

KHAASBAAT

A PUBLICATION FOR INDIAN AMERICANS IN FLORIDA

WWW.KHAASBAAT.COM • EDITOR@KHAASBAAT.COM • 813-758-1786

SEPTEMBER 2026

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AAPI DATA:

ASIAN INDIANS LARGEST ETHNIC GROUP IN FL; ORANGE COUNTY TOPS

Compiled by NITISH S. RELE

Asian Indians (231,340) form the largest ethnic group in Florida, according to Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote) and AAPI Data. The two organizations recently released the 2026 AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) State Fact Sheets, a comprehensive set of demographic and voter data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In the Sunshine State, after Asian Indians, the next leading groups are Filipino (184,506), Chinese except Taiwanese (152,672), Vietnamese (108,330) and Korean (46,872).

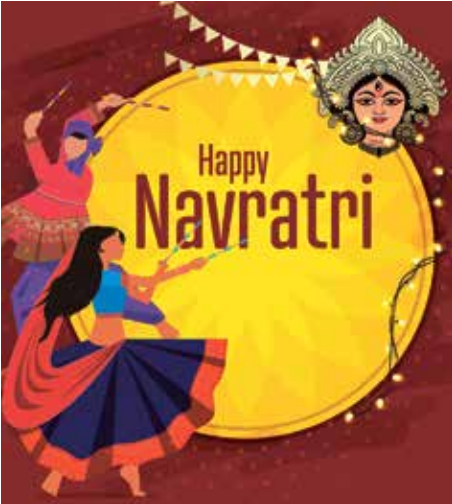


Ranked sixth largest in the nation, Florida's AAPI population is about 1.27 million with 485,883 native-born, 373,682 foreign-born citizens and 167,463 foreign-born noncitizens. The Sunshine State has seen a 48.4% AAPI population growth from 2014-2024. Top Asian languages spoken in the state are Chinese (73,461), Tagalog (71,236), Vietnamese (71,175) followed by Hindi (30,446) and Gujarati (24,433). Among Asian Americans, 51.4% speak a language outside of English at home and 20.5% are limited English proficient.

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EVENTS IN OUR OCTOBER ISSUE

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

SEPT. 2: 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.

SEPT. 5: MEGA ONAM; organized by Malayalee Association of Central Florida/Tampa (MACF); Knanaya Community Center, 2620 Washington Road, Valrico; 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; for tickets, visit www.MACFTampa.com
SEPT. 8: 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.

SEPT. 12: GARBA WITH THE DAKLA KING BHUMIK SHAH; presented by Magik Masti; Gaither High School (indoor basketball court), 16200 N. Dale Mabry Highway, Tampa; 7 p.m.; \$20 early bird special; purchase tickets at www.sulekha.com

SEPT. 16: 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.

SEPT. 17-20: "IN 7 STEPS TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE WITH SADHGURU;" Inner Engineering program at Tampa Women's Club, 290 Bayshore Blvd., Tampa; call (813) 413-1661 or register at www.isha.co/Tampa-IE

SEPT. 19: CHARITY FUNDRAISING CONCERT/DINNER; organized by ISKCON Tampa; featuring bhajan singer Anup Jalota; India Cultural Center, 5511 Lynn Road, Tampa; 5:30 p.m.; tickets start at \$108 and will benefit building new Radha Krishna Temple; for information, call Suresh Kumar at (913) 228-9213.

SEPT. 20: GARBA RAMZAT WITH GEETA RABARI; presented by Record A Hit Entertainment; Sickles High School (basketball court), 7950 Gunn Highway, Tampa; 6 to 10 p.m.; \$35 at door; food available for purchase, call Bhavik Modi at (813) 557-4555.

SIGNIFICANT DATES

SEPT. 4: KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI

SEPT. 14: GANESH CHATURTHI BEGINS

SEPT. 26: ONAM CELEBRATION FROM ATHMA; organized by Association of Tampa Hindu Malayalees; Hindu Temple of Florida, 5509 Lynn Road, Tampa; for details, email athma.inc@gmail.com

OCT. 31: 37TH ANNUAL INDIA FESTIVAL;

organized by the Gujarati Samaj of Tampa Bay; Florida State Fairgrounds, 4800 U.S. 301 N.,

Tampa; 10 a.m. onward; to purchase tickets and for more information, visit <https://indiafesttampa.com/>
CASSELBERRY/ORLANDO/MAITLAND/OVIEDO/ KISSIMMEE

SEPT. 6: FALGUNI PATHAK DANDIYA DHOOM 2026; presented by Hi India and supported by DJ Yatin of Jalsa Beats; Hagerty High School, 3225 Lockwood Blvd., Oviedo; 6 p.m.; call Yatin at (407) 837-2137 or buy \$35 tickets at www.hiindiaevents.com

SEPT. 12: SRI JAGANNATHA RATH YATRA; Hindu Society of Central Florida, 1994 Lake Drive, Casselberry; 9 a.m.; for information, call (321) 662-3584.

SEPT. 12: 16TH ANNUAL ASHOKA AWARDS GALA; organized by Indian American Chamber of Commerce; 6 p.m.; Rolls-Royce Orlando, 2202 33rd St., Suite C, Orlando; live performance by Khuda Baksh, acclaimed singer and first runner-up of "Indian Idol" Season 9, for information, email kash@iaccorlando.com and for tickets, visit www.iaccorlando.com/

SEPT. 14-20: SHRI GANESH MAHOTSAV; organized by Orlando Marathi Mandal and Hindu Society of Central Florida, 1994 Lake Drive, Casselberry; Ganesh sthapana, daily aarti, visarjan; to sponsor or for information, call Prashant Saoji at (321) 460-0800.

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SEPTEMBER 2026 EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	TIME
THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 3	Shree Krishna Janmashtami Janmashtami Puja • Krishna Janam • Bhajan Utsav	6:00 PM onwards
FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 4	Dahi Handi Dahi Handi Utsav & Cultural Program	6:00 PM
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 6	Aja Ekadashi Puja & Aarti	8:00 PM
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 7	Gujarati 4th Shraavan Monday Group Shiva Maha Puja	6:00 PM
TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 8	Bhaum Pradosh Puja Group Shiva Maha Puja	6:30 PM
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13	Hartalika Teej Nepali Group Teej Puja	11:00 AM
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 14	Ganesh Utsav Sthapana Beginning of 10-Day Parthiv Ganesh Puja	11:00 AM
TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 22	Parivartini Ekadashi Puja & Aarti	8:00 PM
FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 25	Anant Chaturdashi & Ganesh Visarjan Parthiv Ganesh Visarjan Puja with DJ / Dhol	6:00 PM
SATURDAY-SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 26-27	Pitru Paksha / Shraddha Paksha Group Pitru Tarpan Program will be arranged with a minimum of 5 sponsors.	By Arrangement
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 27	Shree Jhulelal Ji Bhajan Bhajan • Kirtan • Aarti	5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

WEEKLY EVENTS

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

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

EVERY THURSDAY - 7:00PM
• SADGURU & SHIRDI SAI BABA
• BHAJAN SATSANG

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SOCIETAL CHANGES IN LAST 100 YEARS AFFECTING HEALTH CARE

By DR. VENKIT IYER, MD, FACS



Over the past century, the way people live, work, communicate, eat and receive medical care has changed profoundly. Medical science has extended life expectancy and improved survival from many diseases; however, several societal changes are also contributing to chronic physical and mental health conditions.

Food: Ultra-processed foods have become widespread because they are convenient, inexpensive and palatable. Recent U.S. data estimate that ultra-processed foods provide about 50 percent of the calories consumed, making this pattern a major public health concern.

Higher intake of ultra-processed food has been associated with obesity, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders and other chronic conditions.

Digital media: Many people now spend substantial portions of the day using phones, computers and televisions, often at the expense of face-to-face interaction, sleep, physical activity and cognitive activity. Excessive screen time is associated with sedentary behaviour, social isolation, anxiety, depression, sleep disruption and reduced overall well-being. These trends may contribute to obesity, cardiovascular risk and mental health disorders. Advent of artificial intelligence has its good and bad effects on mental health and cognitive development.

Addictive habits: Tobacco, excessive alcohol use and drug misuse continue to harm individuals, families and society. Short-term pleasure or relief may be followed by long-term physical illness, mental health consequences, addiction, financial strain and social disruption.

Women's role: Expanding educational, professional and social opportunities for women has been an important advance in equality and independence. At the same time, modern family and work patterns can create time pressures for both women and men, including less time for home cooking, family caregiving, pregnancy planning and rest. These burdens may contribute to burnout, delayed parenthood, fertility concerns and mental health.

Urbanisation: Rapid urbanisation has transformed rural areas into densely populated cities, often reducing access to green space and increasing traffic,

pollution, crowding and stress. These environmental changes may contribute to respiratory disease, diminished physical activity and other health challenges.

Climate change: Climate change and air pollution are increasingly linked to health risks, including heat-related illness, respiratory and cardiovascular disease, harms from extreme weather, and threats to food and water security. Wildfire smoke is concerning because fine particulate matter can worsen lung and heart disease.

Travel and transportation: Transportation has become faster and more convenient. However, increased travel also brings health concerns, including accidents, injuries, pollution exposure, sedentary commuting and stress from congestion.

Weapons and violence: The growing availability and destructive capacity of modern weapons have serious public health implications. Firearm injuries, mass violence, war-related trauma, displacement and the psychological effects of chronic insecurity contribute to preventable illness and death. Nuclear weapons add an unprecedented level of risk that did not exist a century ago.

Business of health care: Modern health care system has become dependent on tests, procedures, medications and treatment protocols. When financial pressures from insurers, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and equipment manufacturers dominate care decisions, prevention and lifestyle-based approaches to chronic disease receive less attention than they deserve.

Polypharmacy: Many patients take multiple prescription medications, sometimes from several clinicians and over the counter, who may not be fully coordinated. Polypharmacy can increase the risk of side effects, drug interactions, duplicated therapy and confusion.

In summary, medical progress has helped people live longer and healthier lives, but certain societal changes are having negative impacts on their general health.

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.

AAPI DATA: ASIAN INDIANS LARGEST ETHNIC GROUP IN FLORIDA

Cont'd from page 1

Orange County tops with the highest AAPI population at 82,339, followed by Broward (76,007), Hillsborough (70,981), Duval (51,101) and Palm Beach (44,641). About 9.8 percent Asian Americans live in poverty, 8.45% lack health insurance and 13.05% lack broadband access. As for 2024 data, Florida is ranked sixth in the nation with 637,081 eligible AAPI voters, making up 3.81% share of the electorate after seeing a 70.2% voter eligibility growth from 2014-2024. AAPI youth vote share is 20.48% while the seniors have 43.82 percent share.

Updated every two years, the fact sheets provide policymakers, advocates, researchers, journalists, campaigns, and community organizations with essential data on AAPI – the nation's fastest-growing racial demographic and voter bloc. With over 27 million residents (including mixed-race individuals) spread across the nation and 16,172,190 eligible voters, they have emerged as the nation's fastest-growing voter bloc.



"AAPI voters are shaping elections nationwide, yet our communities are still too often overlooked or misunderstood," said Christine Chen, Executive Director of APIAVote.

"These fact sheets give organizers, policymakers, media, and advocates the context they need to build more informed, effective, and inclusive engagement strategies and to better understand AAPI communities' growing impact on American democracy."

"Our communities are growing rapidly in places well beyond the Northeast and the Pacific West," said Karthick Ramakrishnan, founder and Executive Director of AAPI Data. "It is critical for news media, funders, and civic engagement organizations to use these updated findings to ensure accuracy and efficacy in their work."

The fact sheets are based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and include both monoracial and multiracial AAPI populations.

About AAPI Data

AAPI Data is a national research and policy organization producing accurate data to support community narratives that drive action toward enduring solutions for Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities. Learn more at aapidata.com

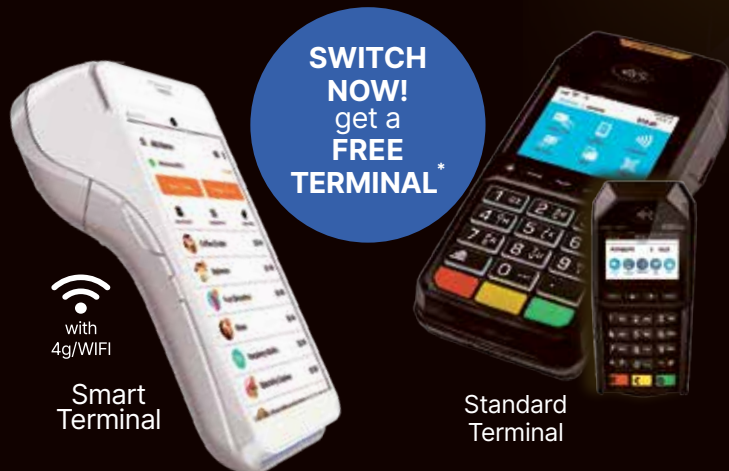
About APIAVote

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote) is the nation's leading nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to engaging, educating, and empowering Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities to strengthen and sustain a culture of civic engagement. See our website for more information at <http://www.apiavote.org/>

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US DHS PROPOSES ELIMINATION OF 60-DAY GRACE PERIOD FOR CERTAIN NONIMMIGRANTS: WHAT EMPLOYERS AND FOREIGN NATIONALS NEED TO KNOW

By KHUSHBU PATEL and DILIP PATEL



In a move that could significantly impact the landscape of employment-based immigration in the United States, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proposed a rule to eliminate the 60-day grace period currently afforded to certain nonimmigrants.

While the full details of the proposed regulation are not yet available, the implications are already sparking considerable concern among employers and foreign workers.

Background: The Sixty-Day Grace Period — A Vital Safety Net

Since its formal implementation in 2017, the 60-day grace period has served as a critical safety net for nonimmigrant workers in the U.S. who experience employment termination or other status changes. Before this regulation, there was no official period allowing individuals in valid visa statuses, such as H-1B, L-1, E-2, or TN, to remain legally in the U.S. after employment ended, aside from the expiration of their I-94 record.

The regulation permits these nonimmigrants and their dependents to stay in the U.S. for up to 60 days after employment ends or until their I-94 expires, whichever comes first. During this time, they can:

- Seek new employment
- Apply for a change of employer or change of status
- Prepare to depart the U.S.
- Obtain employment authorization under compelling circumstances.

Importantly, each individual is eligible for only one 60-day grace period per petition validity period, making it a limited but essential window for lawful transition.

The Proposed Change: What's at Stake?

The DHS proposal, currently in the review phase, aims to eliminate this grace period. If finalized, the rule would mean that nonimmigrants whose employment ends before their petition's expiration date would no longer be able to stay in the U.S. during that 60-day window. Instead, they would be required to depart immediately unless they have obtained specific USCIS authorization for a change of status or employment.

This change could have far-reaching effects:

- **Reduced Flexibility for Foreign Workers:** Currently, workers facing job loss have a safety net that allows them time to find new employment or transition smoothly. The elimination of the grace period would force immediate departure, complicating job searches and potentially leading to more unlawful overstays.
- **Increased Pressure on Employers:** Employers may face challenges in managing employment transitions, especially for foreign nationals on H-1B and other employment-based visas. The sudden departure requirement could disrupt business operations and create compliance risks.
- **Impact on Immigration and Labor Markets:** The change might deter foreign talent from pursuing employment in the U.S., affecting industries that rely heavily on skilled foreign workers, such as technology, healthcare and academia.

Timeline and Next Steps

The review process is ongoing. The proposal was submitted for review on Aug. 6, 2026. Once the review concludes, DHS will publish the proposed rule in the Federal Register, opening a comment period of 30 to 60 days.

Following the comment period, DHS may decide to withdraw, modify or proceed with the rule. If the rule moves forward, it could take several months to finalize and implement, meaning the current 60-day grace period would remain in effect until that time.

What Should Employers and Foreign Nationals Do Now?

While the proposed rule is still under review, it is wise for employers and foreign workers to prepare for potential changes:

- **Stay Informed:** Regularly monitor official DHS and USCIS announcements regarding the rule's progress.
- **Review Employment Policies:** Employers should review their policies for managing employment terminations and consider strategies to ensure compliance and minimize disruptions.
- **Plan for Transition:** Foreign nationals should consider alternative plans, such as timely departure, applying for change of status, or exploring other visa options before employment ends.
- **Consult Legal Experts:** Given the complexity and potential impact, consulting immigration attorneys can help develop strategies to navigate upcoming changes.

Broader Context: A Trend Toward Greater Discretionary Control

This proposed change aligns with broader discussions within U.S. immigration policy circles about increasing DHS and USCIS authority over nonimmigrant employment regulation. The elimination of the grace period undermines the flexibility needed for lawful employment transitions, potentially harming U.S. competitiveness and the ability to attract global talent.

Final Thoughts

The potential elimination of the 60-day grace period represents a significant shift in U.S. immigration policy affecting employment-based nonimmigrants. While the rule is still in the proposal stage, awareness and proactive planning are essential for those impacted.

Employers and foreign nationals should stay vigilant and seek expert legal advice. As always, the evolving landscape emphasizes the importance of staying informed and engaged with official updates and policy developments.

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

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TREAD LIGHTLY AS 2026 BMW M2 CS FLIES RIGHT OUT OF THE GATE!

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

A little over 2,000 BMW M2 CS (Competition Sport) units will be sold worldwide with just an odd 1,000 or so in the United States. Base-priced at \$98,500, the limited-production, high-performance sport coupe zips off 0 to 60 in barely 3.7 seconds with top speed of 188 mph. You get the picture. Obviously, the CS variant is no ordinary vehicle with 50 more horsepower and 36 pounds-feet of torque than the M2 standard coupe. It is as track and road ready and worthy than some of its few rivals like the Audi RS3 or the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS.

Under the hood of the German car sits a 3.0-liter twin-power turbo inline-6 cylinder gas engine that pumps out 523 hp @ 6250 rpm and 479 pounds-feet of torque @ 5730 rpm. It is mated to an immaculate 8-speed auto gearbox (sadly, no manual option on this one), which can also be shifted via paddles on the steering wheel. With a 0.2-inch lower chassis than the base M2, the adaptive M suspension involves a double-joint spring strut front and a 5-link rear axle. Active M Differential distributes drive torque evenly to the rear axle for more control and stability. And as with any high-performance Bimmer powertrain, the engine, chassis, steering and brakes can be personalized according to the driver's fancy. The M Servotronic electric power steering with variable sport is direct and accurate, making the car amazingly athletic at quick corners and sharp turns.

Attribute the aggressive front appearance of the M2 CS to a sole black bar on the frameless kidney grille with the MS CS badge in red and a splitter underneath. A ducktail spoiler, red Brembo brakes and lacy bronze forged wheels further boost the attention-grabber's looks. The interior is cozy with plenty of luxury and style, starting with the iDrive 8.5 operating system made



M2 CS

Tires: P275/35ZR19 front; 285/30ZR20 rear

Wheelbase: 108.1 inches

Length: 180.6 inches

Width: 74.3 inches

Height: 54.9 inches

Fuel capacity: 13.7 gallons

City/hwy/comb: 16/23/19

Weight: 3,770 pounds

Price as tested: \$111,275

Web site: www.bmw.com

up of a 14.9-inch infotainment touchscreen and a 12.3-inch digital driver gauge cluster, all one fine, attractive piece. The M2 CS logo is apparent on the door trim panels, center console, seatback headrests and door sill plates. Lavish use of carbon fiber materials throughout keeps the M2 CS weight to a minimum. Other standard goodies include well-bolstered and supportive Vernasca leather bucket seats, M anthracite headliner, head-up display, Alcantara M steering wheel, Harman Kardon sound system, Apple Play and Android Auto, dual auto a/c, ambient lights, wireless phone charger and 40/20/40 rear seat.

Punch the gas pedal and the M2 CS lunges forward with eagerness, displaying raw power and agility to leave other drivers in your rearview mirror. And the rear-wheel-drive car shows off a cabin that matches its sportiness and liveliness. Go ahead and head over to the nearest track. This zippy little number will only leave you longing for more!

RIDE IN STYLE AND LIKE ROYALTY IN STATELY 2026 RANGE ROVER SE

Want to be treated like royalty with all the grand perks that come with it but behind the wheel? Well, then there is no better choice than the 2026 Range Rover SE long wheelbase (LWB). The flagship SUV from the Land Rover family with sheer class with incredible power and gorgeous looks moves quickly down the road. The driving experience is a pure thrill, fun and grace than just a stroll down the street. Go Above and Beyond as is the Land Rover slogan.

Owned by India-based Tata, the engine and the Range Rover itself is still assembled in England though transmission is from Germany. Regardless, the full-size luxury SUV is equipped with a 3.0-liter V-6 supercharged/intercooled engine (48-volt mild hybrid system) doling out an impressive 395 horsepower @ 6500 rpm and 405 pounds-feet of torque @ 5000 rpm. Power is put to the road via a flawless and responsive 8-speed auto gearbox, which can be shifted via noble-plated steering wheel-mounted paddles. Suspension is handled via a double wishbone front and multilink rear suspension with Adaptive Dynamics to enhance balance, handling and grip by automatically adjusting firmness. All-wheel steering makes a U-turn or parking in a tight spot effortless. Bringing the massive 5,600-pond beast to a slowdown/halt are 14.9-inch front and 13.9-inch vented rear brakes. Terrain Response 2 offers one of the following as per road/weather conditions: comfort (for daily driving), eco, dynamic and auto (grass/gravel/snow, mud/ruts, sand, rock crawl, wade).

The clamshell hood of the majestic SUV meets up with a colossal but attractive horizontal black grille that hosts the recognizable green oval emblem, surrounded by LED headlights with signature daytime running lamps. Approach the SUV from any angle with the key in your pocket and door handles deploy for royalty, in this case, you! Plop into expansive and cushiony perforated Windsor leather seats with large side bolsters that hold you firmly in place. Wood trim is convincingly classy too. The fairly-new Pivi Pro infotainment system is fundamentally a 13.1-inch floating curved glass touchscreen



RANGE ROVER SE

Tires: 275/50R21

Wheelbase: 126 inches

Length: 207 inches

Width: 81 inches

Height: 74 inches

Tow capacity: 7,715 pounds

Fuel capacity: 23.8 gallons

City/hwy/comb: 19/24/21

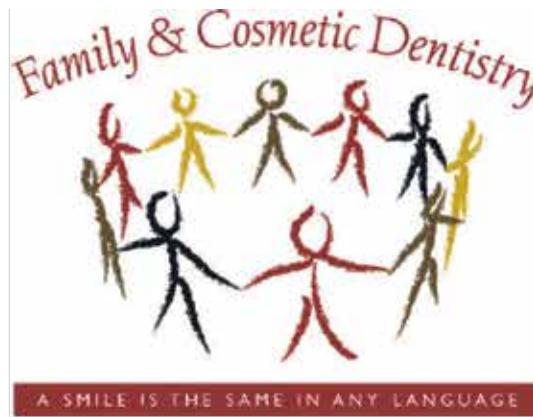
Base price: \$123,150

Web site: www.landrover.com

integrated into the center console for audio, navigation, climate, seat readings. Not to be forgotten is the 13.7-inch driver digital gauge with a rounded speedometer and

tachometer. Lending lavishness to the pristine cabin is a short but evident shifter knob in the hub of it all. Rear passengers are treated to plentiful headroom and luxury-liner legroom space. Other standard goodies include 12-way front heated/cooled seats, sliding panoramic moon roof, wireless phone charger/Android Auto/Apple CarPlay, four-zone auto a/c, Meridian sound system, power second- and third-row seats and tilt/telescopic steering column.

Whether you are off the beaten path or cruising the highway, the stately and serene Range Rover will guide you to the destination in royalty-like extravagance. As the illustrious English musician Jimmy Page once so aptly said, "The whole thing about the Rover is the whole swagger of it." Yes, swagger's the word!



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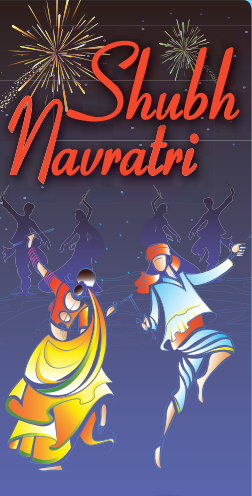
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YOUR KID IS WASTING TIME ... CONGRATULATIONS?

By **ROBERT A.G. LEVINE** and **AIDEN BAI**



So many parents worry that their kids are not doing the things the world proclaims are necessary for college admissions. I've said so many times, colleges are not seeking one particular profile. As parents, maybe we're vexed about the activity when we should be paying attention to the student.

This month, I present Aiden, who has learned so much from ... video games?!

"Video games are the only topic I've seen parents get riled up about more than politics. There's a constant debate between 'these games have value' and 'they waste so much time.' I think both views are misplaced. They're answering the wrong question.

"Let's consider 'Daniel,' a kid playing a game on his phone. His parents just spent a long day at work, drove home, and had to cook dinner. They finally finish, but when calling their kid to eat, Daniel doesn't respond. This repeats and repeats until the fed-up father searches and finds his kid so checked out that he doesn't even notice his parents are trying to feed him.

"Mom and Dad have every right to be annoyed, but on the other hand, Daniel doesn't like getting yelled at, so his response regurgitates the usual points about hand-eye coordination, motor response and social interaction. He may even mention that some scientific studies back up his points.

"In this conflict, everyone takes a side about whether video games are good or bad. And in doing so, we fall into an ageless trap. Fighting over the value of video games is like asking whether books are good. Good compared to what? Which book? For which kid?

"Simple yes-or-no questions lead to oversimplified answers ... about the game, not the child. Let's re-examine this kind of thinking by traveling back in time to one hour before the parents got home.

"Daniel has just finished a long day of school, so he looks for respite. He is on a massive tilt (meaning he is losing a lot of games in quick succession), but further playing is really his way of figuring out what he is doing wrong. By trying to get better, Daniel is focused on self-improvement.

"Now, before you say, 'Daniel could be doing the same thing with something more valuable,' ask yourself this: in how many scenarios will kids embrace failure just to get back up, try again, and adapt to their problems?

"Unfortunately, by focusing on the activity, parents see video games as worthless without seeing that Daniel is building a tolerance for difficulty. By worrying about the game – not the child – they are not considering Daniel's growth, choosing instead to mislabel his concentration as squandered opportunity.

"I am a real-life example of this. When I was younger, I played Spelunky Classic, which kills you constantly and sends you right back to the start. Because of its sheer difficulty, it took me fifty (50) hours to beat that game. But I was learning persistence.

"Did my 'learning' translate elsewhere? Come eighth grade, I started running cross-country. As someone who hated running, I thought I wouldn't make it for two months. But if I could spend 50 hours trying to beat a game, I could spend a few hours running. Over time, my 'never say die' attitude became a key to coping with my most arduous tasks. Failure tolerance is valuable.

"The truth is that video games are neither good nor bad. Their value depends on whether they are played thoughtfully or not. For me, a game helped me learn to address challenges. For someone else, that same game might mean nothing but play time.

"Maybe Daniel really is wasting his evening. Or maybe he is 50 hours away from something that outlasts the game completely. But how would his parents know if they jump into conflict without conversing with their son? In a world overburdened with checklists, perhaps before judging an activity, we should check in with each other."

Well said, Aiden. I remember my own father not understanding why I repeatedly played solitaire on the floor instead of reading books. He never learned what I was trying to do: by playing the simplest game, I was trying to develop my thought processes to succeed in impossible scenarios.

When Harvard accepted me, it wasn't because of my prowess with Solitaire card game, but it also wasn't because of those books I didn't read. If you were a college admissions officer, wouldn't you be impressed with someone who tries to teach himself life lessons?

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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A S T R O L O G Y

SEPTEMBER 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) September may increase activity involving home, family, property, vehicles or personal surroundings. Professional opportunities could support financial progress, particularly through partnerships and established contacts. Communication, documentation and pending responsibilities may become easier to manage as the month progresses. The period appears favorable for resolving practical matters and improving daily organization. Emotional reactions require restraint, especially in domestic discussions. Financial conditions may gradually improve through careful planning, cooperation and disciplined professional effort.

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) Work, health routines, creativity and personal responsibilities require greater attention. Practical communication could support progress in education, professional planning or matters involving children. The planetary pattern indicates the possibility of success in managing competition, pending work or administrative concerns. Financial gains may arise through sustained effort rather than speculation. Relationships seem likely to benefit from thoughtful gestures and balanced expectations. The month appears beneficial for improving routines, developing skills and creating stronger foundations for future growth.

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) September may bring greater focus to education, creativity, family welfare, property and financial planning. Improved analytical ability could support important decisions, although documents and discussions require additional attention during the first half. The Gochara indicates the possibility of professional gains through communication, knowledge or useful associations. Domestic conditions may gradually improve through practical cooperation. Expenses involving comfort or family could increase. Calm speech and disciplined action seem likely to strengthen personal confidence, relationships and financial stability.

CANCER / Kataka (Watery sign, ruling planet is Moon) - (June 22-July 22) Moon Sign – Stars covered Punarvasu (4th part), Pushya, Aslesha Energy, confidence and determination may increase, encouraging one to pursue important personal and professional objectives. Jupiter's continuing influence appears promising for knowledge, guidance, meaningful relationships and long-term development. Communication and short journeys could support new opportunities, while domestic matters may gradually become more comfortable. Mars may increase emotional intensity, making patience especially important. The planetary pattern indicates the possibility of personal advancement, provided decisions remain measured and reactions are not driven by impatience or excessive confidence.

LEO / Simha (Fire sign, ruling planet is Sun) - (July 23-Aug. 22) Sun Sign – Stars covered Magha, Purva Phalguni, Uttara Phalguni (1st part) Personal confidence and visibility remain noticeable, while communication and financial planning receive increasing support. Professional contacts may bring useful possibilities, but major expenses or distant commitments require careful assessment. Relationships seem likely to become more cooperative when pride and unrealistic expectations are avoided. The period appears advantageous for strengthening skills, organizing finances and reviewing long-term priorities. Thoughtful speech could support family harmony. Financial stability may gradually improve through disciplined decisions rather than impulsive action or speculative commitments.

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) September may strengthen analytical ability, communication, confidence and professional visibility. The month appears promising for planning, learning, documentation, interviews and presenting one's abilities. Friends and influential contacts could support meaningful progress, while partnerships may require patience and realistic expectations. The planetary pattern indicates the possibility of financial gains or recognition through disciplined effort. Avoid over-analysis and excessive criticism.

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SEPTEMBER FORECAST

Cont'd from page 12

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) Venus may enhance charm, diplomacy, personal appeal and the ability to build constructive relationships. Career conditions appear favorable for recognition, responsibility or a change in direction. Professional cooperation and balanced negotiation could support advancement. Expenses and private concerns require sensible management, particularly during the first half. Gochara indicates the possibility of greater confidence and useful social connections. Financial and professional circumstances may gradually improve through tactful communication, practical decisions and support from established associations.

SCORPIO / Vruschika (Water sign, ruling planet is Mars) - (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) Mars Sign – Stars covered Vishakha (4th part), Anuradha, Jyestha Travel, higher learning, experienced advisers and professional contacts may bring encouraging opportunities. Improved confidence and communication could support important plans. Financial conditions may improve gradually through networking or earlier efforts. Shared finances, investments and emotional reactions require careful management. The planetary pattern appears beneficial for expanding knowledge and strengthening valuable associations, supporting long-term growth.

SAGITTARIUS / Dhanush (Fire sign, ruling planet is Jupiter) - (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) Jupiter Sign – Stars covered Moola, Purva Shada, Uttara Shada (first part) Professional visibility and responsibilities may increase, creating possibilities for recognition or advancement. Helpful associations could support long-term goals, while friendships and networking appear helpful for gains. Shared finances, insurance, family assets or unresolved obligations require careful management. The movement of Mars indicates the possibility of emotional intensity or unexpected expenditure, making restraint important. Partnerships may gradually improve through balanced communication. Practical planning and disciplined effort seem likely to strengthen professional credibility and financial organization.

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) Partnerships, agreements, travel, education and professional guidance may become increasingly important. The month appears favorable for cooperation, consultations and forming useful associations. Career matters could support recognition when

communication remains clear and responsibilities are handled consistently. Differences with partners should be managed calmly, as emotional reactions may create avoidable tension. Gochara indicates the possibility of gains through disciplined networking and sustained effort. Financial and professional conditions may gradually improve through patience, knowledge and practical cooperation.

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) Work, health, debts, shared finances and long-standing obligations require organized attention. Determined effort could support the resolution of pending matters or professional competition. The period appears promising for higher learning, travel planning and developing a broader perspective. Financial discipline remains necessary, particularly regarding family responsibilities or uncertain investments. Relationships may gradually improve through balanced expectations. The planetary pattern indicates the possibility of greater stability when one avoids impulsive commitments and follows a practical, well-structured plan.

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 Creativity, education, children, personal interests and meaningful relationships may receive encouraging planetary support. Partnerships and professional agreements could benefit from clearer communication and thoughtful negotiation. The month appears favorable for learning, consultation and strengthening important associations. Financial speculation should remain conservative, as emotional enthusiasm may affect judgment. Responsibilities continue to require patience, but circumstances may gradually improve through disciplined action. Gochara indicates the possibility of personal satisfaction, greater confidence and constructive long-term progress.

Disclaimer: This forecast provides general interpretations based on traditional Vedic astrology, Moon-sign Gochara (transits), and commonly accepted planetary aspects. Astrological methods and interpretations may vary, particularly regarding planetary aspects, regional traditions, and schools of practice. These forecasts are intended for general guidance and should not be regarded as a substitute for personal judgment or professional advice.

KHAAS BAAT LAUNCHES ANNUAL SPONSOR DRIVE

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

After completing our 22-year anniversary last month, we launched an annual sponsor drive to secure funds to cover production costs. Since its inception, Khaas Baat has been mailed free of cost to subscribers around the state with only a handful of paid subscribers in the past few years. In fact, we haven't missed an issue since we began in August 2004. In addition, the entire newspaper can be found online. Since ad revenues alone do not cover our monthly production costs (printing, design, mailing), we are in great need of corporate or private sponsors. Your support will allow us to continue publishing Khaas Baat as a high-quality newspaper you depend on.

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

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CULTURE IS NOT INHERITED. IT IS PRACTICED.

BY **BRINDA PAMULAPATI**



We often speak about passing our culture to the next generation as though culture was automatically inherited. We inherit family names, physical features and possessions. Culture is different. It survives when it is experienced, practiced, enjoyed and shared.

A child may know that a particular dish belonged to a grandmother's kitchen, but unless someone prepares it, serves it, and shares the story behind it, eventually it becomes only a name.

Traditional foods carry aromas, memories, celebrations, seasons and family histories.

If our children are never introduced to these foods, how will they know to ask for them? If they do not know to ask, how will they discover the enjoyment they might have brought?

The same is true of music, dance, literature, language, textiles, festivals and art. Appreciation begins with exposure. We learn to enjoy music by hearing it, food by tasting it, and art by seeing and experiencing it.

This is why museums, galleries, concerts, theaters and cultural spaces matter. Taking children to an art gallery introduces them to something a screen cannot fully reproduce: scale, texture, color, material and the presence of an original work. They may not understand every painting, but they begin to observe, question, respond and develop their own visual awareness.

Art also belongs in our everyday surroundings. The interiors we create quietly communicate what we value. A home thoughtfully arranged with original art, textiles, handcrafted objects, books, flowers and meaningful possessions can nurture an appreciation for beauty and creativity. Artistic interiors do not have to be expensive or elaborate. They are spaces created with imagination, individuality and care. When children grow up surrounded by art, art becomes a natural part of life rather than something reserved for museums or collectors.

Culture also lives in the way we treat one another. It is found in preparing a meal for guests, gathering around a table, dressing

for an occasion, visiting relatives, respecting elders, sharing stories and celebrating together. It is also found in learning to socialize with warmth, consideration, patience and self-control. These seemingly ordinary practices create connection and a sense of belonging.

Modern life offers extraordinary convenience. Food arrives at our doors, entertainment is available instantly, and technology can generate images, music and stories. But convenience cannot completely replace experience.

If families stop gathering, future generations may not know the pleasure of gathering. If we stop practicing hospitality, welcoming people into our homes may begin to feel burdensome rather than joyful. If children never visit galleries, hear live music, taste traditional foods, or experience thoughtfully created spaces, they cannot know whether these things might enrich their lives.

This does not mean every tradition must remain unchanged. Culture has always evolved. Our responsibility is not to make the next generation live exactly as we did. It is to give them something meaningful to choose from.

Take them to the gallery. Hang original art at home. Cook the recipe. Attend the concert. Tell the family stories. Invite people over. Celebrate the festival. Practice hospitality.

Some traditions they will keep, some they will reinterpret, and others they may leave behind. That is their choice.

But choice requires exposure.

Culture survives not because we remember that it once existed, but because someone continues to live it.

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

Images at right, Top: Tiger Lily Middle: Stripes Bottom: Red Tiger Credit: Christina Klein



SEPTEMBER IS HEALTHY AGING MONTH: WHAT ARE YOUR EYES TRYING TO TELL YOU?

By DR. ARUN GULANI



September is Healthy Aging Month, a good reminder that living longer should also mean living well and few things influence our independence and enjoyment of life more than our vision. Yet one of the most common mistakes we make as we get older is assuming that every change in eyesight is simply part of aging.

Our eyes do age, of course, and they do so at many different levels. The tear film that coats the eye can become unstable, the cornea can change, the natural lens gradually loses its ability to focus and later its clarity, the gel inside the eye changes, and the retina and optic nerve become more vulnerable to certain diseases. Some of these changes are completely normal. Some can be improved. Others can be

early warnings of conditions that deserve attention. The important thing is knowing the difference.

Presbyopia (reading vision)

For many people, the first noticeable change arrives sometime in their 40s. The restaurant menu starts moving farther away and the print on the phone suddenly seems smaller. This is usually presbyopia, the normal loss of our ability to focus comfortably at nearby.

But not every change in reading vision should automatically be blamed on age. Dry eye can make vision fluctuate, changes in blood sugar can alter focus, medications can affect vision, and subtle changes in the cornea or natural lens can also make yesterday's glasses seem inadequate today.

Dry eyes

In fact, one of the most overlooked parts of good vision is the tear film. Before light enters the cornea, passes through the lens and eventually reaches the retina, it first encounters this incredibly thin layer covering the surface of the eye. If that surface is unstable, the image entering the eye is already compromised. This is why someone may see clearly immediately after blinking and then become blurry again seconds later. Our screen-filled lives can make this worse because while concentrating on computers and phones, we tend to blink less frequently and less completely.

Cataract

As we move through our 50s and 60s, another familiar complaint emerges: "I can see, but I don't see as well at night." Headlights become brighter, halos appear around lights, contrast decreases and driving in rain or darkness becomes less comfortable. These symptoms may come from the tear film, shape of the cornea, astigmatism, size of the pupil or changes developing in the natural lens. Eventually, that lens can become cloudy enough to be called a cataract.

Cataracts are a normal part of aging for most people, but simply having cataract does not necessarily mean it needs to be removed. What matters is how it affects the person's life. Someone may have a visible cataract and function beautifully, while another person with a seemingly modest cataract may struggle tremendously with glare or night driving. More importantly, not every older person with blurry vision is blurry because of the cataract. The tear film, cornea, retina and optic nerve all contribute to the final image. The eye must therefore be understood as an entire optical system rather than as a collection of individual parts.

This also explains why "20/20" doesn't always mean perfect vision. The familiar eye chart measures an important aspect of sight, but it cannot completely describe contrast, glare, night vision, depth perception, optical quality or how comfortably the two eyes work together. A person can read the 20/20 line in a brightly illuminated examination room and still know that something about their vision is not right.

Your Healthy-Eyes Checklist

As you age, pay attention not just to how much you can see, but to how you are seeing:

- Reading: Are you simply needing more distance or light to read, or is the print becoming distorted or disappearing?
- Night driving: Are headlights suddenly producing more glare, halos or starbursts? Is your confidence driving after dark changing?
- Fluctuating vision: Does your vision clear after you blink and then become blurry again? Your tear film may be contributing.

- One eye versus the other: Cover one eye and then the other occasionally. Is there a new or significant difference?
- Straight lines: Do doorframes, window blinds or lines of print suddenly appear bent or wavy?
- Flashes and floaters: Longstanding floaters are common, but a sudden shower of new floaters, flashes of light, or a curtain or shadow across your vision deserves prompt attention.
- Peripheral vision: Are you bumping into objects or becoming less aware of things approaching from the side?
- Double vision: New or sudden double vision should not simply be dismissed as aging.
- Pain or redness: Significant pain, persistent redness or redness associated with decreased vision deserves evaluation.
- Your overall health: Diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol, medications and inflammatory conditions can have an impact on the eyes.

Perhaps the most useful question is simply: Is this change gradual, or did something happen suddenly? Sudden changes generally deserve greater urgency.

Some age-related eye diseases are particularly important because they may initially give us little warning.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma, for example, can gradually damage the optic nerve and peripheral vision while central vision remains excellent.

Age-related Macular Degeneration

Macular degeneration affects a different part of the visual system — the central retina —and may cause straight lines to look bent or distorted or make reading and recognizing faces increasingly difficult.

Diabetes

Diabetes can affect the tiny blood vessels of the retina, sometimes before a person notices any meaningful change in vision.

The eye is also remarkable because it can provide clues about what is happening elsewhere in our bodies. Blood vessels and nervous tissue can be observed directly through the eye without an incision. Diabetes, high blood pressure, inflammatory and autoimmune diseases, and even certain medications can leave clues there. Occasionally, what appears to be an eye complaint may even originate neurologically. Sudden double vision, loss of part of the visual field, or visual changes accompanied by weakness, facial drooping, difficulty speaking or an unusual severe headache should never simply be attributed to getting older.

So, what can we do to help our eyes age well? Much of the advice is reassuringly familiar because healthy eyes are connected to a healthy body. Don't smoke. Exercise regularly. Control blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar. Protect your eyes from excessive ultraviolet exposure. Eat a balanced diet rich in vegetables, fruits, healthy proteins and appropriate sources of omega fatty acids rather than depending on a cabinet full of supplements. Give your eyes breaks during prolonged screen use, pay attention to persistent dryness, and know your family history particularly for glaucoma and macular degeneration.

Most importantly, don't automatically accept a change in vision because of the number of candles on your birthday cake. Aging may explain many changes in our eyes, but it should not become an explanation for everything.

September's Healthy Aging Month is ultimately about much more than adding years to life. It is about maintaining independence, mobility, confidence and our connection with the world around us and vision play an extraordinary role in all of them.

Our eyes will age. That is inevitable. But blurry vision is not a birthday, glare is not a diagnosis, and loss of sight should never simply be accepted as the price of getting older.

The goal isn't to stop our eyes from aging. It's to help them see every age of our lives as clearly as possible.

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

IT'S OKAY TO BE NERVOUS — A DENTIST'S HONEST LETTER TO YOU PART II

By DR. JIGNESH PATEL, DMD



We use a simple stop signal — usually raising your hand — to pause at any moment. No questions asked, no rushing. You set the pace, every single time.

The Gentle Truth About Waiting

I say this with kindness, not to alarm you: avoiding the dentist almost always makes things harder in the long run. A small cavity caught early is a brief, simple appointment. Left too long,

it quietly grows into something more involved. Gum disease is entirely painless in its early stages — which is precisely why it progresses unnoticed when check-ups are skipped.

The reassuring news is that most of what I see in patients who have stayed away for a long time is completely manageable. We begin where you are, not where you think you should be. There is no lecture, no judgment — only a clear, calm plan to move forward together.

"I have never once thought less of a patient for the state of their teeth. I only ever think about how I can help."

A Note on Embarrassment

One of the biggest reasons people avoid the dentist is not pain — it is shame. A fear of being judged for teeth that have not been looked after, for time that has passed, for years of missed appointments piling up into something that feels insurmountable. I want to be very clear: I do not judge. I have seen everything. I know that life gets in the way — that finances get tight, that fear itself is one of the most powerful reasons people stay away. My job is to care for your teeth, not to evaluate the choices that led you here.

When you sit in my chair, the only thing on my mind is: how do I help this person?

A fresh start is always possible. No matter how long it has been, or what you imagine I will find — there is no hole too deep, no gap too wide. We simply begin from where you are today.

Simple Steps to Make Your First Visit Easier

If the idea of coming in still feels overwhelming, here are a few approaches that genuinely help:

- Book a "meet the dentist" visit first — no treatment, just a relaxed conversation and a look around. Completely low pressure, no surprises.
- Bring someone with you — a friend or family member in the room can make the whole experience feel far less daunting.
- Tell us everythi— the more you share about your anxiety, the better we can tailor the appointment to suit you.
- Use headphones — music or a podcast during treatment is always welcome. It helps more than you might expect.
- Take it one step at a time — you do not need to commit to a full treatment plan on day one. A single visit to say hello is a perfectly valid start.

Why I Became a Dentist

I still remember the day dentistry became personal for me. I was a teenager, mid-orthodontic treatment, playing in a cricket championship, when a ball hit me square in the face. My braces tore through my upper lip. I was bleeding, in pain, and — being a teenager — far more worried about what my smile would look like afterward than about anything else.

The dentist who treated me sutured the wound from the inside, so carefully that today, decades later, there is no visible scar. That moment stayed with me. It's when I understood, firsthand, what it means to be in someone's care during a moment of pain and vulnerability — and to come out the other side whole, without even a mark to show for it.

That experience, paired with growing up watching my uncle — the one doctor in our family — bring genuine relief and dignity to his patients, set the course for my life. I studied dentistry in India, trained rigorously in clinical practice and patient management, and later made the decision to move to the United States to build on that foundation and train further in the standards of American dental care.

Along the way I've learned that a healthy mouth genuinely changes how a person moves through the world. When you are not in pain. When you are not self-conscious about your smile. When you can eat what you enjoy and speak without thinking twice — life feels lighter, and that shift is real. I've felt it myself, and I've watched it happen for patients again and again.

As a new associate dentist here at the Family and Cosmetic Dentistry with Dr. Neeraja Jasthi, I am at the beginning of what I hope is a long career built on genuine trust with genuine people. I do not want to be the dentist that patients dread. I want to be the one they wish they had found sooner.

If that sounds like the kind of care you have been looking for — I would love to meet you.

Ready to Take the First Step?

Even a quick hello counts. Book a no-pressure introductory visit and let's start a conversation about your smile — entirely at your own pace.

Dr. Jignesh Patel, associate dentist at Family Cosmetic Dentistry with Dr. Neeraja Jasthi in Tampa, can be reached at (813) 866-9913 or visit <https://www.drjasthi.com/>

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♥ Thank you for being a part of our journey.

EVENTS

Cont'd from page 2

SEPT. 25-26: TRADITIONAL GARBA; presented by Aum Vayu Tourism; performers are Bhumi Trivedi (Sept. 25) and Jignesh Kaviraj Barot (Sept. 26); Poinciana High School, 2300 South Poinciana Blvd., Kissimmee; 8 p.m.; \$50 for two-day combo or purchase tickets individually; call Ankit Pandya at (689) 295-1555 or purchase tickets at sulekha.com

OCT. 3: GRAND GARBA NIGHT WITH PRAPTI MEHTA; presented by Gujarati Society of Central Florida; Oak Ridge High School, 700 W. Oak Ridge Road, Orlando; 8 p.m.; \$10 members, \$20 non-members, \$50 VIP; food, shopping and vendor stalls; call Chirag Patel at (407) 797-9407.

OCT. 3-5: "BEYOND BOLLYWOOD: THE 31ST ANNUAL SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL;" presented by Enzian Theater along with Asian Cultural Association; South Asian films shown on screen; Enzian Theater, 1300 S. Orlando Ave., Maitland; for details, visit www.enzian.org close to event date.

JACKSONVILLE

SEPT. 12: RANGTAALI WITH "INDIAN IDOL" FINALIST AISHWARYA MAJMUDAR; presented by Jax Indian Events and Yash Entertainment; Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, 1000 Water St., Jacksonville; 7 p.m.; for tickets, visit tinyurl.com/jiegarba2026 and more information, call Vijay at (904) 234-3374.

SOUTH FLORIDA (FORT LAUDERDALE)

SEPT. 26: LEGACY: TRIBUTE TO BHARAT RATNA PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR; organized by Association of Performing Arts of India; several sitarists, percussionists, vocalists and violinists to perform in concert; Broward Center for the Performing Arts, 201 Southwest Fifth Ave., Fort Lauderdale; 6 p.m.; purchase tickets at browardcenter.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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Beyond Family Contributions

Employers may establish programs to contribute to employees' 530A accounts. An employer can generally contribute up to \$2,500 annually (adjusted for inflation beginning in 2028) for an eligible employee or dependent under age 18. (The annual employer contribution limit is \$2,500 per employee, regardless of the number of eligible dependents.)

These contributions count against the \$5,000 annual contribution limit. Employer contributions are excluded from the employee's taxable income.

Tax Benefits and Account Rules

Contributions aren't deductible for individual contributors, but account earnings grow tax deferred as long as they remain in the account. Generally, no distributions can be taken before the year your child turns 18.

Until age 18, investments are limited to certain eligible mutual funds and exchange-traded funds that satisfy IRS requirements. In the year your child turns 18, the account basically transitions into a traditional IRA, and most rules governing traditional IRAs apply. Future contributions generally require earned income and may be deductible if your child is eligible.

Also, starting with the year your child turns 18, distributions can be taken. But the distributions will generally be at least partially taxable, and IRA early withdrawal penalties could also apply.

Finding the Best Option

Before making contributions to Section 530A accounts, consider whether other tax-advantaged savings options might better achieve your goals. For example, if your primary objective is funding a child's education, a Section 529 plan may be a better fit. Distributions used for qualified education expenses are tax-free, and some or all of the remaining balance may eventually be converted tax-free to a Roth IRA, subject to applicable requirements and limits.

If you determine that a 529 plan or other savings vehicle is better for your family, but your child would be eligible for the \$1,000 government contribution to a 530A account, seriously consider opening one. Even if you never make a contribution, the tax-deferred compounding growth on \$1,000 can lead to a substantial balance over time.

Seeking Guidance

A 530A account may provide significant long-term savings benefits. Consider how it fits into your overall financial strategy. Contact the office if you need assistance.



Dr. Hani Elmaghrabi is a senior physician and a leader in the field of infectious diseases. He is currently the Medical Director of the Infectious Diseases Unit at the University of Toronto and the University Health Network. He is also a senior advisor to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in Ontario. Dr. Elmaghrabi has a long history of clinical practice and research, and he is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences. He is also a member of the Canadian Society for Infectious Diseases and the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

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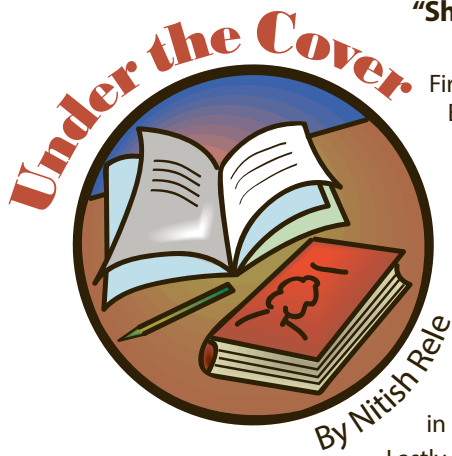
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“Shattered Lands: Five Partitions and the making of Modern India” (518 pages; \$39.99) by Sam Dalrymple; published by W.W. Norton & Co. (www.wwnorton.com)

First, a quick refresher on the British Indian Empire.

- Burma, a part of the gigantic empire, separated initially in 1937.
- Aden and rich Persian Gulf States such as Oman, Yemen, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar split up that same year and again in 1947.
- Then of course the Great Partition of India, creating Pakistan in 1947.
- More than 500 princely states segregated in 1947, divided between India and Pakistan.
- Lastly, the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Just imagine if today those oil-rich nations were still a part of the Indian subcontinent, so to speak. But that’s another story and a pipe dream (or nightmare?) at best! Historian, filmmaker and co-founder of Project Dastaan (peace-building initiative that reconnects refugees displaced by the 1947 India partition) Sam Dalrymple sheds light on the shattering of a massive empire in just 50 years. Books galore have been written about the 1947 partition and the 1971 Bangladesh creation. But it is fascinating to note that Aden, ancient port city in Yemen, was “the Indian Empire’s westernmost bastion, the largest city in the Arabian Peninsula, and like the rest of Indian Arabia it was governed as part of Bombay province,” the author points out.

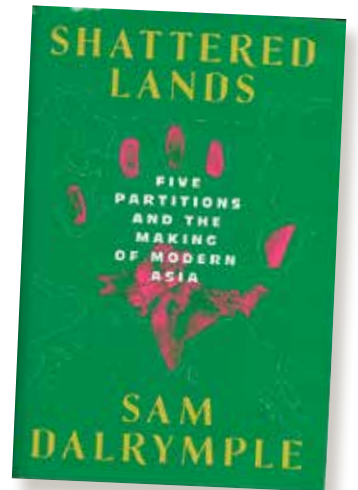
Burma features prominently in the book with “The Long March” during which Indians fled that country for Calcutta after the Japanese invasion in 1942. Such as Mirza Mohammad Bedar Bakt, “the half-Burmese descendant of the last Mughal Emperor, who had been exiled to Rangoon in 1858. Bakt was to remain a refugee all his life, ‘working in a bread factory and dying in poverty’ in 1980. Afterwards his widow was left to sell ‘tea on the pavement at Calcutta’s Howrah station.’” Also staking claims to nationhood were the Nagas, Mizos, Bengalis, Sikhs and even Pashtuns. In fact,

the Burmese separation inspired Muhammad Ali Jinnah to push for another partition of India, notes Dalrymple.

In “The Fall of Hyderabad” chapter, we learn that its Nizam Osman Ali Khan was not that compliant leader the British had believed. He ... “transformed Hyderabad into a modern nation with its own passport, currency, bank and airline. The state’s public works outdid those in British India, and Osmania University was the Raj’s first college to teach to a non-English vernacular (Urdu), writes the author. It is public knowledge that after J.D. Rockefeller’s death, the Nizam was recognized as the world’s richest man, and the fifth richest in history!

Several anecdotes about Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Jinnah, Sardar Patel, V.P. Menon, Sarojini Naidu, the Mountbattens, Subhash Chandra Bose, and even Dhirubhai Ambani and Amartya Sen are sprinkled throughout this well-researched, well-written book. It presents the complex and complicated story of the unmaking of the Indian Empire in a simple and straightforward manner. “How a single sprawling dominion became twelve modern nations,” remarks Dalrymple. “How maps were redrawn in boardrooms and on battlefields, by politicians in London and revolutionaries in Delhi, by kings in remote places and soldiers in trenches. It is a history of ambition and betrayal, of forgotten wars and unlikely alliances of borders carved with ink and fire. And, above all, it is the story of how the map of modern Asia was made.”

Our hats off to New Delhi resident Dalrymple for successfully tackling the delicate and elaborate subject on the legacy of the five partitions. This treasure, written with deep understanding and compassion, is a solid addition to the massive volumes on the subject.



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