

KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

MAY 2026

WWW.KHAASBAAT.COM

EDITOR@KHAASBAAT.COM

813-758-1786

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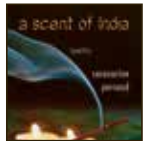
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ORLANDO BRACES FOR HISTORIC GATHERING

As the 2026 Memorial Day weekend approaches, all eyes are on Central Florida. In what is being hailed as a landmark moment for the Gujarati diaspora, the Federation of Gujarati Associations of USA (FOGAUSA) is set to host the "United Gujarati Convention" from May 22 to 25. **Photo is AI generated and for illustrative purposes only.**

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THE GOLDEN RAAS

UCF KNIGHT RAAS CLAIM NATIONAL TITLE

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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

MAY 2: "COPING WITH STRESS AND IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING;" organized by Pehchaan Tampa Bay, presented by Crisis Center of Tampa Bay; Jimmie B. Keel Library, Community room A and B, 2902 W. Bearss Ave., Tampa; 3 to 5 p.m.; RSVP (813) 720-7115.

MAY 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 any questions, text (813) 476-1867.

MAY 8: TRIOS EVENT EXPO; connect with décor and event planners, shopping, live DJ; Quality Inn, 5316 U.S. 19, New Port Richey; 5 p.m. to midnight; free; registration required; call (813) 466-2733.

MAY 9: BHAJAN CLUBBING; hosted and organized by Purvi Bhatt; Sisira Farms, 10575 Paul S. Buchman Highway, Plant City; 7:30 p.m.; live music; call (813) 909-3593.

MAY 9: VASANTHOLSAVAM '26; presented by Malayalee Association of Central Florida to celebrate spring with fashion face-off, dance performances, Kerala food festival; 5 to 10 p.m.; Sacred Heart Knanaya Catholic Community Center, 2620 Washington Road, Valrico; free entry; for information, (813) 753-0388.

MAY 9: 20TH ANNUAL HEALTH FAIR; Hindu Temple of Florida, 5509 Lynn Road, Tampa; free screenings; medical consultation; for details, visit www.tampahindutemple.com

MAY 10: MOTHER'S DAY; "Trendsetters: A Bollywood Musical Journey" organized by Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay in honor of mothers; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 6 p.m. dinner, 7:30 show; GSTB members free, \$40 non-members; for information, call Sandip Patel at (865) 771-9190.

MAY 10: PRAVEEN KUMAR'S 8; Tamil standup comedy; organized by Sakthi Yogalaya; Sri Ayyappa Society of Tampa, 6829 Maple Lane, Tampa; 6 p.m.; \$25 tickets; for information, email sakthiyogalaya@gmail.com

MAY 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.

MAY 15: BOLLYWOOD DJ NIGHT PARTY; presented by Tampa Indian Community Events and Bharti Kapoor Panigrahi; features DJ Yattin; Desi District, 902 E. Brandon Blvd., Brandon; 8:30 p.m.; \$35 per person ticket includes dinner buffet and a complimentary drink; call Panigrahi at (813) 893-9779.

MAY 16: VOCAL MELA - A Festival of Indian Classical Singing; organized by Shruti Foundation; Hindu Temple of Florida, 5509 Lynn Road, Tampa; 6 p.m.; musicians include vocalists Arnab Chatterjee and Brajeswar Mukherjee, Gourisankar and Shankh Lahiri on tabla, and Anirban Chakrabarty on harmonium; \$30 per person ticket can be purchased at www.shrutifoundationtampa.org

MAY 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.

MAY 31: BAPS WALK/

RUN; organized by BAPS Charities; Al Lopez Park, 4810 N.

Himes Ave., Tampa; 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.; \$20 per person, \$10 child registration at <https://www.bapscharities.org/usa/tampa/walk-run-2026-tampa-fl/>

ORLANDO/CASSELBERRY/CELEBRATION

MAY 10: MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH; Wyndham Garden Orlando Resort; 2635 McCoy Road; noon to 3 p.m.; live performance by Awaaz Group; \$55 adults, kids 5 to 12 years are \$35; call DJ Yattin at (407) 837-2137.

MAY 16: 14TH ANNUAL IACC GOLF INVITATIONAL; organized by Indian Chamber of Commerce; Celebration Golf Club, 701 Golf Park Drive, Celebration; 7 a.m.; to register and for more information, visit www.iaccorlando.com



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May 2026 Events

Saturday, May 9 (5:00-8:00PM)
Mother's Day
Mata Ki Chowki
(Sponsored by
Shree Chandrakant Patel & Family)

Thursday, May 14 (6:30-8:00 PM)
Group Pradosh Shiv Pooja

Saturday, May 16 (4:00-6:00 PM)
Gujarati Bhajan

Sunday, May 17
Adhik Jyeshtha Maas Start

Sunday, May 24 (5:00-6:00 PM)
Shree Jhulay Laal Bhajan

Saturday, May 30 (5:30-8:00PM)
Shree Jagannath Bhajan

Weekly Events

EVERY MONDAY - 6:30 PM
• SHIV ABHISHEK AND PUJA

EVERY TUESDAY - 7:00 PM
• SUNDERKAND PATH
• HANUMAN CHALISA

EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00 PM
• ALL SADGURU & SHIRDI SAI BABA
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LUNG CANCER

By DR. VENKIT IYER, MD, FACS



Out of all types of cancers, cancer of the lungs causes highest number of deaths. Approximately 2.2 million people are affected with this disorder world-wide per year, resulting 1.8 million deaths every year. Lung cancer triggers more deaths annually than cancers of colon, breast and prostate combined.

The main risk factors for lung cancer include long-term exposure to tobacco smoke, air pollution and certain occupational hazards such as asbestos, arsenic and chromium. Family history of cancers and prior radiation

therapy to chest wall are added risks. Eighty percent of lung cancers are associated with smoking tobacco. Smokers are at risk to get a lung cancer 15-20 times higher than nonsmokers. The good news is that deaths from lung cancers have decreased during the past few years because of reduced tobacco smoking, better screening tests and more effective treatment protocols.

Common symptoms may include persistent cough, chest pain, shortness of breath, blood in the sputum or haemoptysis, hoarseness of voice, palpable lymph nodes in the neck, repeated upper respiratory infections, recurrent bronchitis and unexplained weight loss. People tend to ignore the symptoms as smoker's cough, flu or bronchitis until late. Diagnosis is verified by a chest X-ray followed by CT scan of the chest.

Heavy smokers are urged to have screening tests for early detection of lung cancers, with hope for better treatment. Current recommendation is to do low dose CT scan (LDCT) once a year for those individuals who are between 50 and 80 years old, who have 20 pack years of smoking history or are currently smoking or who quit smoking within the last 15 years. If any abnormalities are noted in the LDCT, extra tests are conducted such as regular CT scan, bronchoscopy, CT guided biopsy or surgery. A package of smoking means one pack cigarette per day for one year. Many individuals fall outside of these age limits for screening and there is a strong suggestion that insurance companies should allow screening from age 40 onward.

There are two types of lung cancers: non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), which is the most common, and small cell lung cancer (SCLC), which tends to grow and spread faster. Among the non-small cell cancers, they can be adenocarcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma or large cell carcinoma. Medicine and prognosis varies. Treatment of lung cancer depends on the type of cancer, staging, patient fitness

and molecular biology of the disease. Much progress has been made in the last decade alone. Various options include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, immunotherapy and targeted therapy. Each patient is treated individualised by a multidisciplinary team. Biopsy confirmation and staging procedures are done in this effort. This step may involve several other tests and procedures.

Surgery is the first choice for early non-small cell cancers with hope of cure. This may involve lobectomy or pneumonectomy. Surgery is more often being conducted by minimally invasive measures (VATS) and with robotic assistance. Chemotherapy is used as adjuvant to surgery before or after surgery.

Radiation therapy is an option for more advanced cancers as a palliation. A new development that is making impact is precision-targeted therapy based on tumour genetic testing for specific mutations. Several new drugs have been introduced and appear to show promise. Another fresh development is immunotherapy where the immune system is used to attack the cancer cells. Here also several new drugs have been introduced. Small cell lung cancers do not require surgery. They are treated with chemotherapy and immunotherapy. At times, radiotherapy is supplemented.

Efforts must be made to prevent lung cancer as far as possible. First priority is to stop smoking any type of tobacco. Second-hand smoking is also a risk factor. Living in a nonpolluted neighbourhood is important. Toxic fumes, smog, motor vehicle emissions, industrial wastes, radon exposure and climate changes are other risk factors. Breathing fresh air from natural surroundings is healthy. Occupational hazards from mining, asbestos handling and working with toxic materials or radiation emitters must be kept in mind. Society must take responsibilities in reducing atmospheric pollution.

Survival from lung cancer has improved during the last 30 years. This has to do with early detection and advancements in treatment protocols. Currently, if lung cancer is diagnosed in its early stage and treated appropriately, a five-year survival of 60-80 percent can be expected. But the fact remains that lung cancer is still the No. 1 cause of death among all cancers.

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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HOW PAST ENCOUNTERS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN AFFECT YOUR IMMIGRATION JOURNEY

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



Have you ever wondered if a minor run-in with the law years ago could impact your hopes of living and working in the United States? The truth is any encounter with law enforcement—even if it happened a long time ago or resulted in no conviction—can complicate your immigration case. Let's explore why this is important and how you can navigate this tricky terrain.

Did You Know? No Incident Is Too Old or Too Small

Many people assume that an old arrest, a dismissed charge, or an incident that did not lead to a conviction will not matter. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has been routinely checking

criminal history databases, including FBI records. Even if an incident was years ago or was not prosecuted, it can still come up during your immigration process.

Have you ever disclosed such incidents on your visa or immigration forms? Even if you have, USCIS has access to information you might not remember or think is relevant. This includes minor infractions or cases that were expunged or dismissed. Many immigration forms ask whether an individual has been arrested. For example, many individuals often assume that if the case was dismissed or dropped, or if the incident took place several years ago, they can safely answer no. Others may fail to disclose the arrest because it was dismissed and the records were expunged. However, all arrests have to be disclosed whether or not they led to a conviction and whether or not the records were expunged. What does this mean for you? It means that any past encounter could potentially influence your eligibility for a visa, green card, or other immigration benefits.

To determine if an individual has a criminal record, USCIS may issue a Request for Evidence ("RFE") requesting biometrics to be completed. USCIS may also request a complete criminal record—official arrest reports, court records, final dispositions, or even documents indicating that charges were dismissed or expunged.

Typically, you will need:

- Certified arrest or police reports
- Court records showing the final outcome
- Court orders vacating or sealing charges, if applicable

If official records are not available, a letter from the relevant authorities explaining that no record exists may suffice.

The New Reality: Discretion Is More Powerful Than Ever

In years past, simply providing documents showing no conviction or a clean record often sufficed. Today, USCIS officers have broader discretion. They can deny benefits based on their judgment, especially if they believe your criminal history reflects poorly on your character or poses a security concern.

For example, conduct supporting terrorist organizations or hateful ideologies can carry "overwhelmingly negative weight" in their assessment. As such, proactively presenting evidence of rehabilitation, community involvement, stable employment and family ties in the U.S. can make a difference.

How Should You Respond?

If you are asked for evidence or believe your case might be scrutinized due to your criminal history, gather documents that show your positive qualities:

- Personal statements explaining your circumstances and progress
- Letters of recommendation from community leaders, employers, or religious figures
- Evidence of community service, employment, and family responsibilities
- Proof of compliance with court conditions like probation or community service
- Records showing no recent incidents.

Special Considerations for Work Visas

For those applying for work visas like the H-1B or green card through employment, there is another layer of complexity. Even if your petition is approved, your actual status—your ability to enter or stay in the U.S.—can still be denied based on discretion. In fact, recent policies have heightened scrutiny of criminal backgrounds, and in some cases, even a minor past issue could lead to a denial of your change or extension of status.

What Are the Implications?

A denied status can mean you have to leave the U.S. or face hefty fees if you are processed through a consulate abroad. For example, some recent policies impose a \$100,000 fee on certain H-1B petitions if applicants are approved only for consular processing, not for change of status in the U.S.

Final Thoughts: Be Proactive and Prepared

Do you have a past criminal record? Do not wait until the last minute to address it. Working with experienced immigration counsel and preparing your documents thoroughly can significantly improve your chances. Remember, honesty and proactive efforts to demonstrate your rehabilitation are your best tools in navigating this complex process.

Have questions about your own situation? Consulting with qualified legal experts can help you understand your options and develop a strategy suited to your circumstances.

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

MAY 17: MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL; organized by Gujarati Society of Central Florida; performance by dayro singer Vatsala Patil; Shri Lakshmi Narayan Mandir, 269 S. Klondike Ave., Orlando; 5 p.m.; GSCFL members free, \$25 non-members; call Kirit Patel at (689) 222-5185.

MAY 22-25: UNITED GUJARATI CONVENTION 2026; organized by Federation of Gujarati Associations of USA (FOGAUSA) AND LOCAL FLORIDA GUJARATI SOCIETIES; Renaissance Orlando (SeaWorld), 6677 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, for more information and to register, www.FOGAUSA.org

FORT MYERS/NAPLES

MAY 10: MOTHER'S DAY; dinner and dance celebration organized by India Association of Fort Myers; The Commons, 2633 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Fort Myers; 4 to 8 p.m.; kids under 18 years of age are free; \$35 tickets are available at www.iaftmyers.org

PONTE VEDRA BEACH/JACKSONVILLE

MAY 9: TAJA (TELUGU ASSOCIATION OF JACKSONVILLE AREA) UGADI VEDUKALU; New Year celebrations; Ponte Vedra High School, 460 Dark Park Road, Ponte Vedra Beach; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; for information, call Hari at (903) 262-8364.

SOUTH FLORIDA (WEST PALM BEACH)

MAY 17: MOTHER'S DAY PICNIC/MEMBERSHIP DRIVE; organized by Palm Beach India Association; Micanopy Pavilion, Okeehelie Park, 7715 Forest Hills Blvd., West Palm Beach; 11 a.m.; free with annual paid membership, \$25 non-members; for questions, email president@gopbia.org

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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AS GAS PRICES PEAK, AUDI Q6 SPORTBACK E-TRON IS A COMPELLING CHOICE

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

With its sweeping roofline leading to an almost coupe-like appearance, it is arguably one of the sleekest compact all-electric luxury SUVs on the market. Sitting between the Q4 and Q8 e-trons, the 2025 Audi Q6 Sportback e-tron is quick off the mark, with plenty of punch to produce a graceful and energetic ride. Lest we forget, the renowned quattro all-wheel drive provides peace of mind in any road situation or weather condition.

A 100-kWh lithium-ion battery coupled with dual motors, front and rear, is capable of blasting off a healthy 456 horsepower. Translation? Zero to 60 is achievable in just 4.9 seconds with top speed of 130 mph. Getting power to the ground is a single-speed auto gearbox, which results in a quiet and smooth drive train. An electronically controlled, continuously adaptive air suspension at all four wheels delivers admirable poise and stability. Making the SUV effortless to place in corners is a direct and accurate rack-and-pinion electric power steering. The potent brakes, which feature 13.8-inch ventilated discs, have a firm pedal feel. They operate inside 19-inch alloy wheels shod with 235/60 front and 255/55 rear tires. On a full charge, the cozy five-seater can cover up to 318 miles. Plug into a 240 volt and it will take about 14 hours, but a fast DC charge can juice up 80 percent in just 21 minutes. Towing and payload capacities are plentiful at 4,400 and 1,036 pounds respectively.

Thumbs up to the exterior appearance with its generous bit of black trim, showing off a massive single-frame and familiar four-ring grille surrounded by pinwheel-design LED headlights. The interior is cozy with plenty of top-notch luxury and style. The 14.5-inch MMI infotainment interface stands tall on the dashboard with the driver facing a curved 11.9-inch digital display



Q6 SPORTBACK E-TRON

Wheelbase: 113.7 inches
Length: 187.9 inches
Height: 65.1 inches
Width: 86.3 inches
Fuel economy: 109 city, 97 hwy, 103 MPGe
Weight: 5,324 pounds
Base price: \$69,600
Price as tested: \$78,590
Web site: www.audiusa.com

screen. The driver and front passenger are pampered by rich-looking eight-way power heated leather seats. Opt for the \$5,800 prestige package, which fetches you Bang & Olufsen sound system with 3D sound, animated head and taillights, seven digital DRL signatures, top-view camera, 10.9-inch passenger display screen, etc. Thoughtful touches include a three-spoke power tilt/telescopic steering column, moon roof and liftgate, wireless phone charger, 40/20/40 fold rear bench, three-zone auto a/c, and an Audi drive select so dynamic, comfort, balanced, efficiency and offroad modes are available.

With gas nearly \$4 a gallon as summer brings an even bigger hit at the pump, the Q6 e-tron is a no-brainer. Its sleek appearance and cutting-edge technology make the electric SUV a tempting choice. On that note, Audi will skip this year's model and reintroduce the Q6 e-tron in the second quarter of 2027 with several appealing upgrades.

LET THE REVAMPED 2026 HONDA PILOT STEER YOU TO YOUR DESTINATION!

There are a dime a dozen family-haulers on the road but the one that instantly grabs attention is the three-row 2026 Pilot. Boasting a solid chassis, subtle styling and plentiful cabin room, the Honda midsize SUV has enjoyed tremendous popularity since its debut in 2003.

For 2026, the Japanese carmaker's engineers have maintained the naturally aspirated V-6 powertrain in this easy-riding companion. Instead, changes include larger infotainment screen and digital driver cluster, revamped front fascia, retuned steering and better sound insulation. The midsize SUV is still equipped with a 3.5-liter V-6 engine packing decent 285 horsepower @ 6100 rpm and 262 pounds-feet of torque @ 5000 rpm. Our top-level Elite was mated to a 10-speed auto transmission, which when combined with the Variable Cylinder Management, operates in three- or four-cylinder modes for substantial fuel savings. Additional sound-damping materials hold wind and road clatter to a minimum.

And instead of a boxy and almost plain appearance, the curvy and attractive Pilot will draw inquisitive stares like it did during our test drive. LED headlights and fog lamps flank a new gloss black grille with active shutters as it hosts the familiar H for Honda emblem on its unit-body structure. As expected, it's in the cabin that the Pilot shines with well-placed storage cubbies everywhere. There also is a massive hidden underfloor cargo area. Passenger volume is 154.9 cubic feet of space. Thirsty occupants have 14 beverage holders to stay hydrated. The all-new and crystal clear 12.3-inch infotainment screen and

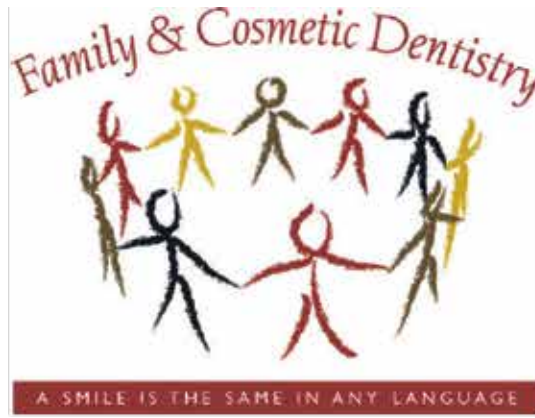


PILOT (ELITE, AWD)

Tires: P255/50 R20
Wheelbase: 113.8 inches
Length: 200.1 inches
Width: 78.5 inches
Height: 71 inches
Suspension: MacPherson front; multilink rear
Steering: power rack-assist pinion
Fuel capacity: 18.5 gallons
City/hwy/comb: 19/25/21
Base price: \$53,495
Web site: www.honda.com

10.2-inch digital driver cluster are substantially bigger than the previous year. Ultrasuede accents with diamond stitches give the ride with 10-way power driver and four-way front-passenger seats a rich ambiance. Thoughtful touches include multi-zone auto a/c, tilt/telescopic four-spoke leather steering wheel, second-row Captain's chairs, third-row 60/40 flat seat, panoramic tilt/slide moon roof, 10-speaker Bose audio, wireless phone charger, head-up display and power tailgate.

For an SUV that weighs about 4,478 pounds, the Pilot delivers a smooth and amenable outing in comfort and style. Thanks to its cargo-, people-hauling practicality and the right mix of power, this Honda is the ideal vehicle to park in a family garage.



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Happy Mother's Day!

ORLANDO BRACES FOR HISTORIC GATHERING

Cont'd from page 1

An exclusive “Sit-Down” on the May 22-25, 2026, United Gujarati Convention with Jayesh Patel, Convention Chairman (and Chairman, GSCFL, Orlando).

As the 2026 Memorial Day weekend approaches, all eyes are on Central Florida. In what is being hailed as a landmark moment for the Gujju diaspora, the Federation of Gujarati Associations of USA (FOGAUSA) is set to host the “United Gujarati Convention” from May 22 to 25.

In a rare show of statewide solidarity, the Gujarati Society of Central Florida has unified every major regional association – from the Panhandle to the Space Coast – to welcome thousands of delegates from across North America.

Malay Shah, CEO of Rimage Solutions and Freebirds Media, sat down with **Jayesh Patel**, Convention Chairman and Chairman of the Gujarati Society of Central Florida, to discuss the scale, the surprises and the soul of this massive undertaking.

A Vision of Unity

Shah: Jayeshbhai, this is a historic win for Florida. What is the core philosophy driving this convention?

Patel: Our mission is singular: to bring all Gujaratis together under one umbrella. With the blessings of our community’s spiritual leaders, we’ve envisioned a “mega-event” that transcends local boundaries. We aren’t just hosting a meeting; we are building a home for the community in the heart of Florida.

Shah: Coordination on this scale is difficult. What has the reception been like from the various Florida chapters?

Patel: The response has been splendid. Every major association from Orlando, Space Coast, Tampa Bay, South Florida, Jacksonville, Ocala, Tallahassee, Fort Myers/Napes, Panhandle and beyond – has



Malay Shah, left, and Jayesh Patel

pledged full support. These local organizations are the backbone of a marathon effort. They aren’t just participants; they are the engine driving our volunteer force.

Business, Culture and the Next Generation

Shah: With delegates arriving from over 40 states and vendors traveling from across U.S. and even India, what can attendees expect on the ground?

Patel: We’ve curated a balance of commerce and culture. We have “Gujarati-to-Gujarati” entrepreneurship sessions and trade shows, as well as also women’s empowerment forums, spiritual discourses, healthcare forum, fashion show, and traditional entertainment like natak. There is quite literally something for every generation.

Shah: You’ve spent decades advocating for the youth. How does this convention reflect that commitment?

Patel: The youth are the reason these societies exist. For United Gujarati Convention 2026, we’ve

designed a high-energy lineup: a golf tournament, a funding pitch event for startups, art competition, chess competitions and even a “Meet the Astronaut” session. We are also hosting a premier matrimony event to help our young professionals build families within the community. Finding a life partner has been a challenge in our community – and we want to provide a platform to families and the aspiring youth to connect and interact.

Innovation and Logistics

Shah: Orlando is a global tech hub. Will we see a focus on modern technology or Artificial Intelligence this year?

Patel: I want to keep some surprises for the opening ceremony, but I’ll say this: word has it that a very special “AI dignitary” might be making an appearance. You’ll have to be there to witness it.

Shah: You’ve chosen the Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld as your base. What went into that decision?

Patel: It’s a world-class facility with prime accessibility. Beyond the venue, we’ve secured incredible perks — discounted room rates, theme park tickets and even cruise deals. We want our delegates to experience the best of Florida hospitality.

The Bottom Line

Shah: In closing, what is your final message to those still on the fence about attending?

Patel: If you are proud of your Gujarati roots, come join us. Use this weekend to network, grow your business, or just celebrate our shared heritage. This is history in the making. Visit www.FOGAUSA.org to register and be a part of it. This is a team effort. Our volunteers are working tirelessly to ensure this event leaves a lasting legacy.”

Photos are AI generated and for illustrative purposes only.

THE GOLDEN RAAS: UCF KNIGHT RAAS DEFIES THE ODDS TO CLAIM NATIONAL TITLE

Story provided by Malay Shah

In a stunning display of rhythm, resilience and cultural pride, the University of Central Florida’s KnightRaas team was crowned the champion of Raas All-Stars XVIII on April 11 in Baltimore, Md., for first time in the history of UCF.

The victory marks a historic milestone for the Orlando-based team at the nation’s most prestigious Raas competition after entering the season as a self-described underdog.

From Underdogs to Icons

Just one year ago, the narrative for KnightRaas was vastly different. After a season that saw the team’s ups and downs, many counted them out. However, under the leadership of captains Niriham Shah, Rishi Kumar, Rayan Nana and Mridhini Beegamudre, the team transformed last year’s disappointment into a fuel for success.

“The team channeled their losses into determination,” Niriham Shah shared. “Empowered by our team of dancers, board members and creative team, backed by our community of alumni, family and sponsors, turned a dream into a reality



celebrates South Asian culture and the Raas-Garba tradition of Gujarat, India, while supporting community-focused philanthropic causes. Now one of the largest intercollegiate dance communities in the nation, RAS connects 60+ teams, 15,000+ dancers and alumni and continues to foster a culture of diversity, safety and inclusion through its resources and town halls.

through sheer persistence and collective belief.”

A Masterclass in Tradition and Spirit

Established in 2013, KnightRaas is UCF’s premier competitive South Asian folk-dance team. Their performance in Baltimore wasn’t just about technical precision; it was a vibrant celebration of Garba and Raas, the traditional folk dances from Gujarat.

The National Championship XVIII showcased the team’s ability to blend high-energy athleticism with cultural heritage. For the dancers, the stage is a way to stay connected to their roots while representing UCF on a national platform.

Raas All-Stars (RAS), founded in 2009,



Federation of Gujarati Associations of USA (FOGAUSA)

In collaboration with all Gujarati associations of Florida

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- 08: Health Sessions
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MAY YOUR EYES BE AT THEIR BEST



By DR. ARUN GULANI

The month of May has a way of waking everything up. The light feels different. Colors look richer. The days stretch just enough for you to say, “let me just sit outside a little longer,” and suddenly it’s dark and your phone battery is at 2 percent.

And in all of this, we forget something simple — vision isn’t just about seeing well enough, it’s about enjoying what you see.

We clean out closets in spring. We service our cars. Some of us even promise to go to the gym (at least for the first week of May). But our eyes? We just expect them to show up and perform, no questions asked.

Maybe this month is a good time to change that.

May means outdoors. Golf courses, beaches, gardening, long drives, or just pretending to walk while actually checking emails on your phone. With all that sunshine comes UV exposure. Now, your eyes don’t complain loudly about it, they’re polite that way. But over time, UV light quietly contributes to aging changes inside the eye.

So yes, your sunglasses are not just a fashion accessory (even though they absolutely can be). They’re sunscreen for your eyes. And if you’re wondering — no,

squinting is not a long-term solution. That’s just your eyes saying, “we need help here.”

Polarized lenses? Even better. Especially around water or while driving — less glare, more comfort, fewer “why is everything so shiny?” moments.

While we’re outside more, let’s be honest, we’re also still glued to screens. Phones don’t take summer vacations. If your eyes feel dry, heavy or just “tired for no reason,” it’s not your imagination.

Here’s a simple trick that actually works (and no, it’s not a gimmick): every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds. It sounds almost too simple. That’s why most people don’t do it. Think of it like stretching during a long flight. Your eyes need that break just as much.

And then come allergies. May is when pollen shows up like an uninvited guest ... and refuses to leave. Itchy eyes, watering, redness — you know the routine. And what do we all instinctively do? Rub our eyes like we’re trying to start a fire. That only makes things worse.

A better approach is surprisingly simple, use lubricating drops, keep windows closed when pollen is high, and wear sunglasses outdoors. Yes, again. They’re doing double duty here. And if it just won’t settle down, it may not be “just allergies.” Sometimes dryness or surface irritation hides behind that same discomfort.

One of the most common things people say is, “I can manage.”

You can manage blurry vision. You can manage glare at night. You can manage constantly adjusting your glasses.

But the question is, why should you have to?

If lights are streaking, halos are bothering you, or you’re working harder to focus than you used to, your eyes are not being dramatic. They’re being honest.

And here’s the good news, eye care today is not what it used to be. Many things that once meant “just live with it” now have thoughtful, customized ways to improve them. Not one-size-fits-all. Not rushed. Just designed around the individual.

There’s a quiet shift happening. People are no longer satisfied with “good enough vision.” They want clarity. Comfort. Ease. Not because they’re picky but because once you experience better vision, you realize what you were missing.

Now, this doesn’t mean everyone needs something drastic. Sometimes it’s as simple as updating your glasses, treating dryness, or fine-tuning how your eyes work together. And sometimes, yes, it means exploring more advanced options like next-generation Lasik and custom cataract surgery. The key is not to assume. The key is to find out.

In the meantime, a few small habits go a long way. Drink water, your eyes like hydration more than your coffee does. Eat color, greens, oranges, reds, if it looks like a rainbow, your eyes approve. Blink more often, sounds funny, but most of us forget, especially on screens. Wear protection when needed. And every now and then, check in on your eyes — not because something is wrong, but to keep it that way.

At the end of the day, vision is not just medical. It’s emotional.

It’s how you watch your child from across the field, how you read a message from someone you love, how you notice the ocean, the green on a golf course, or the expression on someone’s face.

And sometimes, we don’t realize what we’re missing, until we see it clearly again.

As May unfolds, with all its light, color, and energy, it’s a good moment to pause and ask: am I just seeing, or am I truly experiencing what I see?

Because clear vision isn’t just about eyesight.

It’s about living the moment, without effort, without strain, and without compromise.

Arun C. Gulani, M.D., M.S., is director and chief surgeon of Gulani Vision Institute in Jacksonville. He can be reached at gulanivision@gulani.com or visit www.gulanivision.com

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PUNJABI ASSOCIATION IN TAMPA CELEBRATES BAISAKHI

More than 350 community members gathered for an unforgettable evening of celebration and philanthropy April 4 at India Cultural Center in Tampa. Organized by the Punjabi Association of America, the Baisakhi Mela was a testament to community spirit, blending cultural pride, high-energy entertainment, and a strong commitment to supporting a local cause.

The venue was transformed with stunning, vibrant decor, creating an immersive atmosphere that welcomed guests into a world of color and joy, along with delicious authentic food and a spectacular showcase of bhangra and Bollywood dances.



Amit Dehra, left, Vinay Taneja, Hiroo Kapur, Sunny Sidhu and Mary Ann Massolio.

“We wanted this function to be more than just a celebration,” said President Amit Dehra. “It was about celebrating our culture and our community’s power to make a difference.”

In that spirit of giving, PAA proudly announced a donation to 1Voice Foundation, which provides 25 programs and services for children battling cancer and their families that are being treated at various area hospitals.

The evening concluded with members and guests uniting on the dance floor, embodying the fun and unity that defined the night.



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A S T R O L O G Y

MAY 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) Confidence is at its peak — use it wisely, not aggressively, as the line between the two is thin. Harness this energy to influence others and strengthen your position in society. The Sun and Mars align briefly, bringing focus, bold thinking, and drive to complete pending work. Avoid impulsive decisions, as they may backfire. Finances may improve, though stability comes with careful planning. The second half is powerful for new ventures and leadership.

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) The first half of the month needs one to be careful with money and any government-related work. One should avoid taking big risks or making major commitments now. After mid-month, things start to improve — confidence grows, and money matters become clearer. One may see gains and comfort, but only if one stays patient in decisions. Family needs attention, especially the health of elders, particularly the father. Work moves ahead slowly, with some delays. The second half is better for settling and securing gains.

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 begins with introspection and on a slower note. There may be delays or confusion in decision-making. However, clarity sets in, especially mid-month. Jupiter's influence helps expand opportunities through communication, networking, and advisory roles. Financial gains are indicated, though rising expenses may balance immediate benefits. Professionally, new opportunities may emerge toward the end of the month. Patience and clear understanding, paired with proper communication, should be used to avoid misunderstandings. The last phase of the month brings stronger pace and visible progress.

CANCER / Kataka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22-July 22) Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha Financial gains and professional recognition are indicated, particularly through networks and associations. The first half may bring some emotional fluctuations, but stability improves as the month progresses. Professionally, consistent efforts may begin to show results, especially in the latter half. Financial inflow improves, though disciplined management. Family life remains stable but requires emotional balance with proper understanding. This is a beneficial month for long-term planning and strengthening influential connections.

LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23-Aug. 22) Sun Sign – Stars covered Magha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni (1st part) Career and public image remain the primary focus. The first half supports visibility and authority, while the second half brings increased responsibility and pressure. Professionally, this is a decisive phase — recognition is possible, but only through sustained effort and discipline. Financial improvement is gradual and tied to professional growth. Relationships may require balancing personal and professional priorities. Avoid instant or ego-driven decisions, as they backfire.

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) Expansion in thought, planning, and long-term vision dominates from middle of the month. The first half may bring delays or overthinking, but clarity improves after mid-month. Professionally, opportunities arise through strategic planning and skill application. Financial matters may improve with disciplined efforts. This is a favorable time for learning, consulting, and exploring new directions. Avoid rigid thinking and remain flexible to maximize gains.

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) This is clearly a transformative month that demands careful handling of finances, be it shared resources or partnerships of any kind. Unexpected expenses or financial adjustments may arise in the first half. Professionally, progress is slow but steady. Relationships deepen but require emotional maturity and honest communication. The latter half brings better clarity and control. Avoid unnecessary risks and focus on long-term stability.

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MAY FORECAST

Cont'd from page 12

SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) Mars Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha Relationships and partnerships are strongly highlighted. Planetary effects bring intensity, making it important to control reactions and avoid conflicts. Professionally, collaborations may bring results if handled diplomatically. Financial improvement is possible through structured planning. Health and routine need attention, particularly after mid-month. This seems like a rewarding period for control on actions and balancing daily life.

SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Jupiter Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part) The month demands discipline, consistency and a focused effort in whatever one does. Professional progress requires patience. Financial stability can be maintained, though major gains may take time. Health may improve with structured routine. Relationships require attention and time investment. This is not a month for shortcuts — consistent effort may bring long-term rewards.

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) Creativity, self-expression and personal satisfaction come into focus. Professionally, opportunities arise through innovative thinking and calculated moves. Financial matters improve gradually. Family life brings moments of joy but also responsibility. This is a favorable month for those involved in creativity, advisory or independent roles. Balance work home responsibility with personal happiness.

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) Home, family, and emotional stability take priority. Responsibilities may increase, requiring careful balance of personal and professional life. Financial matters remain stable with disciplined planning. Professionally, progress is slow but steady. Avoid emotional decisions in financial or property matters. The month supports grounding, stability, and long-term planning.

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 Communication, networking and movement define this month. Professional

progress is seen through consistent efforts and practical application of knowledge. Financial matters improve gradually, especially through skill-based work. Relationships benefit from clear communication. The latter half brings better clarity and results. This is a positive time for learning, teaching and expanding influence.

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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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, GRAMMAR AND HOW TO DESTROY A COLLEGE ESSAY

By **ROBERT A.G. LEVINE**



In pursuit of college acceptance, applicants and their families overstress about writing perfect essays. After 43 years of admissions experience, I say this without hesitation:

It doesn't work.

Colleges ask questions to evaluate the applicant, not the applicant's writing abilities. The essays are intended to transfer content, not style. As one admissions professional told me:

"The essays should be about showing who the individual is more so than judging their writing.

Unfortunately, I see too much pressure to write a 'unique piece of prose' that

usually results in the same, trite, overdone essays. A student's emails when they're 'off' speak to me more than when they're trying to show their 'best' side. It's all about being genuine and authentic."

One of my favorite admissions deans offered this insight:

"The first rule is 'be real.' Admissions readers crave authenticity and genuine stories. Trying to be someone you're not is not good. I'm very skeptical of the perfect teenager. In fact, I've never met that person."

Yet, in pursuit of that elusive gold ring known as an admissions offer, too many families discard authenticity in favor of what they perceive to be "great writing."

Today, we drown in the chopping wake caused by artificial intelligence. It's a new tool that's still developing, but unfortunately most people use that tool as if it guarantees success. In college and graduate admissions, AI will lead you down a foolish road to failure.

Why? Most of us can tell when AI has been employed, and "most of us" includes admissions readers. While they are trying to understand you, artificial intelligence is not you, nor does it make you sound like you. In pursuit of "better" words, you'll end up submitting counterfeit content. If they can't find you, they won't pick you.

In my experience, ChatGPT and the like are simply these latest models of the wanderlust for success through perfect grammar. Colleges don't care about perfect grammar. As long as your writing is not careless and sloppy, it's OK. Although I appreciate grammar, let's not let grammar get in the way of what's important: your authenticity and your message. If we have to break a few rules to communicate something in a better way, let's break the rules!

When we edit, our job is to help our clients communicate their ideas in the best possible way. You might be surprised to learn that, at UCA, we have hired excellent grammarians, only to let them wade away when they couldn't see the forest for the trees. Yes, we do have internal editing guides (our guide for the Personal Statement alone is 25 pages long), but the rule is always "form follows function."

Remember, the goal is to get selected, not win a writing prize. So, while English teachers do a fine job of coaching English, very few understand what admissions readers want. They don't know the grading rubrics of individual admissions offices, nor do they study the forever-evolving strategies that each college employs differently. That being said, it is always valuable to get input from others, but please consider outside input as suggestion, not mandate. It's your essay.

This is why UCA insists that our students write quickly and loosely. Get your normal conversational tone into your essay. If necessary, dictate instead of typing. And, after we have completed all of our editing, at UCA we return to each student's Speed Draft and reinsert their favored verbiage and sentence structures.

In the world of admissions, the rule is, "Don't do it all perfect. Do it all you."

Which brings me to today's final urban legend: the need for a "hook." Yes, you should quickly engage your admissions reader, who is busy and tired and probably only skimming your essay. However, a hook is not the way to do engage them properly. Although it is critical to catch their attention in the first few sentences, the idea is to communicate your ideas, not impress them with poeticism that is likely unrelated to what you really want them to learn about you. In your Personal Statement, start with a "tell" (btw – implication works better than being express), but hooks seldom accomplish that.

How do you charm them? Sound like yourself! Relax. Be you. Sound like you. Let them discover 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

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WHAT TO KNOW IF YOU RECEIVE AN IRS NOTICE



By **TEJAL DHRUVE, CPA**

Notices from the IRS are more common than you may realize. Each year, the IRS mails millions of letters to clarify information, confirm changes or request additional documentation. Receiving a notice may seem intimidating, but most notices can be addressed quickly with the right information and guidance.

Five Common IRS Notices Explained

Each IRS notice includes a reference number, such as CP49 or CP14. It identifies the issue and helps determine the appropriate response. Below is an

overview of the most common types of notices and what to do if one arrives in your mailbox:

1. CP12 (including CP12, CP12E, CP12F, CP12G, CP12N and CP12U), refund adjustment. A CP12 is sent when the IRS corrects a math error or similar issue on your tax return. The correction may increase or decrease your expected refund. If you agree with the change, no response is required. If you disagree, call the IRS at the toll-free number shown on the notice by the date indicated.
2. CP14, balance due. This notice informs you that you owe taxes. Address the notice promptly. You can pay in full, explore installment options or seek assistance if you believe the notice is incorrect. Ignoring it can result in interest charges, penalties and collection actions.
3. CP49, refund applied to a debt. This notice explains that your refund was used to pay all or part of the outstanding tax liability. Review how the refund was applied. Disputes are generally handled with the agency that received the funds, not the IRS. On a joint return, a spouse who's not responsible for the debt may be able to recover his or her share of the refund by filing Form 8379, "Injured Spouse Allocation."
4. CP2000 series, proposed changes to your return. This notice is issued when the IRS compares your tax return to information reported by third parties, such as employers or financial institutions, and finds a mismatch. It isn't a bill; it's a proposal to adjust your return. Read the notice carefully and respond by the deadline listed. Follow the instructions, include any required documentation and note whether you agree or disagree. If no response is received, additional notices or a bill may follow.
5. Letter 4883C, identity verification. When the IRS suspects possible identity theft, it may pause processing your return until your identity is confirmed. Call the Taxpayer Protection Program hotline as directed in the letter. Have the tax return referenced in the letter, a prior-year return (if available), and supporting documents, such as Form W-2, Form 1099 and Schedule C, ready. If you didn't file the return listed in the notice, contact the IRS immediately, because this may indicate identity theft.

Speaking of fraud, remember that the IRS will never email, text or call demanding payment. Legitimate notices always come by mail.

Understanding Your Options

IRS notices can be confusing, especially when calculations or supporting documents are involved. If you receive a notice, contact the office for help confirming whether it's accurate, understanding your options and communicating with the IRS.

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

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SUSTAINABLE LIVING, WOVEN AS ART

By **BRINDA PAMULAPATI**



In a world moving rapidly toward fast fashion and synthetic convenience, there is a quiet, enduring rhythm that continues to breathe through India's handwoven textiles. These fabrics are not merely materials. They are works of art, living traditions and stories passed through generations. They represent sustainable living long before the term became a

global movement.

Breathable, natural, and deeply rooted in local ecosystems, Indian weaves such as Khadi, Ikat and Jamdani are crafted using cotton, silk and other organic fibers. Like a painting that is built layer by layer, each textile emerges through a slow, deliberate process where texture, rhythm and pattern come together in harmony. These are not just garments. They are compositions.

These are custom-made wearable works of art, carefully designed and crafted by skilled artisans whose knowledge has been accumulated and passed down through generations. Each piece carries within it a legacy of technique, patience and cultural memory. As we embrace modern lifestyles, it becomes increasingly important to remain conscious of our role in supporting and sustaining this rich heritage.

Shilpa Reddy, an Indian fashion designer and sustainability advocate, brings this perspective to life through her YouTube series "Sustainable Living with Shilpa Reddy." Through her exploration of mindful living, she highlights the depth and complexity behind Indian weaves and the lives of the artisans who create them. As she shares, "I wanted to somehow bring awareness about our Indian weaves, weavers and the complexity involved in each and



Collage with Banaras silk saree and acrylic on canvas — Artwork by Brinda Pamulapati

every weave... in every episode." Her words resonate deeply within the realm of art.

What is a handwoven textile if not a canvas? The loom becomes the artist's tool, the threads their medium, and the final fabric a visual and tactile masterpiece. A single handwoven sari can take weeks, sometimes months, to complete, mirroring the devotion an artist brings to a work that cannot be rushed.

Some textiles carry more than craftsmanship. They carry memory. In my own work, I have used my mother's Kanchipuram saree, a fabric that once held the rhythm of her life and her quiet strength. As I layer it with acrylic and transform it into a collage, I am not simply creating an artwork. I am continuing a



Collage with Kanchipuram saree (inherited textile) and acrylic on canvas — Artwork by Brinda Pamulapati

story. The saree, once worn and lived in, now exists in a new form while retaining its essence.

Sustainable living, then, becomes an artistic choice. When we choose handwoven textiles, we are not just selecting clothing. We are collecting heritage and supporting livelihoods, preserving heritage and reducing environmental impact. These fabrics invite us to slow down, to observe, and to feel. In embracing them, we honor not only tradition, but artistry itself.

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

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Here's a relevant poem as we approach the "Mango Season":

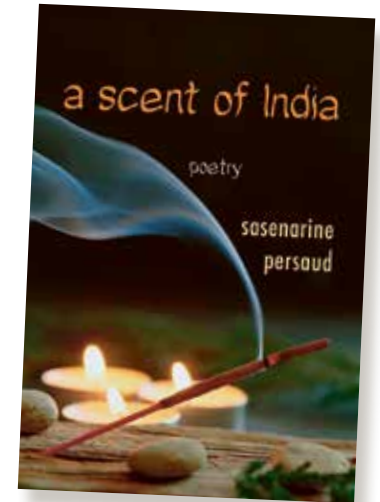
*"Mango chatney or mango achar—what
Difference in uncooked cooked condiment—
A customs officer poking around the bottle
at JFK airport, a waft of mustard oil escaping
And we are hungry hungry hungry as that
Afternoon when Uncle I scaled fifty feet
in a minute wind roaring in branches
atop the Taj mango leaves in a circle seating
Dried coconut in lota as you prepare
For ancient pujas, the Donald's voice ringing
—lying cheating thieving Txx not Tejo Mahalya
Uncle Indar lowering a bucket of tree-ripened
turmeric-gold spice mangoes originating
in an unknown Indian countryside—
Hahaha Uncle I laughing and licking fingers
high above—sweet like spice I know
I know but slowly slowly slowly, eat too much
and you will need to find a backdam latrine."*

And here is brilliantly-written poem, which takes its name from book's title:

*"When an all-week rain has clipped
spring-summer Florida heat
and sindoor adorns evening clouds
when redstarts rattle jamun dusk
when the only discordant notes
are blue jays shrilling—from where
have you come—Toronto
could be anywhere imagination*

*serves up baseball spring training
snapshots of the Rouge River
emptying into Lake Ontario
tulsi blended with dried Assam
leaves—a bold bindu on your forehead
when frogs call between downpours
when bats seize this time between light
and light and eyelids droop O sleep
O sleep O sleep hold while we savour
sandalwood-scented skin after shower."*

A native of Guyana, Persaud who resides in New Tampa, is an author of over 15 books of fiction and poetry. He worked as a writer in Canada before moving to the United States. Among his awards include the K M Hunter Foundation Award, the Arthur Schomburg Award and fellowships/scholarships from the University of Miami and Boston University. This is another indispensable reading for all fans of Persaud who terms his aesthetics "Yogic Realism."



"A Scent of India" (80 pages; \$20.95) by Sasenarine Persaud; published by Mawenzi House (www.mawenzihouse.com)

And he has returned after a three-year pause with yet another fine poetry collection, "A Scent of India." The Indo-Caribbean and Indo-South American poet takes on several subjects in this 59-poem book: coffee, cardinals, cricket, roti, Auschwitz, yoga, cowherds, Delta launch, and more. All revolve around the enduring scent of India, its spices, colors, dances, languages, philosophies, etc. as Sasenarine Persaud takes us to Guyana, Trinidad, San Salvador, Florida.

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