

# THE LOTUS



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## Chéthan's Swan

Making Origami Swans for Peace and Ahimsa at the Republic Day celebration.  
Rainforest, Cleveland Metropark Zoo.

सर्वेषां स्वस्त्यभिवतु । सर्वेषां शान्तिर्भवतु ।

सर्वेषां पूरनं भवतु । सर्वेषां मङ्गलं भवतु ॥

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः । सर्वे सन्तु नरिमयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणां पिशयन्तु । मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत् ॥

*Wish for good for everyone in the world  
and a state of peacefulness.*

*Wish for a sense of happiness,  
healthfulness, fulfillment, closure and  
success.*

*Wish for an absence of physical or  
emotional pain for all.*

The Shanti Mantra, derived from Upanishad, is what comes to mind when we decided the theme of our celebration for 68th Republic day of India was going to be "Ahimsa"(non-harm). To celebrate our heritage, tradition and culture what other theme better than the one which is universally adored in our culture? The mantra peace to all, Shanti sarvam bhakvatu, is not a naive wish for a perfect world for humans if one truly understood the meaning of the word shanti (peace). Shanti does not exactly mean opposite of war, It means an existence of an equilibrium. Violence is destroyer of that equilibrium. Thus Indian cultural value of non-violence goes hand in hand with peace for all.

One of the activity at the celebration to honor the concept of Ahimsa was inspired by a post by Connie Shultz, journalist, columnist, author and married to ohio Senator Sherrod Brown. Connie wrote about the calming effect of origami swan made by attorney Subodh Chandra's 12 year old son Chéthan at tumultuous public event. I had seen Subodh's posts on it before and was impressed by Chéthan's origami skills and therefore wondered if he could lead a swan making workshop at the republic day. I talked to Chéthan all the way from India and everything was set. The plan was made to make and take home Indian tricolor swan of peace and hope after the celebrations. Indeed, it was a joy to make swans huddled around a table, one 'aunty' holding the mike for Chéthan while dad softly reminding him to check other's work! Not everyone's Swan was perfect, but it was the journey which mattered. Thank you Chéthan and your wonderful family for this experience!

On January 28th, 2017 we had a wonderful program which included amazing singing, dancing, information presentation and Indian feast in the midst of calming aquariums accompanied by intermittent thunder/tropical rain fall show at the Rainforest located at the Cleveland Metropark Zoo.

Republic day-2017 committee includes Geetanjali Maheshwari and Sravanthi Vallampati along with our executive board. Although we were left wanting for a robust participation by Indian regional communities and I don't think it turned out to be really a 'fund-raiser', attendance by a number of first timers has made us hopeful and their enjoyment was gratifying. Opportunity for each table to say few sentences about "Ahimsa" in their preferred Indian language was very much appreciated by many.



## Holi Milan Celebration General Body Meeting and Elections

The event is FREE

email

[FICAleveland4you@gmail.com](mailto:FICAleveland4you@gmail.com)

for meal reservation

General body meeting/election will be on Sunday, March 26th, 2017 from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM, immediately after a Holi Milan celebration and Lunch starting on the same day at 1:00 PM. This will be most likely at old ICC building. Please check for confirmation of time, venue, program in your email box and on our website [www.ficacleland.org](http://www.ficacleland.org).

Members of Nominating Committee, which will collect nominations to fill the vacant positions in FICA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees are listed below.

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Additional committee members name and email will be sent along with confirmation by mass email and you will receive nominations from community members. Please send name/contact of nominated individuals to any of these committee members. Self nominations is highly encouraged. Nominations will be entertained till before election time as long as the nominee has agreed to serve, if elected.





# Travel in Odisha

By William G. Barnard, IV

Whenever Sujata and I travel to India we try to stop at one of the 35 World Heritage sites that can be found within the county. The attention that the UNESCO designation gives these sites makes for a trip that will have an interesting landmark and have the tourism infrastructure that allows for adequate lodgings and transportation. This is especially nice for me with my limited Hindi skills. It allows me to hail an auto in Agra and just say "Taj Mahal" and I know the driver will get me there.

This year we traveled to Odisha to see the Sun Temple in Konark. This 13th century temple was built to represent the "chariot" that the sun god, Surya, rides across the sky every day. The chariot is defined by the seven stone horses that pull the temple on its 24 carved wagon wheels that the temple appears to ride on. Although the main sanctum of the temple and the surrounding structures have fallen the remaining Audience Hall (Jagamohana) is an impressive structure that seems to tower over the market leading up to the temple entrance. The real sights to see are not the imposing structures but the detailed and extensive carvings covering the temple. Many of the carvings show important scenes from life around the temple. Wedding processions, deities and signs of trade with foreign lands can be found covering the temple.

One of my favorite things to do in India is visiting the smaller temples that you find along the way during your trip. The more interesting ones usually have been in existence for many years and are located at a geographical landmark. Some times they have an oddity that makes the visit to the temple extra special. They are not the most interesting architecturally, but they and their surroundings tend to have a character that is difficult to ignore.

Not far from Konark we found the Ramachandi Goddess Temple that overlooks an estuary at the mouth of the Kushabhadra river. This small temple with its lively market gives visitors an impressive experience of Indian life. Within the temple lamps can be lit before entering the sanctum of the temple. The lamps along with flowers and other votive items can be purchased inside the temple. The Ramachandi Temple has a very interesting feature. It has a partial skeleton of a whale shark that was found in



the Bay of Bengal near the temple in 1994. The six foot tall skull of the shark was draped in garlands and treated almost as if it were a deity itself.

The market outside of the temple seemed low pressure compared to the stands we encountered outside of the Sun Temple in Konark. The owners would wait until you showed interest in an item for sale and the seller would engage with us. In the market we found a merchant tying bracelets he would sell for use as sacred threads to be blessed in the temple.

Not far from Konark is Puri where the famous Jagannath Temple is located. Despite the warning that non-Hindus were not permitted inside the temple by our travel guide book we proceeded to Puri. Sujata told me that she was not going to miss a chance to enter the temple when she was so close to it. I decided to make the best of the situation and bring my camera to the entrance of the temple so I could catch some of the life that was happening outside of the temple.

When we arrived in Puri we traveled down Grand Rd. a wide avenue that leads to the temple is lined by shops and restaurants. Cars and buses are not permitted within

1km of the temple so our driver parked on the street and we hired a rickshaw to the temple. At the entrance of the temple, the market that marks the end of Grand Rd. was vibrant with pilgrims, shops and rickshaws. The day that we visited on was just a typical Wednesday with no religious significance but the number of people were more than I have ever seen in front of other temples or cathedrals that I've visited before. This was a really popular place to be at. I wondered what it would be like when a festival that would draw more pilgrims to fill the square up. The Jagannath Temple is famous for the Rata Yatra festival which lasts for a few days. The procession in which the Gods are taken out of their shrine to visit another temple.

The priest or Pandaas, as they are called, are omnipresent. But they were silently and quietly present and not very pushy. Sujata made a contract with a traditionally, but stylishly dressed younger Pandaa. He said it would be impossible for me to enter the temple but she should not mention her Marathi heritage. Evidently the Odiya priests in the temple remember when the Maratha Empire ruled over this part of Odisha in the 17th century. Sujata told me

Continued on Page 4



A barber puts the finishing touches on the perfect haircut for a pilgrim getting ready to enter the Jagannath Temple.



Pilgrims walk down Grand Rd. towards the Jagannath Temple in Puri.

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# Save the date

By Sujata Lakhe Barnard

41st Cleveland International Film Festival  
March 29 – April 9, 2017  
clevelandfilm.org or 216.623.FILM (3456)

The Lotus is the media partner (look for the logo in hallway, booklet and movie credits) for 41st Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF41) and FICA is sponsoring a movie made by an Indian team. Please keep an eye on your email box and our website for updates regarding a chance to meet with the directors/actors.

41st CIFF revolves around the word ILLUMINATE, which illustrates what the Festival embodies. This word contains the clear educational subtext of learning, demonstrating progress, and furthering enlightened world views. It encourages film goers to spread the messages they encounter and to create change. Through film the CIFF provides a light that carries past the 12 days of the Festival, serving as a beacon that shines into the community.

More than 100,000 attendees watch the films, can ask the questions of the filmmakers from around the world including India, and carry the experiences into their own lives and

throughout their own communities.

For the past 40 years, the CIFF has been the premier film event in Ohio. Today the CIFF presents approximately 190 feature films and over 200 short films from at least 60 countries.

Over 300 filmmakers and other special guests attend the Film Festival during its 12-day run. More than 8,400 students participate in FilmSlam, the Festival's media literacy program and mini-festival for middle, junior high, and high school students.

The 41st CIFF will launch with an Opening Night Film and Gala (Tickets \$175 for members, \$200 for non-members) to an anticipated crowd of 1,500 people on the evening of Wednesday, March 29th. Following Opening Night, more than 500 film screenings will be exhibited in ten theaters at Tower City Cinemas in downtown Cleveland from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 midnight (and even later on weekends) for the next eleven days. Screenings will also take place

at select neighborhood screening locations throughout the area. Our Closing Night awards program will likely draw 2,000 people on the evening of Sunday, April 9th. Tickets are \$14 for members, \$16 for non-members, \$14 for students and seniors (65+), in-person and w/ valid ID only. Please note tickets purchased via the phone, internet, or mail will be charged a \$4 handling fee per order.

Program Guides will be available the week of March 6th at all Dollar Bank branches, and other locations. Tickets go on sale to members only on Friday, March 10th — one week before they go on sale to the general public on Friday, March 17th. Because advance tickets for many screenings sell quickly, patrons are advised to purchase tickets as early as possible.

Please email to FICAleveland4you@gmail.com for discounted tickets.

### **Indian Republic Day Celebration 2017 Sponsors Thank you!**

Rockwell Automation  
Sewa International  
Mala and Sanjay Garg (Shiksha Daan)  
Cleveland Asian Festival  
Margaret W. Wong & Associates.  
Bengali Cultural Society  
Saffron Patch  
Sujata Lakhe and William Barnard  
Raffle participants

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# Odisha

## Continued From Page 2

she would meet me at a textile shop in the square in an hour and then she headed into the temple. With that I was left to explore the market on my own.

I hoped to get some good photographs of the devotees as they entered or left the temple, so I positioned myself at the exit of the temple waiting for an interesting scene to unfold. It didn't last long for me to be chased out from the front of the temple by beggars looking for donations. I then decided to move to the shops that stood across the square from the temple. One shop that sold metal items including plates and cups had craftsmen out front inscribing items with just a hammer and punch. Many of the other stands in the market were selling bangles and devotional items for the pilgrims to buy for blessing in the temple or donating to the deities.

I worked my way the Textile shop that I was to meet Sujata at and found that the store front was elevated above the street. The area in front of the shop hosted pop-up vendors with their wares in baskets. This area had what seemed to be an army of barbers armed with only straight razors. There were several men getting their heads shaved when I arrived. They were being shaved before entering the temple. Some were saving the hair but most were leaving it to lay on the ground to be swept up later. One family with a little girl who was not interested in having her head shaved was crying and thrashing around violently while a very patient barber with his razor waited for the girl's parents to hold her still.



Vertebrae lay next to the skull of a whale shark that was found in the Bay of Bengal near the Ramachandi Temple in 1994. The bones are kept at the temple and treated as a deity.

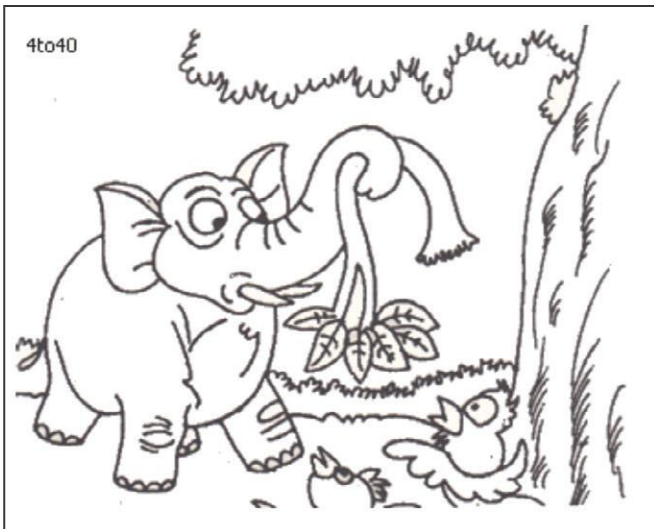
When Sujata returned from the temple she told me of all the things she saw in there. She said that the puja and blessing

included being struck on the head with two sticks by a priest. The sticks would make an audible crack when they connected with

the head. So I didn't feel too bad about not getting to go inside.

## Children's Corner

### The Elephant and the Jackal



Once upon a time, there lived an Elephant by the name of Karpuratilaka in a forest. He was brutal and haughty by nature. He used to roam in the forest without restraint. All the animals of the forest were afraid of this wild Elephant. Without any purpose, he used to pull down the trees and ripped the branches. In this way, he destroyed innumerable nests with eggs and crushed the nestlings under his massive feet.

In short, he had created all round chaos in the forest. Fierce animals like Lions and Tigers also kept themselves at a safe distance from this Elephant. Once it happened that he destroyed the burrows of the jackals in his merciless stroll. This action of Elephant was not tolerable to the animals and all of them wanted to kill the Elephant. They had

a conversation regarding this but thought it was nearly impossible to kill the Elephant due to his gigantic size.

The Jackals were full of rage and planned to call a separate meeting. They were ready to do anything to get rid of the mighty Elephant. But killing the huge Elephant was not a tiny task to do. All of them had a discussion that how could they kill the Elephant. Suddenly, an old Jackal said, "Leave everything on me. I will cleverly bring

about his death". Everyone gave his consent to the idea of the old Jackal.

The next day, old Jackal went to the Elephant, bowed respectfully before him and said, "My Lord! Favor me with your royal glance". The Elephant looked at him and said in a loud voice, "Who are you? Why you have come here?" The intelligent Jackal replied, "I am only a poor Jackal. Your Majesty, no one can deny your greatness. You are kind-hearted, gentle and possess all qualities of a ruler. Taking these things in the mind, all the animals have chosen you to be their King. Please accept this offer and make us obliged".

The Elephant appeared to be happy with

all the praise thrown by the Jackal. Jackal found the time to be appropriate and further acclaimed, "Your Highness, all the animals are eager to see your kingship ceremony. It will be held in the middle of the forest, where thousands of animals have already gathered to get your glimpse. Our astrologers have told this is the auspicious moment for your crowning. Time is slipping fast. So, please come with me without any delay".

The Elephant was really pleased by the Jackal's talk. He always dreamt to become a King. He contemplated that the kingship ceremony will be matter of honor to him. Instantly, he got ready to accompany the Jackal to the place where ceremony was to be held. The Jackal took the Elephant deep into the forest. On the way, they had to walk through a swampy area by the side of a lake. The Jackal walked across the swampy region easily.

But as soon as the Elephant stepped on the swamp, he got stuck in it. He tried his best to come out of the swamp, but to no avail. The more he tried to move out, the more he went deep into it. He got frightened and called out the Jackal, "Friend, Please help me to come out of this mud. I am sinking deep into the mud. Call other animals quickly to help me

otherwise I will die".

The Jackal replied, "I am not going to save you. You deserve this conduct. You are a cruel, arrogant and a merciless creature. You killed our siblings and kids. You have destroyed our burrows and nests of poor birds. You knew everything, but remained indifferent. I am sorry to say that your end has come". The Jackal left the place immediately and the Elephant kept shouting for help. In a little while, the Elephant disappeared from the scene, sinking into the deep mud.

Moral: Large size and heavy weight may be an asset when bullying others but may become a vulnerability in another situation and lead to self destruction. A despot easily swayed by adulation has to meet his doom.





# Renew Yourself With Meditation

By Vishali Gupta

In the Bhagavad Gita, it says, “the mind of one who practices yoga of meditation is steady, like the flame of a candle in a place where there is no wind”.

(Chapter 6, verse 19).

For centuries the mystics of India have recommended a technique of meditation called Trataka. It is a kind of meditation done while gazing at a flame of a candle or Diya (lamp). It has an effect of stilling the mind. Flame of a candle is perfect for this. Like the mind, candle flame is fluid, luminous, and alive. Human mind is naturally attracted to fire. When we rest our eyes on fire, we let go off our worries, stress and anxiety. This technique opens the psychic centers and awakens the force of Kundalini in the Muladhara chakra at the base of the spine taking one deep into meditation.

## HOW TO PRACTICE TRATAKA MEDITATION

- Relax into a comfortable seat. Allow the pelvis and legs to settle into the earth.

- Allow the spine to be erect, placing shoulders over hips and tip of the crown extending up to the sky.

- Place a candle or Diya (OIL LAMP) three to four feet away, the flame level with the eyes.

- Allow eyes to rest on the flame without

blinking. If eyes experience watering or burning, close the eyes and visualize the flame internally. This leads the mind into Dharana or one pointed concentration.

- Watch the flame, relax the body

- Watch the flame, feel your breath

- Experience the light of the flame coming into your eyes, forehead, heart and belly

- Each inhale fills your throat, heart, belly and pelvis with bright light, and each exhale removes any dullness from the inner body

- Be with the flame

- Be fluid with the flame

- Be steady with the flame

- Be radiant with the flame

- If the mind wanders on closing the eyes, open the eyes and gaze at the flame again.

- Allow the flame to hold its light in your awareness.

As gold purified in a furnace loses its impurities and achieves its own true nature, the mind gets rid of the impurities of the attributes of delusion, attachment and purity through meditation and attains Reality. – Adi Shankara



# We Helped Create Yoga World Record!

By Sujata Lakhe Barnard

On January 13th, 2017, when visiting my brother's family in Bhilai Chhattisgarh, we had a chance to participate in a yoga workshop, conducted by popular Yoga Guru and TV personality Baba Ramdev. He is known for proliferation of Pranayam, meditation, Yoga and Ayurveda in India and internationally. More than one lakh (100,000) people were expected to take part in this event. My childhood friend and after-school-activities-co-conspirator, Mini Raj was able to score some front row invites for us. We showed up with our Yoga mats early on this cold morning and walked with throngs of people. The massive event was taking place at Jayanti Stadium in Bhilai on a 36-acre ground. There was a large stage, LCD screens strewn along the field and

green ground cover for people to put their Yoga mats on. There was tight security at the gate, they checked our belongings and then gave us a biodegradable shopping bag to store our footwear as we walked in barefoot. People who did not bring their yoga mats could procure one from a large truck which had stacks of 'Futon' like thin mats. A drone for aerial photography and umpteen photographers were on the ground, who took a special liking to my husband and asked him from what country he is from.

My niece's school has been working with Ramdev Baba and practicing Yoga regularly at the school for over three weeks in preparation for this workshop. She was in a sea of olive-green uniformed school children directly in front of the stage

Despite the cold weather, the event started at 6.30 AM sharp! “We are attempting Yoga World Record following Swami Vivekananda's words,” said a tweet from Baba Ramdev's official twitter account @Ramdev\_Baba. The event could be watched live on FaceBook and was broadcasted live on national TV.



Over one lakh people took part to make five yoga world records in Bhilai (Chhattisgarh) on January 12/13 of 2017. The participants also practiced several yoga exercises like Surya Namaskar Kapal-Bhati and Anulom-Vilom to create yet another world record. A Guinness World Records agent observed and recorded as longest Shirishasan on one side of the stage and record number of push ups on the other side of the stage were attempted.

Singh was also seen performing a few yoga exercises to motivate the participants. Ramdev Baba said a number of uplifting things about the country, about Chhattisgarh people and about Bhilai. The atmosphere was light, joyful and fun.

As the workshop was winding down, we returned the shopping bag that had held our shoes into a bin as we left in a haste to beat the immense exodus at the end.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman



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# 68th Republic Day of India

By Dan Hansen , ClevelandPeople.Com

The theme of the Republic Day event was Ahimsa. Ahimsa is a term meaning 'not to injure'. The word is derived from the Sanskrit and means to cause no injury, do no harm. Ahimsa is also referred to as nonviolence, and it applies to all living beings, including all animals according to many Indian religions.

During the cocktail and networking hour attendees were free to tour the Rainforest, mingle and enjoy appetizers. Then FICA president Sujata Lakhe Barnard welcomed the crowd to the 68th Republic Day. Sujata then introduced Mistress of Ceremonies Sravanthi Vallampati. She spoke about the theme of the evening - Ahimsa.

Sravanthi then called up the Republic Day committee which also included FICA president Sujata Lakhe Barnard, Vandana Singh, Hemant Kanodia, Utkarsha Hazarnis and Geetanjali Maheshwari.

Michael Sreshta played Jana Gana Mana, the national anthem of India, on the saxophone as the crowd sang. Sreshta then played the US National Anthem on the saxophone while Subodh Chandra led the singing.

Mr. Viswanathan Narayan sang the patriotic song Vande Mataram. Vande Mataram is a poem from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's 1882 novel Anandamath. An Ode to Mother Bengal as Mother goddess, it was written in Sanskrit and Bengali. It played a vital role in the Indian independence movement, first sung in a political context by Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896



Dhanya Rao and Debolina Ghosh from the Nritya Geetanjali School of Dance performed a Naga Nrityam Snake Dance choreographed by Shoba Narayan.



The Republic Day Committee that Organized this year's event: Utkarsha Hazarnis, Geetanjali, Maheshwari, Mistress of Ceremonies Sravanthi Vallampati, Vandana Singh, Hemant Kanodia and Sujata Lakhe Barnard



The Republic Day Celebration was held at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo Rainforest exhibit where many of the animals were on display for the guest to view.



The Rainforest recreates the atmosphere of a real tropical forest including flora from India.



session of the Indian National Congress.

Sri Aurobindo referred it as “National Anthem of Bengal”. In 1950 (after India’s independence), the song’s first two verses were given the official status of the “national song” of the Republic of India, distinct from the national anthem of India, Jana Gana Mana.

Next, Sanjay Garg spoke about the FICA volunteer program called Shiksha Daan - the gift of education.

Dhanya Rao and Debolina Ghosh from the Nritya Geetanjali School of Dance performed a Naga Nrityam Snake Dance choreographed by Shoba Narayan.

This was followed by a group from Rockwell Automation who performed a traditional dance “Garbha” with sticks at the event.

Before heading to the Storm Room for dinner, a young boy (one of Subodh’s sons, Che’tan) taught people how to make origami swans to celebrate peace and ahimsa.

Dinner was a tasty buffet from the Saffron Patch and after eating, guests were invited to speak about Ahimsa in their native language.

The attendees then enjoyed dessert and dancing in the unique Rainforest setting.

See photos and videos of the entire evening at <http://www.clevelandpeople.com/groups/asian-indians/2017/republic-day-2017.htm>



Employees from Rockwell Automation perform a traditional dance “Garbha” with sticks.



Members from the Cleveland Asian Festival committee in attendance at the celebration.



Members of the Bengali Cultural Society enjoying appetizers before the night’s entertainment begins.



Michael Sreshta played the Star Spangled Banner on the saxophone while Subodh Chandra led the singing. Sreshta also performed the India national anthem, Jana Gana Mana.



Che’tan teaching people how to make origami swans to celebrate peace and ahimsa.





# Utthita Parsvakonasana

By Vishali Gupta

It is a standing pose that stretches the legs, knees, hips, and ankles while enhancing our stamina. It also lengthens the spine and tones the pelvis. It massages the abdominal organs.

## STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

1. Stand in Tadasana. Exhale, step or lightly jump your feet 3.5 to 4 feet apart.

2. Extend your arms out horizontally so they are parallel to the floor with your palms facing down. Keep your arms full of energy as you feel your shoulder blade and heart region open.

3. Turn your left foot out 90 degrees. Align the heel of the left leg with right leg.

4. Lightly contract your thighs, and then rotate your left thigh outward just enough that the center of the kneecap follows the centerline of the ankle. Rotate the right hip slightly forward or inwards.

5. Inhale, broaden the chest, and lengthen the torso. Exhale; bend your left knee over the left ankle, so the shin is perpendicular to the floor.

6. As you bend your left knee, gently connect the outer left foot into the earth so that your knee continues to follow an even centered line over your heel.

7. Make the left thigh parallel to floor if possible.

8. With each exhale, contract the abdominal and core muscles as you place the left side of the torso on the left thigh placing the left forearm on left thigh. (stage 1)

9. If your practice allows, place left fingertips in front of the left foot keeping the tailbone towards the heels and side



Stage 1

waist lengthening. (stage 2)

10. continue to elongate from right out heel to right fingertips keeping the neck long. stay evenly engaged in both feet encouraging lightness rather than heaviness.

11. Focus on long rich breaths.

12. Bring right hand in a bind behind placing it on left inner thigh. Take left hand from underneath the left thigh and bind the hands in Baddha Parsvakonasana. (stage 3). This is challenging. Keep the heart lifting and crown of the head extending

forward away from the tailbone.

13. To exit, release the bind, coming into warrior 2 stance. Straighten the left leg and make the feet parallel. Bring hands to waist and jump to close the legs together coming into Tadasana.

Vishali is a certified Yoga teacher who lives in Solon with her family. Yoga is her passion. She learnt Yoga while growing up in India and also completed a 200 level teacher training at Chagrin Yoga. She teaches group classes in Chagrin

Yoga and Solon Recreation Center. She offers an inspiring and powerful combination of asana, breath, meditation, and chanting that leaves students uplifted and empowered. Vishali specializes in Yoga and meditation techniques to promote overall wellness strengthen the core muscles to bring agility and alleviate back pain. She also helps private clients and also does instruction for individuals training to be Yoga teachers at licensed Yoga Schools. She can be reached at [guptava@sbcglobal.net](mailto:guptava@sbcglobal.net)



Stage 2



Stage 3





# Black Market- Surgical Strike

By Om Julka



crore worth of notes are in circulation according to the RBI's database on the Indian economy. Of this Rs 500 notes constituted almost 45% of the currency in circulation while 39% of the notes were of rupees 1,000 denomination.

There have been concerns about terror financing through forged notes and also substantial loss of tax revenue. In many cases tax was not being paid by bribing the Tax collectors. Such kind of evil operations have been destroyed by the new deal in currency circulation in India. It is bound to be beneficial in the long run.

In a bold move by Government of India, rupees 500 and 1,000 notes were removed from public circulation as part of a crackdown on corruption and illegal cash holdings by Tax dodgers. It can be called a surgical strike on Black Money, Terrorist funding, arms smuggling and Counterfeit currency.

At the moment, Rs 17,54,000

However, although India's demonetization initiative was seemingly severely mismanaged, this doesn't mean that the entire endeavor was a complete failure. There are definitely some positive indicators. "I think, in the immediate term all sorts of illegal activities, like terrorist financing, have been completely hit," said a prominent

Banker.


In certain parts of the country there used to be always an official amount and an unofficial (Black) amount for property," said a retired officer of Reserve Bank." "Now with this black money going out, the price of real estate is going to fall.

No doubt in the implementation of this new scheme some poor people did suffer in their day to day earnings. As we know the majority of Indian population is poor. Most of the poor people have never gone to a Bank, nor know the operation of Credit Cards etc. So the Government of India has to immediately supply Notes of lower denomination to all as a solution for monetary problems of poor laborers and street vendors or cobblers repairing shoes in street-corners.

The new regulation also had a horrendous impact on the country's tourism because in November the popular month when tourists start

coming to India because of very pleasant weather, the tourists should not be inconvenienced. May be, the government could not

Immediately visualized the problem. A tourist in Goa lamented: "I've walked miles and gone into every travel agent, every cash machine. Only one ATM was working briefly. Even there, by the time I got halfway down the queue the cash had run out." An American Newspaper called it "India's Man-Made Currency Crisis. Such kind of teething troubles of the new deregulation of high value notes of Rs.500 and Rs.1000 need immediate attention of the Government of India. Perhaps it will serve as a good lesson of how to pre-manage such tremendous changes. Otherwise the action taken has been most laudable solution of Black Markets in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi must be congratulated.



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# Cleveland International Hall of Fame Inductee-2017



ClevelandPeople.Com

We would like to extend our congratulations to Mona Alag, member of FICA Board of Trustee and a champion of volunteer work and socially conscious work for her induction in the 2017 Class of the Cleveland International Hall of Fame.

The induction dinner/ceremony will take place on Tuesday, April 18, 2017 in the Grand Ballroom of The Marriott Key Center. Business casual or Ethnic and cultural garb is encouraged. It would be great to have a room filled with the cultural clothing of the many different ethnic groups attending.

Dinner tickets, sponsorships and program messages are available to congratulate the inductees and to show your support for Cleveland's ethnic diversity pioneers. For more information, contact Debbie Hanson at 216-406-6594 or deb@ClevelandPeople.Com. Details on the Hall of Fame, the induction event and opportunities to be involved are also available at <http://clevelandinternationalhalloffame.com/>.

**Subsidized individual tickets are available for \$50 each (\$10 make up by FICA Executive board) by emailing FICAcleveland4you@gmail.com**

Recently, Mona Alag was spotlighted on the GlobalCleveland website as distinguished member of the diverse immigrant ethnic community of Cleveland. Following is the short essay reproduced from GlobalCleveland newsletter where Mona-ji has expressed her thoughts and we thought will be enjoyable for Lotus readers if they missed reading it somehow.

I come from the land of teeming millions, Colorful festivals, an ancient culture steeped in invaluable values-India.

My childhood was like any other young girl growing up in India.

Second daughter, one of four children.

We were educated in Convent of Jesus and Mary in Poona.

Even though my father travelled for work/ business, our mother stayed with us in Poona itself most of the time.

This was to make sure we were not uprooted, and had a good education.

Marriage to an Engineer Harjit Alag, living in Cleveland brought me here. Like most in our families, ours was also an arranged marriage.

There were a lot of fears about the move. Not all of them were about a new land, a new people or being far from my comfort zone. Rather, it was about being responsible for running a household in a new environment.

All that changed very soon.

An angelic silver haired neighbor, Mrs Gable took it upon herself to show me the ropes.

Trips to the grocery stores, department stores, west side market we're all initiated by her. I remember my first experience with a store credit card. May Company. When the sales person explained that I could buy things and not pay on the spot, I went crazy. I loved the "cash or charge?" Returning home, laden with bags galore, I was brought to reality by a horrified husband.

My challenges were interesting.

I remember getting a call from a Plain Dealer reporter. I was asked to comment on a political situation in (now) Bangladesh. I spoke my mind. The next thing I knew, a half page report complete with a picture was flashing on news stands.

Again, a horrified husband!!

I got a call from the legendary Dorothy Fuldheim to appear on the afternoon news with her. Of course I didn't. Too scared.

I was turned down for two jobs, because I had an English accent!!

I couldn't understand the spelling changes.



MONA ALAG  
INDIA

“ I work for Global Services of The Cleveland Clinic, as an interpreter. God and America has been very good to us, we need to give back. I have always maintained that Americans are the friendliest, most helpful people under the sun. ”

#IHYCLE2016

Tyre, was tire, cheque was check.

The most interesting experience was when I went to a Mom 'n Pop store and asked for aluminum foil but pronounced it "alloominium foil." and lady fingers, and brinjal. aka okra and eggplant.

There were no challenging situations as such.

I was quite fascinated with my new home, eager to learn and absorb. Language not being a barrier, things were not that difficult.

I'm basically a home maker.

Raised two beautiful children. Our son Deepak Alag, an executive in a firm in California. Our daughter Pooja Bird, of Twinsburg an attorney with Timken Steel.

I'm a compulsive volunteer. I have been an active member of the Federation of India Community Associations, serving on the Executive Board for 4 years in the 1980ies, returning later, to serve as President for two terms. I now serve on its Board of Trustees.

chaired Project Seva, on the Board of Church Women United, Founding member of

of Association of Asian Indian Women of Ohio, founding member of Helping Hands.

I also helped my husband in his Engineering firm,

H2L1 Engineering Inc.

I work for Global Services of The Cleveland Clinic as an interpreter. Counsel patients from India on financial aid, grants etc. The money I make from there, is donated to Project Seva (service to humanity), Where we serve meals once a month in areas where there is a need.

God and America has been very good to us, we need to give back. I have always maintained that Americans are the friendliest, most helpful people under the sun. Cleveland has proven my belief over and over again.

Other than a few stray incidents, when a

neighbor didn't want to meet me because I was Indian, one gentleman telling me to go back to where I came from. We will always find that element in society wherever we go. We practice all our festivals in Cleveland, that we did back home. Be it collectively as a community, as a family or in our Sikh Temple. We do cling to our identity as Indians, while celebrating the customs of the country that adopted us, many years ago. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Mothers Day, Fathers Day, are big in our family. The Midwest family values and healthy diversity is what I love about Cleveland.

Traveling exposes us to whole new set of cultures and customs. It expands our horizon, teaches us the value of diversity. It fundamentally transforms us.

The contribution of immigrants to the United States is phenomenal. Statistics show that, immigrants are more likely to start businesses, excel in their endeavors. The list of immigrants went on to make America their home and employ thousands of people is endless; Comcast, AT&T, Google, Yahoo, Kohl's DuPont, Sara Lee, Big Lots etc. These are just a few examples. In addition to creating jobs, they have taken their ventures to dizzying heights and contributing to the prosperity of the nation.

In addition, immigrants complete the rainbow. They bring with them, their values, cultures, and of course their deep rooted commitment to pursue higher education and dedication to hard work.

I'm very proud to call Cleveland my home. It has shaped the strong character of many a young mind from our community. Many years ago my husband had an offer from a firm in Texas but I couldn't bear to leave Cleveland.

It would have been like leaving home for a second time.

Mona Alag.

Kirtland.

Ohio.

As you may already know that FICA of NEO, ([www.ficacleveland.org](http://www.ficacleveland.org), @FICAcleveland) has been recognized by the United Way as a Designated Charitable Organization and is eligible non-partner agency with United Way of Cleveland. I would greatly appreciate if you can reach out to your place of work and friends and request them to consider designating Federation of India communities association of North East Ohio (FICA of NEO, @FICAcleveland) to receive part of their annual donation. United Way will then channel their donations to FICA after deducting some service fee. This will create a revenue stream for FICA to support our mission of promoting the rich cultural heritage of India in greater Cleveland; to facilitate ongoing dialog with civic leaders regarding issues of importance to Asian Indian families in the region; to facilitate the mainstreaming of Asian Indian families by creating a platform for the community's active participation in the civic life; to collaborate with local organizations to promote goodwill and understanding between diverse communities; to partner with business groups that promote ties between Indian and US firms and foster economic development.





# FICA Cleveland Republic Day Raffle Winner



Congratulations to Om Julka who won the FICA Cleveland Republic Day Raffle this year. Julka Ji was not able to attend the Republic Day celebration at the Rainforest at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo on Jan. 28th. He was awarded his prize at the Starbucks in Woodmere where he regularly meets with friends for coffee. Pictured: Harjit Saini, Jagdish Dhamije, Sujata Lakhe Barnard, Chittaranjan Jain, Hans Naggpaul, Om Julka, Satyendra Gupta, Lal C. Jagetia

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If you enjoy this FREE Newspaper, and feel that you get great value from it, please consider making a donation to help us continue to offer this service. The Lotus is presently supported by FICA of NEO, advertisements and donor support. Any donation amount is greatly appreciated.

The monthly newspaper is first Asian community Newspaper in USA and the only nonprofit Indian Community newspaper in Cleveland, Ohio, started by CWRU students in 1967. The newspaper is printed in Sandusky and mailed to over 2000 households and businesses. we distribute stacks to libraries, grocery stores, museums and other cultural institution which show interest in South Asian Indian ethnic cultural. Our staff and writers are all unpaid voluntary contributors. The Lotus is a monthly newspaper that reports on the Indian Community and its activities.

Please send donations to FICA/Lotus at:

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Don't forget to include your name, address and contact info for our records and so we can thank you for your donation.



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