

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS (NFIA)



Serving the Indian American Community since 1980

Washington DC Headquarters: 19300 Tattershall Dr., Germantown, MD 20874 USA

President's Address: 9026 Olive St, Bellflower, CA 90706

Phone: (562) 682-2555 e-mail: adube@gmail.com Tax ID# 742299811

VOL. 4, # 09 – SEPTEMBER, 2021

REFLECTING ON THAT DARKEST DAY OF SEPTEMBER WHEN WORLD TRADE CENTER-NORTH AND SOUTH TOWERS BURNED TO GROUND:

The month of September reminds us of the darkest day experienced by America twenty years ago when New York city and the World Trade Center was engulfed in smoke, dust, debris and panic. The major television networks carried stories all day and night of 9-11 terrorists attack; the sad scene of the burning of the buildings and heaped up wreckage in the street next to the World Trade center's North and South towers was tragic. This was the event that changed not only a country but also the world. close to 3,000 lives were lost.



Non-stop in the news were stories about the American-based leader of the plot and the pilot of American Airlines Flight 11 that hit the North Tower, and another hijacker who piloted United Airlines Flight 175 and hit into the South Tower of Trade Center. It was learned later these two men did so because they wanted to die together. Until today it remains a mystery why two hijacker pilots made a decision to hit both towers of Trade Center and die together. Both towers ultimately came down and many lives were lost. The Pentagon also got hit by a plane in the early hours of the morning, fortunately the damage was less comparatively. There was a sigh of relief that the White House, not far from the Pentagon was spared from this barbarity.

Media reported that the terrorists intended to cause harm and planned to hurt the United States, politically, militarily, and financially. Not only New York was the target, another plane went down in Pennsylvania that was piloted by the hijacker. As a result of those attacks and total destruction, Muslim and even the Sikh communities, including Arab Americans bore the burden of public's suspicion, mistrust, and suffered from the atrocities caused by public. Anyone with a beard and turban was a suspect in the eyes of security personnel and many Americans even took the law into their hands when they punished, looted, and caused physical injury to people looking like what the terrorists looked like. We thank the American resolve to build the World Trade Center soon after and now have housed a national museum with memories of 9-11, next to The Trade Center. we feel sad; and we honor those first responders who toured the area and in rubble looked for any signs of human lives that could be saved.

Angela Anand, NFIA Immediate Past President, Editor of the newsletter

EXCEL FOUNDATION USA, A MEMBER ASSOCIATION OF NFIA, NEO HINDU FOUNDATION & VHPA-LA ORGANIZED SODHO (SEARCH) AT GAYATRI CHETNA CENTER:

Excel Foundation USA, in coordination with Neo Hindu Foundation, and VHPA-LA Chapter organized a "Sodho" meaning Search for Love Satsang at Gayatri Chetna Center, Anaheim, CA, on September 05, 2021. The event was presented by Charu Shivakumar (Founder President – Excel Foundation USA and Neo Hindu Foundation), Prof Keshav Patel (President – VHPA-LA), and Youth Organizers Radhika Patel, Vasantha Batchu, Ramesh Thalli, and Jasmin Sivakumaran.

The event started with a tribute to fallen soldiers and prayer for Peace and Harmony. Charu Shivakumar spoke on search for higher purpose in life. Nila Parikh talked about "Sodho", a Gujarati word for Search for Love. Love is key to sustain humanity. Kewal Kanda talked about Hindu Unity. He explained to the audience there is lack of understanding or knowledge about Hinduism among locals. He also stressed all Hindus to be united to show their strength. Yatri Shukla explained what freedom means. Don't let anyone or anything stop you from gaining self-freedom or in other words to be independent.



Prof Keshav Patel asked people to search for right actions under one umbrella. He said for 1000 years we lost our independence because we were not united. He said just as we can protect ourselves from rain with umbrella, we need to get united to form an umbrella to protect us as Hindus. Kamlesh Chauhan started by saying "Mera Dharam hai Sewa, mera Karam hai sewa," meaning my religion is service and my work is service. She said Hindutva or Hinduism is not religion, it is a way of life. We spread love not hate, she said.



Kaushik Patel said Hinduism has been in existence for many millenniums while Christianity is only 2100 years old, Buddhism and Jainism are about 2500 years old, and Islam is about 1500 years old. Hindus have 108 Upanishads and 18 Puranas. Lord Krishna gave us Geeta about 5000 years ago that tells us how to live and wake up to our Vedic Sanskriti and create awakening by spirituality. Geeta Bhatt and Sudhaben played a skit on aging with grace. Rani Kuusto talked about being grateful for survival. Aparna Hande talked about how to be

contented. Ramesh Thalli and his group, Vasuben, Subhash Tolia, and Dr. Pravin Sedani sang Bhajans.

VHPA-LOS ANGELES ORGANIZES RAKSHA BANDHAN WITH LA PALMA POLIC OFFICERS:

Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America – Los Angeles Chapter (VHPA-LA), President Prof. Keshav Patel and other members of this chapter participated to celebrate Raksha Bandhan (Protection Bond) festival with La Palma Police Officers on August 22, 2021.

Invited members of VHPA-LA and Police Officers who didn't have out door duties at that time gathered at La Palma Police station meeting hall for the 'Raksha Bandhan' ceremony. Keshav Patel and Charu Shivakumar (President of Excel Foundation & VP of VHPA-LA) explained the meaning of Raksha Bandhan to the Police officers present Sergeant Joe Guerrero, officers Megan, Elwood Miranda and Dylan Cook. The ceremony started with a chanting of sacred hymn by Prof Keshav Patel for blessing and protection of police.



The ritual is observed for Army and Police force as they are continuously working for the country and people of the country. Ladies then proceeded to light the candles and offered sweets to officers and put red vermilion tikka –the significant sacred mark of blessings- on their foreheads and tied Rakhi on their wrists. Excel Foundation, CA associated for the ceremony.

Police Officers were very much impressed with the meaning and purpose of Raksha Bandhan tradition, they showed their sincere appreciation and happily extended their wrists for ladies to tie the sacred band. Police officers were offered coffee and donuts along with the traditional Indian sweets. The aims of holding "Raksha Bandhan" ceremony with American police are

1. To make Police aware of high qualitative principles of Sanatan Hindu traditions.
2. To plant seeds of mutual cooperation.
3. To ruin environment of hatred against Hindu religion in America.
4. To make police know the value of Vedic principles of universal peace.
5. To know that Hindu – Vedic- prayers are for blessing for all human and creatures living on the earth. Sanatan Dharma is so generous, far away from selfishness.

Members who participated were Prof Keshav Patel, Kewal Kanda, Vallabh Bhatt, Shashikant Thanki, Shivakumar, Charu Shivakumar, Chandrika Patel, Aparna Hande, Radhika Patel, Nila Parikh, Sharada Patel, Rani Kuusto, and Bhadra Bhatt. Kewal Kanda thanked Mr. Terry Kim, the Chief of Police who granted the permission for Raksha Bandhan ceremony and to all police officers who attended the Vedic ceremony in spite of their busy schedule.

CALIFORNIA, GOPIO-INLAND EMPIRE, ORGANIZED A CANDLELIGHT VIGIL ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2021:

A candlelight vigil in memory of the 13 fallen young servicemembers, who were a target of the terrorist attack in Afghanistan, was a sad reminisce which the President of Gopio-Inland Empire, Venkat Peddi, organized, at the Gandhi Memorial in Riverside, California. The Gandhi Memorial was decorated with pictures of the 13 fallen servicemembers.

The candlelight vigil began with an opening statement by the Secretary of Gopio-Inland Empire, Suma Hareesh. She briefly introduced herself and the organization and the purpose of the gathering. The President of Gopio-Inland Empire, Venkat Peddi, talked about the sadness of losing these 13 young servicemembers in Afghanistan with some of them being from our neighboring cities. The president said "Our hearts are with military family that lost a loved one this tragic on August 26, 2021. Our Nation will not forget their sacrifice. Today we remember and honor all 13 US marines. Including our local heroes who were lost in this tragedy:

Lance Corporal - KAREEM NIKOUI (From Norco), Lance Corporal – DYLAN MEROLA (From Rancho Cucamonga).”



He said, “GOPIO Inland Empire Chapter has done a lot of charitable contributions even during the pandemic, providing masks, food, fund raising, oxygen cylinders, or vaccines throughout the Nation and India. In addition, the Inland Empire Chapter also helps with the immigration needs of the society, along with helping abused women or families in need of our services.” The Chair of the organization Ms. Vasu Pawar, introduced herself as the Founding President of the GOPIO Inland Empire Chapter and a Life member of the GOPIO International

Organization. She welcomed everyone and said these young servicemembers were on a mission to protect our Nation and other human beings in Kabul and yet none could protect them. In memory of the fallen, she requested the community to work together with Love, Peace, and Unity and help everyone around us, the able and the disabled, rich and the poor and create a unified community of all ethnicities that will make us all proud.



Dr. Angelo, appointed by the Governor of California, Gavin Newsom as the Chairman of the California Workforce Development Board and locally elected on the Riverside School Board attended the Candlelight Vigil. He expressed his profound appreciation to the Indian Community for always putting the interest of humanitarian efforts and brotherhood and sisterhood at the forefront of the community. Chair of Riverside County Board of Supervisors, Karen Spiegel, who attended the Vigil, was

glad that the association had opened arms to the fallen 13 servicemembers in the Nation. Matthew Maldonado, MPA Board Assistant, County of Riverside also attended the Vigil. There were other GOPIO members and community leaders who attended the Candlelight Vigil, Mrs. Asha Kanda and Kewal Kanda, Raghbir Bagga, Dr. Manoj Shah former President of AAPI, and ISCOPI organizations of physicians, Mr. Ramakrishna Reddy Seelam, President of TASC, Gaurav Taneja, and Amrik Manhas from the Riverside Temple.

OBSERVING OF GANESHA FESTIVAL UNDER THE SPREAD OF COVID – A NEW NORMAL FOR ALL CELEBRATIONS:

During this time of the year, there are many festivities starting this month and ending in December, the last month of the year. The Hindus have Ganesh Chaturthi festival which spans a period of ten days and it has started now. At present there is still the spread of COVID, it is not completely under control so it is still not advisable to meet in large or small crowds. People are discouraged for any festivities according to federal and state agencies as the infection can spread easily in crowds. People are doing what they are used to doing,



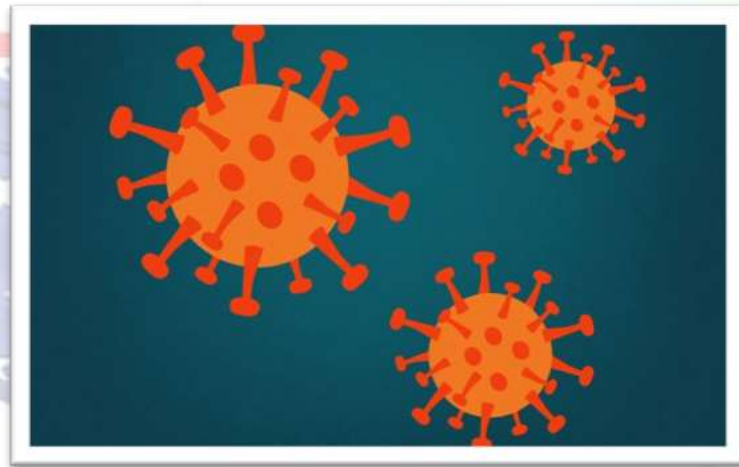
however, in a much-curtailed manner Hindu festivity kickstarted this year with Ganesh Chaturthi, which is now celebrated on September 10. The 10-day long festival is also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi. Hindus celebrate it as the arrival of Lord Ganesha to earth from Kailash Parvat with his mother Parvati. Devotees celebrate this festival by installing clay idols of Ganesha. This is done either in private homes or public spaces by making pandals or stages.

Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated all over India with pomp and show but one can see its real festive fervor in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. People chant Vedic hymns and prayers. They also observe fast and offer Lord Ganesha his favorite sweets, especially modak on all ten days. Modak is believed to be Lord Ganesha's favorite sweet and he fulfills all the wishes of his devotees when they offer him this sweet.

On the tenth day of the festival, Lord Ganesha's idol is carried in a procession with music and people dance around the idol. It is then taken to a nearby water like a river or a sea for immersion. Mumbai has almost 1, 50,000 Ganpati idol immersions every year. History records that Ganesha had five wives Tushti, Pushti, Shree, Riddhi and Siddhi. He has two sons Subh and Labh. Happy festivities to everyone.

COVID DEATHS AND CASES ARE SURGING IN THE UNITED STATES RECENTLY – CASES FOR CHILDREN ARE INCREASING EXPONENTIALLY:

The Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center maintains an ongoing count of the COVID-19 cases and deaths in the United States and worldwide. As of 6:16 p.m. on September 9, 2021, the tally is:



Total cases worldwide: 222,989,119 (up from 222,372,295 Wednesday)

Total deaths worldwide: 4,602,538 (up from 4,593,268 Wednesday)

Total cases in the United States: 40,572,631 (up from 40,412,799 Wednesday)

Total deaths in the United States: 654,268 (up from 652,175 Wednesday)

Biden addressed the nation on the path forward. On Thursday, President Joe Biden announced a new six-point plan to battle the current surge of COVID-19 cases caused by the

highly transmissible delta variant (B1617.2) and address an uneven vaccination campaign that has left only half of the nation fully protected from the novel coronavirus, according to the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy. Federal agencies are working hard to impress upon people the need for vaccination for combating the spread of the virus.

National Broadcasting Company (NBC) reported what President Biden said, "We've been patient, but our patience is wearing thin," Biden said, making a direct appeal to the 80 million people who he said were still unvaccinated. "Your refusal has cost all of us." Biden also announced that he asked the Department of Labor to issue an emergency rule requiring all employers with 100 or more employees to ensure their workforce is fully vaccinated or require any unvaccinated workers to produce a negative Covid test at least once a week. The requirement could carry a \$14,000 fine per violation and would affect two-thirds of the country's workforce, a senior administration official said. Employees working in health care facilities that receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement will also be required to be vaccinated, Biden said, a move that will impact

7 million workers at 50,000 health care providers.

Pediatric cases continue to rise. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released new data on Tuesday showing that almost 27 percent of COVID-19 cases from August 26 to September 2 occurred in children. About 252,000 cases were added the past week, the largest number of child cases in a week since the pandemic began. After declining in early summer, child cases have increased exponentially, with over 750,000 cases added between August 5 and September 2, 2021

The AAP added that at this time, it appears that severe illness due to COVID-19 is uncommon among children. However, there is an urgent need to collect more data on longer-term impacts of the pandemic on children, including ways the virus may harm the long-term physical health of infected children, as well as its emotional and mental health effects.

More information is available on all federal, state, and international health agencies with updated status of the virus and suggestions of protection for people to get vaccinated and help thwart the spread of this deadly virus.

NCAIA ALONG WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ARRANGED A FAREWELL EVENT FOR THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS MINISTER - ANURAG KUMAR OF THE INDIAN EMBASSY:

A farewell was arranged by the NCAIA for minister of community affairs, Mr. Anurag kumar, in VA, on Saturday, September 11, 2021. The metropolitan Washington DC has traditionally been welcoming and outgoing Indian officials of the embassy and always expressing their gratitude for their services. American Citizens and permanent residents who frequently visit their homeland to see their families back home often visit the embassy and consulates in other cities to receive such services. The community also enjoys meeting officials during Indian national celebrations and cultural events organized by the Indian Embassy.



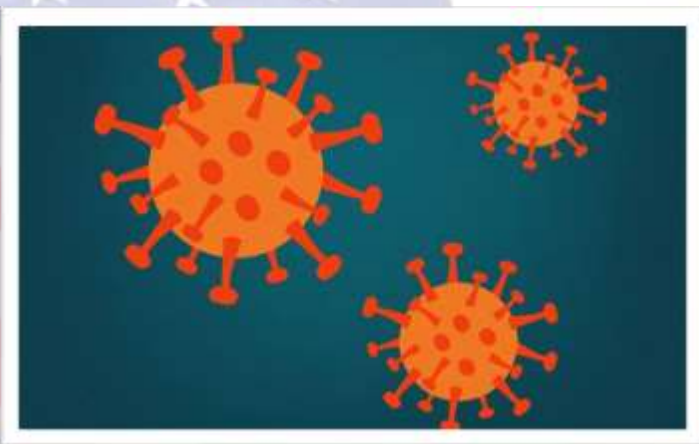
Minister Kumar was a very popular community affairs official and he recognized that he was given a great welcome when he arrived that was not too long ago and now, he is receiving a farewell opportunity to meet the community but he said that is part of the job of an officer employed by the government of India that they move on to their next assignment every two to three years.

In his address to the community, he hoped he would meet again and thanked everyone for the opportunity to work with and get to know much closely and their support to him. He also paid compliments to the gathering by saying that all Indians have done well in their respective professions and represent the best of India. India could not have hired someone to do what the Indians have done for India. He also has seen that people from all parts of India, speaking different languages, are well represented through their cultural celebrations everywhere in the United States of America. He was happy to see that the Indian cultural is now getting passed on from generation to generation.

The event was successful as it brought a cross-section of the metropolitan community to interact in person. NCAIA officers and community leaders who pulled this event together thanked all those who came to attend the event during these times when there is panic caused by the spread of COVID virus. Sirmukh Singh Manku of TV Asia was telecasting live the event so some who could not attend in person were able to hear the minister gratefully acknowledging the respect given to him and his colleagues from the Indian Embassy.

COVID DEATHS AND CASES ARE SURGING IN THE UNITED STATES RECENTLY – FDA GIVES FULL APPROVAL TO PFIZER FOR THE FIRST COVID 19 VACCINE:

The Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center maintains an ongoing count of the COVID-19 cases and deaths in the United States and worldwide. As of 5:40 p.m. on August 27, 2021, the tally is:



Total cases worldwide: 215,106,535 (up from 214,346,831 Thursday)

Total deaths worldwide: 4,480,969 (up from 4,470,113 Thursday)

Total cases in the United States: 38,500,016 (up from 38,300,233 Thursday)

Total deaths in the United States: 634,438 (up from 632,889 Thursday)

The most recent assuring information from The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding vaccine was released last week. It was announced that Pfizer now have been granted full approval for the first

COVID-19 vaccine. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine will now be marketed as Comirnaty, for the prevention of COVID-19 disease in individuals 16 years of age and older. As is known that the vaccine has been authorized for emergency use since mid-December previously and most people were given two shots with a gap of one week in-between the first and the second shot.

President Joe Biden last week urged more Americans to get their shots. "With today's FDA full approval, there's another good reason to get vaccinated," Biden said. "Those who have been waiting for approval should go get your shot now. The vaccination is free. It's easy. It's safe and it's effective, and it's convenient."

India has been now experiencing decline in the spread of second wave of Covid and the number of hospitalizations and deaths. There are still restrictions on travel but the virus spread appears to be again getting under control.

NFIA is a 501c (3) association. NFIA's newsletter aims to inform and to mobilize the Indian American community nationally. It was founded four decades ago and has been continuing to work with the community organizations in large metropolitan areas of the United States. Your suggestions on topics of interest and NFIA's member organizations activities and projects can be featured here and circulated with the help of this communication tool.

Please let us know if you like to receive the newsletter by giving us your best email address. Editor: Angela Anand, angela_anand@yahoo.com Contributions to this issue were made by the following individuals.

Contributing Members: GOPIO former treasurer and NFIA's Administrative Director II, Kewal Kanda, GOPIO Inland Empire President' Venkat Peddi; Editor of NFIA newsletter, Angela Anand; Sirmukh Singh Manku – TV Asia; and Also credited for information here are Everyday Health and John Hopkins data base.
