

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS (NFIA)



Serving the Indian American Community since 1980

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DIWALI IS THE MOST AUSPICIOUS HINDU FESTIVAL CELEBRATED BY INDIAN DIASPORA EVERYWHERE:

India is a land of diverse religions, languages, customs, and cuisines. There is vibrancy of colors in clothing worn during festivals and trinkets used to decorate homes and offices. Diwali is a famous festival of Hindus that represents joy, health, and wealth. It is also equated to Christmas by Western world in the sense that it is also called a festival of lights just like Christmas. According to Hindu scriptures, Diwali is celebrated to welcome Shri Rama Chandra back to his home after spending 14 years in exile. He killed demon king Ravana who represented the evilness in the region. Hence, it is the celebration of victory over evil. By lighting the lamps, ignorance, and darkness is dispelled by light and knowledge.



In the United States, diaspora community has publicized this festival well and the Administration has held a special gathering at the White House for now few years. A special Diwali stamp was also issued in conjunction with this festival. The President Trump is here lighting the lamp at the gathering at the White House. (Getty Image of Diwali)

For many years, the Indian community has been having special commemorative events in the community to mark this festival. Many temples join together and hold a grand celebration where people can buy gifts, gems, clothing, food and all sort of

Indian trinkets. Diwali follows after Dusherra, Navratri, and Durga Puja. This year due to Covid -19, mostly virtual or limited gathering celebrations happened.

In India, Diwali is celebrated in variety of ways. People decorate their houses, draw design on the floor with rice and colored flowers. The pattern of drawing is known as Rangoli and marks good wishes for the approaching new year. People buy new clothes, utensils, idols images, and distribute sweets to friends, family, and neighbors. Businesses exchange sweets to build good relations. New year calendars are also given as gifts to the loved ones and flowers to the temples are offered in prayers for health, wealth, and happiness.

Sweet shops in India look forward to the five-days of Diwali and the third night is the darkest night of the lunar month. One thing all Indian look forward is to buy and exchange a large variety of sweets and these are beautifully packaged and gift wrapped. Diyas (earthen lamps) are placed to invite Lakshmi goddess to the home. Goddess Lakshmi symbolizes wealth. Silver coins with her image on it are part of the offerings during gift exchange and people pray for wealth and good fortune. Since it is a post-harvest festival, people also seek the blessings of goddess for bountiful future crops to feed the human being and animals.

Angela Anand, NFIA President

VALLABHBHAI PATEL– A UNIFIER OF 500 PRINCELY STATES OF INDIA – HIS 145TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY WAS OBSERVED IN INDIA AND OUTSIDE INDIA:

Sardar Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel (October 31, 1875 – 15 December 15, 1950), popularly known as Sardar Patel, was an Indian politician. He served as the first Deputy Prime Minister of India, also as Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Information, and Minister of States. Academically he was trained to work as a lawyer but he was more influenced by the life and ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and worked very closely with Gandhi ji in achieving freedom for India. He is often mentioned as the "Iron Man of India" for his work to unify 500 princely states into the Indian Union.



He was born in a Patidar family in Gujrat and in 1908 he lost his wife, who left him with a son and daughter, and thereafter he never remarried. He wanted to practice law and in order to enhance his interest and abilities, Patel traveled to London in 1910 to study at the Middle Temple. There he studied diligently and passed the final examinations with great credit and efforts. He returned to India and in 1913 and settled in Ahmadabad to practice law. He quickly became known as the leading attorney in criminal law. He was interested in his profession and indifferent to the political scene of India at that time in his life.

In 1917, Mr. Patel's interest changed enormously when he came in contact with another professional trained attorney Mohandas K. Gandhi. Patel liked satyagraha, a policy of non-violence put forth by Gandhi ji, a way to achieve freedom for India. In the long course of actions, Patel differed with Gandhi ji in realizing that the partition of the subcontinent into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan was inevitable, and he asserted that it was in India's interests to part with Pakistan. Like Gandhi, he also went to jail numerous times but his contribution in uniting the princely states into united India is what made him unforgettable in the Independence movement and achievement of India from the Britishers oppression.

A VIRTUAL EVENT CELEBRATED BHARAT EKTA DIWAS ON OCTOBER 31, 2000 IN LOS ANGELES:

Indian American Community in Southern California and Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America of LA Chapter in coordination of many local organizations celebrated Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 145th birth anniversary as Bharat Ekta Diwas through virtual webinar. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna by Indian Government. People from around the world including USA, India, Japan, Australia, Trinidad & Tobago, United Kingdom and Canada participated in the celebration.



The program started with lamp lighting and welcome address by VHPA-LA president Prof. Keshav Patel followed by Ganesh Vandana by students of Savitri Arts Academy. Dignitaries who participated included Chief Guest Dr. TV Nagendra Prasad, Consul General of India San Francisco; and two keynote speakers Dr. Bharat Barai and Dr. Abhaya Asthana.

Dr. Bharat Barai in his keynote address said when India was awarded freedom by British rulers, they also awarded freedom to all princely states numbering around 500. These princely states were given the freedom to stay independent, join India, or join Pakistan as they wished. It was Sardar Patel who united all princely states into one united India hence his birthday became a celebration of Bharat Ekta Diwas or India Unity Day.

Consul General Dr. Nagendra Prasad in his address told the audience Sardar Patel was a visionary leader. He appreciated the local organizations celebrating this day as India Unity Day that is a rich tribute to Sardar Patel. Patel's statue, tallest in the world, is also called Statue of Unity, he said.

Dr. Abhaya Asthana in his address said, today is a special day. When going gets tough, tough gets going – that was Sardar Patel. He made sure Bharat stays strong. Nationalism was closest to his heart. Recorded video messages from India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujrat Mr. Vijay Rupani, Dy CM Mr. Nitin Patel, Agriculture Minister Mr. Parshottam Rupali and MP from UK Smt. Priti Patel were played. Young students from "Elike" youth program delivered recorded messages about Sardar Patel's famous quotes. A short message by the local community leaders including Mayor of Cerritos Mr. Naresh Solanki was played. Program ended with a prayer delivered by Mrs. Baljit Kaur Toor of Gurdwara Sadh Sangat, Norco and vote of thanks delivered by Vasu Pawar.

A VOLUNTEER AWARD NOMINATION HAS BEEN DESIGNATED FOR MR. SUKRIT MUKHERJEE FOR HIS SERVICES DURING SPREAD OF CORONA VIRUS:

Dr. Sukrit Mukherjee of NFIA, an appointed Member on a committee for Information System, was nominated in October for the National President's Volunteer award for his community services. Final Awardee list is yet to be declared by the White House, Washington, D.C., he said.



The Nomination was based on his Volunteer Service hours for the COVID-19 pandemic situation during April - September, 2020 towards the Mask Manufacture and donation to people from all walks of life in and around Southern California and beyond. His community service with Los Angeles County Department of Health and Department of Fire was also the recipient of these face coverings.

Indian Community especially Bengali Community all around the USA celebrated annual Durga puja festival from October 22nd to 26th October, 2020 in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic.



The Bengali Hindu Association of Los Angeles (BHALA) celebrated Durga puja in Los Angeles on 25th October, Sunday and was open to visitors with CDC guidelines ensuring face masks and maintaining 6 feet distancing etc. Dr. Sukrit Mukherjee acted as Priest like previous years. Adhibas Bodhon to Dashami was celebrated on 25th October, 2020. Entire Puja session was broadcast online over You tube Live, Facebook Live and over Zoom that was watched live by hundreds of audiences around the nation. He also received a certificate of recognition in September from local Congressman Alan Lowenthal for representing as the Board of Director on World Peace Day

celebration. NFIA members offer their best wishes to him and his family for continued success in rendering masks and other services to the community selflessly during these unprecedented troublesome times.

A CANDIDATES FORUM WAS ORGANIZED BY GOPIO CHAPTERS AND IMPACT PROJECT FOR STATE HOUSES IN THE NORTHEAST USA- A DESIRE TO SERVE WAS THEIR MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE:

GOPIO was formed in 1989 at the First Global Convention of People of Indian Origin in New York organized by the **NFIA**. GOPIO chapters in the New York area (Manhattan, New York, Connecticut and Central Jersey) in collaboration with IMPACT Project organized an interactive virtual session on Thursday, October 8th, 2020. Moderated by Raj Goyle, Former Member of Kansas State Assembly and Co-Founder, IMPACT said, "When I had joined politics, I did not know much of politics. I was one of the first to be elected to any State Assembly. And I am proud to be part of the new generation of PIOs/NRIs in politics."



Dr. Gautam Mukunda at The Center for Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge, MA. He associated pioneer efforts of Dalip Singh Saund, who was elected to the US Congress in the 1950s. "We could not be where we are today, if he and others did not fight for equal rights for all. There is no better way than running for office."

Connecticut State Rep. Raghib Allie-Brennan, Candidate for CT House of Representatives in the 2nd District shared how he got interested in entering politics, especially through his "commitment to Environment after Hurricane Katrina devastated the nation."

New York State Senator Kevin Thomas, a candidate for NY State Senate District 56, said, "I am proud of the community he has come to represent. My constituents sought change and they got the change by electing me. Ohio State Rep. Niraj Antani, a candidate for Ohio State Senate District 6, said, he is the 2nd Indian American ever elected to a statewide office and he is one of the only Republicans of Indian Origin to be elected. "I work hard to reach across the aisle and cooperate with people in both the Parties to legislate."

Jeremy Cooney from Rochester, New York, a candidate for NY State Senate District 56, said, "I am from India. I was adopted as a young child. My commitment is to give back to the community."

New Hampshire State Rep. Latha Mangipudi, who is a candidate for NH House of Representatives 35th District for a 5th Term, shared with the audience about her own life, challenges in becoming a female, non-White elected official from a state which is majority White.

Rupande Mehta from New Jersey, a candidate for NJ State Senate District 25, said, "I have been working in my community for long, which needs a new leader, who can represent our values of my state and my constituents."

NJ State Rep. Raj Mukherji from NJ's 33rd District said, "My story is simple." Stating that it is "premature to say we have arrived. Our community's vote matters. We are proud to be Brown hibernated community."

Kesha Ram, Burlington, Vermont, a candidate for VT State Senate Chittenden District, shared of the reasons for her entering politics. "I got engaged with the community for long, where we care for each other." One of the youngest ever to be elected to State Assembly at the age of 21, she said, she had left active politics, and now she is back to run for the Senate seat. "

FEELINGS OF GRATITUDE AND SACRIFICE OF TURKEY TO FEED THE FAMILY – IT IS TIME FOR THANKSGIVING FOR ALL THE BOUNTY OF CROPS WE ENJOY:

One of the most enjoyable, festive, and highly traveled family get-together holidays in the United States is the Thanksgiving Day holiday and the weekend. It is held on a Thursday and is a national holiday. This is celebrated on various dates in the United States, Canada, Brazil, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Liberia, and the sub-national entities Leiden, Norfolk Island, and Puerto Rico.

The history behind this holiday is that It began as a day of giving thanks and sacrifice for the blessing of the harvest and of the preceding year. After long pilgrimage when Europeans arrived on the shores of Plymouth Bay, in United States, they were tired and hungry but they were welcomed by the native Indians. For their warm welcome and feasting they gave thanks to the people as some of their traveler family and friends did not survive the long journey by sea and were afflicted by scurvy and other diseases. Of the 102 original *Mayflower* passengers, only 44 survived. Turkeys were prevalent and the birds were sacrificed to feast these hungry people. For that reason, bird turkey is served on this holiday.



Similarly named festival holidays occur in Germany and Japan. Thanksgiving is celebrated on the second Monday of October in Canada and on the fourth Thursday of November in the United States and Brazil, and around the same part of the year in other places. Although Thanksgiving has historical roots in religious and cultural traditions, it has long been celebrated as a secular holiday as well.

Families welcome fall and its bounty of vegetables and fruits. Pumpkins and turkeys or ham along with all other trimmings of green beans, potatoes, and cherries traditionally are found on the dining tables of each and

every home. An image of family around the table and the food prepared with hours of labor shows the caring and loving of the cook and the helpers. This image is of last year's Thanksgiving.

Happy Thanksgiving to NFIA FAMILY!!

GOPE GIDWANI, REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT REPRESENTING NEWENGLAND AND CHEF ROSHANI SHARE THEIR INTEREST IN SINDHI COOKING THROUGH THEIR FAVORITE SAVORY DISHES FOR HOLIDAY'S GET TOGETHER:

Chef Roshni is an award winning Internationally trained chef, author and TV personality with over 20 years experience. She is a Food Network Chopped Champion and has appeared on the Food Network and Hells Kitchen many times. She has dedicated the past 3 years of her career promoting Sindhi food throughout North America and the Caribbean. She recently challenged Bobby Flay with Sindhi food on his hot show Beat Bobby Flay. She has also presented a 7 course Sindhi Dinner multiple times at the famous James Beard house in New York City. Chef Rosh says, "food is a journey, not a destination".



Ingredients for Sindhi Chappa

- 1 rack of lamb/ rack of goat
- 1 chopped fine onion
- 2 tsp cinnamon powder
- 1 tbs ginger garlic paste
- 1 tbs ginger paste
- 2 tbs garam masala

1 tsp cardamom powder
2 tbs curry powder
1 tsp dry methi
2 tbs fresh mint chopped
3 tbs chopped cilantro

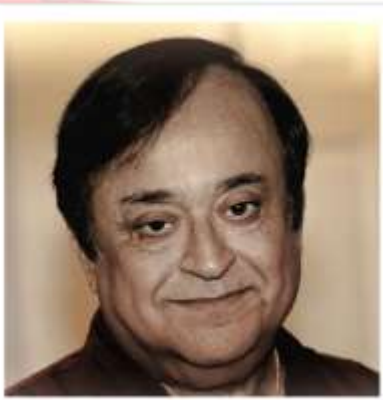
Method: Cut rack of meat into individual chops. In a bowl mix all ingredients and let sit for at least 1 hour. The longer the better. In a skillet on med flame, heat 3 tbs oil and sear chops on each side for about 4 mins.

Finish with fresh squeezed lemon juice and serve with katchumber salad.

For gravy dish, seat lamb on both sides for 2 mins each and add 1 chopped tomato and 1/2 cup of water and simmer for 7 mins on low flame.

Ingredients for Sindhi Bindi Seyal masala

This dish is from this well-known Chef Rosh, "Feed your Soul". It looks delicious and worth a try.



The favorite Sindhi food is Kadhi as well as other recipes of Chef Roshani that Mr. Gidwani who is a good cook himself has cooked for friends and family. Special occasions is Sai bhaji chawal, a popular dish which consists of white steamed rice served with spinach curry which is given a 'tarka' with tomatoes, onions and garlic. Koki is another popular Sindhi flat-bread that is prepared with wheat flour and goes well with any dal, sabzi or even curd or chai.

Another savory dish is Bhindi Sindhi style.

In a blender Blend
1 lbs frozen spinach
1 white onion
1 jalapeño
1/4 cup dry methi
1 bunch cilantro
2 lbs Okra fresh Trimmed

Method: In a pan heat 2 tbs oil. And 2 small dice tomato. 2 tbs ginger garlic paste and 2 tsp Garam masala. Add 1 tsp tumeric powder, 1 tsp coriander powder and 1 tsp cumin powder, cook for about 6-8 mins, add a few tbs water if needed. Then add purée and cook out for about 6 mins. Add in trimmed okra and simmer on low for 15 mins. Salt to taste. NFIA is thankful to Chef Rosh and others for sharing their favorite recipes.

FESTIVITIES AND SWEETS GO TOGETHER IN INDIAN CULTURE – DR. SAMBHU BANIK SHARES TWO SWEET DESSERTS FROM THE CUISINE OF BENGAL:



Dr. Sambhu Banik, a psychologist, a resident of Maryland, from NCAIA, a member organization of NFIA has written three cook books. He said, Sandesh means good News, this and Rosogollas are two favorites of Bengalis. It is prepared by many Bengali families to cherish good and pleasant news, mostly during holidays. Below are two dessert recipes from his books for festive season.

Sandesh (Fresh Cheese Dessert)

Ingredient

1gallon whole milk
6 tbs lemon juice
1 cup sugar
1 tbs ghee
10 pistachio finely crushed

6 cardamom pods, seeds only, finely ground

Method

In a large, heavy saucepan, bring milk to the boiling over point. Add lemon juice and stir, until milk curdles. Remove from heat and let set for a few minutes. Pour curds into a cheese cloth. Tie cloth and press out extra moisture, until cheese is firm, like the curds in dry curd cottage cheese.

Place cheese on a board, knead in sugar until the cheese is smooth. In a large frying pan, heat ghee, add sugared cheese and cook on a low to medium heat for seven minutes, stirring constantly, otherwise it will stick or burn. Add crushed pistachios and ground cardamom. Remove from heat. Pour Sandesh into a serving dish and smooth out by processing down firmly with a spoon. Cut equally sized portions. Serve either warm or chilled. Serves 10-12

Rosogollas (Sweet Balls)

A sweet from Bengal, where no festive occasion is complete without it.

Ingredients

1gallon wholemilk
6 tbs lemon juice
1 tbs cream of wheat
¼ cup small sugar cubes (about 20)
4 cardamoms, seeds only crushed

Syrup

3 cups sugar
4 cups of water
1 tsp rosewater

Method: In a large, heavy saucepan, bring milk to the boiling over point. Add lemon juice and stir, until milk curdles. Remove from heat and let set for a few minutes. Pour curds into a cheese cloth. Tie cloth and press out extra moisture, until cheese is firm, like the curds in dry curd cottage cheese. Put cheese into a bowl and mix in cream of wheat, knead until it is smooth and pliable. Divide the cheese into twenty equal sized balls. Place a ball in the palm of your hand and press a sugar cube and pinch of crushed cardamom into the center of the ball. Reshape ball. In a separate large saucepan, bring water to a boil, add sugar and simmer on medium heat for few minutes. Drop the balls into the boiling syrup. Simmer for 10-12 minutes. Every 3 minutes, sprinkle a spoon of water into the syrup. Remove from heat and cool. Add rosewater to syrup before serving. Serves 10.

AFTER CORONA, A NEW NORMAL :

Everything is subject to change. It is a universal law. Thus, change is imminent. We can either embrace it or fight it. Change of any kind generates stress and anxiety. It is evident that we may be able to build on our present experiences dealing with the onslaught and spread of Coronavirus and strategize our approach to health maintenance for future.



Businesses got impacted. People got afflicted and the healthcare system got surprised by its lack of preparation for this highly infectious virus. It not only changed the lives of Americans but it became a global phenomenon of pandemic proportion.

A report of the CDC released for June 24 through June 30, 2020 cited mental health, substance use, and suicidal ideation prevalence during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is unrest and chaos.

What does the future look like? At present, most small businesses have filed for bankruptcies. Big businesses have experienced low productivity and shortage of people willing to work and thus leading to lay-offs. The public

sector has plans of furloughing workers due to pending decisions of lawmakers on the budget for 2021. Childcare facilities are closed down and people have no choice but to file for unemployment. There are more than 5 million small businesses that took PPP loans, which means this will become a bigger issue in terms of paying back the loans and a burgeoning national deficit in America.

Indian Americans are known to have predominantly chosen medicine as their most desirable profession. There are many physicians working in the U.S. Many of them have opened their private clinics to offer healthcare to people without insurance as a humanitarian gesture and, when possible, they have served in community clinics, again for foreign students and other who do not have insurance.

The United States presently is at a crossroads. Several states are aiming at reopening businesses in phases. Regarding a vaccine, many companies are at different stages of trials and are using different approaches to getting a vaccine out in the near future. The future is looking positive but much different from what it has been. Life will come back to normal, though normal is going to be perhaps a mixture of old and new.

(BY Angela Anand -published in India West newspaper, October 10, 2020. Image credit Express Explained Health.)

THE LATEST NUMBERS (AS OF NOVEMBER 4, 2020) OF CORONA VIRUS CASES AND DEATHS WORLDWIDE – AND SYMPTOMS OF FLU AND COVID:

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 p.m. on November 4, the tally is:

Total cases worldwide: 47,925,055 (up from 47,250,964 Tuesday)
Total deaths worldwide: 1,221,852 (up from 1,210,335 Tuesday)
Total cases in the United States: 9,465,646 (up from 9,358,469 Tuesday)

Total deaths in the United States: 233,535 (up from 231,353 Tuesday)
Total recovered: 31,746,718

The White House scientific advisor cautioned that a "deadly phase" is coming. Deborah Birx, MD, the White House scientific advisor, said in a November 2 report, "We are entering the most concerning and most deadly phase of this pandemic ... leading to increasing mortality," according to the *Washington Post*. She called on administration officials to "take much more aggressive action." This was reported by the healthcare digital web site Everyday Health. Deaths inched up 3 percent last week, according to a Reuters analysis of state and county reports.

TIMES OF INDIA CARRIED A NEWS STORY ABOUT THE FIRST CEO OF ALLIANCE AIR -AN AIRLINE CARRIER:



Harpreet Singh has become the first ever female to head an Indian carrier reported the newspaper. She is cheered for her accomplishments and efforts to achieve this status by the airline industry and people at large.

Congratulations to her for being the first in this industry.

REMEMBERING DR. ROY FROM NFIA MEETINGS AND EVENTS OF LAST YEAR HELD IN WASHINGTON D.C. THIS TIME THIS WAS THE LAST MEETING HE ATTENED IN PERSON:



OTHER MEMORABLE EVENTS FROM D.C. AND HOUSTON HELD IN OCTOBER, 2019:



IN MEMORIAM – LATA MANGESHKAR TWEETED HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES AFTER LEARNING ABOUT THE PASSING OF SIR SEAN CONNERY:

The generation that watched James Bond movies were feeling the loss of an iconic Scottish actor who died this month. He was popular in India also as he portrayed a fictional British secret agent James Bond in seven Bond films during a span of 20 years. Lata Mangeshkar said in a tweet that she was deeply saddened to hear that Sir Sean Connery is no more. The perfect Bond who enthralled the audiences and stood tall as one of the charismatic personalities in the entertainment industry. Such legends come rare! Heartfelt condolences.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO TWO ICONIC ACTORS OF INDIAN CINEMA:

Two talented actors who have done exemplary work for Bollywood and continue to do so are getting one year older this month. NFIA sends greetings of happy birthday to movie industry giant **Shah Rukh Khan** and **Aishwarya Rai Bachchan**. Indian film industry is known to be producing the most films in comparison to other countries and that too in the shortest span of time. It brings lot of revenue for the country and enjoys great turnout in theatres. Covid 19 has made the industry also suffer but soon it will recover from the slump.

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: Administrative Director, Kewal Kanda; NFIA Information Systems Director, Dr. Sukrit Mukherjee; Regional Vice-President, Mr. Gope Gidwani, and Chef Roshani Roughani; Dr. Sambhu Banik, Advisor NCAIA; and GOPIO press release by Dr. Thomas, and President NFIA, Angela Anand. Also credited for information here are Everyday Health, John Hopkins data base, Wikipedia, Washington Post, White House, Reuters and India West newspaper. Photo credits goes to Getty image, Express Explained Health, Chef Rosh as well as to Times of India.
