

THE LOTUS



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A Monthly Publication of the Federation of India Community Associations (FICA) Since 1967

Introducing 2017 FICA Office Holders

Chairman of Board of Trustees is Sudarshan Sathe,
President of Executive board is Ritambhara (Ritu) Mahna.

At the General Body Meeting held at the old ICC building on Sunday, March 26th, 2017 a new slate of Board of Trustees was nominated and elected by acclamation. The BOT held their first meeting on April 30th and elected as its 2017 Chairman, Mr. Sudarshan Sathe, unanimously. Mrs. Mona Alag was elected as Vice Chairman and Mr. Rajan Gautam as its Secretary, also by unanimous vote. The community welcomes the new slate of trustees Mr. Rajan Gautam, Dr. Prasanta Raj, Dr. Rupesh Raina, Dr. Sanjay Parikh, Dr. Sadhan Jana, Mr. Sunil Ghosh & Mr. Asim Datta. They join the current BOT consisting of Dr. Chittaranjan Jain, Dr. Prasada Rao Kondapalli, Mr. Sudarshan Sathe, Dr. Sanjay Garg, Dr. Chandra Haria, Dr. Subha Sen Pakrashi, Mrs. Mona Alag, Mrs. Guniya Bafna, Mr. Dharminder Kampani, Dr. Umesh Yalavarty & Mr. Zahid Siddiqi.



Mr. Sudarshan Sathe is the President & CEO of New Concepts, Inc., a company located in Solon, OH. New Concepts, Inc. supplies metals and raw materials to the Steel Industry in the USA & Canada. Mr. Sathe obtained his MS in Chemical Engineering and MBA from Akron University. He is a lifelong student of India's history & philosophy and is a passionate advocate of promoting close ties between India and the US. He and his wife Swati are proud to call Cleveland their home. Their two sons Tejas & Ojas are college students on the East Coast.



Mrs. Ritu Mahna is an Administrator at OccHealth Concepts - a Certified Pain Clinic, with a total of 5 locations in NE Ohio. She has served in various capacities in organizations such as Shiva Vishnu Temple, AIPNO, AIPO, AAPI, EKAL, & SEWA International. As a much beloved member of the community, Ritu has proven herself as a fund-raising dynamo for the causes that she cares deeply about. Ritu and her husband Dr. Satish Mahna are longtime residents of Cleveland. Their son Saaranish, daughter-in-law Arati and daughter Vaishali live on the East Coast. They are proud grandparents of Eira Shakti Mahna.

our community's current and future needs – a center that we all can truly be proud of.

On the same day, the newly elected executive board of FICA also held its first meeting of the year and unanimously elected Mrs. Ritambhara (Ritu) Mahna as its President. Mr. Samir Gautam was elected as the Vice President and Mr. Gaurav Kapur as its Secretary. Mr. Hemant Kanodia agreed to continue to serve as a treasurer for another year. In addition the executive board comprises of Ms. Sujata Lakhe Barnard, Mr. Ameet Bathiya, Mrs. Shaifali Bathiya, Mr. Yatish Desai, Mr. Biman Ghosh, Mr. Utkarsha Hazarnis, Mrs. Smita Samant, Mr. Deepak Shao, Dr. Priyanka Sharma, Dr. Rajesh Sharma, Mr. Anil Kumar Singh & Dr. Vandana Singh.

Mrs. Mahna thanked Ms. Lakhe Barnard for her service to FICA over the past three years and for incorporating some novel ideas and bringing more participation from students of CSU & CWRU. Ms. Lakhe Barnard continues to serve on the current committee.

By some estimates the population of people of Indian origin, numbers in tens of thousands. In that light FICA membership remains paltry. It is here that the new President sees a great opportunity for growth. Mrs. Mahna's focus in the coming

Upon taking the Chair, Mr. Sudarshan Sathe thanked the outgoing Chairman Dr. Chittaranjan Jain profusely for his long and distinguished service as Chairman and shepherding the sale of ICC building that was negotiated with continuing benefits to the Indian community lasting 5 years even after the sale. Dr. Jain continues as the trustee on the board.

There was much discussion in this meeting about FICA's raison d'être. The new Chairman said that philosophical underpinnings of an organization are important but ultimately it is the action that matters. An organization is what an

organization does, he said.

Paraphrasing the famous philosopher Will Durant, Mr. Sathe felt, we need not a multiplicity of wishes but rather a unifying

purpose that builds together on the status, knowledge and affluence of the Indian community. This purpose could be to build a first class community center that meets

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In Memory Of Dr. Seema Gupta [1971-2014]

By Author

Dr. Seema Gupta, a physician at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK) specializing in leukemia and lymphoma, passed away on Thanksgiving, November 27th, 2014, in the most peaceful and serene way and on the very same day she entered this world. It happened nine years after the unfortunate event in Genoa, Italy, where Seema was attending/presenting her research on leukemia at the European Society of Hematology meeting on November 11, 2005. She suffered a severe anaphylactic reaction that caused heart arrest leading to anoxic brain injury that left her minimally conscious.

Seema was passionate about blood cancer since her childhood and followed her dream to become a leukemia specialist. After high school, she was selected in the honors program in medical education at Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois, where she completed her undergraduate, medical school, and residency training.

Seema then became part of the fellowship program at MSK Cancer Center New York. For three years, she worked hard, studied hard, and became close friends with many of her co-fellows. She was often the fellow that came up with the right answer in study groups and tumor boards, and was able to teach and learn from the others. But most importantly, Seema was a special friend. She was there to talk about patient issues, and to support her friends when they needed



her. Seema was there to listen, and was a strong shoulder to cry on. She was always positive and cheerful, finding the good in everything and everyone. As she went on to become a first-year attending physician at MSK, Seema took it in stride, gracefully

making the transition from fellow to faculty.

She became a mentor to students and fellows and started her own clinical research. Seema was truly loved by all of her friends, her co-workers, and staff at MSK. Above

all, Seema was an excellent physician combining the care and compassion with clinical acumen. Her patients loved her and some still remember her.

Seema was a wonderful daughter, sister, and friend. She loved those around her fully and completely, and was truly a role model for others. Seema always spoke up for her beliefs and instilled strength in those around her. She was not only a compassionate and caring friend, she was also a focused and driven young woman. We all were amazed at how Seema could work so tirelessly, but at the same time, so full of life and joy. Her other loves included shopping, theater, and travel.

Her parents, Satyendra and Manjula Gupta, to keep Seema's passion for Leukemia research alive, have created an endowment fund at MSKCC for Leukemia Research in her name and would appreciate all the support from our community and any one who want to help. For more information please go to link:

<http://mskcc.convio.net/goto/drseemaguptamemorial>

Or donations can also be made by check to "Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center" for "Seema Gupta MD Endowment Fund" and mailed to:

MSK Office of Development
Attn: Carol A. Blumenfeld
885 Second Avenue, 8th Fl
New York, NY 10164-4529

Shiksha Daan at Cleveland Marathon

By Sanjay Garg

It is becoming a tradition for Shiksha Daan to put together a team for participation in Cleveland Marathon activities. Mala Garg is leading a team of 5K walkers on Saturday May 20, and Sanjay Garg, Chair, Shiksha Daan Committee will be walking the half marathon on Sunday May 21.

Mala and Sanjay invite our community members to participate in these activities as part of the Shiksha Daan team. Although registration dead line to be included in the Shiksha Daan fund raising page is past due (May 10th), Please come to cheer the participants at the race and

donate generously for the cause at the links provided below. Contact Sanjay at shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com for questions about Shiksha Daan team.

Make a check out to "FICA - Shiksha Daan" with "Cleveland Marathon" in the memo line, and mail to: Shiksha Daan, c/o Mr. Vinod Nagpal, 18195 Brickmill Run, Strongsville OH 44136

Donate at: <https://www.crowdrise.com/shiksha-daan-team/fundraiser/sanjaygarg1>

Your contributions will help us meet the expenses of running the tutoring program

for refugee children in Cleveland Heights, and the scholarship for a college student which we have through our partner College Now.

The 40th annual Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon's exciting weekend of events will take place on Saturday and Sunday, May 20-21, 2017 in downtown Cleveland! Race weekend spans over two days and includes a variety of events from Saturday, May 20 through Sunday, May 21. Whether you're looking to qualify for Boston, or walk a 10K with your friends - you'll enjoy a scenic "tour" of Cleveland and all the amenities of a world-class event. Join the runners/walkers on race

weekend for a tour of the Rock and Roll Capital of America - with Sunday events starting at the "Q", home of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Note: ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW CLOSED FOR THE 2017 RITE AID CLEVELAND MARATHON. YOU CAN STILL REGISTER AT HEALTH & FITNESS EXPO RACE WEEKEND -Go to <http://www.clevelandmarathon.com/race-weekend/expo.aspx> FOR DAYS & TIMES

Shiksha Daan is grateful for your continued support and encouragement.



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May 20-21, 2017



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Past President's Message

Sujata Lakhe Barnard; lakhe4fica@gmail.com



I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all who helped me during my time as FICA President from April 2015 to March 2017. This period for FICA was a period of many changes. One major one being sale of India Community Center on 12421 Cedar RD, Cleveland Heights, thus losing rental income for the operating budget. During my two years we had two Independence day celebrations, two Republic day Celebration and two Holi celebration. Forty members of our community also participated in making of Parade-the-circle objects from scratch and walked together in a 'Shobha Yatra' along with Cleveland Museum of Arts staff and other Cleveland Community participants. We also helped CMA to identify and bring three renowned Indian performing artists to participate in the parade and thus showcased our community and our cultural art

to close to a million people who came to watch this parade in the Centennial year of the museum. In addition FICA collaborated with students from Case Western Reserve University and Cleveland state University to showcase their talent at CMA, John Carrol University, International Community day, One World Festival, Cleveland Asian Festival, Bollywood America competition, Cleveland museum of Natural History and Rotary club of Cleveland. This collaboration show cased our cultural art to the society in general and gave a platform to students from India to exhibit their talent and benefit from exposure and honorarium. When two fresh Cleveland State University students were hurt in a rainy night freak accident, FICA community came together in matter of hours to lend support to the students. 2016 Independence day was celebrated collaboratively with One World Festival, where thousands of 'passports' were stamped with Indian Tiranga and some times people wanted their name written in Hindi! Presenting a Diwali talk at Rockwell increased awareness of FICA and brought them to RD-2017. Suyog Bapat ran in the Cleveland Diversity day run, which could be a great opportunity to fundraise for FICA. Thus I tried to build bridges between our community and society at large through arts, culture and celebrations and tried to bring Indian faces out in the traditional Cleveland events.. I wish the new boards all the best and all the success.

People who have immigrated from the land they were born and raised, to a place they will work and grow old, go through a process of transformation. Speech pattern, some mannerisms, few values may change but others remain the same. That part which remain the same need a little nurturing. To nurture that part which defines our culture and in order to pass it on to the next generation; We need a platform for expression of our culture and heritage. Awareness and acceptance of our ethical, cultural and social values in the greater society. I hope FICA will serve that.

It is also a must to unify regional cultures encompassed with in Indian boundaries while also supporting and nurturing their individual growth. Walking this fine line in order to identifying a united voice for Asian Indian communities is a challenging task for our new executives. I will request all our community members to please take a little time out from their busy lives and help them in this worthy endeavor.

During my two years tenure as President and one year prior to that, I was also in charge of Lotus. I tried my best to bring voice of Indian community and documentation of its activities to this print media. During this time I scouted out and covered events, found Advertisers, documented communications from FICA boards, filled in as writer, wrote reviews for Cleveland International Film

Festival, found a staff photographer (my husband...ha ha!) improved the layout, color scheme and layout of the paper in general. Most issues had Hot topics, opinion write ups from the community. I also reduced the cost of digital formatting from \$150/issue to \$50 an issue. The scheduling for printing is such that mailing was taking a week and costing \$150 a month. We started mailing it ourselves and picking the paper ourself thus reducing the cost to zero for the paper. We are also collaborating with Punjabi community for maintaining bulk mail account, thus supporting sister organizations in their mass-emailing and bulk-distribution. Expenses for Lotus printing, mailing and digital layout is about \$1000 per month. Funding source for Lotus include Ads, donations, emailing service and fund-raising.

In order to make FICA sustainable and relevant as an organization, it will be necessary to stream-line its executive function instead of depending on personal relationships only. Governing members of the organization need to be met half way by community members, special effort needed for decent attendance at FICA activities, almost to the point of 'arm twisting' is not sustainable. There is no free lunch in this country, government does not fund our activities, we as community need to fund it and enjoy it.

Addendum to Tasneem Lokhandwala's Article in March 2017 Lotus

Tasneem, Lakhandwala is an Indian American living in USA since 1990. She was born and raised in Udaipur, Rajasthan. She has lived with her husband and daughters in northeast Ohio since 1996. She is a school psychologist and have served public schools for 22 years. Please contact her regarding her article at 462TANNU@gmail.com

Tasneem wanted to add the following line to her article; A Panchatantra Moment.

In its most recent report, the nonprofit group South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) noted there were 207 documented "incidents of hate violence and xenophobic political rhetoric aimed at South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab communities" from late December 2015 through Nov. 15, 2016, one week after the presidential election. That represented a 34 percent increase in incidents in less than a third of the period covered in SAALT's 2014 report.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Mayfield Village has organized a yoga festival celebrating Indian heritage on June 21st. The event consists of a group yoga, talk by Sudarshan Sathe on Universality of Yoga, and music, food and dance! The event is free for all and will be held at the open area outside of Mayfield Village community center located at the intersection of SOM and Wilson Mills. First 100 registrants will receive a free mat! Come and join the city in making this event a success! Registration link: <https://www.mayfieldvillage.com/recreation/yoga> or call: Mayfield Village Park and Recreation at 440 461-5163to

Regards,

Sandeep Dixit, Life FICA member, NEOMM Trustee.

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www.aipno.org

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Bengali Cultural Society of Cleveland

www.bcscl.org

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sdutta@oh.rr.com

Marathi Mandal

www.neomm.org

Tanmayee Dixit, President

President@neomm.org

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Birendra Jena, President

330 544-1725

birendrajena@hotmail.com

Children's Corner

The Power of a Rumour

This one is a nice story from the album of Jataka Kathaye/ Tales. Once upon a time, it happened in a forest that a hare was resting under a banyan tree. He had an intuition of doom and thought, "What would happen to me, if the earth will break? ". Suddenly, he heard a weird striking sound. He said, "It's happened, the earth is breaking up". He jumped up and ran madly without even observing the direction.

When he was running through the forest, a hare saw him and asked, "What happened? Where are you going in such a hurry? ". The Hare cried, "The earth is breaking up. You better run too". The second hare ran so fast that he overtook the first hare. As they were passing the forest, both of them shouted to other hares, "The earth is breaking up. The earth is breaking up". Very soon, thousands of hares were running through the forest.

On seeing hares running through the forest, the other animals too got frightened. The news spread from mouth to mouth and soon, everyone came to know that the earth was breaking up. It didn't take much time before all the animals joined the race. All creatures whether reptiles or birds, insects or four-footed animals, everyone was trying

to escape and their cries of fear created chaos all around.

A lion standing on a hill saw all the animals running and thought, "What is the matter? ". He ran down the hill rapidly and



positioned himself in front of the crowd. He shouted at them, "Stop! Stop! ". The powerful presence of the lion curtailed the rising wave of fright among the animals. A parrot yelled, "The earth is breaking up", alighting on a rock near him. The Lion asked, "Who said it? ". The parrot replied, "I heard it from the monkeys".

When the monkeys were asked, they replied that they had heard it from the tigers. When the tigers were asked, it was found that they were informed by the elephants. The elephants told that the buffaloes formed their source. Finally, when the hares were caught up, they pointed one to another until the one, who started this menace was recognized.

The Lion asked the hare, "What made you think that the earth is breaking up?" The hare wavering in fear answered, "Your Majesty, I heard it cracking with my own ears". The Lion investigated the matter and explored the sound that the hare had heard. Ultimately, he came to know that the sound had been caused by a large coconut falling from a tree. The coconut fell on a pile of rocks causing a minor landslide.

The Lion said to all the animals, "Go back to your homes. The earth is absolutely safe. Next time onwards, check a rumour before acting on it". The animals, which were now looking quite stupid, went back to their homes.

Moral: Check a rumour before acting on it.

FICA Officers

Continued From Page 1

year would be to significantly increase its membership and through some additional programs and input from the community, bring FICA to the forefront of community's consciousness.

Both Mr. Sathe & Mrs. Mahna also wish to engage our next generation into being active members of FICA by listening to them and incorporating their ideas into FICA's vision.

The lotus editorial board wishes the new slate all the success in the upcoming year.



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Word of Mouth is Food for the Soul

By Siu Yan Scott, Euclid, Ohio

There is truly nothing more powerful than word of mouth nor the ability of food to bring people together. Recently, a good friend shared a culinary experience with me that caught my attention. She posted pictures on Facebook about a dinner at a local restaurant in Akron called Nepali Kitchen and raved about the how much she enjoyed it. It took a few weeks for my husband and I, being self-proclaimed foodies, to get the chance to dine at Nepali Kitchen but it was an experience that left us wanted to return again soon!

When we walked in, I noticed right away that Nepali Kitchen has an unassuming décor. However, the food was far from boring. I ordered a Vegetable Khana, one



Vegetable Khana

of the dine in only specialty dinners, that consisted of appetizers, panner pakora and onion pakor with saag fry, alomatar, curry, pickle, daal, raita, sliced cucumbers, onion, rice and papad. My husband ordered a Special Khana and selected pork as the meat. I am not well versed in the nuances of this particular cuisine, having to look up specific information about my order, but I was happy to try something new.

In short, our mouths exploded with flavor!! It was like we had been transported to another world of culture. We definitely had not experienced anything like this before in northeastern Ohio and immediately recognized the treasure of this local restaurant. What is even more surprising is that we knew nothing of the owner and upon learning more, I became immediately humbled about how this experience became food for the soul and how others have spread the word about this wonderful kitchen before us!

Around Akron with Blue Green is a locally produced broadcast TV show with positive stories about Akron and shared how Mr. Hem Rai, the owner of Nepali Kitchen, was born in Bhutan and moved to Nepal as



Appetizer

one-and-a-half year old refugee boy. On March 20, their Facebook page shared a post about Mr. Rai and how he came to the U.S., through the International Organization for Migration and worked his way up in the restaurant sector to be a restaurant business owner that now gives back to the community in many ways. In North Hill where there are about 8,000 Bhutan refugees, Mr. Rai, not only started the restaurant but also started

a tavern and convenience store and works with the Bhutanese Community Association of Akron to help preserve his culture and help others new to the community. His restaurant, Nepali Kitchen is located on 399 E. Cuyahoga Falls Ave in Akron. It is a shining example of how food, culture and diversity bring people together in positive and impactful ways that make our lives richer and better every day.



www.ClevelandAsianFestival.org

AsiaTown
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Cleveland, OH 44114

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Nrithya Seva Mani Sujatha Srinivasan

By Sravanthi Vallampati

In the world of today that seems to teeter-totter under ever-changing expectations, there are few things that get an unhesitating response like, 'I wouldn't change a thing if I were to do it all over again'. As a dance mom who makes a point to sit through every class, part for her girls' sake but for the most part to get lost in the poetry of grace, poise, and skillful mastery that flows effortlessly from an authentic brand of a teacher who gets the job done right, I feel I am particularly qualified to expound on the subject.

Guru Sujatha Srinivasan is a friend, a dance teacher and so much more to both our daughters, and an exponent of Bharatanatyam par excellence, who I have had the good fortune of knowing and following for over two decades. We were a mere six months in Cleveland when I chanced upon an opportunity to watch Sujatha dance. There was something so exquisite about her dancing - something I felt compelled to capture and treasure for myself. My way of doing that was of course signing my children up to learn from her even before they were conceived! Surely, this quip of mine has made it rounds in our friends' circles, but you see, there's more to it than jest. As a student of dance, myself, I've always regretted quitting after learning for four years. While it's easy to assume that I am trying to live a long-yet-not-lost dream of mine through my girls, what's not so easy to surmise is that I wished for them to experience that beauty beyond mere grammar and technique, and make it a part of their everyday; revel in its grace while reflecting on the clarity and discipline it would inevitably lend to their every move, on and off stage.

When I heard that the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana had decided to honor her with the Nrithya Seva Mani award, I was thrilled! It was a long time coming for Cleveland's own, Sujatha - a well-deserved honor for a choreographer, performer, and teacher who brings over thirty years of artistic excellence to the world of Bharatanatyam. It was a perfect spring evening on April 16, 2017. Anticipation, joy and immense pride filled our minds and applause refused to fade away. As she walked off the stage at Waetjen Auditorium, I started to reflect on my countless memories of her.

Through the years, I have come to appreciate Sujatha's guru bhakti - a sense of prayerful gratitude for how far she has come with the blessings of those who believed in and nurtured her gift of dance. Sujatha had the immense fortune of learning from illustrious Gurus in Chennai, India. Guru Lalitha initiated her into Bharathanatyam, and Gurus Chitra Visweswaran and Swamimalai S. K. Rajaratnam Pillai groomed her in the Vazhuvoor Ramaiah Pillai style of Bharathanatyam. Sujatha also studied under abhinaya exponent Guru Kalanidhi Narayanan and Udipi Sri Laxminarayan. Those who have recognized and savored the subtlety of form melded divinely with mellifluous expression in Sujatha's choreography will agree that she has kept the classical idiom of her gurus' styles



Sujatha Srinivasan receiving the Nrithya Seva Mani at the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana

intact, with a delightful combination of freshness and relevance that remain rooted in pure tradition.

Sujatha's prowess in yoga, mridangam, and Carnatic music infuses a nuanced perspective that few can bring to bear on a performance. Known for her sharp nritta, cathartic abhinaya and creative choreography, Sujatha has earned many a recognition in the USA and abroad. Prior to this honor, she was nominated for the Ohio Governor's Award for 2016 and was awarded the "Nritya Ratnakara" by Soorya Performing Arts, St. Louis. To her credit are many composer-oriented and thematic presentations including Triveni, Natya Sangamam, Swagatham Krishna, Ahimsa, Pibare Krishnarasam, Shadripu, Andal, Minstrels of God, Mother and Child, Kaveri, EKAM- We are ONE, and Yin Yang- Dimensions of Duality. Students of Shri Kalaa Mandir, Sujatha's dance institute, have won prizes at the Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival, Vindhya Dance Festival, American Natya Idol and India Fest USA. Outside of dance

lessons and practice sessions, Sujatha inspires her students to partake in her commitment to social causes through fundraising events to benefit educational institutions, orphanages and temples in the USA and India. As an arts educator for CAL (Center for Arts Inspired Learning), Sujatha works actively with schools across Northeast Ohio connecting arts with educational curricula.

Pursuit of a traditional art form like Bharatanatyam in a country whose landscape couldn't be more different from India poses challenges that may not be as evident to an untrained eye as they are to the likes of Sujatha. "Instruction in the niceties of movement alone is not sufficient to create a successful Bharathanatyam dancer", I've heard Sujatha point out several times, which is why she adopts an approach that looks at training and appreciation of Bharatanatyam in a holistic way - emphasizing the need and building her training on a solid ground of cultural context, knowledge of music, perfection

of technique and critical thinking. My daughters and their friends agree that there is no freewheeling where Bharatanatyam is concerned. Whether the context and choreography are simple or demanding, they are trained to make no compromises on practicing for perfection. Two other aspects that I became particularly aware of as we started preparing for our older daughter's arangetram, were Sujatha's studied recognition of her students' strengths and areas of opportunities, and the impeccable discipline she demands of herself and her students. I believe that it's this steadfast adherence to time-tested tenets in handling every aspect of Bharatanatyam that makes her worthy of all the accolades and adulation she continues to receive.

Cleveland is fortunate to have a wonderful community of gurus, sishyas and rasikas, and I, a friend who has earned my affection and respect, as she has of so many in the community.

It is hard to keep up with expectations where change is the only constant, but as long as there are gurus like Sujatha we can rest assured that at least our pursuit and enjoyment of Bharatanatyam in all its splendor is guaranteed.

About Sravanthi:

Passionate about Service, Education, Diversity & Inclusion, Communication & Public Speaking, and above all, community involvement, Sravanthi is an award-winning Toastmaster who enjoys opportunities for lifelong learning and meaningful giving. Currently serving or having served as a Board or Committee member and core volunteer of several organizations, she brings her experience and perspectives to the table as a team member and leader.

When not analyzing data at Progressive Insurance, she enjoys spending time with her husband Mohan and daughters Apoorva and Pooja, volunteering, gardening, writing, and sharing her time with friends.



Sujatha Srinivasan and Shri Kala Mandir students at Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana 2017 Award ceremony

Birju Maharaj Performance At Thyagraja Festival

By Josh Sherman



Josh Sherman

The first two dancers before Maharaj ji, Saswati Sen and Sujata Mohapatra, were very highly reputed dancers from the Kathak and Odissi styles. It was a neat thing to see two dancers from different styles who are at that high level dance together. The choreography, their expressiveness, the footwork, even the costumes and makeup were all very impressive.

Regarding Pt. Birju Maharaj, somebody I respect very much recently criticized people for overuse of the term "living legend". But I don't think it's any exaggeration to call the 75 year old Pt. Birju Maharaj, the most revered living kathak dancer, a living legend. We got to see him tonight as part of the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana Festival. (Standing room only in a hall that seats 1,000.)

The emcee said he was unqualified to even talk about the performance, so that makes me especially unqualified. But I have to say, like all these great legends past

and present, he has a magical presence on stage. As Cleveland Balu, one of the festival founders said, "for what most people can express in their face, he only needs his hands".

And besides the expressiveness and humbleness and humor, he moved better than many people who are half his age and his feet tapped out rhythms more complex than many percussionists can play with their hands. Paraphrased quote: "God is Rhythm. Everything is Rhythm. Elements, human, everything. And everything is dancing. Ocean is dancing for long time. The air is dancing, the trees are dancing. To write is dancing. Our minds are dancing. Everything is dancing, everything is Rhythm."-Pt. Birju Maharaj.

Birju Maharaj and Saswati Sen Kathak Workshop:

The night after the concert, I got to observe a Kathak workshop led mostly by the senior disciple of Maharaj ji, Saswati Sen. I was at once taken with her presence and style of teaching. It wasn't just that she threatened to cut chunks of the children's hair out if they goofed off. No, it was how she described the movements and expressions, and the intention behind them.

For example, she demonstrated the difference between reaching as if to pick a flower off a tree, first sort of casually, just because it's part of the dance, and then she showed how to reaching with real longing, to really put that flower there in your mind. It was really fascinating and definitely helped grow my appreciation for Kathak.

Toward the end Pt. Birju Maharaj came. He did more observing than teaching, and most of all he was talking with the fantastic live musicians who were also at the workshop. There was the great Kathak tabla player Utpal Ghoshal who I sat directly next to, as well as Anirban ji on harmonium and vocals on the other side of me, and Chandrachur ji on sitar.

So while the dancing was going on, Maharaj ji was singing beautiful melodies to the musicians, who picked them up quickly and sometimes made notes in notebooks. He also was muttering tabla rhythms, almost too quietly for me to hear, but the tabla player would listen and then would play an amazing sequence, looking back to Maharaj ji to see if he got it and making adjustments when necessary.

I was happy just to be there, in the presence of this small-statured giant of dance, as well as getting to see his strong grasp of music and rhythm. Big thanks to Antara Datta for allowing me to attend the workshop, which was at her kathak school, for her students. Anyone who wants to study kathak in this area is lucky to have someone like her around, so please do check



Sujata Mohapatra, the Odissi exponent and Saswati Sen, the Kathak goddess performed an electrifying Jugal Bandi piece! - Photo by Josh Sherman

her out.

lighter folk / semi-classical piece.

Zakir Husain and Rahul Sharma

It's hard for me to put the last couple days into words. I have this urge to try to capture the experience, but there's no way to.

Zakir ji and Rahul Sharma... What can be said about a program like that? Yesterday a friend told me his friend who saw the concert is a huge music buff said it was the best concert he's ever seen. Another friend of mine who is into spiritual music of all types said Zakir ji had the most spiritual stage presence or vibe she'd ever seen.

One of the most powerful aspects to me was the extent to which Zakir ji, a superstar of Indian classical music if such a thing ever existed, played such a supportive role to the younger instrumentalist consistently throughout the program. He took his lead sections of course, and they were always dazzling, but for the majority of the program he played a highly musical, but

I saw so many familiar faces there. For some, including some musician friends, it was their introduction into classical Indian music. I could hope for no better first experience for them. It was a very special thing for Cleveland, and hopefully will have a lasting impact on classical Hindustani music in this region, which can only happen if we keep the ball rolling.

Big thanks and shout out to Director of Performing Arts Tom Welsh for making this happen, who is not on facebook and definitely won't see this

While reflecting on all the incredible and impactful music I've seen recently, it was a good reminder that music, like all experiences, including even what we consider to be "spiritual" experiences, will eventually fade.

As powerful and healing as music can be, like any other type of ecstatic state, the effects are temporary. If a certain mental or



Guru Sujatha Srinivasan - Photo by Josh Sherman



Kathak Workshop w Pt Birju Maharaj - Photo by Conneta Shringarpurey

minimally ornamented theka (rhythm for accompaniment).

emotional state can come anew, it can and will eventually fade away.

The sound of a santur (classical Indian hammered dulcimer) played live has to be experienced. Rahul Sharma's playing in my opinion did justice to that great instrument, and to classical Hindustani music itself. He played compositions in Raag Yaman for approximately 1.5 hours, followed by a

Music has the power to heal, soothe, excite, connect, unite, or transform, so many other things, but only by turning our attention inward and examining the root of our being can we reveal that within us which is most steady and constant.

Gomukhasana

By Vishali Gupta

Go means cow and mukh means face. This pose translates as face of the cow as the crossed legs resemble the lips of the cow and up and down arms are the ears of the cow. The Sanskrit name of the pose has a hidden intention behind it, i.e. surrender, humility and nurturing traits of cows.

This is a complex posture. It is a deep hip opener with a deep shoulder and chest opener through flexion, external rotation, and adduction of the hips, flexion of one shoulder and extension and internal rotation of the other shoulder.

Getting Into The Pose

Step 1

From Downdog, slide the right foot to the center of the mat, halfway between hands and feet. Slide left knee behind it. Shift hips back and make the sitting bones even. Do not sit on your heel. Make sure left knee is stacked on top of right knee but do not force.

Step 2

Extend left arm in front of you with external rotation in shoulder and then raise it to the sky with palm of the hand facing backwards. Place the left palm on the base of the neck. Make sure the elbow does not slide away from the torso. Elbow is straight pointing up to the sky.

Extend right hand out to the side facing thumb down bringing internal rotation in the shoulder. Take it back to your mid upper back grasping the left hand if possible. Hand will be in between the shoulder blades. If hands do not bind, use a strap in left hand. There is extension in the thoracic spine.

Step 3

Sit up tall and lift your rib cage away from your pelvis, lengthening your spine. Make sure lower back does not round. Keep core strong by drawing belly in and up. Lift your chest, and lengthen through the crown of your head.

Stay in this pose for about 1 minute. Try to relax through your jaw. Release

the arms, uncross the legs, and repeat on the other side. Remember whichever leg is on top, the same side arm is lower.

Benefits Of The Pose

1. Deep stretch of the ankles, hips, thighs, shoulders, armpits, chest and triceps
2. Strengthens spine and abdominals
3. Helps decompress lower back
4. Clears hip joints

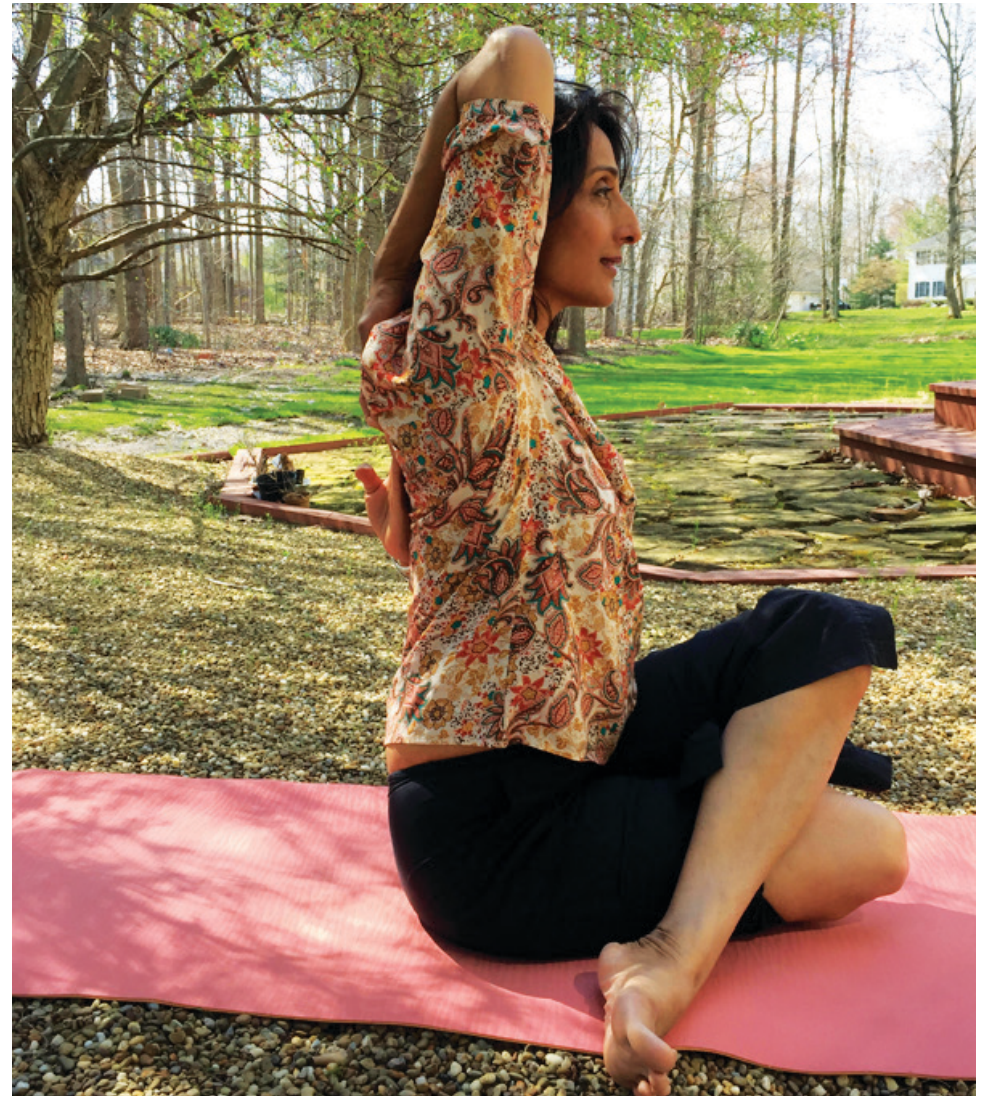
When To Avoid This Pose

Always consult your physician and use the guidance of a trained teacher. There are few instances where you should avoid this pose:

- Serious neck or shoulder injury
- Serious knee injury

This asana quiets the mind as all the five active senses are turned inwards. Legs representing locomotion and arms representing grasping are bound, functions of elimination and reproduction are still and tongue soft so there is no speech. This is Pratyahara or sense withdrawal leading one to a state of meditation.

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



As you may already know that FICA of NEO, (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.



India's Progress

By Om Julka



Henry David Thoreau said,

“ Whenever I have read any part of the Vedas, I have felt that some unearthly and unknown light illuminated me. In the great teaching of the Vedas, there is no touch of sectarianism. It is of all ages, climbs, and the royal road for the attainment of the Great Knowledge.”

Mark Twain called India “the most extraordinary country”

Yes, India a country of multiple races, cultures languages, history, is now a rising great power of the 21st Century. This is because of its dedicated leaders past and present, the most important being Mahatma Gandhi, also called the Father of the nation, who helped to free the country from British

rule by uniting the people of all races.

Robert Blackwill who was U.S. Ambassador in India from 2001 to 2003 discovered its wisdom, and had a great admiration for India. He is reported to have said, “I wouldn't mind being born ten times to rediscover India”.

Mr. Churchill, the Prime Minister of England is said to have used the following pungent words about India denying grant of freedom:-

“If granted freedom, “Power will go to rascals, rogues, freebooters. . . All leaders will be of low caliber & men of straw”.

There is no doubt that he was proved wrong. After achieving independence from British rule and in spite of its history of poverty and deprivation India has remained united. All those prophets of doom who predicted its break-up or coming under dictatorship have been proved wrong.

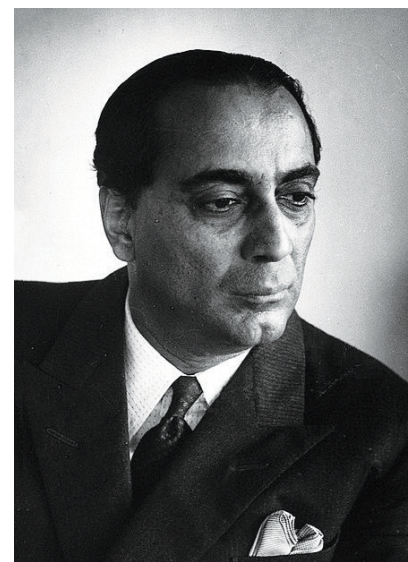
The very fact that India's leaders were sometimes jolted by external forces trying to disrupt the coherence and unity of India by helping to radicalize and misguide some sections of its minorities, yet they were able to keep the country's unity intact.

Steps were soon taken to industrialize the country. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru considered modern science “spirit of the age and dominating factor of the modern world. A chain of new laboratories were also set up. A brilliant Cambridge-educated physicist Homi Bhabha was helped to set up new Research laboratories. Five Institutes of Technology (IITs) were set up.

On the other hand, Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel (1875-1950), the Iron Man of India was not only a key player in framing India's constitution, but also was the main leader who integrated the princely states of India and unified them with the country. I distinctly remember that I was deputed to go and collect some information from some states in connection with integration of State Force with Indian Army in those days.

Similarly other statesmen and leaders like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Mr. Rajagopalachari, Krishna Menon, Maulana Azad, J.B. Kriplani and Lal Bahadur Shastri and others all contributed their wisdom and help to steer India into a unified and progressive nation.

Imagine the good luck of India that 150 million people are now between the ages of 18 to 23 year old. And out of the total population of 1.25 billion, 65 per cent are below the age of 35 years. With the emphasis on education and English medium such a vast number of younger generation will become a great asset to the country. Adult literacy rate has increased to 71 per cent. With high proficiency in English language and software education it is likely to lead the other countries. And the presumption is that the GDP of India will soar higher than many countries. In fact India will rank as one of the three: (China, U.S. and India) top economies in the world by 2020.



Homi Jehangir Bhabha

Born: 30 October 1909, Bombay, British India (present-day India)

Died: 24 January 1966 (aged 56), Mont Blanc, France

Nationality; Indian

Expertise; Nuclear Physics

Associations; Atomic Energy Commission of India, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Cavendish Laboratory, Indian Institute of Science, Trombay Atomic Energy Establishment

Known for; Indian nuclear programme, Cascade process of Cosmic radiations point particles, Bhabha Scattering, Theoretical prediction of Muon

Notable awards; Adams Prize (1942), Padma Bhushan (1954), Fellow of the Royal Society

Nabakalebara, Cleveland

Naba (New) Kalebara (Body) festival of Lord Jagannatha

By Dr. Prasanta K. Raj; prasantaraj@yahoo.com

Adi Sankaracharya established Jagannatha Puri as one of the four major Dharmas in Hindu religion. We are very fortunate that we can visit the deities of Eastern Puri Dhama, here in The Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple, Parma, Ohio.

Puri Jagannatha Temple was built by King Choda Ganga Dev (1112-1148 A.D) which sits on a four-acre complex with a height of 215 feet near Puri beach, Odisha. Lord Jagannatha, along with Sudarsana Chakra and older brother Balaram and sister Subhadra are the main deities stressing the value of the family entity in our culture.

It is believed that after Lord Krishna's accidental demise by an arrow by the tribal hunter Jara, Arjun and others performed the last rites. The central portion did not burn completely which was offered to ocean, which turned in to a stone. The tribal kings worshiped that stone until the King brought and is still kept inside Lord Jagannatha's Daru (Neema Wood) body.

Every year Lord Jagannatha along with His brother and sister travels in a 3 km distance in a grand procession with huge chariots where approximately lakhs

of people attend the festival. They stay at Gundicha Rani's temple and returns back on 9th day. We observe Puri Rathajatra on the same day and celebrate Rathajatra and Return Festival on 1st and 2nd Sunday of June, when they go to our so-called Gundicha Rani temple, which is our community center, where the deities are taken care of daily by common people! In most religious places there is an inner sanctum where deities reside and the priests are the only persons who are allowed. But in Rathajatra persons from any race, religion or creed can actually touch the deities and participate to their heart's content.

Hindu Philosophy gives us the freedom of belief, from multiple deities to single, to even, God with out any shape or form. The four deities represents before us as Lord Rama, Krishna, Balram, Shiva, Laxmi, Durga etc. Also Jagannatha represents both male and female, signifying the concept of a single God, neither male nor female or both and also with the black color which is described as Sunya (Empty) and Nirakara (God without any shape or Form). The black color is also the amalgamation of all the colors, thus representing all race and religions, thus bearing the name Jagat (universe) -Naath (Lord). When one

witnesses the Rathajatra, it seems like that the God is within us. There are many such reasons why He is called Jagannatha.

Every decade or so new deities are made and the inner sacred portion is transferred in to the new ones, which is celebrated as Naba (New) Kalebara (Body). This celebration reinforces our fundamental belief that our soul never dies and just like changing in to new garments, we discard the old body and get in to new body and continue to do good deeds until we achieve ultimate salvation (Mokshya).

This festival includes Prana Bisarjana of our present deities, New Prana Pratistha and also a Free Cultural Program followed by dinner.

We observe Prana Daana and Bisarjana of clay deities during Ganesh, Durga, and Saraswati Puja but seldom are we fortunate enough to have the blessings to participate in the Prana Bisarjana (Patali) of our Lord from the Alter. This is a very unique historical ceremony of our temple of a much bigger magnitude.

This year The Shiva Vishnu Temple is celebrating the Nabakalebara of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsanji. A free cultural program dedicated to Jagannatha Nabakalebara, will be held at Strongsville Auditorium on 18th Sunday 3 to 5 pm. Rathajatra will be celebrated on June 25th morning and Return Festival on July 2nd morning. Every one is requested to participate. For detail information; 440 888 9433



2017 Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival

The 2017 Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival features over 90 performances over 13 days- April 11th- 23rd. It the largest south indian music and dance festival outside of India and has Cleveland it's home for last 40 year. The Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. All events take place at Cleveland State University in the Music Building The festival features majority lineup of Carnatic music and Bharatnatyam and few north Indian classical dance/music items

This year World Music Collaboration was led by the world famous percussionist, Jamey Haddad featuring his band Under One Sun and Carnatic and Hindustani Musicians including Kunnakudi M. Balamuralikrishna (vocal), Ronu Majumdar (flute), U. Rajesh (mandolin), Harshad Kanetkar (tabla), S. V Ramani (mridangam) and B. Shree Sundarkumar (kanjira). This program is very special to us because Jamey Haddad is also a student of our founder, Ramnad V. Raghavan.

Srimad Bhagavatham - a 4 part dance production featuring original music, lyrics and choreography. Choreographers this year included Bharathanatyam greats Anitha Guha, CV Chandrasekar with Sangeeta Isvaran, Divyasena and Kuchipudi maestro Jaikishore Mosalikanti. These dance productions feature a live orchestra of Carnatic concert vocalists and dancers from India as well as prize winners from the across the US and Canada.

Hindustani Flutist Ronu Majumdar, Kathak Maestros BIRju Maharaja and Odissi exponent Sujata Mohapatra, and Kuchipudi artist Jaikishore Mosalikanti presented North-Indian classical art in keeping with the Aradhana Committee's commitment towards inclusiveness of non-carnatic Indian art forms.

Vijyathe Gopala Choodamani is a nrithya natakam(dance drama) which brings to life the exploits of Lord Srikrishna the Poorna Avathar. The narrative features stories in a variegated sequence and portrays krishna's Leelas- his child hood pranks, his exploits against various demons and enemies, and vanquishing of his wicked uncle Kamsa. The dance drama features krishna blessing Jambavan, krishna vanquishing narakasura, Krishna's griha dharmam and his return to vaikunta. The music and lyrics was composed by Neyveli Santhanagopalan and Shri. PR Venkatasubramaniam and dance concept and choreography by Smt. Anitha Guha. Bhrahmara geethai choreography and performed by Smt. Bragha Bessell and Mushtikachanura and Jambavan fight scenes choreographed and performed by Thiruchelvam.

Sambhavaami yuge yuge.. telling the story of the Dashavatharam the 10 incarnations of Vishnu as told in the Srimad Bhagavatam. This particular choreography brings out the inner meaning of why the Lord took certain forms to save the world and restore the balance of Dharma. With lyrics and music by Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi and textual

research by Smt. Sudha Seshayyan and choreography by Sangeeta Isvaran.

Nava Vidha Bhakti - nine different devotional paths to attain salvation through the episodes of krishna from the Bhagavatham. Concept and choreography Kishore mosalakanti, lyrics Shri Dandibotla Vaikunta Narayana Murthy music by RK Shriram Kumar.

Rukmani is awaiting krishna's arrival with all the love in her heart and the unbearable pain due to separation . She didn't give up even after several hurdles that separated her from the Lord. She kept making soul connections with Lord that made himself to arrive before her for their union. The seasons change and the entire universe wishing for the union of two loving souls, who bravely married breaking all the odds on their way because of their immense love for each other.

Rukmani vivaham choreography
Yuvakala Bharathi S. Divyasena
Lyrics Dr. Raghuraman
Music Dr. Vanathyraguraman

Geetha Govindam, the 12th century Odissa poet Jayadeva's masterpiece, speaks about the love of Radha for Krishna. The poems were originally tuned by PS Narayanaswamy and were performed by a group of professional musicians from India and selected students from the US. These beautiful songs were danced by Rhadha, Bragha Bessell, Sujata

Mohapatra, Divyasena Sommanna and Ramya Ramnarayanan.

Prana Nayaka - concept narrated by Sujatha Vijayaraghavan, featuring Carnatic Vocalist Aruna Sairam and dancers Rhadha and Bragha Bessell. These songs are padams and javalis



Saswati Sen at the 2017 Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival

Saint Thyagraja Information

from Wikipedia and The Hindu

Kakarla Tyagabrahmam (4 May 1767 – 6 January 1847) or Saint Tyagaraja, also known as Tyāgayya in Telugu, was one of the greatest composers of Carnatic music or Indian classical music. He was a prolific composer and highly influential in the development of the classical music tradition. Tyagaraja composed thousands of devotional compositions, most in Telugu and in praise of Lord Rama, many of which remain popular today.[2] Of special mention are five of his compositions called the Pancharatna Kritis (English: "five gems"), which are often sung in programs in his honour.

During his long life, Tyagaraja saw the reigns of four kings — Tulaja II (1763-1787), the regency of Amarasimha (1787-1798) which saw the rise of Ramaswami Dikshitar as a favourite of the court, Serfoji II (1798-1832) and Sivaji II (1832-1855). The last two were kings in name, Serfoji having willed away the kingdom to the British in exchange for a pension and Shivaji's son, continuing under the same arrangement. It was during the latter's reign that Tyagaraja passed away. There are many stories about the royalty-Tyagaraja relationship. The saint and the king: on the Serfoji-Tyagaraja relationship, published in March 2017 The Hindu issue, Sriram. V concluded that the legends about persecution of Thyagraja by royalty lacks credibility. Part of the same series published in connection with Tyagaraja's 250th birth anniversary in May 2017 concluded "the king invited Tyagaraja,



the latter refused, whatever be the reason, and there were no hard feelings thereafter between them. Any further speculation is futile."

Birth Name: Kaakarla Tyaagabrahmam
Born: 4 May 1767 Thiruvavur, Thanjavur Maratha kingdom

Died: 6 January 1847 (aged 79) Thiruvavuru, Tanjore district, Madras Presidency

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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.

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THE LOTUS



www.FICAleveland.org

Catching a Bull by the Horns

By William G. Barnard, IV

"You know in India cows are sacred there." This was said by one of my teachers in 7th grade. "In India they walk around where ever they please. They walk in the middle of the street and no one seems to mind or do anything about it." I guess I can thank this insight to the fact that many of my teachers while I was growing up were former hippies that traveled to India looking for the same "insight" that many American tourists search out.

To my adolescent mind this seemed like a crazy place. Bovines ruled supreme and were bowed down to as one traveled past. How could a cow be that important to a nation? What did they eat? If cows can walk around freely what about bulls? Aren't they dangerous?

At the time my knowledge of cows was very limited. I knew from a classic children's toy that, "The cow goes, 'Moooo!'" Other than that I really was not aware of what a cow was. You didn't see too many of them in the Cleveland suburbs.

One of my high school teachers thought this deficiency was too much for him to bare and took us on a field trip that made stops at two farms. One was a pig farm where we witnessed the unceremonious castration of a piglet. The other one was a farm that raised cows, bulls and bison for the meat industry. The large group of students walking across the field probably looked like a pack of dangerous predators to the cows. They would look at us and slowly back up as we advanced on them. The farmer that was leading us decided that it would not be a good idea for us to scare the cows any more. So, we headed back to the barn where we saw a young bison calf that was running around a pen with its mother. It was the closest we would get to a hoofed mammal that day.

Twenty years later I found my self in India for the first time. My brother-in-law, Prashant, met us at the airport with a hired car to accommodate our massive luggage and we started the hour long ride to his house. We left the airport at sunset so I could only see the headlights of the other vehicles on the road and the Vegas like light boards that decorated the fronts of buses. Occasionally I would be able to see people and vehicles that pass through the headlights of the car.

Our driver must have been in a hurry because he was driving faster than the surrounding traffic, passing cars, motorcycles, autos and massive trucks at an alarming rate. We came to a section of the highway that must have been under construction and the car was diverted to a narrow lane at the side of the road that is used mainly for cars turning at intersections. Although this lane was seemed to be designed for one row of cars to pass through, there was three cars across the lane and moving at quick pace. I was looking out of the front windshield and witnessed the two cars riding side by side in front of us swerve one to the left and one to the right. Our driver came to an abrupt stop because



A bull walking through a market in Pushkar, Rajasthan.

there was a cow with a calf standing in the middle of the road like they owned the road. I thought about what my 7th grade teacher said about cows being able to go where ever they please in India.

During stays at Prashant's house I found it interesting to see the cows walking down the street. Even a heard of buffalo guided by their shepherd would pass through the residential neighborhood. I saw that much of what the cows would eat was the food waste from houses and the plants along the road and in wooded area. The cows will even eat paper. I once observed one pick up a paper cup that was dropped on the ground and chew it up like it was a leaf from a tree.

The added benefit of cows being mobile recycler is that they give back in two very important ways. They will produce milk that can be turned into yoghurt, paneer and ghee. They also provide fuel in the form of manure. It seems that as soon as a cow leaves waste behind someone is there to collect it and will form it into a cake that they will dry. These chips will be use by some people for fuel for fire that will heat their homes and cook their food. It seems that the cows provide many services for those who know how to use them.

My sixth trip to India landed me in Pushkar, Rajasthan where the cows wandered the narrow streets in the market, shared space on the ghats with worshipping Hindus and tried to take fresh vegetables off the display in front of restaurants. To be honest I had long forgotten my fascination of the cows roaming the streets and had started take them for granted. In my mind they were hardly the 1000 pound beasts that could inflict serious injury to me.

The streets in Pushkar are narrow. About three people can walk abreast in some parts of the market where congestion caused by tourists and pilgrims makes it difficult to navigate. Throw in a cow walking down the middle of the street and things start to get "interesting". While Sujata was looking through a shop in the market I thought it would be a good idea to see if there was anything interesting up around the corner

and set off to see what there is to see. After setting into a metal wares shop I decided I'd better head back to the shop where Sujata was still looking at lanterns. As I stepped out into the street I hardly noticed the two cows walking in the same direction I was heading. They were walking in single file and I started walking next to the lead cow. Who started to shift her direction to the side of the street that I was walking on. Focused more on finding the shop I was looking for I mindlessly waited for her to pass me and walk in front of me. Soon I felt a tap on my

side, just above the kidney. In the narrow marketplace it is not uncommon to come in contact with another person in the street. I just thought I had bumped into someone.

But then I was tapped again. Tap. Tap. It was a definitely a tap to wake me up. Tap. Tap. These are hard and pointed. Still looking mindlessly for the shop I asked, "What?" to the person I thought was trying to get my attention. Tap! Tap! Was the response but little bit harder. I reach down to grab what ever it was that hitting me. It felt like a hard stick with a rounded point on the end. It also felt like a very strong person was wielding it at the other end and was determined to keep hitting me with it.

I looked down to find that that I literally had caught a bull by the horns. The cow that was poking me in the side was an amorous bull that I casually walked in front of blocking his view of the cow he was following. That's when the bull lightly shook his head and made me release his horn. I wisely stepped aside so he too could pass. Which he did peacefully. From behind I heard a man laughing at me, the bewildered traveller that I was. When I looked at him and smiled at my foolishness he said, "You are in India now. Things are different here." Yes, it is different in India. The cows go where ever they please and no one seems to mind or do anything about it.

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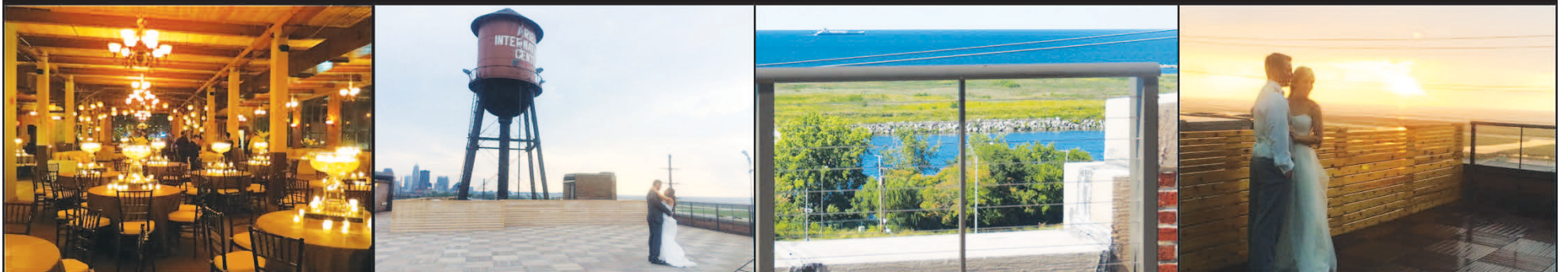
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