

# KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

JANUARY 2023

WWW.KHAASBAAT.COM

EDITOR@KHAASBAAT.COM

813-758-1786

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## HERE ARE THE FLORIDA COMMUNITIES CELEBRATING INDIA'S 74TH REPUBLIC DAY

**SOUTH FLORIDA (MIRAMAR):** The Indian Regional and Cultural Center (IRCC) will hold Anand Bazaar – Lohri/Republic Day/Kite Flying all rolled into one – from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 29, at Miramar Regional Park, 16801 Miramar Parkway (corporate shelter). Kites and food will be available for sale. Youth club elections will also be held. For more information on the event, e-mail board@ircclorida.com or visit <https://ircclorida.org/>

**TAMPA BAY AREA:** The Federation of India Associations (FIA) of Tampa Bay will hold India's 74th Republic Day celebration on Sunday, Jan. 29, at India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa. The lively and free event attracting all age groups from the greater Tampa Bay region includes cultural programs, competitions in

art, essay writing, patriotic dress, rangoli and cooking; blood drive; food booths, clothing and jewelry stalls; India and U.S. flag hoisting; high school scholarships presentation; panel to provide college major advice by students and admissions counselors; member organizations, including regional language exhibits. For details to register and participate, visit <http://www.fiatampabay.org/>

For details, see ad on page 7, call FIA President Kamakshi Shete at (813) 817-5602 or email [FIA\\_TPA\\_Cultural@Googlegroups.com](mailto:FIA_TPA_Cultural@Googlegroups.com)

**ORLANDO:** Indian American Business Association and Chamber will hold India Fair Mela to celebrate Republic Day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 28 at Children's Safety Village, 910 Fairvilla Road, Orlando. During the free and family-friendly event, there will be a display of culture and heritage, flag hoisting, music and dance. For information, call Yogesh at (321) 271-1217 or visit [www.iabausa.com](http://www.iabausa.com)

**JACKSONVILLE:** Indian Cultural Society of Jacksonville will celebrate Republic Day from 4 to 9 p.m. Jan. 28 at Bolles High School, 7400 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville. Children can showcase a kit, dance or group song. There also will be poster, rangoli and fancy-dress competitions. For information, email [indiaday@jaxics.org](mailto:indiaday@jaxics.org) or visit [www.jaxics.org](http://www.jaxics.org)



**HAPPY MAKAR SANKRANTI!**



**HARVEST FESTIVAL DATES SET**

*Story, page 2*

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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.

**EDITOR/PUBLISHER: NITISH S. RELE, M.A. IN JOURNALISM**  
**ASSOCIATE EDITOR: SHEPHALI J. RELE, M.A. IN JOURNALISM**  
**CREATIVE DIRECTOR: TIM LANCASTER**

**Khaas Baat, 8312 Windsor Bluff Drive, Tampa, FL 33647**  
**Phone: 813-758-0518 • e-mail: editor@khaasbaat.com**

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## SIGNIFICANT DATES

**JAN. 5: GURU GOBIND SINGH SAHIB BIRTHDAY**

**JAN. 14: MAKAR SANKRANT/PONGAL/MAGHI**

**JAN. 26: INDIA REPUBLIC DAY**

## EVENTS

### TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER

**JAN. 10: 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.

**JAN. 18: 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.

**FEB. 19: EAST-WEST MUSIC AND DANCE FESTIVAL;** organized by Shruti Foundation; 1 to 7 p.m.; Water Works Park, 1710 N. Highlands Ave., Tampa; free; multicultural event with music bands, dance performances, food, vendors; for information, call (813) 549-9288 or visit [www.shrutifoundationtampa.org](http://www.shrutifoundationtampa.org)

### LAKELAND/BARTOW

**JAN. 29: PICNIC;** organized by Bhartiya Samaj of Central Florida; 11 a.m.; Mary Holland Park, 2015 Shumate Drive, Bartow; \$25; for information, email [info.bsfcfl@gmail.com](mailto:info.bsfcfl@gmail.com) or visit [www.bsfcfl.com](http://www.bsfcfl.com)

**SARASOTA/BRADENTON ONGOING THROUGH MAY 28;** "Gods & Lovers: Paintings and Sculptures from India;" exhibit at John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 5401 Bay Shore Blvd., Sarasota; for details, visit [www.ringling.org](http://www.ringling.org)



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

## FLORIDA CELEBRATES MAKAR SANKRANT!

### TAMPA/WESLEY CHAPEL/ST. PETERSBURG

**JAN. 14: UTTARAYAN;** organized by Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wesley Chapel Cricket Ground, 7321 Boyette Road, Wesley Chapel; free for GSTB members; \$25 non-members; for information, call GSTB President Mukesh Patel at (727) 505-4636.

**JAN. 14: LOHRI/MAKAR SANKRANT;** Sanatan Mandir, 311 E. Palm Ave., Tampa; 5 to 7:30 p.m.; for information, call (813) 221-4482 or visit [www.sanatanmandirtampa.org](http://www.sanatanmandirtampa.org)

**FEB. 4. coordinated by Srigandha Kannada Koota;** for time, venue and other details, call Rashmi at (409) 383-8353 or visit [www.srigandhafl.org](http://www.srigandhafl.org)

### ORLANDO/DELTONA/CASSELBERRY

**JAN. 14: Sri Ayyappa pooja/bhajan;** Hindu Society of Central Florida, 1994 Lake Drive, Casselberry; 7 p.m.; for information, visit

### ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY

**JAN. 13-16: SAMPOORNA GEETA – BHAGAVAD GEETA JNANA YAGNA;** discourses by Swami Shantanandaji; Chinmaya Mission Orlando, 1221 Chinmaya Way, Casselberry; for information, call (407) 376-9560 or visit [www.chinmayaorlando.org](http://www.chinmayaorlando.org)

### NAPLES

**FEB. 18: INDIA FEST;** organized by India Association of Naples; Cambier Park, 755 Eighth Ave. S., Naples; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; music, dances, food; for information, email [Palakmunim@gmail.com](mailto:Palakmunim@gmail.com) or [vishalavaranas@gmail.com](mailto:vishalavaranas@gmail.com)

### SOUTH FLORIDA (HOLLYWOOD/WEST PALM BEACH)

**JAN. 6-15: CLASS/PUJA;** class and puja with world-renowned Bhakti-Yoga teachers Sripad Bhaktivedanta Vana Maharaja and Sripad Bhaktivedanta Siddhanti Maharaja from India; Gaudiya Vedanta Radha-Krsna Mandir, 1710 N. 40th Ave., Hollywood; 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily; locations vary from Hollywood to Weston; call in advance for address; for more information call Vasanti Dasi at (347) 727-8692 or email [gaudiyavedantaoutreach@gmail.com](mailto:gaudiyavedantaoutreach@gmail.com)

**FEB. 11: INDIAFEST 2023;** organized by Palm Beach India Association; Meyer Amphitheater, 105 Evernia St., West Palm Beach; 10 a.m.

to 9 p.m.; cultural performances, clothes, jewelry, arts/crafts, yoga sessions; free; to showcase talent, email [performance@gopbia.org](mailto:performance@gopbia.org)



[www.orlandohindutemple.org](http://www.orlandohindutemple.org)

**JAN. 15: organized by Gujarati Society of Central Florida;** Deltona Sports Complex, 1200 Saxon Blvd., Deltona; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; children's activities/playground; food available; free for members, \$25 non-members; for information, call (601) 576-3312.

**JAN. 21: MAKAR SANKRANT PICNIC;** organized by Orlando Marathi Mandal; for time, venue and details, email [orlandomarathi@yahoo.com](mailto:orlandomarathi@yahoo.com)

### JACKSONVILLE/HASTINGS

**JAN. 15: UTTARAYAN;** planned by Gujarati Samaj of North East Florida; 10 a.m.; St. Johns County Equestrian Center, 8200 Smith Road, Hastings; \$5 members, \$20 for non-members; kites/thread and food will be available for purchase; for information, call (224) 622-0655 or visit [www.gsnef.org](http://www.gsnef.org)





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MONTHLY EVENTS	WEEKLY EVENTS
<b>SUNDAY, JANUARY 1 (5:00 PM to 7:00 PM)</b> • NEW YEAR BHAJAN and SATSANG	<b>EVERY MONDAY - 6:30 PM</b> • SHIV ABHISHEK AND PUJA
<b>SATURDAY, JANUARY 14 (5:00 PM to 7:30 PM)</b> • LOHRI MAKAR SANKRANTI • MATA KI CHOWKI (Sponsored by: Anil & Mamta Kesarwani Family)	<b>EVERY TUESDAY - 7:00 PM</b> • SUNDARKAND • HANUMAM KATHA
<b>SUNDAY, JANUARY 22 (5:30 PM to 7:00 PM)</b> • SHRI JAGANNATH JI BHAJAN	<b>EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00 PM</b> • SAI BABA SATSANG • MAHA PRASAD
<b>WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25 (7:00 PM)</b> • VASANT PANCHMI • SARASWATI MATA PUJA	<b>Pandit Manikya Sharma</b> 813-484-9568 <b>Pandit Rushi Vyas</b> 813-503-3388 <b>Pandit Pranav Bhatt</b> 813-720-1460
<b>SUNDAY, JANUARY 29 (4:30 PM to 6:30 PM)</b> • 2 <sup>nd</sup> SANATAN CLASSICAL MUSIC DANCE FESTIVAL ODDISI Dance by Smt. GOPA RAUTRAY Group With Thiru pant & Pratyasha Dash	<b>Upcoming Events</b> - MAHASHIVRATRI - MATA KA JAGRAN

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**CHOLESTEROL – WHAT’S NEW? PART 3 MANAGEMENT OF HEART DISEASE IN SOUTH ASIANS**

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



South Asians represent about 25 percent of the world’s population but they account for 60 percent of the heart disease that we see around us! This high incidence of coronary artery disease (CAD) in one ethnic group presents a major public health crisis. The Indian diaspora have: 1. Higher rates of CAD compared to compatriots of other ethnic origins, notably Chinese, blacks and whites 2. Premature onset of heart disease: Indians develop heart attack and die about 10 years earlier than in other populations. Heart attack rates are 3-to-5 fold higher in young Indians (<45 years of age in males and <55 years in females) than in other populations. 3. Severe degree of coronary atherosclerosis involving multiple coronary arteries – what Dr. Enas calls “malignant coronary disease”!

So, our efforts should be directed to how best we can prevent this menace. Fortunately, it has become a little easier with the new treatments of risk factors, especially hyperlipidemia, now available. There are new developments in cholesterol control, which we can use.

South Asians are not obese by the Western criteria – their BMI is usually below 25 – but the World Health Organization recommends it should be even lower, like below 23 for South Asians. Another important factor is South Asians have higher incidence of abdominal obesity – elevated levels of visceral and hepatic fat, which are more atherogenic. Hence, steps should be taken to reduce through proper diet and exercise. Keep in mind, atherosclerosis may long precede the development of obstructive coronary disease and hence measures for prevention should start even from childhood.

The most important part of management is decreasing your total serum cholesterol and the bad cholesterol, LDL, to as low as possible. Modern studies have shown no adverse effect from low serum LDL. The main element in all atheromatous plaques is LDL without which there won’t be any obstructive coronary artery disease. We have now excellent drugs to bring down the LDL to low levels, like statins – atorvastatin and rosuvastatin, and another class, Ezetimibe. A new arrival Bempedoic acid is also quite effective. These drugs can be combined for maximum effect. A recent arrival is a biweekly injectable drug, a monoclonal antibody Evolocumab, designed to produce drastic reduction of LDL, quite useful for those who cannot tolerate high doses of statins. The latest in this category is ‘Incliseran’, the effect of which lasts for six months, hence need only twice a year injection. These are frequently used for high-risk patients, especially those who have had previous heart attacks. For some time, cardiologists have been talking about a prophylactic ‘vaccine’ that would be effective in the prevention of CAD and this new drug may well be the one that comes close to fulfilling the need. Also, more treatments are on the way, the most promising is ‘gene editing’ (CRSPR) to prevent atherosclerosis altogether. A wonderful fresh concept, indeed.

In conclusion, it’s so important for us to be aware of the high incidence of premature and severe heart disease and deaths in South Asians. Denial and lack of understanding of the disease can end in tragedy. With some modification of diet, regular exercise, prevention or control of Diabetes Mellitus and keeping the blood lipids low, CAD in South Asians can be controlled effectively.

*This concludes the series on Cholesterol and Heart Disease.*

*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](http://www.amazon.com)*



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**TO APPLY SEND RESUME:** H&T Global Circuits, Attn. Candy Duff, Human Resources Director, 2510 Terminal Dr. S., St. Petersburg, FL 33712 or send resume to [candy.duff@htgpcb.com](mailto:candy.duff@htgpcb.com)

## EYES WIDE OPEN IN THE NEW YEAR!

By Dr. ARUN C. GULANI



In 2023, make a resolution not to settle for "routine."

Vision freedom without glasses and contact lens is no longer a far-reached dream. Demand custom-designed eye surgery, uniquely planned for your eye and its maximum vision potential. Over 70 percent of patients who fly to our practice from around the world come with complications and side effects of eye surgery most commonly; Lasik surgery, Smile (small incision lenticule extraction), PRK (Photorefractive keratectomy), cataract surgery, keratoconus, crosslinking, radial

keratotomy, dry eyes and irregular astigmatism. In most cases, the obvious practice pattern is patients being treated as a number, lined up in waiting rooms, and then going through a surgery mill and landing at a mediocre outcome; left with no options.

Do not fall for advertising or discounts or deals, and remember, as I always teach, "Blindness at any bargain is not a good deal."

In numerous columns in this publication (KhaasBaat), I have explained the concept of Lasik being just one among 20 laser vision techniques. Similarly, cataract surgery can be performed in multiple custom-designed approaches using numerous technologies best suited for your individual eye.

Do not accept cataract surgery menu cards that provide a diamond, gold or routine lens option, providing you a choice of only three lens implants, claiming to be the best. There are more than 30 lens implants available in the United States and over 80 worldwide. Make sure that you are getting technology that is best suited to you, and not limited to a practice's abilities or potential.

Most cataract surgeons (eye surgeons trained to remove cataracts and dysfunctional lenses) are not refractive surgeons (eye surgeons trained to correct vision errors like nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism and reading vision). It is vital for your cataract surgeon to be armed with this dual level of skill and experience, dedicatedly measure and personally study all vision criteria and pick abnormalities special to each individual eye using cutting-edge diagnostic technologies. At the same time, measure the associated anatomy, physiology, optics and vision potential to then diligently surgical technologies and techniques (KLEAR™; full spectrum Kerato-Lenticulo-Refractive range of surgeries) in a holistic approach, individually tailored to each eye no matter how simple or complex it is.

This very concept is the founding principle of next generation cataract surgery; LenzOplastique®

It is also important to realize that "not a candidate" doesn't mean you have no options. Your eye surgeon needs to be experienced and able to modify surgery and apply technology for your unique situation. For example, having high astigmatism or thin cornea or dry eyes does not mean you cannot see without glasses or contact lenses. There are next-generation Lasik techniques like LaZrPlastique® without blades, flaps or cuts that can safely be performed on such patients with excellent vision outcomes.

If unfortunately, you have had routine, cataract or Lasik surgery, or any eye surgery for that matter, do not lose hope. You can still be corrected to the best vision potential.

Become an advocate for yourself and the family by education and due diligence and research before a decision on eye surgery. Perhaps, it is the most important decision that'll impact you for the rest of the life. Insist on meeting with the surgeon, ask all questions you have, take

time and come back for another consult to inquire, including what you may have learned from friends, family or Google. Get all answers clarified by requesting for proof of the doctor's experience, track record of success and reputation.

Though there should be no 100 percent guarantees in medicine and destiny does play a role, it is your responsibility to take charge.

Every doctor tries their best to help patients, but it is a two-way communication and, especially before surgery, that it is important to accomplish not only the trust factor, but also ensure that the best ability and technology is being used, customized to your individual eyes. And, of course, in most cases this leads to an excellent vision and point.

So, make a resolution in this new year to not settle for cookie-cutter surgery or be treated as a number and refuse to be lined up in a surgery mill. Take a breath, take your time, do research, and go in with your "Eyes Wide Open."

Wish you all a very Happy New Year!

**Arun C. Gulani, M.D., M.S., is director and chief surgeon of Gulani Vision Institute in Jacksonville. He can be reached at [gulanivision@gulani.com](mailto:gulanivision@gulani.com) or visit [www.gulanivision.com](http://www.gulanivision.com)**

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## IMPORTANT IMMIGRATION CONSIDERATIONS DURING LAYOFFS

By DILIP PATEL



Amid worries of a recession and rising inflation, the tech sector recently announced a significant number of layoffs, which have adversely affected H-1B and L-1 visa holders, as well as those benefitting from employer sponsorship for green cards to live permanently in the United States. Continued compliance with immigration regulations enforced by both the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Labor (DOL) is especially important for companies such as these, and really any company, that has hired

a foreign national and is now affected by a reduction-in-force. On the positive side, employers who have difficulty filling positions for much needed highly skilled workers now have the opportunity to recruit from those facing layoffs.

### Impact of Layoffs on H-1B Employers and Visa Holders

Employers who have laid off employees in H-1B status have two fundamental considerations that must be addressed. First, the employer must notify U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that the H-1B employment has ended and while not mandatory, they can also withdraw the related labor condition application filed with the DOL. Once laid off, the H-1B employee has a discretionary grace period to find alternative H-1B employment or other lawful basis for sponsorship. They will still be considered as having maintained status following the cessation of their employment for up to 60 consecutive calendar days or until the end of their authorized validity period (whichever is shorter). If the grace period has passed or their authorized validity period has expired and the former H-1B employee has been unable to change status to another visa category or find alternative H-1B employment sponsorship, they risk accruing unlawful presence which can severely hinder their re-entry in the United States in the future. Employers who are willing to hire H-1B employees who have faced a layoff, should be aware that portability rules may permit the H-1B employee to start work as soon as the new employer properly files an H-1B change of employer petition for a worker in H-1B status, without waiting for the petition to be approved. It should also be noted that the regulations permit this discretionary grace period to apply to workers in E-1, E-2, E-3, H-1B, H-1B1, L-1, O-1, or TN classifications (and their dependents.) Second, H-1B employers are obligated to pay for the cost of the H-1B employee's return transportation to their home country if the H-1B has been unable to find alternative H-1B employment or another basis for visa sponsorship.

### Opportunities for Employers Looking for Highly Skilled Workers

For companies looking to hire specialty occupation workers, one general obstacle has been the annual limit on H-1B's and being lucky enough to have the worker selected in H-1B "lottery." However, the lottery is not an issue when recruiting a worker who has been through the process and is now in H-1B status. This would allow a new employer to hire a foreign national in H-1B status without the concern of the foreign national being picked in the annual H-1B lottery. Generally, a noncitizen on H-1B status in the United States is limited to a period of six years in H-1B status. However, an employer wishing to employ a noncitizen who was laid off while on H-1B status may file an H-1B change of employer petition if the noncitizen is in that 60-day grace period and has remaining time left during the six-year period, or they meet certain requirements allowing them to go beyond the six-year limitation. In some instances, the employer may even be able to sponsor a laid-off H-1B employee who has returned to their home country without the

anxiety of the H-1B employee being picked in the lottery since the employee would have already been counted towards congressionally mandated numerical cap on H-1B visas.

Another consideration employers should take into account in the face of layoffs is the use of the part-time H-1B. A part-time H-1B could be a viable option if the employer is interested in hiring or keeping an H-1B employee on staff but there are concerns of sufficient revenue to cover full time employment. As a general rule, the H-1B employee must be making at least a living wage or enough for reasonable support. Therefore, when part-time employment is considered anything less than 35 hours and there's no minimum of hours under the regulations for part-time employment in the H-1B context, it can be an important part of the discussion when seeking to keep workers on staff or looking for new talent. Employers should be sure to check DOL regulations to be sure they remain in compliance with any DOL reporting obligations in the part-time H-1B scenario.

Employers can also see opportunities in hiring laid off H-1B employees who already have adjustment of status applications pending for at least 180 days with an underlying valid I-140 immigrant visa petition. In such cases, the new employer may be able to transfer that underlying I-140 to new offer of employment if the offered position is in the same or similar occupational classification. This is particularly useful to know considering the long wait times for approval of adjustment of status applications and the priority dates for persons born in specific countries. It can save the new employer from starting the PERM process all over again and may provide a shorter wait until their new employee becomes a permanent resident of the United States.

### Impact of Layoffs on Green Card Processing

An employer who wants to sponsor a foreign national for a green card is generally required to obtain certification from the Department of Labor that qualified U.S. workers are not available for the position. The process is often referred to as "PERM." Employers should also consider how the timing of layoffs can impact their ability to continue the PERM process. The PERM process requires compliance with notice obligations enforced by the DOL, which could affect the company's ability to use the permanent position as their basis for sponsoring the foreign national. The labor certification process involves the posting of advertisements, notice to employees, and the filing of a labor certification application by DOL. If an application for labor certification has been filed within six months of a layoff, the employer is required to notify recently laid off U.S. workers with the opportunity to apply for the open permanent position. Notice of the position opening must be provided to potentially qualified laid-off U.S. employees who worked in the same metropolitan area where the position is located and in a position where they performed the same or similar job duties as the position in the labor certification application. Obviously, if a U.S. qualified worker is available for the position offered, the PERM application could not continue.

### The Need for Experienced Immigration Counsel

Should your company need to hire temporary H-1B or L-1 workers or even a noncitizen who is well on their way in the sponsorship process for a permanent position, you should seek the advice and counsel of an experienced immigration attorney to explore some of the hiring options available.

*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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Gayathri Ramaka, Meghna Ramaswamy,  
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11:00 AM - Noon  
Uma Setty, Adhitya Srinivasan,  
Smita Prabhu  
[FIA\\_TPA\\_FancyDress@googlegroups.com](mailto:FIA_TPA_FancyDress@googlegroups.com)

**Student Panel: College Admissions**

Noon to 01:00 PM

**Cultural programs**

02:30 PM - 06:00 PM  
Manasa Raghavendra,  
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## 'BABY BENZ' C300 AN EXCELLENT, MUCH-REVERED SEDAN

Test-drive stories by NITISH S. RELE [motoringtampabay@gmail.com](mailto:motoringtampabay@gmail.com)

Its origin goes way back to 1982. Then the Benz 190 was labeled as 'Baby Benz.' Over a decade later, the 'kid' earned the C-class designation and worldwide sales of more than 10.5 million units with China holding the lead for the past six years. The rest, as they so lovingly say, is history.

But Mercedes engineers have not just kept up with history but taken a step ahead by redesigning the C300 for 2022 inside and out. Under the hood of the steel unibody structure still resides a 2.0-liter inline-4 cylinder turbo engine putting out 255 horsepower @ 5800 rpm and 295 pounds-feet of torque @ 3200 rpm. An integrated starter-generator with a 48-volt capacity provides mild hybrid power delivery of an extra 20 hp. Zero to 60 is possible in just 6 seconds with top speed of 130 mph in this fine, snug and effective ride. The 4MATIC all-wheel-drive vehicle is mated to a standard 9-speed automatic, which can be driven in eco, comfort, sport, sport+ and individual modes. The independent four-link axle front and multilink rear suspension works splendidly to absorb unpleasant highway bumps and sudden sharp turns. Returning a weighted response to the driver's input is razor-sharp, electromechanical power rack-and-pinion steering.

**C300 4MATIC**  
**Tires:** 225/45R18 front;  
 245/40R18 rear  
**Wheelbase:** 112.8 inches  
**Length:** 187 inches  
**Width:** 80 inches  
**Height:** 56.6 inches  
**Fuel capacity:** 17.4 gallons  
**City:** 23 mpg  
**Highway:** 33 mpg  
**Weight:** 3,957 pounds  
**Base price:** \$45,550  
**Price as tested:** \$57,270  
**Web site:** [www.mbusa.com](http://www.mbusa.com)



The compact luxury sedan is 2.6 inches longer with a wheelbase up by 1 and width more than .4 than its predecessor. Also receiving a lift are elbow, head and knee room. Up front, the trademark three-pointed star on the power dome hood meets up with a larger Benz emblem centered in the A-shaped radiator grille with chrome surrounds. It is flanked by horizontal LED headlights. A lavish, elegant cabin is expected of any Mercedes with dual auto a/c, 40/20/40 rear seat, steering wheel paddle shifters, Apple CarPlay and Android wireless phone capabilities, illuminated door sills, panoramic sunroof and heated front

seats. The flattened round sets of air vents with ambient lights are a sight to behold, especially at night. A central and jet-black tablet-like 11.9-inch touch screen, now tilted toward the driver, serves as a audio, navigation and phone infotainment guide. Indeed, top-notch materials and craftsmanship give the car a rich vibe.

There is no doubt that the revamped fifth-gen C300 augments the Benz sedan lineup. If in the market for a gorgeous sedan that provides punch around town, impressive handling/balance, and a sumptuous cabin bar none, take the C300 for a test-drive. It will be well worth your time and effort.

## INFINITI Q50 SPORT SEDAN IS A COOL PICK!

Last year, we test-drove the Q50 Red Sport version of this midsize luxury sport car from Infiniti with 400 horsepower. For 2023, the carmaker dispatched over the lesser trim Sensory model boasting 300 hp @ 6400 rpm. Both have the same 3.0-liter V-6 twin-turbocharged engine under the hood. But kid you not, the sedan didn't feel much different on the road, navigating sharp curves and turns with self-assurance and grace. And except for adding Premium Care maintenance program (three years of oil changes, tire rotations, inspections), the Q50 maintains its status quo.

Putting out 295 pounds-feet of torque @ 5200 rpm, and available as a rear-wheel or all-wheel drive, the lively midsize sedan is coupled with a slick 7-speed auto gearbox. An independent double-wishbone front and a multilink rear suspension ensure safety for occupants in adverse road/weather conditions. Credit for the superbly accurate steering goes to a power-assist, rack-and-pinion system. Behind the wheels hide large rotors: front dual-piston 12.6 inches at front and rear single-piston 12.1 inches to inspire confidence in the driver. Lest we forget, you can enjoy the Q50 in personal, eco, snow, sport and standard modes.

Up front, the double-arch grille and wide hood are surrounded by LED headlights and daytime running lights. Dual chrome exhaust tips deck the rear. If anyone tells you that the Infiniti



**Q50 SENSORY (AWD)**  
**Tires:** P245/40R19  
**Wheelbase:** 112.2 inches  
**Length:** 189.6 inches  
**Width:** 71.8 inches  
**Weight:** 3,966 pounds  
**Fuel capacity:** 19 gallons  
**City:** 19 mpg  
**Highway:** 27 mpg  
**Base price:** \$50,350  
**Web site:** [www.infiniti.com](http://www.infiniti.com)

cabin isn't on par with its German rivals, point out the top-notch materials and gloss levels. The InTouch infotainment system, which comes with dual 8- and 7-inch touch screens atop each other, is functional. Also standard are eight-way power heated front leather seats, dual auto a/c, 60/40 rear seat, overhead sunglass holder, Bose audio with 16 speakers, aluminum sill plates with 'Infiniti' insignia, and power tilt/telescopic steering column and moon roof. But the 13.5-cubic-foot trunk could use with slightly more space.

Standard safety features include dual front and side airbags, side curtain airbag, four-wheel

antilock brakes, vehicle dynamic and traction controls, front seatbelts with pretensioners, remote keyless entry, rearview camera, zone body construction, blind spot, lane-departure and forward-collision warnings, rear cross traffic alert, auto brakes with pedestrian detection, hill start assist, energy-absorbing steering column, tire pressure monitoring system and daytime running lights.

A clever and fine choice for a potential sport sedan buyer, the Q50 displays impressive handling, superb grip and a strong steering feel. And it is a head-turner ride to boot.



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**A FEW THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS**

By **ROBERT LEVINE**



The year is 1983, and I have just graduated from Harvard. Anxious to do something worthwhile (or what I thought might be worthwhile), I join the Harvard Schools Committee to interview applicants for my alma mater.

Twenty-nine years later, after a pseudo-glorious stint as the chairman of our local Harvard Schools Committee, I started an educational consulting business to help students gain admission. Honestly, I had no idea what I was doing, but I learned ... and

then some.

After 10 years and over 2,000 students, I have realized many things about college admissions. And about graduate admissions. And about human nature. Here are just a few tidbits that I'd like to share:

First, highly selective admissions is not all about grades and test scores. At least not in the U.S. In fact, it's about people. It's about creating diverse communities where most of the education happens outside the classrooms. It's about good people making each other better.

Second, emotions – not objective data – are the rock-solid foundation of admissions decisions. Whenever humans read essays or recommendations letters or reports, human nature is necessarily involved. The process is subjective, not random. I don't care what anybody says: absent extraordinary circumstances, how people make decisions is a lot like dating. They either fall in love with you, or they don't love you enough.

Third, by harnessing the soft sciences, we can and do influence admissions readers significantly. Our processes are technique-driven, and they work.

Fourth, with good engagement and open minds, young people can write amazing essays. When I say "amazing," I mean world-class. Better than you can write. Better than I can write. It's breathtaking, and it gives us so much hope for our societal future.

Fifth, none of the good stuff happens without real engagement. A strong, trusting relationship between consultant and client is paramount. Absent that, fuhgeddaboutit. We can't sprinkle magic dust on a slacker, nor can we polish a stinking turd (I've always wanted to say that in print).

Sixth, when I say "client," I mean both the student and the parents. Everyone has to row the oars in the same direction to make the boat move forward best. Parents have a distinct role, an important one, so don't neglect the process nor try to drive the process. With all due

respect, you ain't an expert. That's why you hired one. But parents need to engage, too.

Seventh, when I say you hired "one," I mean "it's better to hire a team." Trust me; I used to do this stuff all by myself. Everyone has bias, everyone has a bad day, everyone gets tired, everyone needs fresh eyes and fresh ideas ... even me, Mr. Know-It-All. Here at UCA, we all work together to advance each client's individual, personalized best interests. Every day, someone in our office exclaims, "I wish they could see what we do!" We even tried recording some of what it, but the video files are way too big to share. Sorry.

Eighth, this idea of keeping your consultancy a secret is just silly. Walking through the shadow of the valley of admissions death is much easier with friends. Connecting young people and adults with each other leads to better things. Conversely, secrecy robs your high school counselor of the opportunity to help you as best they can. Transparency and community are two important values around here.

Ninth, reputation matters, but it really doesn't. I get it. I have the word "Harvard" on my resume. Yes, it opens doors, but only so far. What really matters is fit, that organic combination of curricular structure, campus culture and off-campus opportunity. This is not about a line item on a resume. This is about success, in college and beyond. It's about being great, not about wearing a T-shirt of a school that is considered to be great. Don't achieve your best, and you won't achieve much of anything, regardless of your resume. Now, while you're thinking "yeah, but," please accept this reality check: admissions is not like making a reservation at a five-star hotel. It's hard, like making an Olympic team. Seriously, it's that hard.

Tenth, admissions decisions are neither the end of the world, nor the beginning. The "why" of getting in – or not – has so many factors involved, all of which have to do with the school's needs, not yours. In fact, the colleges spew out so much bad information – untruths that most people consider to be true – that you need to be a conspiracy theorist (or hire an excellent consultant) just to navigate the morass that favors them, not you.

That's all I have room for today, but you know how to find me!

**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](http://www.universitycoa.com)**

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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)** There is a positive change in the job environment. The month promises good monetary gains owing to influential planetary transits. Great time ahead, with all money matters and finance; some may have more disposable income than expenses. Prosperity and peace are rest assured. Commercially, one may be successful.

**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 influences create a remarkable recovery from serious illnesses for chronic and serious patients. Few planets may create discord and problems for some. Move with caution as things may not be so comfortable due to planetary influence.

**GEMINI / Mithun (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 Mercury promises success in personal and professional relationship. Venus alongwith Mercury promises good financial gains; however, some planetary influences create a disturbing factor on the domestic sphere. Take care of heart and stress-related problems as well. Professionally, the situation is not so supportive.

**CANCER / Karaka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22-July 22) Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha** An excellent time period, in fact, this is one of the best times for one in every respect. All planets are highly positively placed. Health, wealth, peace, prosperity and love seem to be in one's favor. It is a great time to start new ventures in one's sphere of work. Do not let this time slip; try to recover all losses, one may succeed and meet with 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 seems to be a positive month. One may feel full of energy and high spirits and emerge as a winner in most of the time. One may do extremely 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 may be encouraging.

**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)** An outstanding time period, in fact this is one of the best times in every respect. All planets are positively placed. Health, wealth, peace, prosperity seems to be in one's favor. It is a wonderful time to

start new ventures in one's area of work. Do not let this time slip. Go full speed on the professional front: one may meet with success.

**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 Venus gives a special note on one's personal success; hence, march ahead with full courage and positive approach. Rich gains in love and financial success seem possible, but one may have to work hard to achieve it.

**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 may improve and one could gain much. Commercially, this is a good month for some. However, professional change is not advisable, hence be cautious. Business partnerships may work to your benefit. Be careful of your actions.

**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 month; however, due precautions to 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) Shravan, Dhanishta (first 2 parts)** Overall, it is a gainful time on most fronts as planetary influences bring good effects on wealth, family and spouse relationship. However, be careful on health grounds as expenses are possible.

**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 one side, income potential increases while, on the other hand, expenses would increase in different proportions as well. One may have to work hard to make it a gainful period; just keep a close watch on your actions. Practically, this is a favorable time for family, wealth and domestic front.

**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, one's time period is fine on almost all fronts. Domestic, personal, love life, wealth – all these channels are open. One may be happy in all respects as this is a highly useful 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*



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FOR KIDS  
AGES 3-12

Scan code  
to register:



Annual celebration of **Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math** in a free, family-friendly outdoor festival!

**Date:** Saturday, January 28, 2023

**Location:** Shorecrest Preparatory School

**Time:** 10am - 2pm

5101 1st Street NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33703

STEAMfest activities include:

- Robotics demonstrations
- Hands-on technology exploration
- Design and engineering challenges
- Individual and group arts activities
- Dedicated preschool area for young children
- Food trucks and play stations

Donations  
benefitting:



FEATURING:



**Admission is FREE!** Suggested donation of a non-perishable food item or personal hygiene supplies benefitting the St. Pete Free Clinic. For more information or to RSVP visit: [www.stpetesteamfest.com](http://www.stpetesteamfest.com) or call: 727-522-2111.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Shorecrest campus is a smoke-free, pet-free zone.

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## TAX PLANNING

### YEAR 2023-GO GREEN AND CLAIM CREDITS

By **TEJAL DHRUVE**



There is a big difference between a tax deduction and tax credit. Simply put, a tax deduction will reduce your taxable income while a tax credit will reduce the actual tax-dollar to dollar. That is the reason it is worth exploring the credits that will reduce your tax burden. We have discussed here some credits, which were in effect before January 2023, but which are modified/expanded for 2023 and beyond. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed in August 2022 covered these credits.

#### Credit for Renewable Energy:

The break for adding solar panels and the like to your home is extended through 2034. Individuals get a tax credit for installing an alternative energy system that relies on a renewable energy source, such as solar, wind, geothermal or fuel cell technology. The cost of wind turbines, solar panels, solar electric equipment and solar-power water heaters is eligible for the credit, whether they are installed in a primary residence or vacation home. Starting in 2023, the credit is expanded to cover battery storage technology installed in your residence. The credit equals 30 percent of the cost of the equipment and installation for 2022 through 2032. It falls to 26 percent in 2033, 22 percent in 2034 and ends after 2034.

#### Credit for Home Improvements:

Compared to 2022, credit for adding energy efficient improvements to your home is bigger and better for 2023 through 2032. The credit applies to 30 percent of the cost of certain types of insulation, plus external windows, doors and skylights. The credit also includes 100 percent of the cost of electric heat pumps and water heaters, some central air-conditioning systems, and similar energy-saving investments. There is a \$1,200 annual limit, but some items have a higher or lower limit. For example, the yearly credit can't exceed \$600 for exterior windows and skylights; \$600 for central air conditioners; \$600 for natural gas, propane or oil water heaters, furnaces or boilers; or \$500 for exterior doors. The annual limit increases to \$2,000 for a biomass stove or biomass hot water boiler, or electric or natural gas heat pump. You can also take credit for up to \$150 of the cost of a home energy audit.

#### Credit for Electric Vehicles (Clean Vehicle Credit):

Electric vehicles that are bought and placed in service can take federal income tax credit on 1040, ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500. The MSRP can't exceed \$55,000 for sedans or \$80,000 for vans, SUVs and pickups. Fuel cell vehicles qualify. The credit is not available to taxpayers with modified adjusted gross incomes over \$300,000 for joint filers, \$225,000 for household heads and \$150,000 for others. The 200,000 plug-in-sales threshold limitation on manufacturers is removed. And buyers of certain used electric vehicles can get a credit equal to the lesser of \$4,000 or 30 percent of the car's sales price, provided the buyer's modified AGI isn't over \$150,000 for joint filers, \$112,500 for heads of household or \$75,000 for all other filers.

One big change begins in 2024: The option for the buyer to monetize the credit by transferring it to the dealer at the time of purchase, thus lowering the amount that the buyer pays for the car. This allows buyers to take immediate advantage of the tax credit instead of waiting for the next year, when they file their tax returns. There are no guidelines provided yet about income threshold verification by the auto dealership. Leaving the credit calculations to the dealers will lead to chaos, miscalculations, and some unwelcome surprises at the tax time. There is still time for 2024, so we will see.

**Tejal Dhruve, CPA, LLC, a full-service tax and wealth management firm with offices in Wesley Chapel, Florida, and Dublin, Ohio, can be reached at (614) 742-7158 or email info@dhruvecpa.com**





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