

# KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

JUNE 2026

WWW.KHAASBAAT.COM

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## Inside:



Immigration  
Security vetting

6



Motoring  
Subaru  
Outback

8



FL Event  
Swami  
Mukundan-  
anda

12



FL Event  
Satsang held

12



Astrology  
June  
forecast

14



Classifieds  
Help wanted

14

# AAPICON 2026

## A CELEBRATION OF MEDICINE, UNITY, CULTURE AND PURPOSE

MOMENTOUS EVENT SET JULY 4TH WEEKEND IN TAMPA BAY  
COINCIDES WITH AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY

Story page 10



## AKSHAYA PATRA:

### FROM A TEMPLE KITCHEN TO FIVE BILLION MEALS

See page 20

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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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## EVENTS

### TAMPA/ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER

**JUNE 3: 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 any questions, text (813) 476-1867.

**JUNE 7: GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP;** presented by PEHCHAAN Tampa Bay; open to all individuals 16 and older in response to recent tragedy involving USF students; USF-EDU 115, Education Building, 4110 USF Apple Drive, Tampa; 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.; RSVP (813) 720-7115.

**JUNE 7: MUSIC CONCERT;** performer Kavish Seth, presented by South Asian Indian Film Festival; Highland Park Clubhouse, 11740 Casa Lago Lane, Tampa; 5 to 7 p.m.; free, open to donations; RSVP Hemant Dinkar at (312) 933-2251.

**JUNE 9: 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.

**JUNE 12: RAM MIRIYALA LIVE CONCERT;** Telugu film playback singer, composer to perform; presented by Romeo Entertainments; The Grand Karaoke Lounge, 1104 E.



Fowler Ave., Suite 102, Tampa; 8 p.m.; for tickets, visit <https://www.romeoentertainments.com/>

**JUNE 17: 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.

**JUNE 20: SUR-SANGAT;** presented by Maayboli Melawa Tampa Bay (MMTB); performers are Hindustani classical vocalist Dr. Meenal Mategaonkar, tabla player Abhay Datar and Ninad Joshi on harmonium; Sri Ayyappa Society of Tampa,

6829 Maple Lane, Tampa; 3 to 6 p.m.; for tickets, visit [www.mmtbusa.org](http://www.mmtbusa.org)

**JUNE 22-25: LIFE TRANSFORMATION ON MINDSETS FOR HAPPINESS AND FULFILMENT PROGRAM;** conducted by Swami Mukundananda, founder of JKYog; Hindu Temple of Florida, 5509 Lynn Road, Tampa; for more information about Swami's free Tampa discourse and to register, visit <https://www.jkyog.org/FL> or call Dale Rafferty at (727) 313-1887.

**JUNE 28: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA;** practitioners will present benefits of yoga, Hatha yoga, Pranayama, food as medicine, relaxation, laughter yoga, etc. followed by lunch; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; \$10 cost; register at <https://www.idytampa.org/>; for details, call Sundar Kalesekaran (Chair) at (813) 784-7860.

**JULY 2-5: AAPICON 2026;** 44th annual AAPI Convention & Scientific Assembly; Tampa Marriott Water St., 505 Water St., Tampa; to register or for details, visit <https://aapiconvention.org/>

**JULY 18: GUJARATI COMEDY NIGHT WITH KISHOR KAKA;** presented by HIT Entertainment; performers are Smit Pandya and RJ Harshil; Chamberlain High School, 9401 N. Blvd., Tampa; 6:30 p.m.; \$25; for information, call Bhavik Modi at (813) 557-4555.

### INVERNESS/CRYSTAL RIVER

**AUG. 1: GURU PURNIMA;** grand celebration at Shirdi Sai Florida Center, 4707 S. Pleasant Grove Road, Inverness; details to be announced; visit [www.shirdiusa.com](http://www.shirdiusa.com) or call (352) 860-2181.

### ORLANDO/ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

**JUNE 7: NEW AGE GROUP PICNIC;** Sanlando Park (pavilion 3), 401 W. Highland St., Altamonte Springs; 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; music and laughter, pizza, watermelon; for information, call (407) 928-7371.

**JUNE 10: CHAI WITH NEW MEMBERS** organized by Indian Chamber of Commerce; 5 p.m.; for venue and more information, visit [www.iaccorlando.com](http://www.iaccorlando.com)

Cont'd on page 6

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JUNE 2026 EVENTS			WEEKLY EVENTS		
WEDNESDAY JUNE 3	Sankashti Chaturthi Ganesh Havan	6:30 PM to 8:00 PM		<b>EVERY MONDAY - 6:30 PM</b>	• SHIV ABHISHEK AND PUJA
THURSDAY JUNE 11	Param Ekadashi Pooja & Aarti	8:00 PM		<b>EVERY TUESDAY - 7:00 PM</b>	• SUNDERKAND PATH • HANUMAN CHALISA
FRIDAY JUNE 12	Pradosh Pooja Group Shiv Pooja	6:00 PM to 8:00 PM		<b>EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00 PM</b>	• ALL SADGURU & SHIRDI SAI BABA BHAJAN SATSANG
FRIDAY JUNE 12	Amra Phal Tulsi Ji Archan Pooja Shree Purushottam Maas Aarti	8:00 PM			
SATURDAY JUNE 13	Adhik Purushottam Maas Gujarati Bhajan Sandhya	4:00 PM to 6:00 PM			
SUNDAY JUNE 14	Shree Jhulay Laal Bhajan	5:00 PM to 6:00 PM			
SUNDAY JUNE 14	Father's Day Special Celebration Mata Ki Chowki	6:30 PM to 8:30 PM			
THURSDAY JUNE 25	Nirjala Ekadashi & Gayatri Jayanti Pooja & Aarti	8:00 PM			
FRIDAY JUNE 26	Shree Hanuman Charitra Katha <i>By Shree Hariprakash Dasji Swami</i>	6:00 PM to 8:00 PM			
SATURDAY JUNE 27	Shree Hanuman Charitra Katha <i>By Shree Hariprakash Dasji Swami</i>	6:00 PM to 8:00 PM			
SUNDAY JUNE 28	Shree Hanuman Charitra Katha <i>By Shree Hariprakash Dasji Swami</i>	11:00 AM to 1:00 PM			
SUNDAY JUNE 28	Snana Purnima Shree Jagannath Ji Dev Snana Mahoutsav	5:00 PM to 8:00 PM			

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## BIOLOGICAL OBJECTIVITY OF LIFE

By DR. VENKIT IYER, MD, FACS



Inherent to life are two basic biologic characteristics, which can be observed in all living creatures, from bacteria to blue whales, from earthworms to elephants, including humans. First one is survival and longevity, and the second is reproduction and gene transfer.

Every living creature has an innate desire to live as long as possible. Longevity in turn depends on two further factors: one is to consume nutrients for energy needs and the other is to avoid premature death by using defense mechanisms. Humans have added additional good health

measures to increase longevity. However, these measures are not part of basic biology.

Intake of food for energy needs is a universal requirement. All animals, birds and insects consume food, which is then converted to ATP or energy molecules. Humans are no exception. We consider eating as part of daily routine. It is part of biology seeking nourishment at regular intervals. Hunger is a warning signal to the brain indicating that it is time to refill the stomach.

Humans with high intelligence plan for food availability ahead of time. Much of the industries in agriculture, restaurants, supermarkets, beverages, shipping and transportation are related to food. All celebrations or festivals center around food. Many of the wars and immigration problems are for steady supply of food and safety. Also, humans have learned various measures to improve their body health, thereby doubling life expectancy in the last 100 years.

The second factor in prolonging longevity is to avoid premature deaths from injuries, accidents and other mishaps. Animals have response of fight or flight built into their system. Without thinking, they run away from dangers or attack the offender. A deer or mouse runs fast, as soon as it perceives a potential harm. A tiger or dog would attack. Even plants have thorns and poison to protect their seeds. Humans have been fighting each other from time immemorial for control, safety, food and mates. All the wars, forts and moats are designed to attack or defend.

Other items of interest for longevity are movement, or exercise, sleep or rest, and community interaction. These can be observed in animals, birds and insects also. Community life helps with group defense and survival.

The second basic objectivity of all living creatures has been reproduction and gene transfer. Why did nature prefer to have reproduction instead of infinite prolongation of life? One explanation is that the aged cells and aged bodies were

defective, disabled and destined to die. Since time limit is set for all living creatures, the only way to allow perpetuity is by reproduction. Instead of keeping the old disabled being, would it not be better to have a fresh new existence, just like you would want to sell a 50-year-old car and buy a new model.

Reproduction was made easy for unicellular organisms like the bacteria. They just split into two and doubled. For multicellular organisms, male-female conjugation was mandated. The progeny had a mix of male and female, with features of both parents, but not quite the same. Probably nature or the creator wanted a remix of the genes for each generation, to perform better than the previous generation. Imagine how the world will be otherwise. If all creatures including humans were allowed to clone themselves repeatedly, there would be many identical dictators, artists and criminals. Attraction between male and female was designed on purpose. Even flowers and fruits are meant for distribution of pollen or seeds.

For some creatures, once the reproduction and gene transfer is completed, the mission of life is completed. Certain male insects die immediately after fertilizing the female. Polygamy is common among animals, as well as certain human clans – the purpose being increased number of progenies. Fight for finding the mate is another feature that can be observed. Certain antelope must kill other male challengers to become the chosen among the female antelopes.

Raising the offspring was a function of gene transfer, to protect the young ones from dangers and nurture them. After childbirth, this became the mission for rest of the life for many adults. Humans using their intelligence became engrossed in working and earning to provide a safe environment to raise children. Care of the young ones can be observed among animals and birds. Once the babies grow up and become independent, they fly away and restart their own life objectives. Extension of this protection included families and then communities and countries.

Those species that could not live long and failed to procreate became extinct over a period. These two primary objectivities of life can explain what we see in our everyday walk in life.

**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 has necessary links and contact information.**

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## USCIS IMPLEMENTS NEW SECURITY VETTING PROCESS: WHAT IT MEANS FOR IMMIGRATION APPLICANTS AND ADVOCATES

By DILIP PATEL and KHUSHBU PATEL



In a move that has sent ripples across the immigration community, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced on April 27 that it is introducing a new, enhanced security vetting process. This development is prompting delays in the adjudication of a broad range of immigration applications, from adjustment of status and naturalization to asylum and family petitions. Understanding the implications of this shift is crucial.

### What's Changing?

According to reports from the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and credible news outlets like CBS News, USCIS has begun implementing a new security vetting process that affects nearly all pending immigration cases requiring fingerprint checks. The key change? USCIS now has access to enhanced criminal history data from the FBI's "Next Generation Identification" (NGI) system, enabled by an executive order issued earlier this year — Executive Order 14385.

Previously, USCIS relied on fingerprint and name checks submitted through FBI databases. Now, with access to more comprehensive criminal history records, USCIS officers are required to perform an "additional" vetting step before approving many applications. This means that, for many cases filed before April 27, applicants will need to resubmit their fingerprints — though, notably, they may not need to appear again at an Application Support Center (ASC). The fingerprints already on file are expected to be used once the new process is completed.

### Why the Change?

The motivation behind this overhaul is rooted in national security concerns. The executive order directs federal agencies to maximize access to criminal history record information to improve vetting procedures. USCIS's new process aligns with this directive, aiming to bolster screening measures against potential security threats. The move comes amid heightened national security concerns following recent incidents, including the shooting involving the National Guard, which prompted a review of vetting procedures across immigration agencies. As CBS reports, this enhanced vetting process was launched to provide USCIS with "greater access to criminal history database," thereby allowing for more thorough background checks.

### How Will This Impact Applicants?

The immediate effect is a delay in the adjudication of many pending cases. USCIS has stated that delays should be "brief and resolved shortly," but unofficial estimates from AILA suggest that this could impact millions of cases. These delays are not uniform; some cases will be held up more than others, especially those that require background checks for criminal history or other sensitive information.

Despite USCIS's assurances, delays could extend into several months. This is particularly important for those awaiting decisions on adjustment of status, naturalization, asylum, and employment authorization applications. The delays are primarily due to USCIS's need to "reload" all background checks in bulk as part of the new system.

### What About Already Scheduled Interviews?

Good news for applicants with scheduled interviews: reports indicate that most interviews will proceed as scheduled. These cases are being prioritized for the new background check process, and USCIS is aiming to avoid disrupting scheduled appointments. However, if a case is held up at the background check stage, it could still delay the overall timeline significantly.

### What About Cases That Are Likely to Be Denied?

USCIS officers have been instructed not to approve cases that are pending if they require fingerprint checks until the new vetting is complete. Interestingly, applications that are intended for denial are not subject to the resubmission requirement. This means that some applications could be denied based on the new, more comprehensive background checks, even if they previously appeared to be in good shape.

### What Should Applicants and Practitioners Do?

While USCIS maintains that the delays will be "brief," applicants should prepare for the possibility of extended wait times. Here are some practical tips:

- Set realistic expectations: Delays could stretch into months, especially as USCIS processes bulk rechecks.
- Review criminal history records: Be prepared for Requests for Evidence (RFEs) or Notices of Intent to Deny (NOIDs) related to criminal charges, juvenile records, or sealed records. Applicants with past criminal issues, juvenile records, or sealed cases should consider proactively gathering documentation.
- Monitor case status: Stay in close contact with USCIS and use online case tracking tools to receive updates.

### Final Thoughts

This new security vetting process marks a significant shift in how the U.S. immigration system conducts background checks. While designed to enhance national security, it also introduces uncertainty and delays for applicants. USCIS has not yet issued comprehensive public guidance on how the new process will be applied across all case types. The agency is still "ongoing" in processing, and the full impact remains to be seen. Staying informed, managing expectations and being prepared for potential delays will be key to successfully navigating the evolving landscape of immigration adjudications. If you receive a Request for Evidence or a Notice of Intent to Deny, consult a qualified immigration attorney for case-specific guidance.

**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**

## EVENTS

Cont'd from page 2

### ORLANDO/ALTAMONTE SPRINGS

**JULY 1: SPIRITUAL LEADER VISIT;** Sadhu Vaswani Mission head Didi Krishna; Maa Durga Sri Sai Baba Temple, 11414 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando; 6 p.m.; for information, call (407) 574-8044.

### JACKSONVILLE

**JUNE 21: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA;** organized by Hindu Society of North East Florida, 4968 Greenland Road, Jacksonville; 5 to 7 p.m.; RSVP at office@hsnef.org or call (904) 268-7630.

### SOUTH FLORIDA (DAVIE/MIAMI)

**JUNE 6: CHESS TOURNAMENT;** organized by Kerala Samajam of South Florida; 14790 S.W. 24th St., Davie; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; for information, call Jaison James at (954) 213-4671.

**JUNE 20-21: INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY;** Fair Expo Center (indoors), 10901 Coral Way, Miami; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; free; for information, call (754) 444-6206.

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



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## OVERHAULED 2026 SUBARU OUTBACK WILDERNESS IS A PRACTICAL, ECONOMICAL BUY

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

At one time, it used to be referred to as a “lifted wagon.” But after a total revamp in 2026, you can safely say that this seventh-gen Subaru, ensconced on a unitized body structure, conveys a midsize SUV/crossover look. The Outback is now taller and boxier with a higher ground clearance than before. Regardless of its appearance, the Outback boasts a solid ride with quick acceleration, superb handling and steering feel. Of course, standard all-wheel-drive system along with dual X-Mode traction management ensures exceptional balance in all driving conditions.

Once again, the 2.4-liter horizontally opposed, turbo inline-4 engine cranks out 260 horsepower @ 5600 rpm and 277 pounds-feet of torque @ 4800 rpm. Power routed through a continuous variable transmission with 8-speed manual-shift capabilities contributes to adequate performance. An independent MacPherson strut front and a double wishbone rear suspension results in a pleasantly agile ride. Steering response with the rack-and-pinion power assist is sharp, precise and perfectly weighted. The Outback’s exceptional stopping power comes from robust 12.4-inch ventilated front and 11.8-inch rear discs. Tow capacity is decent at 3,500 pounds.

Forget the familiar hexagonal grille! Instead, the revised front fascia shows off SUBARU in all black caps flanked by stacked LEDs and anodized copper accents and Wilderness cladding on the exterior body. The steeply raked rear glass meets up with a new light signature that spans width of the liftgate. A twin cockpit with electroluminescent rounded gauge displays for speedometer, tachometer, fuel and coolant temperature give the interior a rich ambiance. All new is the 12.1-inch tablet-style infotainment touch



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**Length:** 191.7 inches  
**Height:** 68.3 inches  
**Width:** 74 inches  
**Weight:** 3,973 pounds  
**Fuel capacity:** 18 gallons  
**City/hwy/comb:** 21/27/23 mpg  
**Base price:** \$44,995  
**Price as tested:** \$48,490  
**Web site:** [www.subaru.com](http://www.subaru.com)

screen, the center of attention on the dashboard. Eye-catching copper accents on the steering wheel and shifter are evident in the well-lit cabin too, which boasts passenger volume of 146.9 cubic feet. Physical climate and volume control knobs are well laid out. Other goodies include 10-way power driver and four-way front-passenger heated seats, dual auto a/c, overhead sunglass holder, power lift gate, Harman Kardon speakers, wireless phone charger/Android Auto/Apple CarPlay, 60/40 fold-down rear seatback, auto start/stop and a roof rack with crossbars that can carry a payload of 800 pounds.

This redesigned and easy-on-the-pocket Subaru (lower trim models begin at \$34,995) is a tempting midsize SUV that has sold over three million units since its U.S. debut over three decades ago. Thanks to a functional interior, subtle styling and, best of all, standard all-wheel drive that showcases its on-road ride/handling and off-road talent, the Outback is a terrific performer.

## THIS ‘ROGUE’ IS THE ‘ONE’ YOU WANT TO KEEP IN THE GARAGE!

Time was when the tremendously popular midsize Altima ruled the roost. But with SUVs and crossovers taking over, the sedan’s time has passed. Undoubtedly, the Nissan Rogue with a cozy, well-damped ride has slowly but surely caught up with the youth and their active lifestyles. Now, this compact SUV is the Japanese carmaker’s top-selling vehicle in the United States. And rightly so.

For 2026, the powertrain maintains its status quo with a 1.5-liter DOHC intercooled and turbocharged engine developing 201 horsepower @ 5600 rpm and 225 pounds-feet of torque @ 4000 rpm. It is coupled with a continuous variable transmission, which can be noisy at times. The electric power rack-and-pinion steering conveys a solid on-center feel, willing to change directions when hustled along the road.

An independent strut with coil springs makes up the front while the rear is equipped with a multilink suspension. The all-wheel-drive system distributes torque evenly to the wheels irrespective of road conditions. Drive modes available are eco, auto, sport, off-road and snow.

Ensnconed on the unibody-type structure is a V-motion black grille with mesh, and LED headlights and daytime running lights. Offered at no extra cost on the Rock Creek trim are dual auto a/c, 8-inch touchscreen for infotainment controls, eight-way driver and four-way front-passenger power and heated seats, quilted leatherette seats and shifter, D-shaped tilt/telescopic steering column, push-button start, 12.3-inch digital instrument panel and a center console pass-through. Ingress and egress are effortless with the 60/40-

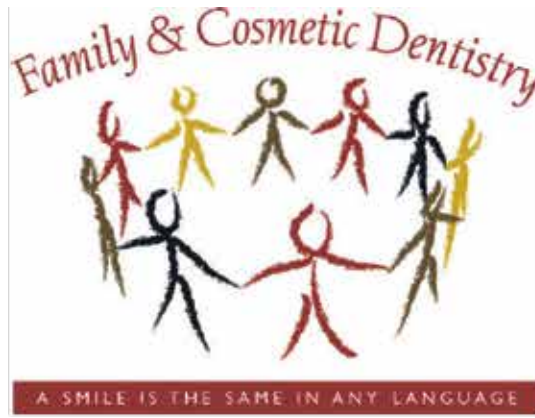


### ROGUE AWD (ROCK CREEK)

**Tires:** 235/65/R17  
**Wheelbase:** 106.5 inches  
**Length:** 183 inches  
**Width:** 72.4 inches  
**Height:** 66.5 inches  
**Weight:** 3,713 pounds  
**Tow capacity:** 1,500 pounds  
**Fuel capacity:** 14.5 gallons  
**City/hwy/comb:** 27/32/29 mpg  
**Base price:** \$33,990  
**Price as tested:** \$37,835  
**Web site:** [www.nissanusa.com](http://www.nissanusa.com)

split rear seat, which when folded, ekes out 74.1 cubic feet of space. And passenger volume is an admirable 105.4 cubic feet. Need to haul extra luggage/belongings? The tubular roof rack capacity can hold up to 220 pounds of weight. That this is the off-road capable and adventure-ready Rock Creek model is evident from all-terrain 17-inch tires, hands-free power lift gate, all-season cargo area protector/floor liners, and lava red accents on tires, roof rack, seats, front fascia and seat back rests.

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



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# AAPICON 2026 — A CELEBRATION OF MEDICINE, UNITY, CULTURE AND PURPOSE MOMENTOUS EVENT SET JULY 4TH WEEKEND IN TAMPA BAY COINCIDES WITH AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY



Dr Amit Chakrabarty



Dr Raghu Juvvadi



Dr Rakesh Sharma



Dr Sagar Galwankar

**Story provided by AAPI**

As the July 4th weekend approaches, anticipation builds for one of the most significant gatherings in the AAPI community — the 44th Annual AAPI Convention & Scientific Assembly (AAPICON 2026) in Tampa. Scheduled from July 2-5, this landmark event will bring together thousands of physicians, leaders and families.

“It is with immense pleasure that we announce the 44th Annual American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly will be held at the iconic JW Marriott Tampa Water Street and Tampa Marriott Water Street, set along Tampa’s beautiful waterfront,” said Dr. Amit Chakrabarty. “These world-class venues will provide a dynamic and elegant setting to host scientific sessions, CME programs, product theaters, business networking events, and cultural showcases creating an enriching experience for all attendees.”

What makes this year’s convention especially meaningful is the powerful alignment of cultural celebration with America’s Independence Day weekend — a moment that embodies both national pride and the rich diversity that defines it.

**A Gathering Rooted in Unity and Vision**

AAPICON 2026 is not just a professional conference; it is a platform for collective identity and purpose. With the theme “Stronger Together: United in Care, Undivided in Voice,” the convention reflects a shared commitment to collaboration and community advancement.

The convention is expected to attract more than 2,000 attendees, reflecting its scale and influence.

**The Spirit of Celebration: Culture and Entertainment**

AAPICON 2026 also promises an immersive cultural experience. The convention will include “highenergy entertainment and cultural showcases” alongside global cuisine and family-friendly programs.

Dr. Meher Medavaram, President-Elect of AAPI, described Tampa 2026 as: “The real stage, the real celebration... delivering a convention that sets a new benchmark for excellence, unity, and celebration.” Cultural performances, music, and artistic expression will bring the AAPI diaspora to life, transforming the convention space into a vibrant stage of identity and pride.

Convener of the Convention 2026, Dr. Raghu Juvvadi, said, “As the Tampa convention approaches, it stands as more than a scheduled gathering — it is a celebration of identity, unity, and joy. From dynamic entertainment to meaningful dialogue, AAPICON 2026 promises to leave a lasting impression on all who attend.”

Dr. Rakesh Sharma, Chairman of the Fundraising Committee, said “As we approach

the July 4th weekend, I am filled with anticipation for the 44th Annual AAPI Convention & Scientific Assembly — a celebration of medicine, unity, culture, and purpose. This gathering represents not only our shared commitment to advancing health care but also our dedication to fostering a sense of community within the AAPI family. We are honored to welcome Sidhguruvar Shri Sidheshwar Brahmishi, whose blessings will enrich our celebration of spirituality and inspire us all. Together, let us embrace this opportunity to connect, learn, and uplift each other in the spirit of service and solidarity.”

Gracing the occasion will be spiritual leaders such as Didi Krishna Kumari, head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission, and divine master and saint “Siddhguru” Sri Sidheshwar Brahmshri Guruvar. Entertainment bridges generations and cultures. “Bollywood star and entrepreneur Vivek Oberoi will be joining us, with several more celebrities and sportspersons already in the pipeline. Come be part of the excitement, the unity and the celebration that only AAPI can create,” said Dr. Sagar Galwankar, Chair of AAPI Convention. Playback singers Kumar Sanu, Sadhana Sargam, and the music composer duo of Vishal-Shekhar, along with Emmy-nominated standup comedian Nimesh Patel will also take the stage.

**July 4th Weekend: A Symbolic Convergence**

Holding the convention during Independence Day weekend adds a deeper layer of meaning. It is a time when fireworks light up the skies — and at AAPICON, those symbolic sparks are mirrored in cultural pride and shared celebration. The convention has even been described as part of a broader moment of national reflection, coinciding with the 250th anniversary of American independence, reinforcing its sense of historic importance.

**This intersection of heritage and patriotism underscores a powerful truth: the AAPI experience is integral to the American narrative.**

Urging members of AAPI to register, Dr. Chakrabarty said, “Our AAPI Convention is fast becoming the most electrifying gathering of the year, with new attractions being added every single day, and I want each of you to feel proud knowing that this convention is truly your convention — its success depends entirely on your presence, your energy, and your participation.”

The events are open to AAPI friends and family, and local Tampa residents are also welcome. Day tickets for the convention will be available after June 15.

**To register and for more information, visit <https://aapiconvention.org/>**



44TH ANNUAL AAPI CONVENTION & SCIENTIFIC ASSEMBLY

# AAPICON 2026

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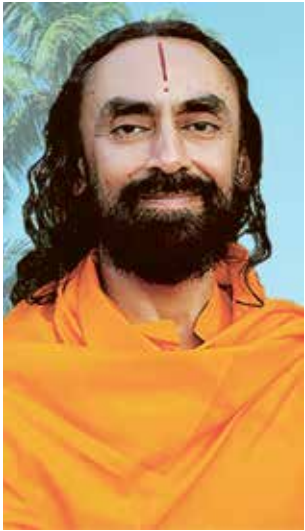
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**SWAMI MUKUNDANANDA PRESENTS DISCOURSES JUNE 22-25 IN TAMPA**



Shree Swami Mukundananda

*Story provided by JKYog*

Shree Swami Mukundananda will be in Tampa from June 22-25 at the Hindu Temple of Florida (5509 Lynn Road) for his much-awaited Life Transformation Program. This four-day series will feature enlightening discourses on “Mindsets for Happiness and Fulfillment,” based on his bestselling book.

Swamiji is the founder of JKYog and Jagadguru Kripalu University (JKU), an IIT and IIM alumnus, internationally bestselling author, Vedic scholar, and Bhakti saint.

A mentor for millions, he travels across India and USA, working tirelessly to conduct a series of LTPs, delivering practical wisdom that positively impacts the lives of today’s adults and youth that inspires them to lead happy, successful lives.

Each evening program will begin at 6:45 p.m. with a special Meet-and-Greet opportunity with Swamiji, followed by an enlightening discourse interspersed with ancient wisdom, practical insights, and modern scientific understanding. The evenings will also include uplifting bhajans, aarti and dinner mahaprasad.

Additionally, there will be daily morning walks with Swamiji, providing anyone with a unique opportunity to ask Swamiji questions and to seek his personal guidance.

Feedback from past participants confirms significant improvements in stress management, energy levels, positivity, and self-worth, making the Life Transformation Program a deeply enriching experience for all individuals.

JKYog’s Life Transformation Programs are open to all, regardless of age or background, and are offered free of cost. To reserve a seat and for more information about Swamiji’s Tampa program, visit <https://www.jkyog.org/events/FL>

**SATSANG HELD IN ORLANDO**

A well-attended Jhulay Laal Dada-Satsang was held May 17 at Maa Durga Sri Sai Baba Mandir in Orlando. The mandir at 11414 S. Apopka Vineland Road can be reached at (407) 574-8044.

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# ASTROLOGY

## JUNE 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 Sign – Stars covered Ashwini, Bharani, Krittika (1st Part)** A positive month for wealth, peace, happiness and overall well-being. Financial confidence improves, supporting careful planning and future investments. Opportunities related to stocks, shares or real estate may appear encouraging when handled wisely. Professionally, growth, recognition or a beneficial change in role may arise. The mind

remains focused on long-term security and stability. Health stays supportive, bringing relief from stress and minor disturbances.

**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)** Patience and calm thinking will be important. Domestic matters require careful handling and understanding. Financially, the period remains supportive, though caution is advised in money matters involving immediate family members. Avoid major financial decisions or risky activities. Situations gradually improve later, bringing better clarity and stability.

**GEMINI / Mithuna (Air sign, ruling planet is Mercury) - (May 22-June 21) Mercury Sign - Stars covered Mrigashira (last 2 parts), Ardra & Punarvasu (3 parts)** Financial pressure may rise due to planetary influences. One should minimize unnecessary financial activity and avoid risky decisions to prevent avoidable losses or heavy expenses. It is advisable to follow routine life and stay away from misadventures or unknown associations. Extra caution is needed as a careless decision may have long-term effects. With disciplined effort and careful planning, financial comfort may gradually improve.

**CANCER / Karaka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22-July 22) Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha** One should be careful regarding weight gain, stress, emotional sensitivity and overthinking. Financial progress and growth remain supportive, making this a favorable period to work on pending business plans and future goals. Matters related to land, housing or real estate may bring long-term benefits when handled wisely. Health requires attention, especially regarding veins, headaches or nervous strain caused by stress and exhaustion.

**LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23-Aug. 22) Sun Sign – Stars covered Magha, Purva Phalguni, and Uttara Phalguni (1st part)** Professionally and financially, this appears to be a good period for growth and progress. Opportunities for promotions, improved roles or salary discussions may bring positive results. Sudden expenses related to vehicles may arise, requiring careful planning. Matters connected to land or real estate may bring last-minute benefits or optimistic developments. This is a supportive time to complete pending or delayed important activities.

**VIRGO / Kanya (Earthen sign, ruling planet is Mercury) (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Mercury Sign – Stars covered Uttara Phalguni (last 3 parts), Hasta, Chitra (first 2 parts)** This month brings beneficial energy for finances, profession, growth, recovery, inheritance matters and long-term security. Property, land or real estate matters may bring encouraging opportunities and future benefits. However, caution is advised in speculative activities as chance of wrong judgments remain. Domestic and financial matters need careful handling initially. Recovery of old dues, pending payments or delayed finances can also be expected.

**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)** Restrict activities to the minimum as efforts may not bring desired results. The month supports restraint, meditation, fasting and inner cleansing, with better times ahead. Domestic tensions, financial pressures, mental stress and confusion may prevail. Stick only to essential routine work and avoid unnecessary arguments or confrontations, as they may create further complications. Patience and calmness will be most beneficial.

**SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) Mars Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha** Majority planets support your sign. Business plans may bring satisfactory progress if handled carefully. Avoid speculation, gambling or risky stock investments. New ventures are best avoided. Positive signs for job change, promotion, or professional improvement

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## **JUNE FORECAST**

*Cont'd from page 14*

are visible. The second half of the month proves more supportive for completing pending work and important projects. Domestic happiness prevails, and spending more time with family will bring peace and satisfaction.

**SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23-Dec. 21)**  
**Jupiter Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part)**

Focus on health, especially related to digestive issues. Delaying proper care may prolong discomfort. Wearing yellow on Thursdays could prove beneficial. The first half may bring feelings of confusion, or financial pressure. One should remain careful regarding money matters, as delays, losses or disputes related to rightful dues, inheritance or pending claims may arise.

**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)** A positive month for work, career and business opportunities. New contacts may bring beneficial professional openings. Optimistic signs for promotion, recognition, or a new job opportunity may arise early. However, success will require timely effort, as delays or last-minute changes are possible. Planetary influences remain supportive overall but may increase responsibilities and workload. Patience and disciplined effort will help convert opportunities into meaningful results.

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

**Saturn Sign - Stars covered: Dhanistha (last 2 parts) Satabhisha, Purva Bhadra Pada (1st 3 parts)** Real estate and property matters may bring promising results. The period supports prosperity, happiness and completion of pending plans or promises. It is a suitable time to move ahead with delayed activities. However, caution is advised in new matrimonial, or business alliances are possible. One should also remain careful while dealing with new acquaintances. Avoid unnecessary professional disagreements and think carefully before taking any major decision.

**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** Short journeys connected with professional growth or career matters may

prove beneficial. Positive developments related to promotion, change in role, salary improvement, or career progress may gradually unfold. Property, land or real estate matters appear supportive and may bring encouraging results. Overall, the month remains satisfactory for growth, progress, and completing important plans..

**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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**COLLEGE VISITS: MY WEEK ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ADMISSIONS DESK**

BY DAWN M. CHMURA AND ROBERT A.G. LEVINE



This April, I took a four-day adventure touring colleges around Boston. Before visiting, I reached the admissions offices, hoping to arrange individual meetings with their professionals. However, I quickly realized that the best way to understand the good and the bad was to experience everything exactly as prospective students do: through information sessions and student-led tours.

Not surprisingly – we tell this to all UCA clients – the information sessions felt generic and remarkably similar from school to school. Admissions officers spoke glowingly about their curricula, campus cultures, opportunities, and

institutional identities. Although these may be the same themes colleges ask students to reflect upon in their applications, I didn't find the sessions to be helpful either for learning about the school or for writing good college essays.

As someone who worked closely with a boarding school admissions office for nearly 25 years, I am highly aware of how institutions curate a marketing aura that presents a strategic, branded emotion the moment visitors walk through the door. Admissions events are carefully orchestrated experiences, and while most of the schools I visited were perfectly pleasant, two visits stood out distinctively.

At one college, I walked into a dark, empty admissions office. Students sat silently in a corner, the reception desk was unattended, and the office doors were closed. Nearly twenty minutes passed before anyone appeared. It was not a strong first impression for me, and I suspect that any visitor who had the same experience might choose not to apply to that college.

Brandeis, on the other hand, immediately felt exceptionally welcoming. Student ambassadors greeted families, admissions staff circulated throughout the lobby, and the space itself felt inviting, even if intentionally so. No doubt: their atmosphere shapes your perception.

As my week continued, something else became increasingly apparent: my own fatigue. Even while taking notes and evaluating each experience individually with professional intent, many of the facts, feelings and campuses ended up blending together. One school's talking points merged into another's. I found myself wondering how families who tour multiple colleges can possibly make thoughtful distinctions between them.

That realization became even more compelling when I observed the differences between those attending the tours. Most of the younger students — high school sophomores and juniors — remained quiet while their parents asked the questions. But those already-admitted seniors who were visiting before making their final decisions were deeply engaged, asking specific questions about programs, opportunities, housing, and student life. They walked closely beside the tour guides, continuing conversations long after the formal presentations ended in an effort to determine whether these schools were truly right for them.

By the end of my trip, I began wondering whether pre-application visits are unintentionally counterproductive. There are so many variables that influence your "takeaway" about a college: a charismatic tour guide, a disengaged representative, the size of the tour group, the quality and quantity of your group's interactions, exhaustion, weather, even whether actual enrolled students are visible anywhere. During my visit to Tufts, had it been rainy, icy, bitterly cold, or even sunless and overcast, I suspect my reaction to its famously steep hill would have been entirely different.

Of course, colleges are putting their best feet forward during these events, and that is not inherently wrong. Most admissions teams are "people persons" who work hard to create welcoming and informative experiences for prospects. I know this because I spent decades involved in that work myself. However, to be fair to yourselves, students and parents should recognize that these visits are sales opportunities for them and, for you, emotional experiences more than informational ones.

Emotion can sometimes overshadow more important questions. Does the academic structure fit my learning style? Can we afford this school? What is available off-campus? Are we reacting to substance or simply to atmosphere? (And ... will the university give honest answers to any of our questions?)

Of course, school visits can be helpful. Campus energy, student interaction, and the overall environment are important factors in a productive college career. However, after spending a week on the other side of the admissions desk, I am convinced that many students make emotional judgments much too early in the process.

Before applying, spend more time researching each college online, then after your admissions offers come in, be ready to visit those schools. When the decision is about what is right for you and no longer about impressing them, college visits can really help you make the most thoughtful decision for your best possible future.

**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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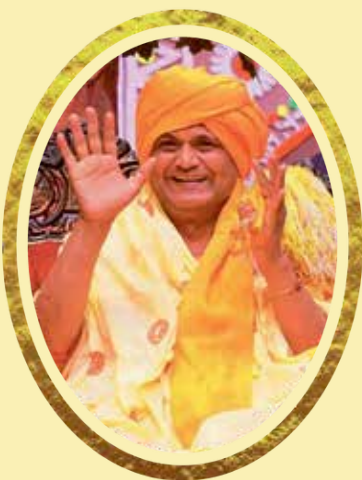


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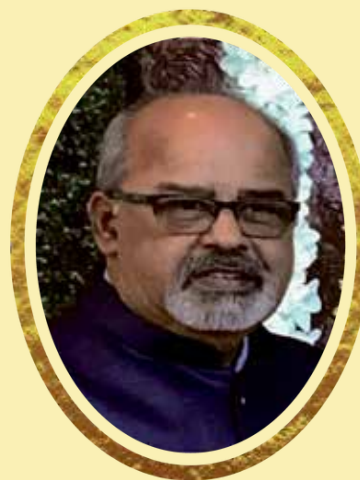
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## TURN A REAL ESTATE SALE INTO A TAX-SMART STRATEGY

By TEJAL DHRUVE, CPA



Selling investment or commercial real estate can result in a substantial tax bill if the property has appreciated significantly. One strategy to help ease your tax burden is an installment sale.

### What’s an Installment Sale?

In an installment sale, the seller gets at least one payment after the tax year in which the sale occurs. So, if you sell investment or commercial real estate, instead of receiving the full purchase price all at once, you get payments over time.

This allows you to defer recognition of gain and spread the tax liability over several years. Installment sales can

also help attract more buyers because they won’t have to pay the entire price upfront and obtaining financing might be easier.

### Two types of installment sales

There are a couple of ways to set up an installment sale:

1. Traditional. This generally involves the buyer making payments directly to the seller under the terms of a promissory note.
2. Structured. Here, a third-party assignment company or financial institution assists with the transaction and oversees the payment schedule. The third party typically assumes responsibility for future payments to the seller, which may reduce the seller’s risk.

### Tax Considerations

Gains from real estate held for more than one year are typically taxed at favorable long-term capital gains rates — 15% for most taxpayers and 20% for higher-income taxpayers. For 2026, the 20% rate applies when taxable income exceeds \$545,500 (singles), \$579,600 (heads of household), \$613,700 (married couples filing jointly) or \$306,850 (married couples filing separately). With the gain spread over multiple years, an installment sale may help keep you below the 20% rate threshold.

Depending on your income level, it might also help prevent you from triggering the 3.8% net investment income tax (NIIT) or at least reduce your NIIT liability. The NIIT applies to net investment income to the extent that modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$200,000 (singles and heads of household), \$250,000 (joint filers) or \$125,000 (separate filers).

However, several tax rules can complicate installment sales. For example, depreciation recapture must be reported as ordinary income in the year of sale, even if payments are received later. Only the remaining gain can be spread out under the installment method. The good news is that if your marginal ordinary rate is 32%, 35% or 37%, depreciation recapture is taxed at only 25%.

Additionally, installment agreements exceeding \$5 million may trigger an IRS interest charge on the deferred tax. Special rules apply to related-party sales and may accelerate the remaining tax if the property is resold within two years.

### Electing Out

Installment reporting is generally automatic if you sell property and receive at least one payment after the tax year of the sale. However, you can choose to elect out of it and report the entire gain in the year of sale.

This might make sense if you expect higher tax rates in future years, have current-year losses or deductions that could offset the gain, or want to accelerate income for financial planning purposes. When you file your tax return for the year of the sale, you can decide whether to elect out.

### Moving Forward

Installment sales can be complex. If you’re thinking about selling investment or commercial real estate, contact the office to determine whether an installment sale makes sense for your situation.

**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)**



## AKSHAYA PATRA: FROM A TEMPLE KITCHEN TO FIVE BILLION MEALS

### Story, photos provided by Akshaya Patra

What began as a small act of compassion in Bangalore in the year 2000 has grown into one of the most remarkable humanitarian programs in the world. The Akshaya Patra Foundation started by serving meals to 1,500 children in five government schools, driven by a simple conviction that no child should have to choose between eating and going to school. Twenty-five years later, that conviction has produced five billion meals, 78 centralized kitchens, and a daily operation that feeds more than 2.35 million children across India before most of the world has finished its morning coffee.

### A mission that found its moment

Akshaya Patra was founded in Bangalore by members of the ISKCON community who recognized that hunger was one of the most stubborn barriers keeping children out of school. Families in low-income communities often could not afford to send children to school when there was work to be done and food to be earned. A guaranteed meal at school changed that calculation entirely. Almost immediately after the first meals were served, headmasters began reporting higher attendance and children who had drifted away from school coming back. The model was simple, the results were clear, and the demand that followed was overwhelming. By 2003, Akshaya Patra had formalized that model into something more durable, becoming the first NGO to enter a public-private partnership with the Government of India in the school feeding space. That collaboration became the foundation of what is now the PM POSHAN national school meal program, and it remains one of the more successful examples of government and civil society working together toward a shared goal at genuine scale.

### The engineering behind the mission

What has made Akshaya Patra different from most humanitarian food programs is the seriousness with which it approached the operational challenge. Several of its founders had engineering backgrounds, and that showed in how the organization built itself. Rather than cooking on-site at individual schools, Akshaya Patra



developed large, centralized kitchen facilities capable of producing tens of thousands of meals in a single operation and delivering them by insulated vehicles to schools spread across a wide area. The concept was closer to food manufacturing than to traditional charity, and that was precisely the point.

The kitchens that came out of that thinking are remarkable facilities. Cauldrons holding hundreds of liters of rice, machines producing 60,000 rotis per hour, and delivery fleets running optimized routes to ensure meals arrive hot and on time. Several kitchens carry ISO food safety certification, and the organization applies Kaizen and Six Sigma methodologies to its operations, tracking

performance through data and continuously improving processes across its network. In 2025, 158 electric vehicles joined the delivery fleet as part of a commitment to reach 1,000 EVs by 2030, and solar energy systems are being

installed across kitchens to reduce dependence on the power grid, with the Hyderabad kitchen already running on solar-generated steam.

That operational discipline is what makes the cost structure possible. The total cost of feeding one child for an entire school year is \$44, with the government covering a portion through PM POSHAN and private donors contributing approximately \$20. For a program operating at this scale, that figure is a genuine achievement, and it is what allows Akshaya Patra to keep growing without the economics collapsing under their own weight.

### Five billion meals and counting

In March 2026, the Akshaya Patra Foundation gathered at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of the President of India, to mark the five billion cumulative meals milestone, with the President attending as Chief Guest at the celebration. It was a moment that captured what 25 years of sustained effort looks like when it compounds. One billion meals came in 2012, two billion in 2016, three billion in 2019, four billion celebrated at the United Nations headquarters in New York City in 2024, and five billion at the presidential palace less than two years after that.

The Foundation now operates 78 kitchen facilities across 16 states and 3 Union Territories, reaching more than 2.35 million children in over 24,000 government schools every school day, with over 480 million mid-day meals served in 2025 alone. Two new kitchens are coming online in 2026 as part of an expansion plan targeting 100 total facilities over the next two years. The Gorakhpur kitchen, operational from April 2026, has a capacity of 100,000 meals per day, and the Modinagar kitchen, Akshaya Patra's 79th, reaches full capacity in July 2026 serving 95,000 students across 525 schools.

The recognition the Foundation has received along the way reflects the seriousness of what it has built. In 2016, Akshaya Patra received the Gandhi Peace Prize, awarded by the President and Prime Minister of India and previously given to Nelson Mandela and the Grameen Bank. Harvard Business School has published two case studies on the organization. The BBC recognized it with a Global Food Champion Award. Former US President Bill Clinton visited the Jaipur kitchen in 2014, and President-elect Barack Obama praised the organization's innovative approach in 2008.

### A program growing in every direction

Mid-day meal remains the center of the work, but Akshaya Patra's programs have expanded steadily to address hunger at every stage of a child's early life. The



Morning Nutrition Program now operates across 36 locations in 5 states, serving 800,000 children daily with more than 83 million total morning meals served since the program launched. Menus are tailored to regional staples, idli and sambar in Karnataka, khichdi and upma across Uttar Pradesh, pongal and bisi bele bhath further south, because the goal is food that children will actually eat and that reflects the communities being served.

The Anganwadi feeding program reaches pregnant and nursing mothers and children from infancy through age six, grounded in the understanding that nutritional support in the earliest years of life shapes educational and developmental outcomes well into the future. The AVSAR scholarship program provides financial assistance to students who would otherwise drop out after Class 10, tackling the next barrier that appears once a child has been fed, enrolled, and engaged. And when disaster strikes, as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Akshaya Patra has the infrastructure to pivot quickly, having served over 244 million relief meals to migrant workers and vulnerable families during that period alone.

**Akshaya Patra in the United States**

Akshaya Patra Foundation USA serves as the American fundraising arm of the Foundation, headquartered in Fremont, California, and registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with EIN 01-0574950. It holds a four out of four-star rating from Charity Navigator, the gold standard for nonprofit accountability in the United States, and in 2025 raised over \$18 million with 78 cents of every dollar going directly to program services. That fundraising runs through a network of 37 chapters across the country, each led by local volunteers who organize galas, walkathons, golf outings, and cultural events that connect their communities to the mission.

The donor base is largely Indian American, a community with deep roots in the same parts of India where Akshaya Patra works and a long tradition of giving back to the place they came from. At the same time, the organization has always understood that child hunger is not a cultural issue and that the story of a child eating and staying in school is one that resonates well beyond any single community.

**West Florida's connection to the mission**

The West Florida chapter has built a strong and growing presence within the Akshaya Patra network, currently sustaining meals for 20,000 children annually and playing an active role in shaping Akshaya Patra's presence across the entire state of Florida. That influence began with initiation of Tampa Chapter by Dr. Kaushal Chari and late Dr. Madhavi Sekaran who wanted to demonstrate what a local community can accomplish when it organizes around a cause of feeding and educating our children.

The chapter's growth since then has been driven by a combination of high-impact galas, exclusive donor dinners that have built a lasting pipeline of committed supporters, and deep grassroots outreach including booths at the AAHOA and AAPI conferences that have brought the mission to new audiences. The chapter also helped establish the Orlando chapter and continues to provide guidance as that community finds its footing. Chapter chair Dr. Snehal Parikh and Parthiv Shah has led youth engagement efforts that have mobilized student volunteers and the next generation of philanthropists, while Dr. Sheila Sagar has built the community partnerships that keep the mission visible and supported at every level of the region. The chapter is guided by advisors Jugal Taneja, Dr. Kiran Patel with Malti Pandya, Dr Rakesh Shah, Dr. Bijal Rajani, Anu Durai, the Gujarati Samaj, Jain Samaj, Telegu association, FAPI, and FIA chairs rounding out the chapter chair leadership alongside Dr. Sagar and Dr. Parikh.

**For those in the region looking to get involved, call or e-mail Dr Dilip Mehta at (727) 455-9222 and mehta34684@gmail.com**

To Know more about Akshaya Patra and to donate, press CTRL+ the link below: [www.akshayapatra.org](http://www.akshayapatra.org)

Twenty dollars funds one child's meals for a full school year, going into a program with 25 years of proof behind it. The state of Florida now feeds 75,000 children with fresh, hot, nutritious meals, every day of the school year. How many children would you like to feed in the upcoming school year?

**The bowl has not emptied yet.**

To learn more or support the mission, visit [apusa.org](http://apusa.org). Akshaya Patra Foundation USA is a registered 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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## 2026 KIA CARNIVAL HYBRID IS A TEMPTING CHOICE AS GAS PRICES CLIMB!

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

Remember the Sedona? It was Kia's minivan flagship sedan from 2002 to 2021 in the United States and also around the same time when the Korean automaker began altering model names to align with global markets. It was apparent then that it would be replaced by the nameplate Carnival, which has been used worldwide.

Ever since its debut in 2022, this SUV-inspired "Multi-Purpose Vehicle," as Kia likes to use the term, has left a lasting impression on minivan buyers. Offered in seven- or eight-passenger trims, the Carnival is equipped with a hybrid powertrain. A 1.6-liter gasoline-direct injection turbocharged engine cranks out a healthy 242 horsepower @ 5500 rpm and 270 pounds-feet of torque while coupled with a sprightly 6-speed auto gear box. Further assistance is received from an electric motor and a 270-volt lithium-ion battery. Absorbing road nose and imperfections with ease is a MacPherson strut front and a multilink rear suspension. The motor-driver power steering talks to you in self-assuring tones, never asking for a mid-turn wheel adjustment. At the driver's fingertips are normal, smart, sport and eco modes and a tow capacity of 2,500 pounds.

Our SX Prestige model came with the Dark Edition trim or blacked-out accents on the radiator grille, side sill garnish, skid plates, roof rails and alloy wheels to show off a sporty look. Mind you, on a minivan. And it worked! Step into the roomy and practical cabin to find two huge 12.3-inch screens spanning across the dashboard, driver digital gauge and infotainment system. Second-row passengers can travel as though on a luxury liner with slide, recline and leg extenders while the third-row seat folds flat into the floor.



### CARNIVAL HYBRID (SX PRESTIGE)

**Tires:** 235/55R19  
**Wheelbase:** 121.7 inches  
**Length:** 203 inches  
**Width:** 89.2 inches  
**Height:** 69.9 inches  
**Weight:** 4,967 pounds  
**Fuel capacity:** 19 gallons  
**Base price:** \$53,090  
**Price as tested:** \$57,490  
**Web site:** [www.kiausa.com](http://www.kiausa.com)

Fold down both the rear seats and you are looking at a remarkable 145.1 cubic feet of space to haul into the cargo hold. Other treats for occupants are heated/cooled front and second-row seat, power sliding rear doors, tri-zone auto a/c, power lift gate, ambient lights, 12-speaker Bose stereo, dual tilt/slide sun roofs, eight-way power front leather seats, tilt/telescopic steering column, manual second- and third-row sunshades, door scuff plates. And if the little ones needs to be kept occupied on family trips up north this summer, select the \$2,500 dual-screen rear seat entertainment package.

As prices at the pump hover around \$4.25 a gallon, the Carnival with city/hwy/comb figures of 34/31/32 is proving to be an attractive proposition. You are essentially looking at traveling nearly 600 miles on a tank before the need to fill gas. Add the minivan's solid chassis, thought-out interior and affordable price to the mix and it is a win-win all the way.

## EXPLORE THE TERRAIN WITH CONFIDENCE IN 2026 CHEVROLET TRAVERSE Z71 OFF-ROADER

Nissan Pathfinder. Kia Telluride. VW Atlas. Honda Pilot. Toyota Grand Highlander ... and the list of midsize SUVs goes on. It is no secret that competition in the three-row, family-friendly SUV segment is fierce. Among them all is the robust, reliable and utilitarian Chevrolet Traverse. It is equipped with a 2.5-liter turbocharged inline-4-cylinder engine putting out a healthy 328 horsepower @ 5500 rpm and 362 pounds-feet of torque @ 3500 rpm. That is plenty of clout to propel this nearly 4,793-pound SUV toward its destination briskly on challenging roads.

Power routed through the crisp-shifting 8-speed auto gear box delivers adequate performance. Standard active noise cancellation isolates occupants from road sound and imperfections in this front-wheel or all-wheel-drive ride. Tow capacity of 5,000 pounds is plenty to haul a sailboat or a trailer. Our Z71 trim, with its off-road prowess, came equipped with increased ground clearance, all-terrain tires, twin-clutch all-wheel drive, unique suspension dampers and a terrain mode with driver selectable modes.

With its muscular stance, the front fascia of the Traverse shows off sleek headlights surrounding an upright high-gloss black grille with a centered familiar bow-tie emblem, signature red-tow hooks, black roof rails and an aluminum skid plate. Slip behind the wheel and a mammoth angled 17.7-inch infotainment touch screen draws your attention along with an 11-inch driver digital cluster. Pull the lever and the spacious Captain's chairs fold down flat while the 50/50 third-row seat can be power operated. That's an abundant 98.2 cubic feet of storage area. Chevrolet calls it Evotex or simulated leather upholstery, as good



### TRAVERSE (Z71 AWD)

**Tires:** P265/65R18 all-season  
**Wheelbase:** 121 inches  
**Length:** 204.7 inches  
**Width:** 79.9 inches  
**Height:** 72 inches  
**Suspension:** MacPherson strut front, 5-link rear  
**Steering:** electric variable power  
**Fuel capacity:** 21.7 gallons  
**City/hwy/comb:** 17/24/21 mpg  
**Base price:** \$48,900  
**Price as tested:** \$57,455  
**Web site:** [www.chevrolet.com](http://www.chevrolet.com)

a feel as any leather seats, we should admit. There also is a massive storage bin underneath the cargo hold. Other goodies that come at no extra cost include tri-zone auto a/c, eight-way power driver and four-way front-passenger manual seats, power lift gate, column-mounted shifter, wireless phone charger and manual tilt/telescopic steering wheel. Go for the worthwhile \$1,225 driver confidence package, which fetches an HD surround view, rear pedestrian alert/camera mirror, traffic sign recognition and a key card.

Like to venture off the beaten path to explore new trails every now and then? Then the Traverse Z71 fits the bill to a T. This eminently practical package with passenger- and cargo/tow-hauling capabilities is a smart pick for the midsize SUV buyer.



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