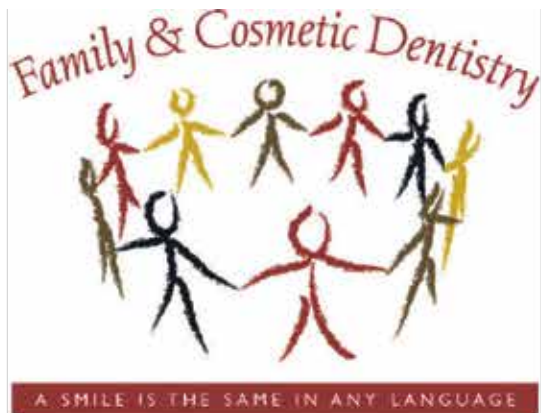
Base price: \$38,640

Price as tested: \$43,100

Web site: www.nissanusa.com

pedestrian detection, daytime running lights and tire pressure monitoring system are standard. Looking into the future of autonomous transport, the ProPilot Assist helps drivers to maintain their lane, and set vehicle speed and distance to a car ahead.

Listen up, all you younger and urban SUV buyers. Nothing beats the Rogue in usefulness, functionality, respectable fuel-economy figures and value. In fact, it is one handy 'Rogue' you want to keep by your side, or in this case, parked in your garage.



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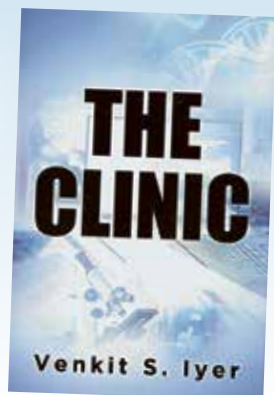
THE CLINIC

by Venkit S. Iyer, MD, MS, FACS, FRCS-C



Dr. Venkit S. Iyer

A fertility clinic, a genetic research laboratory, and a dark website collaborate to assist in reproductive needs, genetic manipulations, and human experimentations done in high secrecy. Scientists want to explore and experiment, while clients demand cutting-edge technology to satisfy their interests. Medical technology keeps advancing steadily and is looking towards reaching goals that were unthinkable a few years ago. This fictional medical thriller will take you through futuristic possibilities for the human race.



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WHAT MAY HAPPEN AFTER THE SUPREME COURT SPEAKS

By ROBERT LEVINE



NOTE: You may consider what I'm about to say as controversial, but this article is designed to help the next generation navigate college admissions.

By definition, the future is impossible to predict, but I'm going to try.

Presently, the United States Supreme Court is considering two cases about college admissions. Students For Fair Admissions (SFFA) has accused Harvard of discriminating against Asians in order to boost representation from other groups and has

also accused the University of North Carolina of violating both the U.S. Constitution and federal civil rights laws.

Oral arguments were recently conducted, and experts observing the justices' comments noted that the court seems ready to recede from its 2003 decision in Grutter vs. Bollinger, which found that admissions processes that favor "underrepresented minority groups" do not violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1978, the court upheld affirmative action in admissions in University of California vs. Bakke. However, the recent oral arguments seemed to signal that today's justices are considering dissolving affirmative action and race-based (and presumably ethnicity-based) factors.

So, what does that really mean for college admissions? In my opinion, probably nothing.

In a world that asserts "white privilege" as the universal cause of discrimination, it should be noted that both the plaintiffs complaining

about unfair practices in both Bakke and Grutter were white. It should also be noted that today's diverse campuses do not favor whites quantitatively.

Depending upon the source you review, whites (non-Hispanic) make up roughly 60% of the American population. At Harvard, the percentage of whites is under 40%. At UNC – a public university that legally must support the citizens of its state, which is 68% white – the percentage of white students is only 59%.

However, despite the fact that Asian-Americans make up slightly less than 6% of the US population, Harvard's student body is 21% Asian-American (plus 12% international students, many from Asia). UNC is almost 12% Asian, despite the state being only 3% Asian.

Especially at private colleges, Asian Americans are boosted in comparison to the national demographics. Not including international students, Stanford is 23% Asian. MIT is roughly 30% Asian, which is more than its 29% white population. Yale is 20% Asian, and Princeton is 22% Asian. At each of these schools, the white population is only about 40%.

This admissions issue is not white privilege. SFFA is attacking bias resulting from affirmative action. In other words – and this may not be popular – the primary targets of these two lawsuits are black students.

Depending upon the source, blacks make up between 12% and 13% of our U.S. population. In cities, black populations tend to be much higher. However, in American colleges, their numbers are lower. At Harvard, blacks make up less than 9% of the population. At UNC, the number is around 8%. At Stanford, it's 7%. At MIT, only 6%. At both Yale and Princeton, the black populations are less than 8% of the campus blend.

I am not spouting these statistics to prove any point except to say that, according to the demographic numbers, current holistic admissions policies favor Asian-Americans by factors between 3X and 4X, disfavor white applicants, and also disfavor black applicants.

Why? Especially at residential colleges where students live together on campus for all four years, diversity in all forms is part of the education. When people with different experiences and different philosophies interact, they teach each other about their differences. In my opinion, this is a good thing.

Even if the Supreme Court rules against Harvard and UNC, do we really believe that our colleges will dispose of their core value favoring diverse student bodies? Do we really think they will limit black students, who are already disproportionately underrepresented? I do not think so.

Instead, even if affirmative action is no longer utilized in admissions, I suspect that U.S. college demographic numbers will not change dramatically. Rather, instead of indicating that race or ethnicity is a basis for selection, U.S. colleges will indicate other reasons for their admissions decisions. They could rely upon socioeconomic factors, or first-generation status, or even "Did you see how great their essays were!"

Despite what the Supreme Court rules, here is what I know with certainty:

If you understand how admissions works, your chances go up. If you do not understand the admissions process, your chances go down. That's why educational consultants help students achieve their best potentials.

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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BOOK REVIEW

Under the Cover



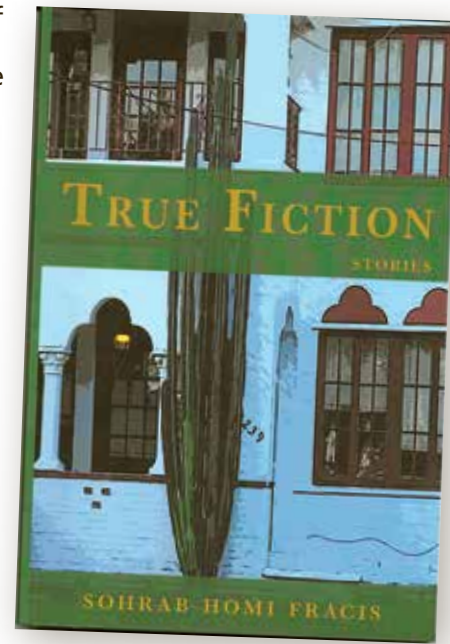
By Nitish Rele

"True Fiction" stories (98 pages; \$20 paperback) by Sohrab Homi Fracis; published by Stephen F. Austin State University Press (www.sfasu.edu/sfapress)

After "Ticket to Minto: Stories of India and America" and "Go Home," Jacksonville native Sohrab Homi Fracis has penned another brilliant collection of short stories, eight this time. "Open Mic" deals with gentrification as the protagonist watches helplessly the closure of a beloved and popular Florida coffee shop. It focuses on an immigrant from Rwanda and a hipster

musician. "He's a scruffy-bearded young regular by the name of Max," writes Fracis. "Longish light hair falls across his forehead to screen his most distinctive feature: a permanently closed eye ... He doesn't do vocals, just blues and folk-rock progressions that are uneven and not easily identifiable. Still, the guitar has a warm tone and the progressions are ambitious, incorporating bass lines behind the chords and lead riffs above them." In "All Right, Now, Cupid," the author tells the story of an underpaid bank teller going postal. "Tellers are walking dinosaurs who already know that the asteroid is about to hit," he notes. Mum is the "word" in the title story of a professor regarding his ex-girlfriend whose tale ends tragically at the age of 44. "Steven," the narrative of a devoted husband and father who realizes he is becoming a woman, tackles gender questions. The adult fairy story, "A Coming" is a breath of fresh air, told vividly. "Sometimes, when an alpine swift soared by on brown wings, a muddy necklace of feathers across his snowy breast, she hitched a ride on

his forehead, lulled by the whoosh of his wings, braced by sky breezes that caught her dark," writes an evocative Fracis and so effortlessly. And the best is left for last, a first-person interpretation of the heartbreaking legend of Sohrab (bastard prince of ancient Turkey) and Rustom found in the 10th-century Persian epic poem "Shahnameh." "The Iranians do war in style. Great pavilions in Persian blues, greens, reds, and golds, each with its symbolic banner: the house of the elephant, the house of the lion, the house of the wolf, the house of the griffon, the house of any dragon." As Sohrab succumbs to the blade, "The lifeblood poured from the open wound. It swelled the red tributary that wound slowly across the sand, until it dripped into the Zibad. The stream carried it past our murmuring camps, as clouds rolled and fog arose, then on toward the Oxus. The great river flowed as if unaware of blood in the waters. And at last it spilled into the Arid Sea." What does it mean to be human? The author attempts to answer the question with an array of colorful but flawed characters, all searching for answers. A round of applause to Sohrab Fracis for the poignant compilation, splendidly penned, striking a note or two in the reader's heart.



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DECEMBER FORECAST

By PANKAJ KOHLI



ARIES / Mesha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (March 21-April 20) Mars Sign – Stars covered Ashwini, Bharani, Krittika (1st Part) Arians, your financial situation may improve in the coming months and could stand to gain much. Domestic and family happiness might prevail and in an overall cheerful month. Life is on the go. Professionally, your career could have new openings. Business travel may be helpful for career growth.

TAURUS / Vrushabha (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (April 21-May 21) Moon Sign - Stars covered Krittika (last 3 parts), Rohini, Mrigashira (first 2 parts) Taurian,

stand to gain much with regard to professional and personal matters. Business partnerships and matrimonial alliances may be favorable. Sound financial gains and all- round progress are assured. It is a highly positive month as professional changes are seen. Health is sound; in fact, you will be more confident, enthusiastic and cheerful with added energy and positive spirit.

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

Moon Sign - Stars covered Mrigashira (last 2 parts), Ardra and Punarvasu (first 3 parts) Your virtues shine bringing good financial gains. Mercury’s position may bring all personal success and also help remove negative currents. Healthwise, take care. There could be undercurrents in domestic life. No professional changes should be considered.

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

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

Personal and financial success are on the rise and you may see overall riches and gains through the position of stars. Jupiter’s divine blessings are bestowed upon your sign. However, the disposition of Saturn, Rahu and Ketu are somewhat disturbing, so small obstacles might arise. All-round professional, financial and sound health is foreseen.

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

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

Lions, move with caution, please take care with regards to personal and financial matters. Expenditure may be higher than income. With regards to health, finance and profession, be cautious. Go for medical assistance at slightest provocation. Do not rely upon intuition; instead, think before you act, onus of actions is on you. Do not blame luck.

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

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

It is a highly beneficial month. You may get success at every step. Ketu brings riches and gains and Rahu’s negative effects are removed by Jupiter. Mercury brings personal success. Professional development and elevation in job front

is foretold. Health part is manageable. Rich gains can be expected from unexpected sources. Avail all opportunities that come your way.

LIBRA / Tula (Air sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) Moon Sign – Stars covered Chitra (last 2 parts), Swati, Vishakha (first 3 parts) Planetary transition makes your month quite beneficial. Social status and influence may increase. There is good recognition, financial gains and overall lucky time and rich gains, Librans! Professionally, expect encouraging news. Love and romance are on cards for eligible folks. Health is sound.

SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24-Nov. 22)Moon Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha This month appears to be cautious, take precaution at every step. Domestic and finances need to be watched carefully; do not overspend or overindulge in any activity. Take care of health, it needs attention. Professionally, move cautiously on job or business fronts.

SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Moon Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part) It is a positive period financially and professionally. It is also a great time for love, personal development and career growth. However, chronic patients need to be extra careful. Life seems to be normal and cordial.

CAPRICORN / Makara (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Saturn) - (Dec. 22-Jan. 20) Moon Sign – Stars covered Uttara Shada (last 3 parts) Shraavan, Dhanistha (first 2 parts) Luck shines, fortunes and virtues may be helpful. However, change in place, either in job or any other respect is possible. Finances are manageable. Love life is on the go. Professionally, it is a positive and good period for change.

AQUARIUS / Kumbha (Air sign, ruling planet is Saturn) – (Jan, 21-Feb. 19) Moon Sign-Stars covered: Dhanistha (last 2 parts) Satabhisha, Purva Bhadra Pada (1st 3 parts) Sun and Mercury promise success, happiness and luck; they also bring rich money and gains all around. Professional elevation is possible on the job front. This is a great time for professional growth. Romance and love are within you all the time; so express and show it. Health and joy are great.

PISCES / Meena (Water sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Feb. 20-March 20) Moon Sign - Stars covered: Purva Bhadra Pada (last part) Uttara Bhadra Pada, Revathi It is an excellent time; happy conditions may prevail with regards to finances, domestic happiness, personal success and planned ventures. Present position of planets brings success almost everywhere. Planetary transitions bring luck in profession and success.

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

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At the invitation of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and First Lady Casey DeSantis, guests arrived from across the Sunshine State: Tampa, Fort Myers, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, West Palm Beach, Jacksonville, Orlando, Ocala and Tallahassee itself. For the second time



since 2019, Indian American physicians, entrepreneurs, hotel/motel owners and other professionals came together at the Governor’s Mansion in Tallahassee on Oct. 26 event. The governor and first lady lit the traditional diya oil lamp and welcomed the invitees.

Once again, Danny Gaekwad, a prominent businessman and entrepreneur from Ocala, began the process that led to the second Diwali



event in the governor’s mansion. He started the process some years ago upon DeSantis’ election simply by asking the new state chief executive the question: “Would you consider Diwali here at the mansion?” Gaekwad had asked. “Promise he gave me, promise he kept.”

A welcome sign greeted visitors at the front steps, while the home’s interior bright with light from oil lamps displayed its decorations. Savories, sweets and a full delicious Indian cuisine spread tempted appetites.

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TAX PLANNING

STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE THE YEAR ENDS!

By TEJAL DHRUVE



The calendar year ends on Dec. 31, 2022, and us CPAs consider it the start of new “tax season.” There are some steps that you can take now to reduce the tax bill for 2022.

Check your health Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

You must clean it out by Dec. 31 if your employer hasn't implemented the 2½-month grace period of \$570 carryover rule. Otherwise, you will forfeit any money left in your account. Consider electing to contribute to a health FSA for 2023. You can put in up to \$3,050 next year to your employer's health FSA to cover out-of-pocket medicals. Amounts contributed to an FSA escape federal income tax as well as payroll taxes.

Max out your 2022 401(k) and IRA contributions

You have until Dec. 31 to stash money in 401(k)s, 403(b)s and other workplace retirement plans, and until April 18, 2023, to contribute to a traditional IRA or a Roth IRA for 2022. Individuals can contribute up to \$20,500 to a 401(k), \$6500 more if age 50 or up. The 2022 paying cap for IRA is \$6,000, plus an extra \$1,000 if age 50 and older.

Convert a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA

Given the ailing stock market, now might be a good time to convert a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA. You will have to pay tax on the converted amount, but once the money is in the Roth, future earnings are tax-free. Key to any decision are present and future tax rates. If you expect that your tax rate in retirement will be the same as or higher than the rate on the conversion, switching to a Roth can pay off taxwise, provided you don't have to tap IRA funds to pay your tax bill on the conversion. If your tax rate in retirement will be lower, than tax-free payouts could be less advantageous. You needn't convert your entire account balance at once. You can transfer the money in increments over time, and space out the tax hit.

Pay attention to the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) rules for traditional IRAs.

Individuals age 72 and older must take annual withdrawals or pay a 50 percent penalty. To arrive at the 2022 RMD amount, start with your IRA balances as of Dec. 31, 2021, and use the tables in IRS Pub. 590-B. The amounts can be taken from any IRA you pick. If 2022 is your first RMD year, you have until April 3, 2023, to take the RMD. The distribution will still be based on your total IRA balance as of Dec 31, 2021. If you opt to defer your first RMD to 2023, you will be taxed on two payouts: the deferred one for 2022 and the RMD for 2023. This will increase your 2023 income.

Charitable donations made directly from a traditional IRA can save taxes

People age 70½ and older can transfer up to \$100,000 yearly from IRAs directly to charity. Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) can count as RMD, but they're not taxable or added to your AGI, so they won't trigger a Medicare premium surcharge in 2024. The QCD strategy can be a good way to earn tax savings from charitable gifts for taxpayers not taking charitable write-offs because of higher standard deductions. Be sure to get a receipt from the charity to substantiate the donation.

Donations

Make the most of your generosity when donating to charitable organizations. Contribute appreciated property, such as stocks or shares in mutual funds. If you've owned the property for more than a year, you can deduct its full value in most cases if you itemize. Neither you nor the charity pays tax on the appreciation. Don't donate assets that have dropped in value. If you do, the loss is wasted.

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