

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS (NFIA)



Serving the Indian American Community since 1980
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WOMEN ARE GETTING ACKNOWLEDGED FOR COMPETENCE AND MARCH IS ALSO TOUTED FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION AND WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH:

Women have been making strides recently. It is evident from the election of a bi-racial female Vice-President to the second highest ranking office in the history of the United States of America. February was recognized as the month of the Black history. March 8, 2021 has been recognized as the International Women's Day. Women are making gains politically, socially, and to some extent economically, though only marginally but the numbers are slowly rising. Women are proverbially breaking glass ceiling.



The name of Kamala Devi Harris has made the history and is appropriately hailed by the National Women's History Museum in unveiling a glass portrait of her in front of the Lincoln Memorial on Thursday, February 4, 2021 in Washington D.C. The portrait is made of shattered glass a symbol of breaking the glass ceiling in existence of the high-ranking elected officials.

For getting this broken glass portrait, the credit for great creativity goes to a Swiss artist, Simon Berger who painstakingly crafted this by precisely

hammering cracks in sheets of laminated glass. He used a photo of New York photographer Celeste Sloman's as the basis – a backdrop to craft this unique creation.

Other remarkable mention in this Black history month is of Ms. Amanda Gorman, a 22-year-old, the youngest inaugural poet, who is featured on the cover of the coveted Time magazine. She gained first notoriety by delivering her original composition, "The Hills We Climb" at the presidential inauguration on January 20, 2021 and again this week, by reading her poem, "Chorus of the Captains," before the kick off of the Superbowl on February 7, 2021. What an honor for Ms. Gorman, a native of Los Angeles, who became the first poet to read before the start of the game. She has been getting accolades and was interviewed by Michelle Obama for the cover of the Time Magazine. The month of Black history must include Michelle Obama, the former first Black First lady who made significant contributions to promoting physical health. From 2009 through 2017, she touted the health benefits of exercising. She emphatically promoted, "Let's Move"- a health initiative of Obama Administration.

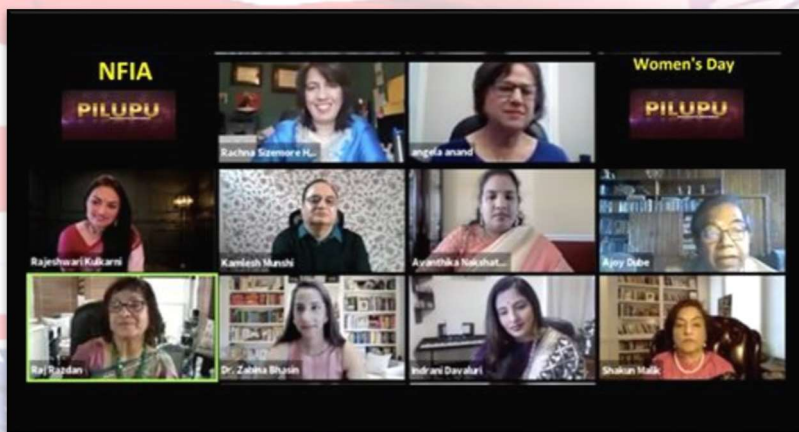
In President Biden's administration, many south Asian women are getting tabbed for important positions. Women still have a long way to go, especially the minority women, but they are striving and making news fast and frequently.

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

NFIA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY—A CELEBRATION ARRANGED BY WOMEN IN THREE STATES OF USA:

National Federation of Indian American Associations in cooperation with area Community Organizations celebrated International Women's Day in virtual setting. The program was broadcast live by media partner **PILUPU-TV Entertainment for Global Audience**. Locally it was covered by **TV Asia** Network in Washington DC.

The theme of the celebration was building bridges of understanding between women of different subcultures of India and their varied educational, professional experiences as well as achievements. The program titled, "Women Trailblazers" included five women from different cities of East and West Coast representing arts, sciences, and business. Diversity, inclusion, and recognizing women following their calling by pursuing their desired goals and achieving results was the highlight of this event. Women Trailblazers were awarded GAURAV PURASKAR. The celebration was organized by Angela Anand, Immediate past president of NFIA; Lalita Kaul, Director of NFIA; Raj Razdan, Vice President of NFIA and Kamlesh Munshi, Regional Vice President of NFIA.



Ajoy Dube, President of NFIA told the audience that this program is the first of three that are being organized by NFIA to celebrate International Day of Women. He said we are celebrating International Women's Day today as Social, economic, cultural and political achievement day of women. He called for action for accessibility and equality for women in every field.

Maryland Senator Susan Lee, who is a civil rights lawyer by trade, was the Keynote Speaker. She said women are multi-tasking warriors and are not being recognized for their contributions. She said, she was beyond overjoyed when Kamala Harris was elected as US Vice President. Senator Lee awarded, virtually, five trailblazing women.

Rajeshwari Gadasalli Kulkarni – is a Musician, performer, an aspiring playback singer, teacher of Math and Music, and owner of Math is fun – an after-school program.

Indrani Davaluri – a Classical Dancer, Guru, Artistic Director of Natyamargam, a model and an Actress. She was also named Global Glamorous face and recently crowned as Mrs. South Asia World Elite 2020.

Shakun Malik, MD – Head, Thoracic and Head & Neck Cancer CTEP/NCI at the National Institute of Health. She has multiple publications in peer-reviewed journals. She is in process of launching "HemAth" to inspire and empower women of Kashmir. She grew up in Kashmir, India.

Zabina Bhasin Ahuja, MD – a Child Psychiatrist, Innovator, founder and Owner of Toys for children – KIDZ. She recently featured on ABC Networks GMA on Feb18, 2021. She grew up surrounded in diversity and is working with culture focused toys for kids.

Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Esq. – is a first India American woman elected to a Fairfax County wide office in VA. She is also a Program Coordinator of the online Human Resource Development program at Texas Tech University.

All speakers were introduced by NFIA officers and speakers talked about women empowerment and agreed that today's women are self-dependent. They should not see themselves just as women but as doctors or lawyers. Don't give up but adapt to dreams. As women they should open the doors and help others, and encourage other women to not settle for anything less than what they want.

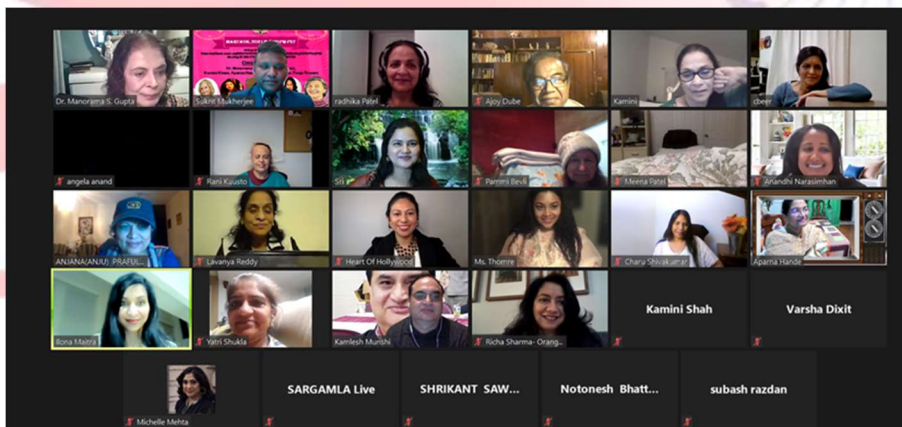
They are capable of doing anything and everything. Featured were two artists who overcame their disability by achieving with the help of empowered women in their lives, their moms and now they are able to not only survive but thrive and are progressing in spite of their developmental challenges. One is a dancer of Kuchipudi classical discipline and other one winning. He said we are celebrating International Women's Day today as Social, economic, cultural and political achievement day of women. He called for action for accessibility and equality for women in every field.

The program was broadcast live over the **Facebook**. According to the **PILUPUTV** for the International Women's Day celebration televised by the tv the stats are: 1600 views, 103 comments, and 26 groups shared the event across America.

NFIA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN CA:

This program to celebrate Women's Day was organized by Dr. Manorama Gupta, Chair for Women Affairs for NFIA with coordination of Kamini Khare, Aparna Hande, Chari Shivakumar, and Pooja Thomre. This program was also broadcast live over Zoom platform as well as on YouTube. It was a well-attended program. Dr. Manorama Gupta introduced Pooja Thomre, treasurer of NFIA, who welcomed the audience and the NFIA board and appreciated Dr. Gupta for arranging this program at short notice. Traditional Lamp Lighting and a prayer followed the welcome address.

Ajoy Dube, president of NFIA welcomed everyone and requested people to join NFIA which is the biggest organization in USA for Indo-American community. He said we are celebrating International Women's Day today as Social, economic, cultural and political achievement day of women. He called for action for accessibility and equality for women in every field.



The program was Emceed by Ms. Shreekonda. There were many women speakers who spoke about women achievements and programs they are heading to help women. Some notable speakers were Janet Kritner, Giovanna Salas, Sumati Rao (CCA Consulate Office San Francisco), Anandhi Narasimhan (MD), Cecilia Sloan, Richa Sharma (Women in Business), Ilona Maitra, Varsha Dixit, and Michelle Mehta. They all talked about

contemporary women and their achievements.

Janet Kritner founder of Grandma House of Hope who was a homeless person herself and was helped by a strange man to put back on her feet. She embraced unconditional love from the experience and started the shelter to help others. Now she has seventeen shelters to help people to stand and support themselves on their own.

Ilona Maitra from Canada wished Happy Women's Day to all listeners and told her personal story of perseverance to never give up. She said, she and her husband were Kayaking in the sea in Jamaica when a giant wave threw them out of the Kayak. She was barely hanging on to oar. She somehow kept her cool and was able to swim back to shore. She got help from life guard to go back and saved her husband.

Sumati Rao – CCA at Indian Consulate in San Francisco conveyed her recorded message. She thanked the NFIA for the invitation. She said, women in India traditionally enjoy good status and equality and have done exceptionally well. Indian Government has been a model employer for women. Indian Government remains committed for women participation in key sectors. Mrs. Rao encouraged women to step out and earn their own success and empowerment. Women have the ability to do what they want. She told the women audience; the world will be yours if you believe in yourself.

Cecilia Sloan a producer of seven documentaries said she believes in equality for women. She said, one cannot imagine a woman planting million trees but can create a green-belt movement in Kenya. She said, a woman named Vangari encouraged Kenyan women to plant trees that have been chopped off and had left the land bare. Planting trees gave women the empowerment, confidence and earned respect.

Anandhi Narasimhan, MD a Hind Ratan Awardee talked about her family and mental health during this Covid pandemic. She said, pandemic has changed the way we live these days. Families do not have resources to cope with fatalities and mental health caused by this pandemic. She said her family has lost many members due to typhoid pandemic that happened a while ago. There have been many pandemics in the world throughout the history. This Covid pandemic effects mental distress, anxiety, and fears of PTSD in people.

NFIA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN OREGON:

The International Women's Day was celebrated on Sunday, March 7th 2021 in Portland, Oregon. This event was a collaboration of NFIA and Greater Portland Nonprofit Organizations.



This was the first NFIA virtual event organized by Prashanthi Harathi, Regional Vice President, NFIA.

The event started with traditional lighting of lamp followed by a traditional invocatory dance to Lord Ganesha to remove any obstacles. The invocatory dance was performed by Tanya Krishna Harathi, a 7th grader in Stoller Middle School, Portland, Oregon. She has been learning Kuchipudi for many years under the guidance of her mother, Smt. Prashanthi Harathi, and has performed in many fundraisers and places around the globe.

Hosting the event was done by Prashanthi Harathi, Regional Vice President for Pacific North for NFIA.

Introductions to nominators for some of the nonprofit organizations in the Greater Portland area was done by Chandrika.

Guest of Honor was **Sumati Rao**, Consul for Consulate General of India, San Francisco, who gave a wonderful speech on women empowerment.

Ray Ann Kremer, the Co-chair of a Jewish dialogue group, talked about hidden prejudice one may encounter in mixed ethnic groups.

Kris Steinnes, Founder of Women of Wisdom foundation, gave a speech about the importance of women raising the feminine consciousness for the healing of the world. Adrienne Warren, an experienced counselor explained mental health challenges for women during COVID.

Dr. Sandra McQueen, an Instructor at Georgia State University, talked about the importance of students knowing and understanding others. Dr. Sheetal Desai, a physical therapist spoke about the wellness of women.

Speakers from NFIA included Lavanya Reddy, the Executive Vice President of NFIA, who described the role of important Goddesses of India. Raj Razdan, Vice President of NFIA, talked about the importance of happiness and taking care of seniors.

Putting the videos together, creating flyers, and orchestrating the virtual event was all done by 13-year-old Tanya Krishna Harathi. Introductions to nominators for some of the nonprofit organizations in the Greater Portland area was done by Chandrika. Technical aspects were managed by Tanya Krishna Harathi and Radha Krishna Harathi. The event was informative with amazing speakers and was successful with **200 plus** participants between **Zoom and Facebook Live**.

NFIA MEMBERS ALONG WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION ORGANIZED A UNITY CONFERENCE:

The Neo Hindu Foundation organized a Virtual Conference for Hindu Unity Movement under the leadership of Convener Charu Shivakumar and coordinated by Co-Conveners Kewal Kanda, Prof. Keshav Patel, Ashok Shah, Ashok Madan, Aparna Hande, Nila Parikh, Radhika Patel, and Ramesh Thalli.

The event was organized with a view to hear concerns of the community and brainstorm the ideas to find solutions to overcome lack of understanding and knowledge of Hindu philosophy.

Keynote speaker for the event/conference was a young man Rushabh Rupani who is student here in USA and is son of Gujarat's Chief Vijay Rupani. He spoke very well about the greatness of Hinduism. He said Hinduism is not just a religion, it is a way of life. Many other speakers also talked about the spirituality and other great aspects of Hindu religion.

Young students of Excel Foundation, Megha Arun, Jasmin Sivakumaran, Swarit Srivastava, and Nidhi Alle, portraying as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, & Narad, presented a beautiful Musical Dance Drama called "Tridev Yatra – The Spiritual travel of the Body, Mind & Soul." Young boys and girls presented an open discussion about – "If Hindu Unity is Possible" in this divided world. Audience was also entertained by Bharatanatyam dance and some melodious bhajans. The views about Solutions to Challenges that Hindu religion faces in the world today were offered by Ashok Shah, Kewal Kanda, Ashok Madan, and Prof. Keshav Patel.

A few prominent community leaders who have worked to bring the community together and volunteered their time and resources to help the community locally or internationally were recognized as Diamonds of Indian Hindu Unity (Also called Bharateey Ekta Ke Heere). It was well planned and executed conference.

CLUB NOSTALGIA MUSICIANS CONCERT AIMED TO ENTERTAIN SENIOR CITIZENS:

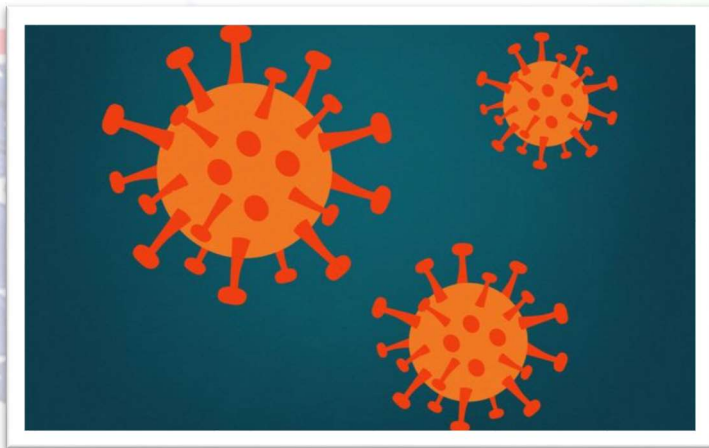
As the expression goes, old is gold. Musicians and vocalists along with their facilitator NR Venkatachalam are known for performing for noble causes.

On Sunday, March 14, 2021, this concert was done not only to entertain senior citizens but also to acknowledge the work of Senior Citizens of Georgia and the National Federation of Indian American Associations (NFIA) in USA.

The sponsors for the program were Dr. S.K.C. and Mayuri Shah of Georgia. According to Vice President Raj Razdan the charity concert took the attendees to down the memory lane. Attendees felt entertained and thankful for this charity event.

THE WHOLE WORLD BECAME "HOME BOUND" DUE TO COVID 19 - SPREAD OF PANDEMIC PROPORTION ONE YEAR AGO - ON MARCH 11, 2020:

Dr. Tedros Adhanom, World Health Organization (WHO) Director General had declared on March 11, 2020 that the CORONA Virus had become a challenge of pandemic proportion and for public safety everyone must become home bound. All entered a state of self-imposed isolation. Only essential workers were permitted to be out of the home to combat the challenge.



It is estimated that by July this year we can expect to come out of this isolation. It is probable that by then the herd immunity might happen. It is expected that by fall life will become as close as feasible to normal – of course a new normal.

Regrettably, the answer is less than certain and affirmative. Herd immunity is achieved when a significant proportion of the population becomes immune, mostly through vaccination, so the spread of the virus become controlled. White House chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci has estimated that

70 to 85 percent of the U.S. population needs to be vaccinated to develop this status. President Biden has made his administration's priority to get majority of the population vaccinated by end of July by making vaccination doses available for all those who want to be vaccinated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last week decreed that standard agency advise of 14-day coronavirus quarantine can be shortened to 10 days or even seven days.

The first case of COVID-19 in United States was reported 420 days ago on 1/21/2020. On March 17, 2021. the new cases in US were reported 58,480 and 1,173 deaths.

THE INDIAN EMBASSY – INFORMATION ABOUT OVERSEAS CITIZEN OF INDIA (OCI) CARD:

Guidelines about the Reissuance of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Card -It is informed that **VFS Global** is the service provider for OCI services for the Embassy of India, Washington DC or its Consulates in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, New York and San Francisco. Its operations have started from 04 November 2020. All the OCI applicants are requested to visit the link <https://services.vfsglobal.com/usa/en/ind/apply-oci-services> for details.

Apart from the applicable Government of India OCI fees, the applicants will also be required to pay US\$ 15.90 as service charge to VFS Global and US\$ 3 as contribution to Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF).

In case of any other specific queries related to OCI services, please email to fsoci.washington@mea.gov.in

The details of the VFS Global Application Centre are as under:

1025 Vermont Ave, NW
Suite 320,
Washington, DC 20005

(It may also be noted that due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, there will be no walk-in service at VFS Global until further notice. All applications shall only be dealt with by post.)

VFS Helpline Numbers

Consular Services (For OCI and Renunciation) + 1 800 320 9693

Operational Days: Monday to Friday, 8:00 to 20:00 hours EST

A FEW NOTABLE ABOUT NFIA FAMILY AND FRIENDS - MAKING NEWS:

LIFE TIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD – Dr. Parveen Chopra along with nine others.



Recently Marquis WHO'S WHO IN USA the oldest biographer in USA since 1894 that have profiled achievements of very distinguished and noted leaders from Presidents of America to exceptional achievers in various professions in USA, bestowed their LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD to DR. PARVEEN CHOPRA for the year 2021 along with other very selective group of nine in USA and declared the results in prestigious The Wall Street Journal published from New York, USA, the most acclaimed newspaper in the financial and business fields in the world. Congratulations to Dr. Chopra.

Dr. Chopra is retired but has a publication that he edits and distributes in New York New Jersey area.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION- ABILITY AND DISABILITY:

A young 14-year-old teenager who was featured in Washington DC program on International Women's Day received first place award for a cd album for which he and two others did instrumentation. His mother, who received Gaurav Puraskar, a women trailblazer narrated the story of her son. At age four, he was so impacted due to altruism that the doctor advised the mother to put him in an institution. She said 10 years later the young man performed at Broadway in front of Andrew Webber because he refused to be isolated in school and had the determination to play music without a coach.

He and his band are getting lot of accolades. Jake is known to help all his class mates and is very supportive of his friends, family, and class mates. His mother is very proud of this young man who is a determined kid.



She said, Jake Sizemore has been talking for *years* about wanting to drive. Probably since he was 10. He's wanted to drive more than his sister Laura. He's so determined to get his permit he's made literally 200 flash cards, read the entire driver's manual three times, and done the 150-question practice exam TWICE. On his own. Rachna Sizemore said, I've never met a more goal-oriented kid in my life. What Jake wants he will figure out a way to get, through grit and sheer will. The trio has won WAMMIE for rock music.

It is a joy to see this young man who recorded and sang a song on International Women's Day where his mother was an award recipient.

SWASTIK CAMPAIGN – East CCommunity Organized an event to educate Party officials. In a well-attended March 10 Zoom meeting, New York State Democratic chair Jay Jacobs assured the Indian American community that the S2727 bill misrepresenting the Swastika (also spelled as Swastik) as a symbol of hate “will not move forward, it will not be advanced in the Senate or the Assembly, it is not going anywhere.”

Along with East Coast media, the West Coast newspaper India West also carried the news story. The meeting which was organized by a community leader Nilima Madan and others was intended to have a dialogue with the officials.

Dr. Thomas Abraham, founder of NFIA and GOPIO and **Ms. Gunjan Rastogi**, Regional Vice President from New York also attended the meet and expressed their thoughts. Jacobs gave his assurance at the meeting organized by the Nassau County Democratic Committee and the newly formed United Front of Indian Americans in North America. The meeting was the result of intense efforts by Kamlesh Mehta, who has taken a frontline seat in the “Save Swastik” campaign. Organizers were successful because their voice was heard.

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: NFIA Director, Dr. Sukrit Mukherjee; Prashanthi Harathi, Regional Vice President, Kewal Kanda, GOPIO, and Immediate Past President NFIA, Angela Anand. Also credited for information here are Everyday Health, John Hopkins data base, CDC, Wall Street Journal, and special acknowledgement of images, AP photo of Vice President Kamala Harris from news, and special credit to the Indian Embassy for their press release.
