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# India

## Independence Day

### 15<sup>th</sup> August

### Florida communities celebrating the patriotic day include:

**TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER**  
FIA of Tampa Bay will celebrate India's 79th Independence Day on Aug. 24.

**ORLANDO/OVIEDO**  
Central Florida Indian Cultural Association will celebrate Independence Day on Aug. 16 in Oviedo.

**SOUTH FLORIDA (FORT LAUDERDALE)**  
The Association of Indians in America South Florida chapter will honor India Independence Day on Aug. 17.

For more information on these events and others to be held in Fort Myers/Naples, Gainesville and Tallahassee, please see page 23

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# KHAAS BAAT

## CELEBRATES 21 YEARS!

Story, page 23

# WHO'S WHO

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

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## EVENTS / SIGNIFICANT DATES

### EVENTS

#### TAMPA/CLEARWATER/ST. PETERSBURG

**AUG. 6: GSTB SENIOR DAY;** organized by Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; \$10 for GSTB members, \$15 for non-members; lunch and entertainment; for information, call Jitubhai Vora at (941) 962-9774.

**AUG. 10-16: SHRIMAD BHAGWAT KATHA;** organized by Sanatan Mandir, 311 E. Palm Ave., Tampa; 5 to 8 p.m. daily with mahaprasad at 8:30; presented by Acharya Shri Gaurav Krishna Goswamiji; for information, call the temple President Sanjeev Kumar at (941) 914-5000 or visit [www.sanatanmandirtampa.org](http://www.sanatanmandirtampa.org)

**AUG. 12: 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.

**AUG. 20: ICC SENIORS GET-TOGETHER;** India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; free seminar, lunch and entertainment; only for 65 years and older; 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.

**AUG. 23: RAAGA RHAPSODY;** Hindu American Foundation musical benefit dinner; Hindustani classical vocalist Sanvitha Sridhar accompanied by Dr. Rahul Pandit on tabla; 5 to 9 p.m.; Centre Club, 123 W. West Shore Blvd., Tampa; register at [myhaf.org/tampa-25-kb](http://myhaf.org/tampa-25-kb)

**AUG. 23: ONAM CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA;** organized by Malayalee Association of Central Florida/ Tampa (MACF); Sacred Heart Knanaya Catholic Community Center, 2620 Washington Road, Valrico; 11 a.m.; for tickets, visit [www.MACFTampa.com](http://www.MACFTampa.com); for information, call Francis at (813) 719-0303.

**AUG. 28: SATSANG;** Sri Siddhewar Brahmrishi to conduct satsang; Sanatan Mandir, 311 E. Palm Ave., Tampa; 6 p.m.; sponsored by Manjul and Jugal Taneja and family; for information, call (813) 221-4482.

**AUG. 30: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO 63rd INDEPENDENCE DINNER DANCE;** organized by Shree Raam Mandir at The Oaks at St. Marks, 13312 Cain Road, Tampa; 7 p.m. to midnight; \$25; or information, call Angela at (813) 842-4447.

### SIGNIFICANT DATES

**AUG. 9: RAKSHA BANDHAN**

**AUG. 15: INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**AUG. 15: NAVROZE (PARSI NEW YEAR)**

**AUG. 16: JANMASHTAMI**

**AUG. 27: GANESH CHATURTHI**

#### LAKELAND/WINTER HAVEN/BARTOW

**AUG. 2: SRI VENKATESHWARA KALYANAM;** organized by Shubam Foundation of Lakeland; Shree Swaminarayan Hindu Temple, 2793 New Tampa Highway, Lakeland; 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.; for information, call Gopinath at (775) 997-4321 or visit <https://www.lakelandkalyanam.org>

#### ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY

**AUG. 22-23: ORLANDO GARBA;** Atul Purohit on Aug. 22 and Geeta Rabari next day at Orange County Convention Center, West Hall B4, 9800 International Drive; 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.; purchase tickets on Eventbrite/TicketMaster.

**AUG. 23: "EK SHAM DUO KE NAAM;"** music ensemble/band featuring songs by legends Madan Mohan and O.P. Nayyar; song by Swarsetu; Orange County Multicultural Center, 7149 W. Colonial Drive, Orlando; 4 to 6:30 p.m.; for information, call Pallavi Patel at (407) 756-7138.

#### JACKSONVILLE/ST. JOHNS

**AUG. 17: TAJA PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT;** organized by Telugu Association of Jacksonville area; Fruit Cove Recreation Club, 1344 Roberts Road, St. Johns; 7 a.m.; categories are kids, men, women and \$15 members, \$25 non-members; for information, WhatsApp (904) 701-4307 or visit [www.manataja.com](http://www.manataja.com)

#### SOUTH FLORIDA (FORT LAUDERDALE)

**AUG. 21: SATSANG PROGRAM;** presented by Sant Nirankari Mission, Fort Lauderdale; Downtown Event Center, 416 N.E. 1st St., Fort Lauderdale; 6:30 to 9 p.m.; for information and RSVP, visit [www.nirankari.org/fortlauderdale](http://www.nirankari.org/fortlauderdale) or email [fortlauderdale@nirankari.org](mailto:fortlauderdale@nirankari.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.**



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**Saturday, August 2 (5:30pm-7:30pm)**  
Shree Jagannath Bhajan Aarti

**Monday, August 04 (6:00pm-8:00pm)**  
Group Shravan Somvar

**Friday, August 08 (8:00pm Aarti)**  
Shravan Purnima | Raksha Bandhan

**August 10-16 (5:00pm-8:00pm)**  
7 Days Shree Bhagwat Katha by Gaurav Kumar Goswami Ji  
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**Monday, August 11 (6:00pm-8:00pm)**  
Shravan Month Group Shiv Abhishekam

**Tuesday, August 12 (6:00pm-8:00pm)** Heramb Sankat Chaturthi

**Friday, August 15 (5:00pm-8:00pm)** Krishna Janam Katha Kirtan

**Saturday, August 16 (9:00pm-11:00pm)**  
Shree Krishna Janam Asthmii Bhajan kirtan Maha Palma Nand Utsav Celebrations

**Sunday, August 17 (3:00pm-8:00pm)**  
Group Shree Vishnu Havan Yagna | Dahi Handi Celebrations

**Monday, August 18 (6:00pm-8:00pm)**  
Shravan Somvar Group Abhishek

**Wednesday, August 20 (6:00pm-8:00pm)**  
Budh Pradosh Group Shiv Puja

**Monday, August 25 (6:00pm-8:00pm)**  
Hartalika Teej Group Puja

**Tuesday, August 26 to Saturday, September 6**  
10 Days Sarvajani Ganesh Utsav  
Shree Ganesh Chaturthi  
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**Weekly Events**

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## PROSTATE PROBLEMS

By DR. VENKIT IYER, MD, FACS



News about former President Joe Biden suffering from advanced prostate cancer was shocking. Many of us wondered why it was not detected earlier and how it can be treated.

Prostate is a walnut-size organ located in the male pelvis at the very lower end of urinary bladder where the urethra begins. It generates the seminal fluid, which gets mixed with the sperms made from the testes, then stored in the seminal vesicles. In addition, it controls urine flow and generates certain hormone-like substances.

Disorders of the prostate gland are common, affecting most of the male population particularly as they get old. Benign hypertrophy of prostate (BPH), cancer of prostate and infection of the gland called prostatitis make up most of such problems. Urologists are the medical specialists who manage these problems.

Most common among these is benign enlargement of prostate (BPH) affecting 90 percent of men above age 80 and 50 percent of men above age 50. It is not cancer, and it will not turn into cancer either. As the gland enlarges it compresses

the urethra, causing a variety of urinary symptoms. Such symptoms include hesitancy, frequency, urgency, nocturia, incontinence, incomplete emptying, straining to urinate, weak stream and eventual retention of urine. One may notice occasional hematuria from congested veins or backpressure to kidneys resulting in hydronephrosis.

Diagnosis is made by physical examination that includes digital rectal examination, PSA levels, urinalysis and ultrasound examinations. Treatment is individualized depending upon the age of the patient, their comorbidities, and patient preference. Some of them can be watched and followed. Others may prefer to take medications that decrease the volume of the gland. Some others may prefer surgery, which can be done by different techniques. All the treatment modalities have side effects and complications. It is best for the individual to consult a urologist.

Prostatitis is inflammation of the prostate. Often it is secondary to sexually transmitted infections or related to urinary tract infections. Patients may experience fever, pelvic or perineal pain or urinary symptoms of burning on micturition. Antibiotics are useful in controlling the infection.

Cancer of the prostate affects one out of eight men above the age of 65. While the exact cause is unknown, there are certain risk factors. Genetics, family history of cancers, African American background, obesity, diet with heavy fat, red meat and dairy products are some such risk factors.

In the early stages, it does not cause any symptoms, or minor signs are passed off as age related urinary problems. Routine physical checkup that includes a digital rectal examination to feel the back wall of the prostate gland to detect any nodules and routine blood test for prostate specific antigen (PSA) for people above the age of 50 are the two important evaluations for early finding.

It is now widely accepted that PSA level is a good screening test as a starting point. Normally, it should be below 4. If it is above 7, it will raise alarm bells. PSA level could be raised to mild levels with benign enlargement of prostate gland. Hence, it is important to do serial measurements once every six months. If they keep climbing up or if a nodule is felt on digital examination, further evaluation is done with an ultrasound. Needle biopsy of the abnormal nodule is performed with ultrasound guidance or MRI guidance for tissue diagnosis for final confirmation. Once the diagnosis is confirmed, the severity of the disease and extent of the spread is assessed with different tests.

The treatment of prostate cancer is individualized depending upon the stage of the disease, presence of metastasis, age of the patient and their own personal preferences. Patients above the age of 80 with early prostate cancer can be left untreated since the cancer is slow growing and may not be the cause of death. Those in younger age between 50 to 80 are treated aggressively, especially if they are early cancers. For them the choices are radical surgery to remove the prostate gland completely or give radiation therapy or hormonal therapy. Those who have advanced cancers with spread to bones or lymph nodes can also be remedied with hormonal therapy, radiation treatment, immunotherapy, or bone targeted therapy.

Prognosis of prostate cancers has improved significantly with advances in robotic surgery, new medications and immunotherapy. Ninety-five percent of early prostate cancers can be cured. Even a good number of advanced prostate cancers can have their disease held in control and the patient's life span extended. Men should be encouraged to seek routine medical evaluation and upon noticing any urinary symptoms.

**Dr. Venkit S. Iyer, MD, FACS, is a retired general and vascular surgeon. He has authored six books: "Decision making in clinical surgery" first and second editions; "Aging well and reaching beyond," "The Clinic," "Geriatrics Handbook" and "Iyer's story book for children." They are available through Amazon or from the author. His website [venkitiyer.com](http://venkitiyer.com) has necessary links and contact information.**



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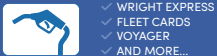
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## NAVIGATING IMMIGRATION CHALLENGES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES: AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO COMPLIANCE AND PREPAREDNESS

By **DILIP PATEL** and **KHUSHBU PATEL**



In today's interconnected economy, small businesses thrive on a diverse workforce that often includes immigrant workers. This diversity fuels innovation, expands markets, and helps local economies grow. However, managing immigration compliance can be complex — especially if you're unfamiliar with federal and state regulations. Understanding the landscape of immigration enforcement actions, such as Form I-9 inspections, ICE worksite raids, and DHS visa site visits, is crucial for protecting your business and your employees.

### Why Compliance Matters More Than Ever

Non-compliance with immigration laws can have severe consequences, including hefty fines, debarment from federal contracts, criminal charges, and damage to your reputation. For small businesses, these penalties can threaten financial stability and operational continuity. It's vital to stay ahead of the curve by understanding what enforcement agencies are looking for and how to prepare effectively.

### Understanding Key Enforcement Actions

Some of the most common immigration enforcement actions that small businesses might face are:

- Form I-9 Inspections:

All employers are legally required to verify employment eligibility using Form I-9 for every employee hired after Nov. 6, 1986. Government agencies like ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) routinely inspect these forms to ensure compliance. Errors, missing information, or backdated entries can lead to penalties.

- Regularly review and update your I-9 forms for accuracy.
- Train HR personnel and managers on proper completion procedures.
- Consider using E-Verify, a free electronic system that confirms work authorization rapidly.
- Worksite ICE Raids:

ICE agents may conduct surprise raids to question and detain suspected undocumented workers. Such incidents can cause operational disruptions and legal liabilities.

- Develop a clear response plan with designated personnel trained to handle raids.
- Keep detailed records of agents' actions during any raid—names, badge numbers, and scope of activity.
- Maintain a strong relationship with an immigration attorney who can provide immediate guidance.
- DHS Visa-Related Site Visits:

Employers utilizing certain visas — like H-1B, L-1 or F-1 STEM OPT — may be subject to DHS site visits to verify compliance with visa terms. These inspections can affect visa status and future applications.

- Keep all visa documentation current, organized, and accessible.
- Work closely with legal experts familiar with visa regulations.
- Prepare a response plan for potential visits, including verifying official credentials and restricting access if needed.

### Proactive Steps for Small Business Owners

Staying compliant requires a proactive approach. Here are practical steps that one can take to safeguard his or her business:

- Create a Compliance Checklist:

Develop a comprehensive guide covering employment verification, record-keeping, and visa documentation. Regularly review and update this checklist to reflect current laws.

- Regular Training:

Educate your HR team and managers about immigration laws and best practices.

Regular training sessions help prevent inadvertent violations.

- Maintain Organized Records:

Securely store all I-9 forms, visa documents, and correspondence with government agencies. Well-organized files enable quick responses during inspections or audits.

- Engage Legal Support:

Establish relationships with experienced immigration attorneys who can advise on complex issues, review documents and guide response strategies.

- Develop Response Protocols:

Have clear, step-by-step procedures in place for handling inspections, raids, or site visits. Knowing what to do minimizes panic and ensures compliance.

Imagine that ICE agents arrive unexpectedly at your business. Here are ways to respond:

- Verify the agents' credentials and the purpose of their visit.
- Ensure only designated staff speak with them, and document their interactions in detail.
- Restrict access to private areas unless authorized.
- Contact your immigration attorney immediately for guidance.
- Inform employees to stay calm and direct inquiries to the designated point person.

### Building a Culture of Compliance

Beyond reactive measures, promoting a culture of legal awareness within your organization is essential. Incorporate immigration compliance into onboarding processes and hold periodic training sessions.

Final Thoughts: Empower Your Business

While navigating immigration regulations may seem overwhelming, remember that resources are available. Legal experts, industry networks and government guidance can help you develop effective strategies. The key is to stay informed, prepared and proactive. By understanding enforcement actions and implementing best practices, your small business can thrive amid regulatory challenges.

### Your Next Steps

- Review your current employment verification procedures and update as needed.
- Schedule regular training sessions for HR staff on I-9 compliance and immigration laws.
- Establish relationships with trusted immigration attorneys or legal advisors.
- Prepare a detailed response plan for potential inspections, raids, or site visits.
- Create a welcoming and compliant workplace culture that values diversity and legality.

Taking these proactive steps not only helps you avoid penalties but also builds a resilient, trustworthy business environment. Navigating immigration challenges doesn't have to be intimidating — armed with knowledge and preparation, your small business can confidently face any compliance hurdles ahead.

**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](mailto:dilip.patel@bipc.com)**

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## SHRIMAD BHAGWAT KATHA SET AUG. 10-16 AT SANATAN MANDIR IN TAMPA

BY NARESH VISSA

Nearly 19 years after his father, the revered Acharya Shri Mridul Krishna Shastriji Maharaj graced the stage at Sanatan Mandir, the temple will host his son, Acharya Shri Gaurav Krishna Goswamiji, for Shrimad Bhagwat Katha from Aug. 10-16. The event will be at the mandir, 311 E. Palm Ave., from 5 to 8 p.m. daily. Mahaprasad (dinner) will be served at 8:30. On Aug. 10, the event begins at 4 p.m. and on Aug. 16, Janmashtami, at 6:30 p.m.

In August 2006, Acharya Mridul Krishna Shastri ji led an eight-day, 108 Pothi Bhagwat Katha at Sanatan Mandir — an event that drew record crowds and became one of the most cherished memories in the temple's history. For years, devotees asked: "When is he coming again?" After many near misses, Chandrakant Patel reached out to Sanatan

Mandir President Sanjeev Kumar with a proposal. Within 19 minutes, the board unanimously approved the visit, bringing the long-awaited return to fruition — with a special twist. On Aug. 16, father and son will present the Katha together.

Acharya Gaurav Krishna Goswamiji was born on July 6, 1984, in Vrindavan, U.P. A direct descendant of Swami Haridasji — the 15th-century saint and guru of Tansen — Goswamiji carries forward a sacred legacy. At age 18, he gave his first Bhagwat Katha to more than 20,000 devotees. Since then, he has led over 350 weeklong Kathas around the world.

For sponsorships and participation, contact Sanjeev Kumar at (941) 914-5000 or Chandrakant Patel at (813) 340-5505.



## OVERHAULED VW TIGUAN A STANDOUT IN NAME AND SPIRIT!

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

The bestseller for Volkswagen has undergone a major transformation for 2025. Sitting between the smaller Taos and the larger Atlas, the Tiguan takes on a new look, boost in power, and now is available solely as a five-passenger compact SUV. So, if you are looking for anything bigger in the VW family, opt for the seven-seater Atlas.



Under the hood sits a turbo, intercooled and direct-injected 2.0-liter inline-4 cylinder engine putting out 201 horsepower (up 17 from 2024) @ 5000 rpm and 221 pounds-feet of torque @ 1500 rpm. Quick off the mark, responding with agility in any situation (weighs 170 pounds fewer than its predecessor), this third-generation SUV is equipped with a flawless 8-speed auto gearbox. Ensnared on the unitary body, available as a front-wheel or our 4MOTION (all-wheel-drive) tester version, is a robust and reliable strut-type front and a multilink rear suspension. The electric power steering is quick and communicative to result in a positive on-center response. Drive modes include eco, comfort, sport, custom, off-road and snow. Slimmer LED headlights meet up on a light bar to surround the centered, illuminated VW crest on the grille. The SEL R-Line trim fetches you roof rails, bumpers and headliners (all in black, of course!) as well as an exclusive R-Line badging inside and out. The gorgeous cabin exemplifies European styling with a simple but elegant instrument panel of large analog speedometer/tachometer gauges and driver information center. New for 2025 is a column-mounted gear shifter, saving space in the center area. The infotainment touchscreen for audio, phone and nav controls is a mammoth 15 inches, sitting atop the dashboard. Passenger volume is praiseworthy at 126 cubic feet, an increase of 2 cubes from the prior year. Audiophiles will take to the 700-watt, 12-speaker Harman Kardon audio system. Ambient light options of at least 30 colors, stainless-steel pedal caps, front-door sill scuff plates and American walnut wood trim are a fine touch. Other amenities include a panoramic power sun roof and lift gate, three-zone auto a/c with second-row air vents, head-up display, three-spoke power leather tilt/telescopic steering column, eight-way power driver and front-passenger heated/cooled seats and a wireless phone charger.

The Tiguan sticks out in the swarming compact SUV field, thanks to a sprightly engine, exceptional handling and balance, everyday practicality and decent fuel economy. As for its odd-sounding name, look at it as a boon for once. It's German for 'tiger' and 'iguana.'

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UNDERSTANDING STRESS: THE SILENT KILLER AND HOW MEDITATION CAN HELP YOU MANAGE IT

By DR. ANJUM KUMBKARNI, M.D., MBA



In the last few articles, we’ve explored the concept of stress response, relaxation response, and how using your breath can help you relax. Today, we’ll focus on understanding the warning signs that indicate stress is building up in your body and mind. If left unaddressed, this chronic stress can lead to serious health complications. The good news is that recognizing stress early and taking steps to manage it through mindfulness and meditation can bring about significant relief.

Warning Signals of Stress

Physical Symptoms:

Your body communicates with you when stress starts to

take a toll. Some common physical signs include:

- Headaches and stomach aches;
- Indigestion or acid reflux;
- Tiredness, back pain, tight neck and shoulders;
- Racing heart or palpitations;
- Sweaty palms, restlessness, or ringing in the ears.

Cognitive Symptoms:

Stress also affects how you think and process information. You may experience:

- Trouble thinking clearly, forgetfulness and a lack of creativity;
- Memory loss and difficulty making decisions;
- Racing thoughts, negative thinking, and ruminations (fixating on worries).

Emotional Symptoms:

Your emotions may become intense or overwhelming. You might feel:

- Nervousness, anxiety or edginess;
- Pressure, boredom (feeling that nothing has meaning);
- Anger, sadness, loneliness, or a sense of emptiness;
- Feeling powerless to make any changes, leading to frustration.

Behavioral Symptoms:

Stress can also change your behavior. Look out for:

- Decreased exercise or skipping meals;
- Overuse of alcohol or teeth grinding at night;
- Crying, hair twisting or overeating;
- Difficulty getting things done, loss of sleep, and feeling jumpy.

Relational Symptoms:

Stress can affect relationships, causing:

- Resentment, judgement, and withdrawal;
- Lashing out at others, lack of intimacy, and intolerance;
- Avoiding friends or using people, creating emotional distance.

The Medical Impact of Chronic Stress

Ongoing stress doesn’t just affect your mood and behavior; it can take a heavy toll on your health. Some medical conditions linked to chronic stress include:

- High blood pressure, diabetes and acid reflux;
- Headaches, migraines and muscle tension headaches;
- Irritable bowel disease (IBD), leading to symptoms like diarrhea and constipation;
- Fibromyalgia, autoimmune diseases, and even insomnia.

It’s essential to realize that stress affects both your mind and body. Once you recognize these symptoms, it’s crucial to decide what level of help you need. If your symptoms are severe, seeking medical help or therapy is necessary. Alongside professional help, meditation and mindfulness can be incredibly effective in managing and undoing the harmful effects of stress.

Meditation as a Tool to Manage Stress

You don’t need to be an expert to benefit from meditation. Even starting with simple techniques can make a significant difference. Last month, we discussed deep breathing and mini relaxation exercises, which you can use daily.

One of the most effective techniques for relaxation is Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). This method helps release physical tension from the body, easing the stress stored in your muscles.

Guided Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique

Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit or lie down. Take a few moments to breathe deeply and let go of any distractions. Now, let’s begin with this simple practice:

1. Feet: Bring awareness to your feet the sensation in your toes and the space between the cells of your feet. Feel a sense of lightness as the area becomes relaxed and open.
2. Calves and Knees: Move attention to your calves and knees. Simply observe the sensations and feel the space between the muscles. Allow the area to soften and relax.
3. Thighs: Bring awareness to your thighs. Feel the lightness between the cells of the muscles. Let your legs feel heavy and relaxed, as if they are sinking deeper into the ground.
4. Pelvic Area: Now, focus on your pelvic area. Notice any sensation there and the feeling of space and relaxation between the cells. Allow this area to open up, feeling light and free.
5. Stomach: Gently bring attention to your stomach. Feel the spaciousness between the muscles and skin. Allow the area to relax, becoming light and expansive with each breath.
6. Hands and Arms: Move focus to your hands and arms. Feel the subtle space between your fingers, palms and arms. Notice how the area becomes soft and light as you breathe.
7. Shoulders: Direct awareness to your shoulders. Let them feel open, with lightness in every muscle. Imagine the space between each muscle and the ease that comes with letting go of tension.
8. Neck and Jaw: Gently bring attention to your neck and jaw. Let the sensation of space fill this area. Feel the ease as the muscles of your neck and jaw relax and become lighter.
9. Face: Now, bring awareness to your face. Relax your eyes, forehead, and jaw. Feel the lightness and the space between every cell of your facial muscles.
10. Head: Finally, focus on your head. Feel the lightness between the scalp and the rest of the body. Notice the openness and relaxation as your mind becomes calm.

This exercise should take around 5-10 minutes, and if you wish, you can extend it to 20 minutes. This technique can naturally lead into Yoga Nidra, a deeper state of relaxation that rejuvenates both the body and mind.

A Step Towards Wellness

By incorporating progressive muscle relaxation and mindfulness techniques like these into your routine, you’re taking an important step toward managing stress. It’s essential to recognize stress early and address it before it becomes a long-term issue. If needed, seek professional help, but remember that regular meditation can help undo the damage and improve your overall well-being.

In future articles, we will introduce more meditation techniques to help you on your journey to a stress-free life. Until then, practice these techniques and feel the difference they make!

Anjum Kumbkarni, a board-certified internal medicine physician and Harvard SMART program trained meditation coach, can be reached at [blissandmind@gmail.com](mailto:blissandmind@gmail.com)

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## WHAT A PERSONAL STATEMENT IS NOT!

By **ROBERT A.G. LEVINE**



University applications almost always ask for a "Personal Statement" (or words to that effect). They are not all the same. Today, we shall discuss the Personal Statement utilized by most U.S. colleges. This is a different essay than what is required by universities outside of the United States, and it is also different from what is required by universities outside the U.S.

Unfortunately, it seems that most people think "one size fits all." That's a big mistake!

The starting point for understanding the undergraduate Personal Statement is to understand why colleges even request this essay. Some people think it's a writing sample. Nope! They already have

your grades in English class to evaluate your ability to write. Besides, most everyone has help in editing this essay, whether it's an English teacher, a high school counselor, a parent, or a hired college consultant. Yes, avoid being sloppy or offensive, but the message should not be "I can write." It should be "Here is what I want you to know about me."

But what do they want to know?

Let's start with what they do not want to know. The Personal Statement is not an expanded resume. It is not meant to prove your academic abilities, nor to expand upon your extracurricular activities. Remember, the application form was designed to give them that information already. They ask for your courses. They ask for your grades. They ask for your SAT scores. They ask for things you do outside the classroom. They create a format to allow for a complete and efficient evaluation by admissions professionals. If they wanted to know more about these things, they will ask for more.

What they want is for you to write an essay on "any topic of your choice." However, what they really want to know is the answer to "Who are you?" They are trying to predict applicants in their environments, not just their classrooms.

Colleges teach in different ways. Colleges create different communities. Colleges have different cultures. They want to know how you might contribute – or not – in their world. In other words, does your personality fit their college?

Yes, I said "personality." Our top universities create environments where students teach each other outside the classroom by sharing their diverse experiences, philosophies and ideas. They need people who will share and who are likeable.

For that reason, our top colleges evaluate each applicant's personality. Quite literally, there are sections on their grading sheets for this purpose. Harvard and Princeton both call it "Personal Qualities." Dartmouth calls it "Character." Swarthmore calls it "Personal Characteristics." Penn and Vanderbilt both use the terms "Qualities" and "Characteristics." You get the idea ....

None of that information is available by reading about academics, test scores or extracurriculars. It is found in Personal Statements, recommendation letters and interviews. In chronological order, the Personal Statement is the first place an admissions office will see your "id," your chi, your soul, your personality.

So, please do not write about a topic that is not central to you. Watch mechanisms, while interesting, do not tell a college more about you. And writing essays that prove your worth? They have already seen your results, but until the Personal Statement, they have not yet seen you.

Therefore, please do not write expanded resumes. Write about who you are, how you became that person, and how your characteristics developed over time. Let them predict your future in their college. Show them your trajectory. It's not about what you have done, but rather how you became the kind of person who may (or may not) work well in their environment. If you do feel the need to talk about one of your activities, write about your method, not your results.

Again, if you are applying to the U.K. (or schools in most other countries), what they want is different. If you are applying to graduate schools, what they want is different. For undergraduate U.S. colleges, write about your person, not your achievements.

Still, many of you are too pre-conditioned and will still want to prove yourself through this essay. Please resist this urge; that is not the purpose of the Personal Statement. If they want to know more about your academics or your extracurricular activities, they will prompt you for this information in "supplemental" essays.

If they can't understand you, they won't pick you. Show you!

**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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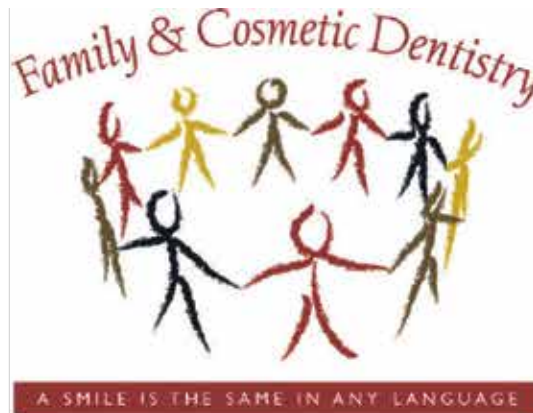
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## A S T R O L O G Y

### AUGUST 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)**  
August brings a mix of intensity and opportunity for Aries natives. One may feel driven to push forward in both career and personal endeavors. Mars energizes your determination, but impulsiveness could backfire — plan wisely. Your leadership qualities could be in demand, especially in team settings. Somewhere in the middle of the month some projects could see delays. Focus on completing long-term goals rather than starting newer ones. Health requires attention — balance ambition and self-care. A strong month if one channels energy constructively.

**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)**

A stabilizing time awaits many Taurus natives. Your lord Venus aids to overcome tensions in relationships, offering opportunities for reconciliation and renewal. Financial planning needs attention, with a possible new venture round the corner. One may feel inspired to beautify their surroundings or indulge in artistic expression. Use this energy for long-term benefit — avoid overspending. Family life offers support, and emotional well-being thrives through meaningful connection and routine.

**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)**

The month brings focus in communication and travel. One may find pulled into multiple conversations — some helpful, others distracting. Use your own judgement. Short journeys, workshops or learning experiences could open doors to career or creativity. Mercury encourages clarity in decision-making but also warns against hasty decisions. Sibling or peer pressure could require attention. Toward the month-end, clarity emerges around a project or personal intention. Stay curious but rooted — growth comes from in-depth planning and proper execution.

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

**Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha** This is the period for anchoring financial and emotional security. The natives may find themselves more attuned to long-term planning and domestic responsibilities. Investments, savings or property decisions could come up for review. Emotionally, it's time to bond and spend more family time. Intuitive faculties may see some overcoming tough situations. Prioritize well-being and avoid emotional burnout. Sometime this month some natives could reset their material and spiritual outlook.

**LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23-Aug. 22) Sun Sign – Stars covered**

**Magha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni (1st part)** This is your stint, Leo — and the stars encourage full self-expression. Confidence, charisma and creative energy are at peak. This is a time to shine in both personal and professional realms. New opportunities may arise related to leadership, public speaking or entrepreneurship. However, with great visibility comes responsibility — avoid ego clashes. Personal relationships blossom if nurtured with authenticity. Take time to self-reflect toward life and goals, which may offer greater clarity.

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

**– Stars covered Uttara Phalguni (last 3 parts), Hasta, Chitra (first 2 parts)** This is a month for quiet and deep introspection. Some may prefer working behind the scenes or focusing on internal healing and realignment. August favors research, therapy, journaling or spiritual retreats. Don't rush with resolutions, use this stretch to clear emotional clutter. Professionally, one could be laying the groundwork for something significant. Preserve energy, especially in draining social settings that may help in rejuvenation. This may also assist in clearing one's mind in proper decision making. Trust in divine blessings.

**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)**

August puts one in the middle of social and professional network. Libra natives may be drawn to community projects, friendships or collective goals. There's potential to meet influential individuals who align with your aspirations. Some could need to balance energy with putting limitations — stay grounded in what you feel is correct and true. Financial discussions or collaborations may arise somewhere. Love and friendships flourish when based on shared vision. Focus on your dreams — they are closer than you think.

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

**– Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha** This month shines spotlight on career progression and long-term achievements. Some natives may find themselves sharing bigger responsibilities. Stay calm under pressure — your leadership can transform challenges into steppingstones. Be mindful of power struggles, especially in hierarchical settings. On the personal front, it's time to align ambition with emotional fulfillment. The period could bring a turning point or realization about one's professional path. Stay focused and grounded.

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

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

Expansion and exploration define the natives. For some, it may be an ideal time for travel,







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## AUGUST FORECAST

Cont'd from page 14

study or explore something deeply meaningful. Jupiter supports a renewed sense of purpose — perfect for launching visionary ideas. Some could experience breakthroughs in belief systems or spiritual growth. Your natural optimism returns after a reflective period. Be careful with overcommitting or overpromising — balance freedom and responsibility. Relationships may build this month on shared values.

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

**Saturn Sign – Stars covered Uttara Shada (last 3 parts) Shrivana, Dhanistha (first 2 parts)**  
August emphasizes personal transformation and deep emotional work. Issues around business alliances or shared finances may arise for some. It's a good stretch to confront hidden fears — by doing so one could feel a sense of liberation. Financial planning around debts, inheritance or investments may come up. Saturn supports patience and long-term thinking. Professional partnerships could undergo a test — communication is key. Emotionally, this is a month for letting go of what no longer serves any purpose replacing it with authentic healing.

**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)**  
Relationships are front and center. Aquarius natives may experience shifts in commitments — romantic, business or otherwise. Some could want to review where you invest time and energy. Clarity comes through honest conversations with people you trust and evaluating what partnership truly means. Creative energy is strong and may lead to productive collaborations for some. It is also a good month for legal matters, personal realizations, adjustments and realignments.

**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**

A highly productive month, Pisces. Daily routines, health and service-related matters take precedence. This is a powerful time to reorganize your life in ways that support sustainable well-being. You may take on new responsibilities at work or initiate changes in diet, fitness or time management. Creativity flows best when the environment is harmonious. Be mindful not to overspread your energies too thin. Let small victories build your confidence. The month encourages you to invest in your long-term wellness and purpose.

**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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## TAX PLANNING

### KEY TAX LAW CHANGES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES UNDER THE OBBBA



By **TEJAL DHRUVE**

On July 4, President Trump signed into law the far-reaching legislation known as the One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). As expected, it extends and enhances many of the tax breaks from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). It also includes several of Trump's campaign promises — though many are only temporary — and eliminates tax breaks related to clean energy. Here's a rundown of some of the main tax law changes to be aware of as you plan for the 2025 tax year.

#### Highlights for Individuals

Makes permanent the TCJA's individual tax rates of 10%, 12%, 22%, 24%, 32%, 35% and 37%,

Makes permanent the near doubling of the standard deduction, plus for 2025 increases it to \$15,750 for single filers, \$23,625 for heads of households and \$31,500 for joint filers, with annual inflation adjustments going forward,

Makes permanent the higher child tax credit, plus for 2025 increases it to \$2,200, with annual inflation adjustments going forward,

Temporarily increases the limit on the deduction for state and local taxes (the SALT cap) to \$40,000 for 2025, with a 1% increase each year through 2029, after which the \$10,000 limit will return,

Expands the allowable education expenses that can be paid with tax-free Section 529 plan distributions, beginning July 5, 2025, or Jan. 1, 2026, depending on the type of expense,

Permanently increases the federal gift and estate tax exemption amount to \$15 million for individuals and \$30 million for married couples beginning in 2026, with annual inflation adjustments going forward,

For 2025-2028, creates a new deduction of up to \$25,000 for tip income in certain industries, subject to income-based phaseouts,

For 2025-2028, creates a new deduction of up to \$12,500 for single filers or \$25,000 for joint filers for qualified overtime pay, subject to income-based phaseouts,

For 2025-2028, creates an above-the-line deduction of up to \$10,000 for qualified passenger vehicle loan interest on the purchase of certain American-made vehicles, subject to income-based phaseouts,

For 2025-2028, creates an additional deduction of up to \$6,000 for taxpayers age 65 or older, subject to income-based phaseouts, and

Eliminates clean energy tax credits, generally after 2025, such as the energy-efficient home improvement and residential clean energy credits — but eliminates the clean vehicle credits for both new and used vehicles after Sept. 30, 2025.

#### Highlights for Businesses

Makes permanent and expands the 20% Sec. 199A qualified business income (QBI) deduction for owners of pass-through entities (such as partnerships, limited liability companies and S corporations) and sole proprietorships,

Makes bonus depreciation permanent and increases it to 100% for qualified new and used assets acquired after Jan. 19, 2025,

Increases the Sec. 179 expensing limit to \$2.5 million and the expensing phaseout threshold to \$4 million for 2025, with annual inflation adjustments going forward,

Permanently allows the immediate deduction of domestic research and experimentation expenses (retroactive to 2022 for eligible small businesses), and

Eliminates clean energy tax incentives, such as the alternative fuel vehicle refueling property credit and the Sec. 179D deduction for energy-efficient commercial buildings after June 30, 2026 — but eliminates the qualified commercial clean vehicle credit after Sept. 30, 2025.

#### How Will You Be Affected?

While this list may seem extensive, it represents just a sampling of the tax changes included in the 870-page OBBBA. Contact the office with questions about how the new law will affect you.

**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](mailto:info@dhruvecpa.com)**



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## 4RUNNER TRD PRO WILL ENTHRALL Hardcore OFF-ROADERS!

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

It's stood the test of time for more than four decades. The midsize iconic off-road SUV keeps on going, stronger than ever with each passing year. And for the first time, the sixth-gen 2025 Toyota 4Runner is equipped with a hybrid powertrain shared with the Tacoma and Land Cruiser.

The 2.4-liter inline turbo 4-cylinder engine blasts off 326 horsepower @ 6000 rpm and 465 pounds-feet of torque @ 1700 rpm. The 4WD (2H, 4H and 4L choices) is coupled with a 1.87-kWh battery and 48-hp electric motor. Getting power to the ground is a slick-shifting 8-speed auto gearbox. An independent double-wishbone front and multilink rear suspension along with 13.4-inch front and 13.2-inch rear ventilated disc brakes ensure stability on the toughest road surfaces. The fast and accurate power-assist rack and pinion steering returns a weighted, direct response to the driver's input. Apart from normal, eco and sporty on-road driving modes, there are the multi-terrain select switches for rock, mud and sand or crawl control (essentially cruise control while off-roading). Looking to tow a sailboat or a small camper? The 4Runner can handle a 6,000-pound weight.

Intimidating front look? You bet. Credit the muscular TOYOTA-etched heritage grille with an integrated 20-inch LED light bar. The robust and rugged SUV is further boosted by RIGID Industries' LED fog lamps. And, of course, one can't help but notice the lofty black hood scoop on the attractive Mudbath exterior of our test drive. That this is an old hand skilled to maneuver off-road tracks efficiently is apparent from the TRD PRO emblems on both front sides, hood, aluminum skid plate, Fox shocks, wheels, black-performance exhaust tip, power liftgate and rear badging in big caps. Step inside and further evidence of its hardcore capabilities can be found on the steering wheel, shifter knob and



**4RUNNER (TRD PRO)**  
**Tires:** P265/70R18  
**Wheelbase:** 112.2 inches  
**Length:** 194.9 inches  
**Width:** 77.9 inches  
**Height:** 73.1 inches  
**Weight:** 5,455 pounds  
**Fuel capacity:** 19 gallons  
**City/hwy/comb:**  
 23/24/24 mpg  
**Base price:** \$66,900  
**Price as tested:** \$73,388  
**Web site:** [www.toyota.com](http://www.toyota.com)

starter button. Cooled/heated and eight-way power synthetic upholstery black seats with red stitches meet the driver and front passenger. A massive 14-inch infotainment screen sits atop the center stack with the familiar volume button for the audio. Yes, Toyota does stick to the conventional look! Dual auto a/c, power tilt/slide moon roof and steering wheel, overhead sunglass holder, 12 cup/bottle holders, five nifty USB-C ports and a wireless phone charger, 12-inch digital gauge cluster and a 14-speaker JBL audio are offered at no extra cost.

You can securely venture off the beaten path with little detriment to your back side in the TRD Pro version. Or cruise the highway and neighborhood streets with ease and confidence. Built at Toyota's Tahara plant in Japan, the legendary 4Runner should continue to charm off-road aficionados for many more decades to come.

## MAZDA MIATA MX-5 – 36 YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG!

The list of cars that are just timeless, never aging, is not very long. Among the perennial rides undoubtedly is the 2025 Mazda Miata, now in its 36th year, and more endearing than ever. It should surprise no one that over 1.2 million units of the legendary car have been sold worldwide.

For top-down motoring enthusiasts, this cool, engaging sports car that takes off from 0 to 60 in 5.5 seconds is close and dear to their hearts. And that comes as no surprise. The convertible is sporty, agile and tossable, in short, just a fun car to take for a spin.

Power in the Club model comes from a Skyactiv-G 2.0-liter DOHC inline-4-cylinder engine, which develops 181 horsepower at 7000 rpm and 151 pounds-feet of torque at 4000 rpm. The direct-injection Skyactiv uses a torque boost via a high compression ratio to increase fuel economy. We averaged a nearly combined 30 mpg, beating EPA estimates. The roadster is mated to a sole 6-speed manual gearbox in our Club test-drive trim, which truly should be the only transmission offered anyway in our eyes. It shifts quickly and quietly to result in a smooth ride. The sport-tuned suspension, which uses Bilstein shock absorbers, is skillfully controlled by a double wishbone front and multilink rear system. Guiding the lively convertible, with its manual z-shaped folding black cloth top, is an electric power-assist steering.

The familiar and centered Mazda emblem is flanked by slender projector-beam LED headlights meeting up to a long aluminum hood with a pushed-back windshield and short roof. The interior is elegant, lavish and expensive looking. Take vinyl/leather on the tilt/telescopic steering column, shifter, hand brake, and of course the comfy seats. The instrument cluster of rounded tachometer, speedometer, coolant temp and fuel gauges in black with white letters is pleasing to the eye. Other comforts include a push button ignition,



**MX-5 (CLUB)**  
**Tires:** 205/45R17  
**Wheelbase:** 90.9 inches  
**Length:** 154.1 inches  
**Width:** 68.3 inches  
**Height:** 48.6 inches  
**Weight:** 2,366 pounds  
**Fuel capacity:** 11.9 gallons  
**City/hwy/combined:**  
 26/34/29 mpg  
**Web site:**  
[www.mazdausa.com](http://www.mazdausa.com)

8.8-inch navigation, phone and audio touch screen operated via command control, heated front seats, Bose audio with 9 speakers, manual a/c, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, piano black seatback bar trim, mesh aero board wind blocker,

and power door locks/windows. The only minus is the miniscule trunk, which is understandable in a two-seater.

Indeed, the Miata MX-5 is a thrill of a ride. Open-air motoring buffs will have a blast on the highway or tackling the rigors of daily driving, thanks to the convertible's swift and nimble character. And at just \$33,030, the fuel-sipper is a bargain. May the world's best-selling roadster bring smiles and pleasure for another 36 years ... and more!



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Final: 08/24/2025 at 9:30 AM  
Entry Due on 08/10/2025  
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Jyoshni Ram & Krishna Chandran  
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## EVERYDAY ART, EVERYDAY HEALING – PART II

**BY BRINDA PAMULAPATI**



If Part 1 explored the foundational connection between art and wellness, let us now take it a step further. Art is not only therapeutic when done in structured settings or studios. It becomes most impactful when it is woven into the fabric of daily life. Whether you are a busy professional, a stay-at-home parent, or a student navigating school pressure, art can be a steady companion for emotional balance and self-expression.

 Art helps us slow down. In a world that constantly demands output, speed and performance, the quiet act of creating something with our hands helps us regain control over our inner rhythm. It might be five minutes of doodling on the edge of a notebook, tracing patterns in a rangoli design, or threading a needle through fabric in rhythmic embroidery. These simple actions have a grounding effect. They calm the mind and offer a moment of peace. Art does not need to be shared to be meaningful. Not every sketch, poem, or dance

needs an audience. Some of the most healing forms of creativity are those we keep to ourselves. Singing in the shower, molding clay in silence, or writing a letter never meant to be sent can all be powerful ways of tuning in to our inner lives. These private expressions build self-awareness and gently lead us toward clarity and emotional strength.

In today's high-pressure culture, creative time is often seen as a luxury or an indulgence. In truth, it is essential. Engaging with art has been shown to reduce stress hormones, elevate mood, and improve emotional regulation. It allows us to reflect, process our experiences, and respond to challenges with greater resilience.

There are many practical ways to bring art into everyday life. Starting your morning with five minutes of painting or drawing before checking your phone can help you begin the day with focus and calm. Using your hands before diving into responsibilities helps set a grounded tone.

Working with materials such as clay, thread or colored pencils during short breaks throughout the day can also be soothing. These tactile experiences shift our attention from overthinking to present-moment awareness.

Sharing art with loved ones adds another layer of benefit. Weekly family art sessions, even something as simple as coloring together at the kitchen table, can deepen connection and create lasting memories. Children especially benefit from having creative outlets where they can explore and express their emotions safely.

In professional spaces, surrounding ourselves with creative elements can improve mood and reduce burnout. Adding handmade decorations or small craft projects to your desk brings a sense of warmth and personality to even the most clinical of environments.

An excellent example of this meditative and immersive power of art can be found in the work of abstract artist Jack Reilly. Known for his intricately shaped canvases and luminous color palettes, Reilly's paintings invite the viewer into a contemplative space. His work blends structure with spontaneity, offering a visual experience that calms the mind while expanding creative thought. Viewing or engaging with such work reminds us that art is not just an object — it is an experience that mirrors the inner journey of reflection and becoming.

You can also set aside time for quiet creative reflection. In homes, schools or community centers, having an hour without screens where everyone engages in individual creative activity can nurture a collective sense of peace.

Ultimately, these practices are not about creating perfect art. They are about being present, listening inward, and allowing creativity to guide us gently through life's complexities.

Art is not just about beauty. It is about becoming. Every mark we make, every thread we pull, and every word we write brings us closer to who we are. Let us embrace creativity not as a luxury, but as a daily ritual for healing, growth and joy.

**Brinda Pamulapati, owner/managing director, of Venvi Art Gallery in Tallahassee, can be reached at (850) 322-0965 or visit [www.VenviArtGallery.com](http://www.VenviArtGallery.com)**



  
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**BELOVED SPIRITUAL MASTER SRI SIDHGURUVAR TO BLESS TAMPA AGAIN ON AUGUST 28**

After a spiritually uplifting and well-attended event in 2024, the Tampa Bay Indian Hindu community is once again preparing to welcome the revered Sri Sidheshwar Brahmurishi Gurudev — affectionately known as Sidhguruvar — for an inspiring evening of wisdom, devotion, and divine connection.

This year's satsang will be held on Thursday, Aug. 28, at 6 p.m. at Sanatan Mandir, 311 E. Palm Ave., Tampa. The event is free and open to all. The evening will conclude with a lovingly prepared prasad dinner, courtesy of the newly opened Sanatan Mandir Kitchen, offering devotees an opportunity to connect over a shared meal in a spirit of unity and gratitude.

As a spiritual prelude to the main event, seekers are also invited to participate in a powerful 3-Day Siddhasana Retreat from Aug. 9-11 in Tampa. Guided by Sidheshwar – The Power of Soul, this immersive residential retreat promises a sacred pause to quieten the mind, energize the soul, and reconnect with your inner self. Participants will embark on a transformative journey to Unlock the Inner Code and realize that everything they seek is already within.

Globally admired for his timeless message, "The life we live is God's gift to us. The way we live our life is our returning gift to God," Sidhguruvar inspires seekers to

**Register:** [siddheshwarthepowerofsoul.org/3-day-international-retreat](https://siddheshwarthepowerofsoul.org/3-day-international-retreat)  
**Contact:** +1 727-515-1221 | +1 954-681-8534

embrace simplicity, inner peace, and selfless living. His previous Tampa visit drew hundreds from across Florida, with many describing the experience as deeply transformative.

This special event is generously sponsored by Manju and Jugal Taneja and Family, and promoted by Sanatan Mandir President Sanjeev Kumar, Event Chair Dr. Rakesh Sharma (cardiologist) and Founder Dr. Pawan Rattan, who warmly invite the entire Tampa Bay Indian-American community to attend and receive the blessings of Gurudev.

In a time when many seek spiritual grounding and a deeper connection to India's rich heritage, Sidhguruvar's presence is a powerful reminder that divine grace knows no borders.

**For more information, contact: 813-221-4482 or 727-788-0111 (Manager).**

# SIDHGURUVAR

## Sri Sidheshwar Brahmurishi Gurudev

*I am* WITH YOU, TAMPA

The life we live is God's gift to us  
 The way we live our life, will be our  
 returning gift to God.



**28<sup>th</sup> August, 2025**  
 6:00 pm Onwards

**📍 SANATAN MANDIR**  
 311 East Palm Ave Tampa, FL 33602 USA  
**☎️ +1 813-221-4482, +1 727-788-0111**

**Followed by**  
 Prashad (Dinner)

**Organized by**  
 Manju Jugal Taneja & Family





# Under the Cover



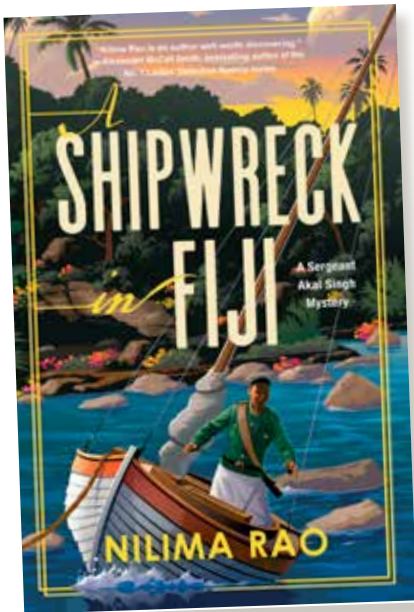
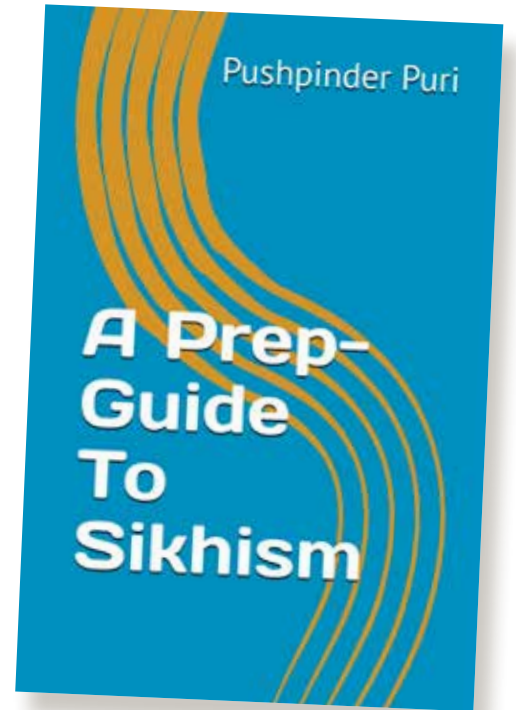
By Nitish Rele

**“A Prep-Guide to Sikhism” (246 pages; \$12.99) by Pushpinder Singh Puri; independently published; (available on Amazon.com)**

Did you know that the 500-year-old Sikh faith is the youngest and the fifth largest religion in the world? About 30 million Sikhs count for 0.4 percent of the world population.

Admittedly not a Sikh scholar, Pushpinder Singh Puri of the Tampa Bay area has written an informative book to create an awareness of Sikhism. And what better format than a Q and A for readers to learn about the Sikh way of life – live in accordance with Sikh Gurus teachings and Sri Guru Granth Sahib. According to the author, Sikhs should believe in and meditate on one God, consider all humans equal, earn living by honest means and do seva (charity). Singh literally means a lion and all Sikh men use it in their names; Sikh women use ‘Kaur’ or lioness. Sikhs believe all people come from the same God and have same rights and

privileges. Sikhs consider bad virtues as enemies – lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. Forgiveness is stressed. Sikhs pray for the welfare of humanity. A baptized Sikh, man or woman, maintains five physical symbols, 5 K’s – uncut hair, comb, iron bangle, shorts and ceremonial dagger. Sikhs regard all foods a gift of God and are free to eat meat and eggs, it’s their choice. There is no worship of human images or idols in Sikhism. The 10 Gurus who reigned from 1469 to 1708 claimed to be servants of God, not God. Sri Guru Granth Sahib (1,430 pages), compiled by the fifth Sikh Guru Arjan Dev, contains actual hymns and verses uttered by six Gurus and several saints and sages. The important dates for Sikhs are birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, Martyrdom Days of Arjan Dev and Teg Bahadur, and birth anniversary of Gobind Singh. Sikhs can marry non-Sikhs and the marriage ceremony, Anand Karaj, requires consent from the couple that they have accepted Sikh faith. Author Puri also addresses the Sikh carnage in 1984, the Khalistan struggle and Operation Blue Star. The book cites well-known Sikhs such as Bhai Mardana, Mai Bhago, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Ram Singh Kuka, Bhagat Singh, Giani Zail Singh, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Ajay Singh Banga, Nikki Haley. Kudos to the author for enlightening the reader on aspects of Sikhism from its origin to today’s times through this concise book.



**“A Shipwreck in Fiji” by Nilima Rao; 272 pages; \$27.95 (published by Soho Crime; www.sohocrime.com)**

Nilima Rao’s debut book, which was reviewed earlier in the year, introduced a 25-year-old Indian police sergeant Akali Singh, Fijian corporal Taviti and Dr. Robert Holmes. Set in 1915 Fiji, “A Shipwreck in Fiji” continues with the trio but with a twist to a new and fascinating tale. The endearing Singh is tasked with chaperoning two strong-willed British women (relatives of Fiji Times editor) to Levuka in the island of Ovalau. Simultaneously, he has been assigned to investigate a report of Germans (or is it Norwegians?) thousands of miles from the front of World War II, cited on the beach. To make matters worse, he has been given charge of an 18-year-old Ovalau police constable for whom histrionics are a specialty! “The town (Levuka) was nestled between a sheltered harbour at the front and a ring of tree-covered cliffs behind, curving around to the sides to form an amphitheatre around the town,” describes the author as Singh and gets his first glimpse of the weathered old town. “... A stone wall bounded the land ... no clusters of coconut palms providing shelter. Housing scattered out behind the row of stores, clustered at the bottom of the hill, becoming more sparse until finally it became too steep and then the jungle took over, climbing up the cliff.” As soon as he arrives in town, things take a nosedive: two murders take place, a difficult local chief creates major headaches, and a likely close relationship with one of the two British women, also a wishful journalist. A Fiji native of Indian descent, Rao’s great-grandparents served as indentured servants, i.e. cheap labor for the British colonies. It is this historical setting that inspired the author to incorporate into the fictional Sgt. Akali Singh Mysteries. What’s next in the spotlessly researched and captivating series that will enthrall fans of Tarquin Hall’s Vish Puri, Vaseem Khan’s Malabar House and Sujata Massey’s Pervern Mistry? Maybe some romance and a big decision for the charming sergeant, reveals the author. We eagerly await the third in this ever-increasingly popular series.

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# INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

Cont'd from page 1

## TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER

**TAMPA BAY AREA: The Federation of Indian Associations (FIA) of Tampa Bay** will hold India's 79th Independence Day celebration on Sunday, Aug. 24, at India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa. Starting at 9 am, this free event attracting all age groups from the greater Tampa Bay region includes cultural programs, competitions in art, essay writing, patriotic dress, music, rangoli and cooking; food booths, clothing and jewelry stalls; India and U.S. flag hoisting; member organizations, including regional language exhibits. For details to register and participate, visit <http://www.fiatampabay.org/> Contact Event Chair Jigisha Desai, Co-Chair Jai Chandran or FIA President Gayathri Ramaka at [FIA\\_TPA\\_Cultural@googlegroups.com](mailto:FIA_TPA_Cultural@googlegroups.com)

Also in Tampa Bay, **MATA America Telugu Association** will celebrate Independence Day from 10 a.m. Aug. 17 at Pride Elementary School, 10310 Lions Den Drive. Dance academies and community groups are encouraged to participate. For information, call Harikrishna N. at (813) 666-5067 or email [info@mata-us.org](mailto:info@mata-us.org)

## SOUTH FLORIDA (FORT LAUDERDALE)

**The Association of Indians in America (AIA) South Florida** chapter will hold India Independence Day celebrations from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 17, at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, 201 S.W. Fifth Ave., Fort Lauderdale. Admission is free, parking is \$15. On the agenda is cultural entertainment of music and dance, Indian food and fashion. For details, email [aia.sflorida@gmail.com](mailto:aia.sflorida@gmail.com)

## ORLANDO/OVIEDO

**Central Florida Indian Cultural Association** will celebrate Independence Day from 2 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 16, at Hagerty High School, 3225 Lockwood Blvd., Oviedo. Programs include a kids and adults patriotic figures parade and cultural dance performances. Entry is free. For information, call Prashant Saoji at (321) 460-0800.

# KHAAS BAAT COMPLETES 21-YEAR ANNIVERSARY, LAUNCHES ANNUAL SPONSOR DRIVE

By **NITISH S. RELE AND SHEPHALI J. RELE**

As we celebrate the 21-year Khaas Baat anniversary this month, we thank the dedicated volunteer columnists, past and present, for their valuable contributions, and our steadfast advertisers and well-wishers. It wouldn't have been possible without their efforts and support. Also, we have strived to make a positive impact by keeping readers informed of cultural activities and events, prominent people and happenings within the community. If you feel Khaas Baat has succeeded in doing so, we would appreciate and need any support you can offer.

Toward that end, we are launching an annual sponsor drive to secure funds to cover production costs. Since its inception, Khaas Baat has been mailed free of cost to subscribers around the state with only a handful of paid subscribers in the past few years. We are proud that during the pandemic we continued publishing regularly. In fact, we haven't skipped an issue since we began printing in August 2004. Also, since 2021, the entire print version of the newspaper can be found online. Since ad revenues alone do not help cover our monthly production costs (printing, design, mailing), we are in need of corporate or private sponsors. Your backing will help us continue to publish Khaas Baat as a high-quality newspaper proudly serving our community. Please send your contribution via Zelle to (813) 758-1786 or you can PayPal ID to: [nitishrele@gmail.com](mailto:nitishrele@gmail.com) You may also send a check addressed to KHAAS BAAT and mailed to KHAAS BAAT, 8312 WINDSOR BLUFF DRIVE, TAMPA, FL 33647.

With our festival season under way, we request community leaders and organizers to email event details to [editor@khaasbaat.com](mailto:editor@khaasbaat.com) by the 20th of the month to be included in the following month's issue. We always welcome your story ideas and suggestions on how we can best serve our community.

Khaas Baat is proud to be the ONE AND ONLY Sunshine State publication to offer comprehensive coverage of news and happenings in the Florida Indian community. Do follow us on twitter [@khaasbaat](https://twitter.com/khaasbaat) and join us on Facebook.



## FORT MYERS/NAPLES

**India Association of Fort Myers** will hold India Independence Day celebrations on Aug. 16 at the Clubhouse at Casa Del Lago, 7551 Sika Deer Way, Fort Myers from noon to 5 p.m. The event will showcase a journey through India, then and now. IAFM members are free, non-members \$15. For information, email [contact@iafortmyers.org](mailto:contact@iafortmyers.org)

Also, **India Association of Naples** will celebrate Independence Day with a picnic from 9 a.m. until noon on Aug. 23 at Koreshan State Park. There will be live cooking of South Indian breakfast items. The event is free for members and \$10 for non-members. For information, email [naplesindia@gmail.com](mailto:naplesindia@gmail.com)

## NEWBERRY/GAINESVILLE

**India Cultural and Education Center (ICEC) Youth Group** will celebrate India's Independence Day on Aug. 16 at Easton Center, 24880 N.W. 16th Ave., Newberry. For details, visit [www.icec-florida.org](http://www.icec-florida.org)

## TALLAHASSEE

**India Association of Tallahassee (IATLH)** will hold its annual Utsav/India Day from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at Lawton Chiles High School, 7200 Lawton Chiles Lane, Tallahassee on Sunday, Aug. 17. There will be cultural performances, speech/storytelling and quiz/poster/reels and Indian fancy dress contests. For information, email [President.iath@gmail.com](mailto:President.iath@gmail.com)

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