

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS (NFIA)

Serving the Indian American Community since 1980

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REMEMBERING ASTRONAUT KALPANA CHAWLA AND SPACE ODYSSEY OF COLUMBIA:

America has prided itself about its successful space program for over four decades. This month reminds Americans of the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster that occurred on February 1, 2003 and shook NASA and the country up from its ground. It was a fatal incident in the United States space program when Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated as it reentered the atmosphere, killing all seven crew members. The disaster was the second fatal accident in the United States Space Shuttle program, after the 1986 breakup of Challenger, which happened soon after liftoff. In this Columbia crew was also Ms. Kalpana Chawla, an Indian-born American astronaut and engineer who was the first woman of Indian origin to go to space.



Kalpana Chawla was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor, and several streets, universities, and institutions have been named in her honor. Being the first female from India, she will be remembered by historians. (Photo is credited to Wikipedia)

This was not only loss of human lives and the expensive equipment but also the loss of confidence of NASA engineers and scientists. Due to this incident, NASA suspended its Space Shuttle flight operations for more than two years. Same was the case when the previous Challenger disaster happened. NASA ultimately made improvement in safety and several technical changes, including adding a thorough on-orbit inspection to determine how well the shuttle's thermal protection system had endured the ascent, and keeping a designated rescue

mission ready in case irreparable damage was found. This mission was commanded by Rick D. Husband, who was a colonel in the U.S. Air Force and a test pilot. The mission's pilot was William C. McCool, a U.S. Navy commander who was on his first spaceflight. The payload commander of Columbia was Michael P. Anderson, a U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel. Kalpana Chawla, served as the flight engineer. David M. Brown and Laurel Blair Salton Clark, both U.S. Navy captains, flew as the mission specialists on this mission and Ian Ramon, a colonel in the Israeli Air Force and the first Israeli astronaut, flew along with them as a payload specialist.

The space program of the United States had learned from this tragic incidence and have since commanded more space shuttle in pursuit of learning about the unknown and the memory of this incidence lingers on. India will not forget Ms. Kalpana Chawla, the space astronaut and has recorded her life and upbringing in UP before arriving here and the States is also proud of her and all here crew members.

Angela Anand, NFIA President (2019-2020), Editor of the Newsletter

THE BOARD MEMBERS –OFFICERS OF YEAR 2022 NFIA TEAM ARE PROFILED HERE:



Ashok (Pat) Patnaik, Secretary of NFIA, is a banker and Vice President of Small Business Lending. Patnaik also serves on the City of Cerritos, CA as the Parks and Recreation Commissioner. Prior to this appointment, Patnaik served for 6 years as a Commissioner in the Economic Development and Community Safety department for the City of Cerritos. Prior to the banking stint, Patnaik worked for major US corporations and traveled to 35 countries setting up Joint Ventures throughout several continents. Patnaik, a long-term Cerritos resident, holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering degree from National Institute of Technology, Rourkela, India as well as an MBA from Pepperdine University, CA.



Prashanthi Harathi was elected as the Joint Secretary for National Federation of Indian-American Associations (NFIA). Last year, as the Pacific North Regional Vice President, she organized a successful Women's Day virtual event, and continuously served the community through NFIA. This year, she plans to do more community work through NFIA. She is an extremely passionate dance Professional with over 31 years of experience in Performing and 21 years of teaching the great Indian traditional dance form of Kuchipudi. She is post graduated in Performing Arts (Indian Classical Dance - Kuchipudi) from Hyderabad Central University and was the topper in the University. Her academic qualifications include Masters in Performing Arts (Kuchipudi). She has Bachelors in Hindi, Masters in Public Administration, and Masters in Computers.



Hari.H.Singh, Ph.D. currently serving the National Federation of Indian American Associations as its Executive Director Administration since 2016. He chairs, administers and manages the NFIA membership drive, its annual Nomination and Election of new Board of Directors (BOD), takes active lead role in Executive Committee meetings, contributes in smooth and productive execution of NFIA programs, and performs any other tasks as authorized by the NFIA Board. Prior to 2016, he served NFIA as its Vice President, Joint Secretary, Director-at-large, and its Regional Vice President of Washington Capital Region. In addition to the above Dr. Singh took active roles in NFIA led annual Congressional luncheon, the White House Briefings, and other related activities in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

He also served twice as the President of the Federation of Indian American Association- National Capital Region (FIA-NCR) from 2000 to 2002. Professionally, as a Program Director/Health Science Administrator at the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health Bethesda, Maryland for last several

years. Before joining the NIH, he served at the US Food and Drug Administration as Senior Scientist. After serving the US Government for almost 35 years and few years in academic institutions, he retired from his profession and currently spending his time in serving the Indian American Community and the Community at large.



Geeta Sunkara came to the United States in 1980 after her marriage. Since 2002, she has been involved in all aspect of activities at Shri Shirdi Sai temple of Atlanta, such as Health fairs, blood drive, and habitat for humanity. She has Held several volunteer roles at Sai temple on its executive committee such as Secretary, Vice President, President, past President and at present as CFO.

After 35 years as health care professional, now retired, she is able to get involved at temple to do more seva and actively participate in Universal Sai Association for community service and she says she is looking forward to work with NFIA. Her goals are to participate and support the activities of NFIA. Inspire youth with cultural and community activities and engage senior citizens with social and spiritual activities.

REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA HAD MANY ELECTED OFFICIALS AND ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP PRESENCE IN NORTH EAST- ORGANIZED TO CELEBRATE THE OCCASION:

NFIA joined hands with GOPIO chapters in the Northeast USA (New York, GOPIO Manhattan, GOPIO-CT, GOPIO-Central Jersey) and other community organization in a show of unity work come together to celebrate India's 73rd Republic Day virtually on Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, paying rich tributes to their motherland, India as she stands tall among nations of the world, proclaiming freedom, democratic values, economic and technological advancements, and the rich cultural traditions. Chief guest Indian Consul General in New York Ambassador Randhir Kumar Jaiswal, referring the several elected Indian American leaders who attended the event, Ambassador Jaiswal said, "Your presence and greetings mean a lot to us and to the Indian Diaspora and to the Indo-US relationship."



Photo –Dignitaries and elected officials at the celebration, from left Consul General Randhir Kumar Jaiswal, Impact Executive Director Neil Makhija, Vermont State Senator Kesha Ram, NJ State Senator Vin Gopal, Ohio State Senator Niraj Antani, CT. Rep. Harry Arora, NH Rep. Latha Mangipudi, BY Rep. Jenifer Rajkumar and NJ Rep. Raj Mukherji.

Neil Makhija, Executive President of Indian American Impact, introduced the elected state officials attending

the event including New Jersey Senator Vin Gopal and Rep. Raj Mukherji, Vermont Senator Kesha Ram, Ohio Senator Niraj Antani, NY State Rep. Jenifer Rajkumar, New Hampshire Rep. Latha Mangipudi and Connecticut State Rep. Harry Arora.

GOPIO Chairman, Dr. Thomas Abraham pointed out that India has sent a large number of its brightest to America, who have made substantial contributions in building up the economy of America. Dr. Jaya Daptardar eloquently emceed the event. Co-Sponsoring Organizations and the leaders who had attended the event included: President of the National Federation of Indian American Association Lavanya Reddy from Seattle and Secretary Ashok Patnaik from Los Angeles, VP for New York Region Gunja Rastogi, who is the President of National Indian American Association for Senior Citizens; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Executive Director Sudhir Vaishnav; Indo-American Senior Citizen Center of New York President Mukund Mehta; Jiwan Jyoti Chairman Suresh Arya from Rockland County; Jhilmil President Anoop Bhargava from New Jersey; Milan Cultural Association President Suresh Sharma from Hartford, CT; Kerala Center President Alex Esthappan from Elmont, New York; National AIA President Gobind Munjal and India Association of Long Island President Bina Sabapathi.

The taped program can be seen on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/3d90UWW8SvA>
(This write up was prepared from the press release by GOPIO)

WASHINGTON HELPING HANDS IS PERFORMING COMMUNITY SERVICE:

Washington Helping Hands served food to homeless women and children shelters starting from Thanks giving to the third week, end of January, 2022. The food was Freshly cooked. These were vegetarian meals given with needed hygiene items bags to the needy. The members have been performing community service since 2012. NW Share has 2 food trucks that serve food for homeless 5 days a week. The members are trying to increase the service to 7 days a week. The members think a donation of 259 can feed 200 people. This effort is being supported by many organizations. NFIA President Lavanya Reddy, Director at large Vamshi Reddy, and RVP Chandra Sena took active part in cooking, sponsoring and delivering the food.



SEATTLE STATUE OF GANDHI JI WAS VISITED BY DIFFERENT ORGANIZATION ON REPUBLIC DAY:



Several individuals and Leaders of different organizations joined to celebrate Republic Day in Bellevue WA. NFIA Gandhi Ji statue which was given as a gift to Washington state by the Indian Government. Now this is a gathering place to celebrate national holidays. Local NFIA team, Lavanya Reddy, President NFIA, Vamshi Reddy NFIA Director at large, Chandrasena, RVP NFIA, took lead in celebrating and paid tribute with garlands.

Gandhi Ji is revered by not only Indians but non-Indians as well. Many regions where NFIA has presence had virtual or hybrid presence in these celebrations and have included Washington DC, San Diego, Chicago, and Atlanta at the time of this newsletter and if missed will be acknowledged next time around.



Each year many people attend these national holidays but due to spread of COVID, fewer people are attending. NFIA members send their best to their countrymen on this day.

Photo credit of these photos goes to Seattle, Washington.

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK- A MEMBER ORGANIZATION OF NFIA HAD A NEW YEAR PROGRAM WITH MUSIC AND GUESTS:

In January, a program to recognize Network members and guests for their accomplishments was held virtually. The special guest of the event was **IP Singh**, a musician who has worked with Bollywood music directors, Kalyan ji Anand ji, Laxmikant Pyarelal, Rajkamal Ji and now has launched his solo efforts in writing, recording, and releasing music for all music channels including apple, amazon, Spotify and has distributed his music widely. Mr. Singh is also a painter, writer, and musician who plays many instruments. Network recognized him and other four who are listed here.

A speaker on the January event of the Network was, a breast cancer survivor, **Indira Kaur Ahluwalia**, who is an author and an entrepreneur. At a young age with two young children, she was diagnosed with a stage IV cancer. She was raising children and going through an unpleasant divorce. She spoke about her journey of resilience and hope as well as her sheer determination to raise and live for her children helped her to deal with this disease. Her book, Fast Forward to Hope is available at Amazon.

Another speaker on this new year program was **Dr. Shakun Malik**, who during her visit to Kashmir visited refugee women. Their life conditions motivated her to help them and she founded Hemat program. The people have become homeless due to political circumstances. She has documented the thoughts of the women who have been striving to live meaningfully by sewing masks and distributing them.

Suraj Kulkarni, who has now graduated is a student at UCLA, during his senior year of High School he received a Prudential Spirit of Community Award for his volunteer work. The honor, which included a \$5,000 scholarship, was one of just 10 that were bestowed by Prudential nationwide, and Kulkarni was the lone student west of Colorado to be honored.

Indrani Davaluri, a dance guru and founder of Natyamargam, classical dance style of Bharatnatyam. She has been performing along with her students for several years in the metropolitan Washington DC. Not only she is a great dancer, skilled in Abhinav, but also an actor and model. She has been producing videos of their performances and has been involved in producing and acting in a locally starred movie.

This program included local vocal artists from Washington DC, Virginia, Oregon, CA and India. It was attended by Network members and former president/chairman Mr. Gorakshkar and Vice President Aparna Hande of NFIA.

IN MEMORIAM - LATA MANGESHKAR BREATHED HER LAST ON FEBRUARY 6, 2022 IN MUMBAI:

Lata Mangeshkar ji has been described as the nightingale of music. She was a recipient of Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award and honored with many more awards that distinguished her from her colleagues. She reigned the movie industry for approximately eight decades as the highest regarded artist with melodious voice. She breathed last on February 6, 2022.



She was 92 years old and had been hospitalized and suffering due to Covid virus complications and pneumonia. Besides the good care, love of family and her admirers, multiple organs failure was the cause of her death. She is survived by three vocalist sisters of repute and an accomplished brother, and they are all singers and musicians connected with the Bollywood industry. The movie industry has lost its most precious and revered human asset in her death. She has left a large legacy behind that has made her life and work unforgettable. Her musical career included approximately 30, 000 songs in 36 languages for well-known movie stars. She was versatile and could emote so well that her repertoire included songs that can show her voice range and the shades of sadness, joyfulness, love, spirituality, and patriotism. Not only the movie industry but the whole country has expressed grief in her passing and tributes have been pouring in from people beyond India.

Such was her status and accomplishments that she has received a state funeral and Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew in from New Delhi to pay his last respects. Media carried photographs of her body wrapped in the Indian flag, as thousands, including Bollywood stars and politicians, thronged Mumbai's iconic Shivaji Park where she was cremated by the Hindu ceremony of holy men chanting of Vedic hymns. Her funeral also received a special gun salute. The country declared national two days of mourning as is customary by lowering the country's flag in respect to her.

"I am anguished beyond words," Modi said in a tweet. "She leaves a void in our nation that cannot be filled. The coming generations will remember her as a stalwart of Indian culture, whose melodious voice had an unparalleled ability to mesmerize people."

NFIA officers and members sends condolences to Mangeshkar family. Lata ji will live in the heart of her admirers forever. Indian movie industry and the country lost its most beloved daughter.

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. NFIA President and Officers of the Board, Lavania Reddy, Ashok Patnaik, Prashanthi Harathi, Geeta Sunkara, and Admin. Director H.H. Singh, and GOPIO Press Release provided by Dr. Thomas Abraham, and contributions were made by the Past President of NFIA, Angela Anand. Also credited for photos are the officers of NFIA for their profile photos, Wikipedia for Kalpana Chawla and Space Shuttle Columbia astronauts' information and Indian Media for PM Modi's thoughts on passing of Lata Mangeshkar, the photo credit for Lata Mangeshkar ji's photo goes to for Wicipedia. NFIA newsletter requesting the members and organizations to communicate their activities to include in the newsletter.
