

KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

NOVEMBER 2021

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Happy Diwali

Florida communities celebrating the festival of lights:

TAMPA BAY AREA

Sanatan Mandir in Tampa will hold Dhanteras on Nov. 2 and Deepawali Laxmi Puja from 6.30 p.m. on Nov. 4. Annakut puja will be the next day from 6 to 8.30 p.m. The mandir is at 311 E. Palm Ave. For information, call (813) 221-4482 or visit www.sanatanmandirtampa.org

Hindu Temple of Florida in Tampa will hold Deepavali on Nov. 4. For information on other Diwali-related activities, call (813) 962-6890 or visit <https://www.htfl.org/>

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir will celebrate Chopda Pujan at 7 p.m. on Nov. 4. The next day will be Annakut Darshan from 1 to 7 p.m. Kids Diwali celebrations will be virtual 10:30 a.m. to noon Nov. 13. BAPS is at 9556 E. Fowler Ave. in Thonotosassa. For

details, call (813) 986-5473.

ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY/ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

Hindu Society of Central Florida (1994 Lake Drive) in Casselberry will celebrate Diwali from 2 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 6, with rangoli and diya competitions, cultural entertainment, Diwali Pooja/aarti, fireworks and mahaprasad. For information, call Balaji Kottapak at (407) 417-4585 or visit www.orlandohindutemple.org

JACKSONVILLE/ST. AUGUSTINE

The Hindu Society of North East Florida, 1968 Greenland Road, Jacksonville, will celebrate Dhan Teras on Nov. 2 and Annakoot on Nov. 4. For information, visit <https://hsnef.org/> *Continued on page 12*

ADMISSIONS "INTERVIEWS" IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

By ROBERT LEVINE



For years, many of America's top colleges conducted interviews of applicants as part of the admissions process. Having served in this capacity for Harvard for over 29 years, I cannot tell you how many times I sat down with bright young people at a Starbucks for an hour-long chat that turned into an Interview Report, which proved to be highly influential in determining who got in and who did not.

Then Covid-19 hit and put a stop to most everything.

Yet now that the world is transforming into another "new normal." Things change, but things also remain the same: the admissions interview is BACK.

Well, not necessarily an "interview" in the classic sense

Some schools have returned to performing interviews, usually by alumni, only now many of those interviews are being conducted over zoom or some other form of digital video chat. However, new formats – which were becoming more popular even before the pandemic – are being utilized by many schools. One or two-minute prerecorded videos often take the place of live interviews. Even in an Instagram world, these are hard for anyone to master.

First, with a prerecorded video, there is nobody with whom to interact. That may seem like a benefit to some, but for most people, the inability to have meaningful conversations can change the human dynamic for the worse. It is very hard to demonstrate that you will be a beneficial part of a campus community in a format with zero give-and-take.

Second, these videos are short. Whereas an interview provides time and opportunity to communicate memorable stuff, a prerecorded video just ... doesn't.

Continued on page 3

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

By NITISH S. RELE and SHEPHALI J. RELE

We wish our readers a very Happy Diwali and a Prosperous New Year. May the festival of lights illuminate your home and heart with peace and joy. We are glad to note that Florida communities are celebrating the season. Are you a talented writer? Send us your short essay, story or poem for consideration. Story ideas are always welcome. To community leaders planning activities, please let us know about them in advance. Email editor@khaasbaat.com

Thanks to those who have recently subscribed. To subscribe, see page 2. As always, we welcome your suggestions, sponsorships and support. Checks can be addressed to Khaas Baat, 8312 Windsor Bluff Drive, Tampa, FL 33647. Payment can also be made via PayPal to PP ID: nitishrele@gmail.com



Rele hot rides

MOTORING

Check out our test-drive rides of the Lexus IS350 F-Sport and the VW Atlas.
Story, page 10

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WHO'S WHO

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

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HELP WANTED Need domestic help, preferably live-in, in Trinity, for a family of two to help with household activities like cooking, laundry, cleaning, ironing, etc. Day time from 9 a.m. to p.m. can be considered also. Please contact Dr. Mehra at (647) 267-5665.

HELP WANTED Tampa restaurant is looking for servers, food runners and front host. Good pay. Call (972) 900-1526 or email minervatampa@gmail.com

HELP WANTED UPS stores at the Palms, Cross Creek Boulevard, State Road 54 and State Road 56 in Wesley Chapel (all in the Tampa Bay area and surrounding) are looking for motivated and hardworking individuals. Retired people looking for part-time position can also apply. Call Syed at (609) 458-6786.

HELP WANTED Days Inn Motel in Saint Augustine, FL, looking for housekeeping couple as well as front desk clerk. Accommodation will be provided. Call Vijay at (904) 671-3147 or email daysinn2560@gmail.com

HELP WANTED Front desk and housekeeper needed in local motel in St. Petersburg. Both are in day shift. Accommodation provided. Contact (727) 686-0807.

SERVICES OFFERED – LOAN REFINANCE Any gas station or motel wants to refinance loan, call (863) 414-4777 or email pashah1956@gmail.com Prime plus 1.5 rate.

SERVICES OFFERED – PAL, VIDEOTAPE CONVERSION R&M Video Services, 1940 Bay Drive, Miami Beach. PAL and many other videotape formats converted to USB thumb drive, USB external hard drive or DVD. Also, home movie film and 35mm slides. Web: rmvideoservicesflorida.com; Email: randmvideo@atlanticbb.net; Tel: (786) 344-2296.

NOV. 2: DIWALI FESTIVITIES BEGIN

EVENTS

TAMPA BAY AREA

NOV. 7: WINTER GALA; hosted by Academy of Odissi Dance; red carpet affair; evening filled with mesmerizing Indian dances followed by dinner; \$25 tickets; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; for information, call Gopa Rautray at (813) 992-5234.

ORLANDO/WINTER PARK/LAKE BUENA VISTA

NOV. 13: 4th ANNUAL SUR & TAAL; presented by Asian Cultural Association; 4 p.m.; \$15; Trinity Preparatory School, 5700 Trinity Prep lane, Winter Park; for information, visit www.aca-florida.org or call (407) 333-3667.

NOV. 14: HSCF NEW AGE GROUP TRIP; organized by Hindu Society of Central Florida New Age Group; 10:30 a.m.; Scenic Boat Tour, 312 E. Morse Blvd., Winter Park; tour followed by lunch at Tabla restaurant, 216 N. Park Ave., Suite H, Winter Park; \$10 for annual NAG paid members, \$40 non-members; email to hscfnewagegroup@gmail.com

NOV. 20: 12th ANNUAL ASHOKA GALA AWARDS; presented by Indian American Chamber of Commerce; 6 p.m.; Four Seasons Resort and Spa, 10100 Dream Tree Blvd., Lake Buena Vista; red carpet, live entertainment, open bar; all proceeds benefit charity; for tickets, visit www.iaccorlando.com

ADMISSIONS "INTERVIEWS" IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Continued from page 1

So, how do you create a video that helps you become part of a school's next class?

Let's start with discussing what not to do. Don't try to be perfect. Psychologically, although humans are impressed by perfection, we tend to like imperfection. In art, we usually prefer asymmetry over symmetry; off-center is more interesting. When you mirror an attractive face through Photoshop, the model or movie star somehow doesn't look as attractive. My funniest stories are about what went wrong, not about what I did right.

Translating this into the world of admissions, please do not create an overworked, overproduced movie. Admissions officers are looking for genuine people, not immaculate editing. This is not a portfolio for a competitive film major. This is a quick meet-and-greet.

Perhaps the most important advice is: relax. Just be you. Don't worry so much about making mistakes (bloopers, by the way, can be endearing). In fact, the chance that you'll get a great video in just one take is practically zero. Assume that you're going to make many attempts before achieving even a palatable result. Remove the pressure from yourself.

But what to say, or do? Please, do not recite your resume, achievements or qualifications. They already know about those things from your application. The video is meant to add information – about your human side – not "prove" yourself.

Definitely give your name, where you're from, and ... then what? Here lies the brilliance of a short take. You can say and do pretty much anything you want (within the boundaries of decency, of course). If you look at YouTube, you will see dozens and dozens of short admissions videos, but remember: they are usually posted by students (as something the kids enjoyed), not by admissions offices (as something that proved effective). Use the internet, but only for giving yourself comfort that anything goes.

Discuss what you are looking forward to doing in college. Chat about how your friends make you laugh. Describe a quirk or idiosyncrasy. Tell them about a question which vexes you. If you're unsure about what to say, try a bunch of different ideas, then ask your friends or parents what they like. Remember: it's all about what the audience wants.

Ultimately, admissions officers just want to get to know you, not some perfect presentation. As one admissions dean told me:

"Trying to be someone you're not because you think that's what I want? It's not good. I'm going to be intrigued by an interesting person who probably is not perfect. In fact, I'd be very skeptical of the perfect 17 or 18-year old. I've never met that person."

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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MONTHLY EVENTS	WEEKLY EVENTS
<p>TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 02</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHANTERAS <p>THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 04 (6:30 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEEPAWALI LAXMI CHOPDA PUJAN (Online Puja Booking) <p>FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 05 (6:00 PM to 8:30 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAV VARSH • ANNKOOT GOVARDHAN PUJA • BHAJAN SANDHYA (Maha Aarti followed by Maha Prasad) <p>SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 07 (5:30 PM to 7:30 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MATA KI CHOWKI (Sponsored by : Sh. Amit & Mala Dehra Family) <p>SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14 (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEV UTHAYANI EKADASHI • TULSI VIVAH <p>THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18 (6:00 PM to 8:30 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEV DIWALI (Big Celebration) (Maha Aarti followed by Maha Prasad) <p>SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20 (5:30 PM to 7:00 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHRI JAGANNATH BHAJAN <p>SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21 (5:00 PM to 6:00 PM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHRI SAI JHULAY LAL BHAJAN 	<p>EVERY MONDAY - 6:30 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHIV ABHISHEK AND PUJA • SHRAVAN SOMVAR PUJA <p>EVERY TUESDAY - 7:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUNDARKAND • HANUMAM KATHA <p>EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAI BABA SATSANG • MAHA PRASAD <p>Pandit Manikya Sharma 813-484-9568</p> <p>Pandit Rushi Vyas 813-503-3388</p>
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">IMPORTANT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Puja services have been resumed with guidelines. - Please follow CDC guidelines when visiting temple. - For private puja at Temple or at your place, please contact Temple or Pandit Ji. 	




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CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC XV – FINAL POST COVID – LESSONS LEARNED

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



Although new cases are in decline, the pandemic has driven the patients and their healthcare providers to adopt new ways to manage illnesses. Needless to say, this has been perhaps the most difficult time in the annals of patient management. And going forward, many of these changes in our health care delivery system as discussed below, are here to stay. Welcome to the new normal!

1. Telemedicine: The virtual or zoom visits for medical follow-up care took off during the peak days of Covid-19 and has all but replaced the traditional office visit. Now, the patients have learned to log

into their computer or smartphone and discuss current issues with their physicians. And they seem to like it since they can do it conveniently sitting at home. Arrangements for in-person visit can be made as and when necessary.

2. Emergency visits to the hospital and urgent care centers have come down. Unless the situation warrants immediate attention, patients prefer zoom communication with their doctors. One drawback is that occasionally serious problems like impending heart attacks may not get prompt attention, leading to complications. Also, remember that ERs and urgent care centers are already busy these days with a significant delay in seeing patients.

3. The pandemic is likely to continue for some more time and then will remain with us as an endemic popping up during winter time like the flu; so, be ready for annual vaccination. Hope most of you got your booster shots.

4. Symptoms of anxiety and depression among U.S. adults have been amplified ever since Covid-19 started. Initially, it was the 'confinement anxiety' from lockdown but even after the rules were relaxed, there is still considerable restrictions to our mobility. Women seem to be more severely affected by the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. So, it's important to take steps for proper handling of these mental health issues.

5. Sadly, there has been reports of increased domestic violence after the pandemic began. When you have to stay put in with less chance for social outing, there's likely to be too much closeness that creates a fertile ground for abuse, although it should never be that way. So,

beware of the problem and take appropriate remedial action.

6. Children also suffered as frequent school closures kept them away from friends and in-person learning. Although many schools are open now, we don't know what will happen if and when another surge of the pandemic occurs. However, certain items such as psychological counselling sessions, private tutoring lessons, etc., are still being conducted through zoom. Children are also becoming addicted to iPads and cell phones and weaning away these gadgets from them needs deft handling.

7. 'Working from home' has become the order of the day and 'going to the office' as we know now may become a thing of the past. Many companies are now remote-only operations in which employees never collaborate in person. This may lead to loss of a sense of shared empathy, coordination and comradery.

8. "Pandemic posture" is a new problem to contend with. The poor stance from constant slouching at a desk or on a couch that many of us have been resorting to these days can result in back or neck pain. To reduce the pain, exercise daily. Working with a physical therapist to learn the right way to sit up straight and how to strengthen the muscles that support the posture, sitting on a chair with cushioning for the buttocks and support for the lower back, getting a footrest, keeping your computer monitor at eye level and using an ergonomically designed mouse and wrist pad – can be helpful. Also, get up, stretch and walk around for just five minutes every hour.

9. Withering of social life: A lot of relationships have suffered largely because of the inability to get out of the house and move around freely. And many social gathering places have closed down as well that has depleted the joys that make up a human life —and buoy human health. But, in the coming months, as we start meeting and greeting many of our friends and relatives, the situation will improve.

Going forward, don't panic. All of us need to sharpen up on our own coping skills till life regains a semblance of normality. And continue to observe personal hygiene always.

This ends the series on coronavirus pandemic.

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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HAPPY DEEPAVALI: BEYOND SPARKLERS, DO YOUR PEEPERS SPARKLE?

By DR. ARUN C. GULANI



In my previous column, I explained the concept of cataracts and how not to wait till they mature or till you are "Blind enough."

Our eyecare industry continues to innovate and bring out new lens implant technologies to keep up with vision demands and changing vision goals of the new generation of patients looking forward to live longer than their ancestor and, that too, with vision freedom.

Let's understand some new terminologies of proprietary surgical techniques I have invented to raise the bar on current eye surgical concepts, techniques and technologies.

LenzOplastique™ is a next generation, no pain, no stitch, no injection, no drugs, vision-optimized cataract surgery in a calm, soothing, personalized ambience where everything from instrumentation to lens implant technology is tailored to individual eyes and vision goals.

LlaZrPlastique®: Next-generation Lasik surgery with no cuts, no blades and no flaps that can safely and effectively correct any associated vision glasses prescription before or after cataract surgery.

Corneoplastique®: Cornea-based noninvasive laser techniques to correct patients with complications of cataract and Lasik surgery.

The U.S. FDA-approved lens technologies may be the best investment you can make during this festival season of "spend and plenty." Especially, if you are over 58 years of age and have been diagnosed with cataracts.

This is also a great time to live for those over 40 years of age and dependent on those pesky reading glasses. The currency of spoil and grandeur has changed from "material" to "experience" and never before so high, as your own custom-designed vision to enjoy the rest of your life with.

Summary of answers to most commonly asked questions by cataract patients:

1. Do I have to wait till my cataracts ripen/mature? No, not anymore! In fact if you wear glasses for any reason, nearsightedness, farsightedness or astigmatism, as long as your eyes are healthy, you don't need to wait to start seeing clearly without glasses (LenzOplastique™).
2. Why was I given so many confusing choices for lens implants for my cataract surgery? Your cataract having been a lens needs to be replaced with an artificial lens and there are over 34 different lens technologies available in the U.S. and nearly 81 worldwide. Do your research and don't fall for only two or three choices. Ask questions and explain your vision goals to the eye doctor.
3. Why am I wearing glasses after cataract surgery? In some cases, you may have some glasses' number despite surgery and this can be successfully corrected using modern laser vision surgery techniques like LaZrPlastique®.
4. What if I have a corneal problem like Keratoconus or previous Radial Keratotomy surgery? Can I still have cataract surgery? Yes, you certainly can and even, in such cases, result in vision without glasses with proper planning and technology choices.
5. Can complications of cataract surgery be corrected? As long as your retina is fine and potential to see is maintained, most complications of cataract surgery can be successfully corrected to excellent vision not only for anatomical damages but also for vision using staged Laser Corneoplastique® techniques.

This Diwali, the riches to compare and flash is neither diamonds nor gold. The present currency is the lens implant for your cataract surgery. The cost of the implant is a direct correlate to how much your loved ones really love you.

So, you go to your eye doctor's office and are diagnosed with cataracts. Before

you can mourn about this obvious testimonial to having aged, you are given a menu of lens implants to choose from – a full range of affordable to magical! You leave the eye doctor's office scratching your head and turn to your trusted source of medical information: Google!

Industry already knew that would be your only recourse and built widespread advertisement campaigns online so you are smothered with choices explained in terms they hope challenges your aging brain enough to help you succumb to the shiniest and most expensive technology. This you somehow justify as a mark of wealth that could still invoke the gods in all their glory; during Deepavali (Diwali).

Ok, let's get serious.

This is the most confusing thing many patients today face once diagnosed with cataracts. What lens implant to choose and how to understand their impact on their vision.

I have previously written about how you as a patient should take charge of your particular eye health and vision goals and then let the surgeon assist in selecting the best implant.

All of us understand that during cataract surgery, the cataract is removed, and an artificial lens implant is inserted in the eye. Until recently, there were no choices and life was simple – boring and monofocal!

With technology innovations, we have lens implants that include Multifocal (Progressive), Trifocal, Extended depth of focus (EDOF), X wave technology, etc., to help you see distance and near; Toric (to correct astigmatism), photocell and even re-chargeable (like I have described in previous columns). A thorough exam of your eye, including its optics and health, can help decide which lens implant will most likely result in vision without glasses at distance and near.

I encourage you to believe that your surgeon is more knowledgeable than Google and you must ask questions about pros and cons and possible expectations. How the lens implant chosen for you works and how will that translate to vision for your individualized goals. What are the possible side effects and what solutions are available? Also, have you been offered all lens implants choices available or only those available with that surgeon/office?

Do clearly outline your vision goal (distance vision, near vision or both and do you have to have perfect night vision, etc.)

Most usually, a combination of your vision goals along with the surgeon's selection of the lens implant in your best interest can lead to a satisfactory outcome. Anything less than this and you may become a statistic.

Emotions usually run high because of the cost of the implants beyond insurance and hence expectations must be clear before surgery.

Poor lens implant choices can lead to haloes and star bursts that can challenge the splendor of many a Deepavali lights.

By the same token, proper selection of the lens implant and surgical technique is one of the most gratifying surgical outcomes in modern medicine with a vision outcome that lasts a lifetime with well-earned bragging rights enough to divert the attention from Solitaires and Rolexes to the proud shimmer of your eyes.

This Deepavali, I can envision groups of richly dressed people looking into each other's eyes comparing their sparkles and testing vision at all distances even before drinks are served.

Go ahead and light the sparklers but get the Sparkle back in your eyes!

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 or visit www.gulanivision.com

EB-2 UPGRADES FOR INDIA-BORN PENDING EB-3 DOWNGRADES – PART I

By DILIP PATEL



The November 2021 Visa Bulletin shows that for India, the EB-3 Preference visa availability dates have moved back ("retrogressed") from Jan. 1, 2014 to Jan. 15, 2012. One year ago, many India born employment-based green card applicants with EB-2 priority dates between May 15, 2011 and Jan. 1, 2015 had worked frantically with their employers to file applications with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to "Downgrade" their EB-2 approved petitions to EB-3 in order to be eligible to file their applications for Adjustment of Status (AOS) while the window to file such applications remained open. Now, those applicants are questioning whether they can "Upgrade" back to EB-2.

The background is that historically, an applicant became eligible for a green card faster under the higher EB-2 preference category (for jobs requiring a master's degree or bachelor's degree and five years of experience) compared to the EB-3 preference category (for jobs that required less education or experience). However, during October 2020, EB-3 applicants with priority dates earlier than Jan. 1, 2015 were allowed to apply for Adjustment of Status, while EB-2 applicants required priority dates earlier than May 15, 2011. This was because USCIS allowed AOS applicants to use the "Filing Dates" listed in the October 2020 Visa Bulletin instead of "Final Action" dates.

Note that even after USCIS has completed its processing of the AOS application and is ready to approve the application, the green card cannot be issued unless visas are available as shown in the Final Action date of the Visa Bulletin at that time. For October 2020, the Final Action dates for India were Sept. 1, 2009 for EB-2 and Jan. 15, 2010 for EB-3. During the

past year until October 2021, India Final Action dates for EB-2 continued to move forward from Sept. 1, 2009 to Sept. 1, 2011. The EB-3 Final Action dates also moved forward to Jan. 1, 2014.

However, the November 2021 Visa Bulletin shows that while the Final Action Date for India EB-2 moved forward to Dec. 1, 2011, the EB-3 date retrogressed to Jan. 15, 2012. The prediction is that the EB-3 India date will continue to retrogress.

So, if you have an EB-2 approved Petition and filed a "Downgrade" to EB-3 with an AOS application which is still in process at USCIS, can you switch it back or Upgrade to EB-2, and if so how?

For now, an upgrade is advantageous if your EB-2 priority date is earlier than Dec. 1, 2011. In the coming months, it may be relevant to more applicants if the EB-2 date advances further. Predictions on how the dates will progress is a topic for another article, but there is a lot of discussion among immigration attorneys about options to utilize the EB-2 priority date. Some are suggesting that you file a new AOS application with full documentation and filing fees. Others are suggesting that you "interfile" a request to USCIS to use the EB-2 petition.

If you file a new application, USCIS will certainly accept the application. The downside is that you have to pay the filing fees all over again. Also, the new AOS application will be processed as of the date received by USCIS. You would lose any benefit from the fact that the existing application has been in process for almost a year.

To be continued...

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



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OVERHAULED LEXUS IS350 IS MORE ALLURING THAN EVER!

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

This is one of our favorite compact sport sedans. Why? It is just a real fun car to drive, ready to take off in an instant, nimble in traffic and swift to merge on busy highways. In figures: 0 to 60 in barely 5.6 seconds, ¼-mile in 13.8 seconds and top speed of 143 mph. What makes the IS350 even better for 2021 are the numerous changes Lexus has made inside out though the power train stays as is. Length and width are up by 1.8 inches though height is unchanged.

Under the unitized steel body still resides a 3.5-liter V-6 engine that cranks out 311 horsepower @ 6600 rpm and 280 pounds-feet of torque @ 4800 rpm. Equipped with the IS F high-performance model's eight-speed auto gearbox, it can be driven in eco, normal, sport or snow modes. Though our test was a rear-wheel drive, you can opt for an electronically controlled all-weather drive for firmer grip and traction. Suspension is handled by an independent double wishbone front and a multilink rear system to smoothen breaks, bumps and turns on the road. The rack-and-pinion steering with electric power assist is quick, precise and well-weighted.

Slimmer LED headlights and daytime running lights flank the massive and redesigned spindle grille, a color-coordinated front functional air intake with full-width tail lamps and dual chrome tips in the rear. Now that all IS350s will have standard F Sport features, the front and rear bumpers receive a distinctive look as does

IS350 (RWD)
Tires: 235/40R19 front, 265/35R19 rear
Wheelbase: 110.2 inches
Length: 185.4 inches
Width: 72.4 inches
Height: 56.5 inches
Fuel capacity: 17.4 gallons
City: 20 mpg
Highway: 28 mpg
Weight: 3,748 pounds
Base price: \$42,900
Price as tested: \$55,050
Web site: www.lexus.com



the grille surround and rocker moldings. Niceties include dual auto a/c, 60/40 rear seat, 10-way power and eight-way front-passenger heated/cooled seats, moon roof, LFA-inspired 8-inch TFT instrument cluster with sliding bezel, silver-metallic analog clock, and a power tilt/telescopic steering column. A mouse-like, easy-to-use Remote Touch enables the driver to toggle navigation, climate, audio and phone controls, which are displayed on a 10.3-inch screen.

Dual front and side airbags, side curtain airbag, front knee airbags, vehicle stability and traction controls, front/rear crumple zones, four-

wheel antilock brakes with electronic brake distribution and brake assist, blind spot monitor with rear cross traffic alert, daytime running lights and a tire pressure monitoring system are standard. Add in a pre-collision system that detects pedestrians, lane departure assist and dynamic cruise control, all part of the no-cost Lexus Safety Sense+.

Looking for a little bit of gusto in your ride? Then the rev-happy and powerful IS350 will be more than delighted to oblige. A lavish cabin and respectable fuel economy should help seal the deal.

FAIRLY NEW VW ATLAS IS A HUGE HIT!

Introduced in 2018, the fairly new Atlas is the largest VW on the road today, eclipsing its younger sibling the Tiguan. Under the hood sits a sole 3.6-liter V-6 engine putting out 276 horsepower @ 6200 rpm and 266 pounds-feet of torque @ 2750 rpm. For a vehicle weighing nearly 4,700 pounds, it's quick off the mark, responding with agility in any situation. The midsize SUV offers an 8-speed auto gearbox. Ensclosed on the unitary body is a robust independent four-wheel suspension. Tow capacity is a remarkable 5,000 pounds.



Available as a front-wheel or all-wheel drive (our trim), this replacement for the Touareg appears to be attracting lots of attention, all good. Horizontal LED headlights and daytime running lights flank chrome bars with a centered VW insignia. The attractive cabin of the SUV epitomizes European styling and flair with a simple but elegant instrument panel of large analog speedometer and tachometer gauges and a centered driver information

center. The 60/40 second-row seat tilts and slides 7.7 inches forward effortlessly while the 50/50 third row is big enough for two adults to sit comfortably. Passenger volume is commendable at 153.7 cubic feet while you get an astonishing 96.8 cubic feet behind the front row with all rear seats down. Like the sun to come down on you? Open up the 4.4-by-2.8-foot panoramic sunroof. Amenities include an 8-inch touch screen for

ATLAS (SEL)
Tires: 255/50R20 all season
Wheelbase: 117.3 inches
Length: 198.3 inches
Width: 78.3 inches
Height: 70 inches
Steering: rack and pinion, electromechanical
Fuel capacity: 18.6 gallons
City: 17 mpg
Highway: 23 mpg
Base price: \$48,395
Web site: www.vw.com

audio, nav and phone controls, tri-zone auto a/c with second-row air vents, three-spoke leather steering column, front heated/cooled seats, and a power lift gate.

Dual front and side airbags, side curtain airbag for both rows, four-wheel antilock brakes with brake assist, electronic stability with anti-slip regulation and engine brake assist, traction control, lane departure and forward collision warning, blind-spot monitor, front/rear park distance control, hill start assist

and descent control, adaptive cruise control, overhead and rearview camera, tire pressure monitoring system and daytime running lights are standard.

Competition is fierce in the midsize SUV segment but this fairly new ride has been receiving rave reviews from its owners. Apart from a potent power train and good looks, a roomy third-row seat and generous cargo hold should ensure that the VW Atlas becomes a frontrunner.

GEAR UP FOR THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS!

By KIRAN BAHL



Happy Diwali!! It's that joyous time of year where we celebrate our faith, our family, our friends, our food and also our fashion! Let's look into these quick tips and tricks for an easier feel to look and feel fancy, just right for the festival of lights.

LIGHTS AND BRIGHTS, DIWALI COLORS

Diwali is all about the light, overpowering the dark in our lives. Keeping this in mind, when planning your ensemble for the next gathering, think the very same ... light and some bright.

- Pastels, lights, are still a favorite among saris and lenghas. To 'dress' up the look further though, opt for big jewels around your neck and ears for more sparkle.
- Jewel shades, brights, are taking over. With more and more things opening up and being celebrated post-pandemic, bold is in. Dark reds, greens and blues are super popular. Keep lips dark too, after all, masks are optional now.
- Wear your heels. I'm seeing some flat sandals/juttis hit Diwali runway looks, but there is a

lack of polish I feel to the look. Keep the casual footwear for temple or simpler house events.

RANGOLI, DIWALI SHAPES

This season's holiday wear of course is about sequins and stones, but prints are the now. From ambi/paisley designs to dark floral looks and animal motifs, let's dive right into the right way to print.

- For the bold, wear an allover print. Ambi/paisley designs are back in both eastern and western fashion scenes. Whether in baby blue/pink pastels or blue and brown combos, it's a fashion do, especially in palazzo and pant suits. To add some shine, choose embroidery or stonework looks.
- To minimize your look a little or if you feel your hot pink lengha is already too outstanding, use a print dupatta in a pretty peacock print. Dark florals are trending, a black kameez on a palazzo or dhoti pant suit with maroon and mustard rose print is lovely!
- For this busier look, opt for solid/metallic colored heels. Keep hair casual too.

FIRE and SUNSETS, DIWALI LOOKS

Fire, like a beautiful sunset, is the overall theme this season. Go with shades of this for your festive wear.

Reds, oranges, yellows and pinks are radiant. Try wearing them all at once for a spectacular show.

- A red suit sizzles, a red sari is just hot. Brighter oranges are gaining popularity too, give an orange lengha or sharara suit a try. Yellows are still going strong, even after their upward rise during the Ganesh Chaturthi season a couple of months ago. Pink is still pretty and showing in so many varieties of hues for Diwali. Wear multiples of these hues to look oh-so-pretty!
- BIG necklaces are in. Even with bright and vivid colors, large chokers especially are the jewels to wear and show off. Stud earrings look best to keep a proper proportion with the neckwear. If wearing a long statement necklace, wear the largest earrings you can find!
- Monotone styling is in this season. Keep your makeup, your outfit and heels all red – it's clean and streamlined.

Happy Diwali!! 'Tis the season of light and love, spread and share it abundantly, happily and safely. And, as always, remember to 'gro' with style!

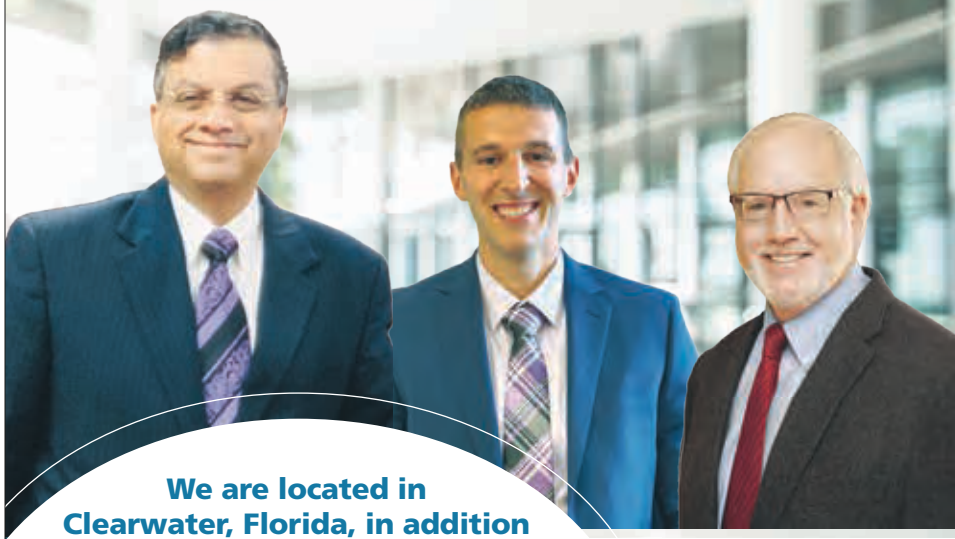
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DIWALI FESTIVITIES

TAMPA BAY AREA

Sri Ayyappa temple of Tampa, 6829 Maple Lane, will celebrate Diwali with fireworks and dinner on Friday, Nov. 5, from 6:30 p.m. onward. For information, visit www.tampaayyappatemple.org

SOUTH FLORIDA

BOYNTON BEACH/MIAMI: BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, 541 S.E. 18th Ave., Boynton Beach will hold Diwali and Chopda Pujan from 7 p.m. on Nov. 4. Annakut Darshan will be from noon to 8 p.m. the next day. For information, call (561) 740 2898.

SOUTHWEST RANCHES: South Florida Hindu Temple, 13010 W. Griffin Road, Southwest Ranches, will celebrate Diwali on Nov. 3 with puja starting at 6 p.m. On Nov. 7, the mandir will have Annakoot with puja/bhajans from 10 a.m. To participate, call (954) 252-8802.

JACKSONVILLE/ST. AUGUSTINE

Indian Cultural Society of Jacksonville will hold its Diwali Dhamaka on Saturday, Dec. 4, at

World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort, 500 S. Legacy Trail, St. Augustine. Social hour begins at 3 p.m. followed by performances at 4 p.m. There will be food, dance and music. Entry is free for 2022 members. For tickets/info, email info@jaxics.org or visit www.jaxics.org

ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY/ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

Orlando Marathi Mandal will be celebrating Diwali with cultural programs on Sunday, Nov. 14, at Eastmonte Civic Center, 830 Magnolia Drive, Altamonte Springs from 4 to 9 p.m. For details, e-mail orlandomarathi@yahoo.com or call (407) 712-5992.

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, 1325 W. Oakridge Road, Orlando, will have Diwali and Chopda Pujan from 5:45 p.m. on Nov. 4. The next day will be Annakut Darshan from 12.30 to 8 p.m. Kids Diwali celebrations will be virtual 10:30 a.m. to noon Nov. 13. For information, call (407) 857-0091.

LAKELAND/WINTER HAVEN

Shree Swaminarayan Hindu Temple (ISSO), 2793 New Tampa Highway, Lakeland, will hold Diwali Annakut celebration from 5 to 7 p.m. on Nov. 6. For information, call (863) 687-4776 or visit www.issolakeland.org

INVERNESS

Shirdi Sai Florida Center, 4707 S. Pleasant Grove Road, Inverness, will celebrate Dhanteras on Nov. 2 and Deepawali, Dhanalakshmi Puja on Nov. 3. For timings and other details, call (352) 860-2181 or visit www.shirdiusa.com

MELBOURNE (SPACE COAST)

Manav Mandir will hold Diwali celebrations (Laxmi Puja) at 6 p.m. on Nov. 4 and Gowardhan Puja the next day. The temple is at 7400 Waelti Drive, Melbourne. For information, (321) 426-0668, email info@mmbrevard.org or visit www.mmbrevard.org

PROTEST VIGIL HELD IN TAMPA TO SUPPORT PERSECUTED HINDUS, MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN



Concerned Hindus in Tampa Bay joined a nationwide protest vigil by The Chingari Project on Sept. 18 to remember thousands of Hindu and minority girls abducted each year, raped, assaulted, forcibly converted to Islam and married off or sold to older men in Pakistan.

Founded in 2021, The Chingari Project (Coalition for HINDu Girls Abducted And Their Rights) is a social justice campaign aimed toward bringing awareness to Hindus across the globe about the atrocities that young, innocent Hindu girls face in Sindh, Pakistan. For more information, visit www.Chingari.org or email hindusoftampabay@gmail.com for more information.

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NOVEMBER 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) Mars is symbolic of a warrior a soldier, adventure and courage. However, this month we see multiple combinations come into play; some positive, some lukewarm; i.e., sun conjoins your planetary lord, creating aggression and anger; Jupiter and Mars aspect the house of health, peace, finance, matrimonial or business alliances. One may have to exercise control over emotions and dominance. Aggression and anger management play their roles, especially in marital and business alliances! Remember, time waits for none and you have the power to work hard and produce favorable results, particularly finance, accrual of wealth

and material prosperity. Precaution: Beware of over-enthusiasm. Exercise self-control and restraint.

TAURUS / Vrushabha (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Venus) - (April 21-May 21) Venus Sign - Stars covered Krittika (last 3 parts), Rohini, Mrigashira (first 2 parts) Taurians have a promising time on one hand and trying time both together. Your sign lord Venus positively aspects and impacts the house of peace, wealth and identity. On the other hand, be cautious with medical issues, especially kidneys, UTI or prostate. Negative under-currents may also be felt in matrimonial or business relationships. However, major planets transit positively. It is time to seize opportunities and derive the fruits to your advantage and guard against medical issues. Precaution: Don't procrastinate; in fact, move with the tide of time.

GEMINI / Mithuna (Air sign, ruling planet is Mercury) - (May 22-June 21) Mercury Sign - Stars covered Mrigashira (last 2 parts), Ardra & Punarvasu (first 3 parts) An encouraging period, though one takes time to take a firm decision on any matter due to fluidity and duality in nature. Marital bliss for the married and positive alliances for eligible-seeking partner looks promising for many. Though professional advancement is on the cards, however, chance of a last-minute road block cannot be ruled out. With smart planning and quick action, one is able to achieve much to their advantage else there is more to lose with procrastination! On medical front, skin rashes and allergies, especially nose and throat, may troublesome natives. Precaution: Plan well and execute promptly. Stalling is not your friend.

CANCER / Kataka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22-July 22) Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha Moon is your ruler with waxing and waning phases. Pay special attention to the lunar cycle. With

a waxing Moon and a little bit of luck, time factor becomes satisfactory – for business ventures, self-employed, marital alliances, and real estate matters or anything auspicious. When Moon enters the waning phase, don't rely on luck; instead, take charge of situations and work with double force and energy. The secret is to not let your mind remain idle, as it has a tendency to wander and slip into an abyss. The month is otherwise quite rewarding for self-achievers and go-getters. Precaution: Avoid being idle, utilize physical energy to win over mental forces.

LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23-Aug. 22) Sun Sign – Stars covered Magha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni (1st part)

Leo, a royal sign, always commands respect with an inherent quality of domination. You cannot tolerate "low-level thinking at any time". This is a promising month though positive results are not without trials. Your sign lord is debilitated for the first fortnight; this means some may face identity-crisis, trying hard to prove themselves, little recognition and low self-esteem. But have full faith in your sign; remember, an injured lion has twice the strength to get up and fight. Beware, low immunity and allergies cannot be ruled out. Precaution: Be prepared to fall, but get up with twice the energy and fight.

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) Your sign lord, Mercury, conjoining Sun and Mars, transits through a favorable time. Similarly, Venutian transit in Jupiter's house is a blessing. With current transition of your sign lord and many other encouraging planets, there is a positive impact on house of wealth, peace, material and physical comfort. A well-planned constructive project may take shape. Intellectual faculties are functioning well and influential circle seems to expand too. Effective contacts are being made. Business seems to be improving also. However, existing marital relationships or ones in formation may see some setback if not handled properly. Move with time for converting opportunities into successful ventures. Precaution: Be alert. Keep your doors open to opportunities.

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)

Librans, the transitory effect of current planets cannot be said to be beneficial. With the royal Sun and Mars present in your house, one may be given to anger. To specify, this combination may produce adverse results in dealing with people, especially when they don't listen or take your advice. However, the directional influences are highly advantageous where luck and intuitiveness play a vital role in uplifting you financially and materially. Precaution: Little belief in intuition and working accordingly may be a good idea; however, judge for yourself, weigh all pros and cons before taking a decision.

SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) Mars Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha Placement of transiting planets provides a mixed picture. Some expenses that are from the government may require both partners to contribute proportionately. Professionally, this is a good time to get into government, armed forces or police services. People with political backgrounds stand to gain much. People with weak willpower may be given in to smoking and drinking. Monetary and financial situation improves for a lot of people. However, spousal relations may turn sour for some. With a little patience, one can turn the situation favorably. This is a great time to develop spiritual powers. Precaution: Watch for promotion in a government job.

SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Jupiter Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part) Trend of the current month promises a positive time. Your 2nd house is strong bringing financial prosperity and domestic peace. Professional growth, increase in income, higher salaries cannot be ruled out. These are all well marked in the chart. However, your sign lord is debilitated, which means rewards will surely come, but will come after lot of hard work and labor. Be cautious with medical issues, especially liver, kidney or prostate problems. Precaution: Healthcare needs first priority.

CAPRICORN / Makara (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Saturn) - (Dec. 22-Jan. 20) Saturn Sign – Stars covered Uttara Shada (last 3 parts) Shravana, Dhanistha (first 2 parts) The current month indicates that you have a fairly good time in all respects. Favorable trend continues, so do not miss opportunities. Your 11th house is well disposed, making you financially secure by providing larger gains. Time favors you for taking up new ventures too. Believe in the saying, "when the iron is hot, strike with your might." This is the time to put ideas into action. Precaution: Don't procrastinate.

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) Your sign lord, Saturn, is partially beneficial; however, the house of profession and the house of income are strongly placed and powerful, creating conditions for big achievements and success in all undertakings. Similarly, the disposition of Venus in the 11th gives all success with rich gains. It is time to spread your wings more widely to cover more areas in your field of activities. Precaution: Seize time and opportunity. This is a great time.

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 Development and professional progress is seen. Planetary position indicates one may have to undertake some special projects, involving air travel. This will be rewarding and gainful. Your 9th house is strong, which means that fortune shines. The door for some big schemes is opening shortly. Be patient and wait for better opportunities for all new ventures. Seems some may strike gold. Precaution: Let not opportunities slip you out. Honor time, time honors you.

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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