

# Desh-Videsh



~ A Magazine Promoting the Indian Subcontinent since 1993 ~

FEBRUARY 2026- VOLUME 33 NUMBER 02

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**Passing the Torch to the  
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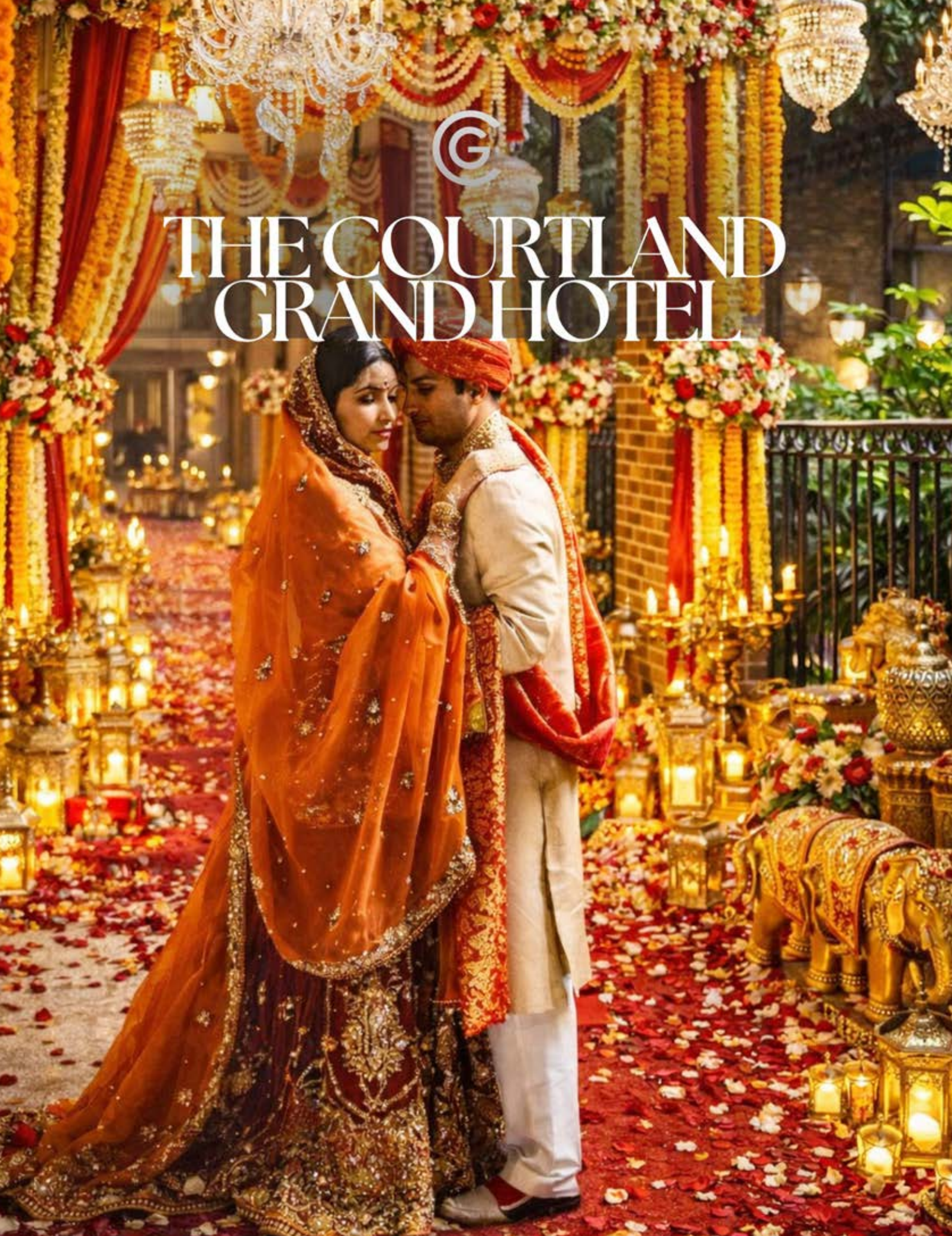
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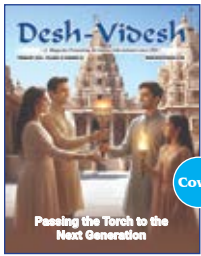
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## - MISSION STATEMENT -

To serve and support members of the Indian subcontinent community with an inspirational and educational magazine and to empower readers with an awareness of local, national and international news, events, and social happenings.

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**आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः**

**Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah**

**Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions.**

Rig Veda 1.89.1

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## Religious Intolerance – And the Courage to Accept Other Faiths as Our Own

It is often said—almost as social wisdom—“Never discuss politics or religion with friends and family.” These two subjects ignite emotions. They test loyalties. They can fracture relationships that took years to build.

But what about discussions on religion in public spaces? What happens when deeply held beliefs are not whispered at dinner tables but declared boldly in open forums?

Two weeks ago, I had an experience that forced me to confront this question directly.

At a public community event in South Florida, several organizations had set up booths. Among them was a local church operated by members of the Indian community. Out of curiosity—and perhaps habit—I walked up to the booth and began a conversation about religion.

What began as a polite exchange soon turned intense.

One of the non-Indian church members made a statement that was both familiar and startling in its directness. I have heard it before. I have read it in books and online debates. But never had I encountered it so plainly, face-to-face, in a one-on-one conversation.

**He said, “Christ is the only way to salvation.” He went further: “All other religions are fake imitations of Christianity.”**

For a moment, I paused.

As someone who has spent decades promoting Hindu values, culture, and philosophy—through publishing, community events, and personal dialogue—I could not let such a statement pass without response.

I reminded him that Christianity has existed for a little over 2,000 years. Human civilization stretches back far beyond that. Was he suggesting that every soul who lived before the birth of Christ—across continents and civilizations—was denied salvation?

Were the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Native Americans, Chinese sages, Vedic rishis, and countless generations of seekers simply condemned by chronology? And what about the assertion that all other religions are “fake imitations”?

I pointed out that respected historians and scholars—many of them not Hindu—have documented that Hindu traditions date back more than 5,000 years. If age alone were the measure of authenticity, then one could argue, with equal audacity, that newer religions are imitations of older spiritual traditions.

But reflection demands honesty. Religious intolerance does not always shout. Sometimes it hides behind certainty. Sometimes it appears in the form of exclusivity—“Only my path is valid.” **Yet intolerance does not belong to one religion alone. It is a human weakness.**

A few days prior to that public exchange, someone shared another incident with me, leaving me equally unsettled.

A Hindu family shared with me the story of their young daughter attending a Catholic school. On the day of Diwali, she went to school wearing a small bindi on her forehead. For her, it was not a political statement. It was not an act of defiance. It was an expression of joy—of culture, of tradition, of celebrating the Festival of Lights.

As soon as the school principal saw the bindi, he reportedly rubbed it off her forehead and told her not to wear “something like that” in school.

Pause for a moment and absorb that image.

**A child.**

**A sacred festival.**

**A tiny dot of identity.**

**Erased.**

One may argue that schools have dress codes. One may argue about uniformity. But we must ask a deeper question: Would the same action have been taken if a student wore a cross necklace? Would a Christmas symbol have been removed? Would an Ash Wednesday cross on the forehead have been wiped away?

The issue here is not about attacking Catholic institutions. It is about examining double standards. It is about asking whether religious freedom truly applies equally—or selectively.

For that young girl, what message was sent?

**That her faith is unwelcome? That her identity must be hidden? That assimilation requires erasure?**

America prides itself on religious liberty. The First Amendment protects freedom of belief and expression. Yet real freedom is not measured by laws alone. It is measured by daily experiences—especially those of children.

For immigrant communities, these moments carry emotional weight. Parents choose schools hoping for academic excellence and moral grounding. They do not expect their children’s cultural expressions to be dismissed.

**Religious intolerance is not always dramatic. It does not always come with shouting or violence. Sometimes it comes quietly—in small acts that communicate exclusion.**

The booth conversation and the bindi incident may seem unrelated, but they are connected by a common thread: the belief that one religious identity holds superiority over others.

In the first case, the superiority was theological: “Only my religion leads to salvation.” In the second case, it was institutional: “Your symbol does not belong here.” **Both reflect a discomfort with pluralism.**

And yet, pluralism is the reality of modern America—especially in places like South Florida. Temples, churches, mosques, and synagogues stand within miles of each other. Our children sit in the same classrooms. Our businesses serve diverse communities. We weave our neighborhoods together.

In such an environment, religious intolerance is not just morally troubling—it is socially unsustainable.

Hindu philosophy offers a powerful counterpoint. The ancient declaration from the Rig Veda—

**“Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti” Meaning Truth is one; the wise call it by many names.**

This is not merely poetic. It is civilizational wisdom. It does not demand uniformity. It allows diversity. True pluralism does not require abandoning conviction. It requires holding conviction without contempt.

There is a profound difference between saying, “This is my path, and I believe in it wholeheartedly,” and saying, “Your path is false, inferior, or invalid.” **The first statement invites dialogue. The second closes the door.**

The bindi incident also challenges us internally. As Hindus and Indian Americans, are we equally respectful of others’ symbols? Do we defend the rights of all communities—or only when our own is affected? **Acceptance is not agreement. Respect is not surrender.**

When I reflect on my exchange at that booth, I recognize that intellectual arguments alone do not resolve intolerance. History, chronology, and scriptural citations may win debates—but they rarely win hearts. **What transforms hearts is exposure, empathy, and experience.**

Perhaps that church member has never studied Hindu philosophy deeply. Perhaps that school principal has never understood what a bindi represents auspiciousness, spiritual focus, and cultural pride.

Ignorance is not always malicious. Sometimes it is simply an unexamined habit. **But unexamined habits, when institutionalized, become discrimination.**

If religion is meant to elevate humanity, then its measure cannot be exclusivity. It must be compassion.

**Jesus preached love. Krishna taught duty grounded in dharma. Buddha emphasized compassion. Prophet Muhammad spoke of mercy.**

Yet followers across traditions sometimes use sacred teachings to draw boundaries rather than build bridges.

As community leaders, publishers, and parents, we must model a different path. Our children are watching how we respond to intolerance. If they see anger alone, they will inherit resentment. If they see dignity combined with courage, they will inherit strength.

The young girl whose bindi was wiped away may grow up remembering that moment. The question is, will she remember it as humiliation—or as motivation to stand proudly in her identity?

Religious confidence does not require suppressing others. True spirituality is not insecure. **It does not fear comparison. It does not demand erasure. It does not depend on declaring others wrong to feel right.**

The Earth is older than any single religion. Humanity's spiritual search predates all organized institutions. Across centuries and continents, people have looked at the same sky and asked the same eternal questions.

**Different languages.**

**Different rituals.**

**Different symbols.**

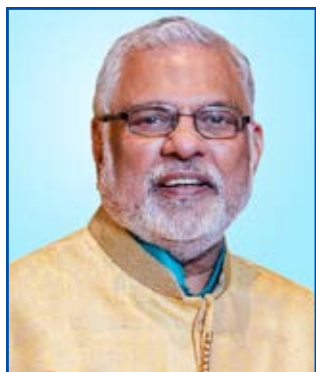
**One shared human longing.**

Perhaps we should not avoid discussions about religion in public spaces. Instead, we should elevate them. Let them be conversations rooted in curiosity rather than conquest. Religious intolerance begins when humility disappears. Acceptance begins when humility returns.

And in a world increasingly divided by ideology, the courage to honor another's faith—while remaining steadfast in our own—may be the highest expression of faith itself.

Let me close this editorial by reiterating the Universal Peace Prayer from Hindu Scripture.

**Om Asato Maa Sad-Gamaya |  
Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya |  
Mrtyor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya |  
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||**



Om, lead me from the world of unreality to the reality of the eternal self,  
Lead me. From the Darkness of Ignorance towards the Light of Spiritual Knowledge,  
Lead me from the world of mortality towards the world of immortality of self-realization,  
Om, peace, peace, peace.

**Raj Shah**  
Managing Editor  
Desh Videsh Media Group

# Letter to the Editor



**Dear Editor,**

The article, “The Rise and Rise of Indian Americans,” by Raj Shah in the January issue, beautifully captured our journey from newcomers to contributors. My parents arrived with little money but endless faith in education. Today their children are professionals serving this country proudly. Success did not come overnight—it came through sacrifice and discipline. Thank you for honoring the immigrant generation’s quiet courage.

**Sincerely,**

Amit Desai

Edison, New Jersey

**Hello,**

I appreciated Raj Shah’s thoughtful piece on Indian-American growth. In my classroom, I see second-generation students balancing heritage and identity with confidence. They celebrate Diwali and debate American history with equal pride. This is the real success – belonging without losing roots. Your article reminded us that cultural confidence is progress.

**Warm regards,**

Pooja Iyer

Teacher

Dallas, Texas

**Dear Editorial Staff,**

I appreciated the January article “The Art of Bouncing Back with Greater Success.” My first startup failed, and I felt ashamed discussing it. Later I analyzed my mistakes and joined another company with maturity and confidence. Your message helps our community see failure as learning, not stigma.

**Sincerely,**

Rajiv Menon

San Jose, California

**Dear Desh-Videsh,**

Your article helped my teenage daughter after she failed an exam and felt she disappointed us. We discussed effort instead of perfection. She improved and regained confidence. Indian American families must teach resilience, not only achievement. Thank you for a meaningful and timely reminder.

**Warm regards,**

Dr. Neha Patel

Physician and Parent

Chicago, Illinois

**Dear Desh-Videsh Staff,**

As an oncologist, I appreciated Dr. Anjali Menon’s balanced article. Many patients believe natural therapies can replace chemotherapy. The article correctly stresses integration, not substitution. Supportive practices may improve comfort, but delaying proven treatment risks survival. Clear communication between patients and physicians is essential. Thank you for presenting responsible guidance.

**Sincerely,**

Dr. Vivek Mehta

New York, New York

**Dear Editor,**

I commend Dr. Menon for clarifying integrative versus alternative care. Many families trust Ayurveda but fear modern treatment. Combining yoga, diet, and supervised herbs with oncology can support recovery without compromising safety. The strong warning about medical consultation is valuable for our community.

**Warm regards,**

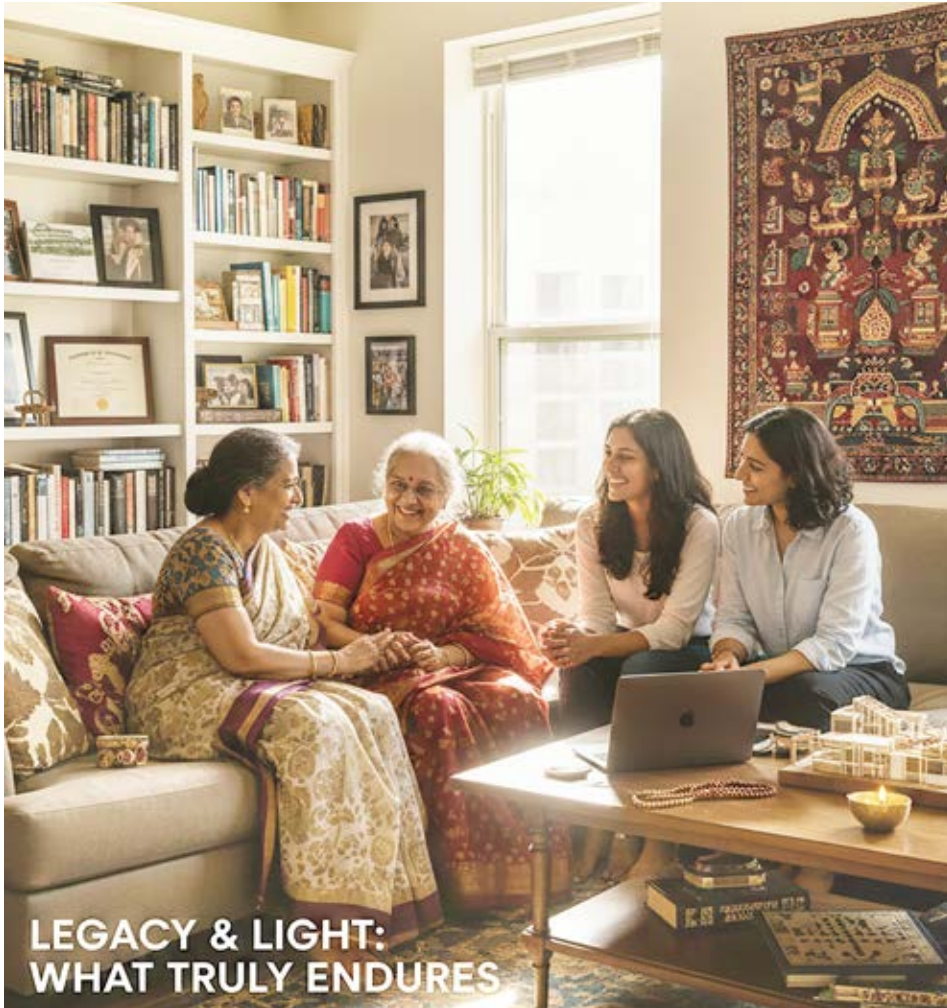
Dr. Kavita Shah

Fremont, California

# Passing the Torch to the Next Generation

*Family, Food, Festivals, and the Indian Values That Endure*

By Raj Shah



When our children look back, what will they remember—our success or our values? As Indian Americans, we have much to acknowledge with quiet pride. In just a few decades, a community that arrived with limited resources has built lives of stability and opportunity. We have educated our children, entered respected professions, created thriving businesses, contributed to

innovation, and earned recognition in a country far from where many of us began.

These achievements do matter. They reflect sacrifice, resilience, and perseverance. Yet success, by its nature, remains external. It is visible, measurable, and easily celebrated. The deeper question, however, calls us inward. It asks not only what we have achieved, but what we are carrying forward—what values, traditions, and

ways of life will endure when success alone is no longer the measure.

## What Are We Really Passing On?

What, beyond material comfort and professional success, are we passing on to the next generation?

This question is not philosophical alone. It is deeply practical. Wealth can be transferred. Education can be planned. Careers can be guided. But culture, values, and identity do not pass automatically. They require presence, intention, and everyday living. They are transmitted not through speeches or institutions, but through homes—through shared meals, conversations, rituals, celebrations, and relationships.

The torch I speak of in this issue of *Desh-Videsh* magazine is not ideological. It is not about leadership positions or public recognition. It is far more intimate. It is the quiet inheritance of how families live, what they honor, and what they choose to preserve when no one is watching. It is the way elders are spoken to, the way guests are welcomed, the way gratitude is expressed, the way festivals are observed, and the way faith is practiced—or not practiced—within the walls of a home.

In January of *Desh-Videsh* I talked about “The Rise and Rise of Indian Americans.” The narrative of rise and recognition is important. It tells us how far we have come. In this issue of *Desh-Videsh* magazine, I want to talk about an equally important aspect



This Valentine's, choose what lasts .

of our rise: culture and heritage. A community can rise economically and still lose its cultural focus. Therefore, our focus should not be ONLY on our achievements but rather on the foundation of our success.

In America, culture rarely disappears through rejection. It fades through neglect. It slips away in the rush of daily life, in the belief that there will be time later, and in the assumption that children will absorb identity simply by being born into it. Yet identity does not survive on intention alone. What is not lived is eventually forgotten.

Passing the torch does not require grand gestures. It begins quietly, at home. It begins with the decision to prioritize presence over pressure. In valuing connection over convenience. In recognizing that what we pass on today—intentionally or unintentionally—will shape how the next generation understands who they are long after the applause fades.

### **The Family serves as the First Cultural Classroom.**

Culture is not first learned through books, weekend classes, or formal instruction. It is absorbed quietly, long before children have the language to describe it. The family home is the first and most influential cultural classroom, and parents are its most powerful teachers—not by what they explain, but by what they live.

In Hindu tradition, *sanskara* was never a lesson plan. It was not delivered through lectures or enforced through rules. It was transmitted through observation. Children learned by watching how elders spoke to one another, how guests were welcomed, how disagreements were handled, and how daily life unfolded. Values were not discussed abstractly; they were demonstrated repeatedly.

Respect for elders, for example, was not taught as a concept. It was



practiced. Children observed how parents addressed grandparents, how decisions were discussed, and how patience and deference were shown. Over time, respect became instinctive rather than imposed. In many Indian American homes today,

meals are often fragmented—eaten at different times, in different spaces, or in front of screens. What is lost is not merely conversation, but continuity. A child who rarely experiences family meals loses one of the most powerful settings for cultural learning.

Daily routines, though seemingly mundane, shape identity more deeply than occasional events. Morning greetings, bedtime rituals, simple prayers, household responsibilities—these repeated actions communicate what a family values. They create rhythm and familiarity. Children do not need constant explanations to understand that something matters; they sense it through repetition.

One of the most overlooked truths of cultural transmission is that children learn identity long before they consciously understand it. They absorb tone, behavior, and priorities emotionally before they can articulate meaning intellectually. By the time questions arise—about faith, culture, or belonging—the foundation has often already been laid.

This is why consistency matters more than intensity. Culture that passes sporadically or only on special

**“Wealth can be transferred. Education can be planned. Careers can be guided. But culture, values, and identity do not pass automatically.”**

this transmission is challenged not by lack of intent, but by lack of exposure. When extended family is distant or daily interactions are rushed, children have fewer opportunities to witness these relationships in action.

Shared meals once served as natural gathering points for family life. They were moments when stories were exchanged, values were reinforced, and bonds were strengthened without effort. Today,

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occasions struggles to take root. Culture lives gently but regularly becomes part of a child's inner world. Even imperfect consistency—shared meals a few times a week, simple rituals observed occasionally, respectful interactions modeled daily—has a lasting impact.

The family as a cultural classroom does not require perfection, structure, or expertise. It requires presence. When children grow up seeing culture lived naturally at home, they carry it forward not as an obligation, but as a part of who they are.

### **Food as Memory, Culture, and Belonging**

Long after specific lessons fade, taste remains. Food has a unique ability to anchor memory, emotion, and identity in ways that words often cannot. For many children, especially those growing up between cultures, food becomes the most enduring and instinctive connection to their heritage.

In Indian families, the kitchen has traditionally been more than a functional space. It is a cultural center—a place where generations meet, where stories are exchanged, and where identity is passed on quietly. The sounds, aromas, and rhythms of cooking form a backdrop to family life. Children absorb culture here without instruction, simply by being present.

Festival foods carry layers of meaning that rarely need explanation. A particular sweet prepared for Diwali, a savory dish made during Navratri, or a special offering during



the geography and history of a family's origin. Family recipes, passed down through generations, act as edible archives—holding memories of grandparents, childhood homes, and shared experiences.

Children often remember taste longer than teachings because food engages the senses fully. It is experiential rather than abstract.

While explanations can be forgotten or resisted, the sensory memory of a dish—its aroma, texture, and flavor—stays embedded. Years later, a familiar taste can evoke belonging more powerfully than words ever could.

In the American context, food sometimes becomes the last remaining cultural thread when other practices weaken. Language may fade. Rituals may become occasional. But the desire for familiar flavors often persists into adulthood. Such a desire is not nostalgia alone; it is emotional continuity. Food provides comfort, familiarity, and grounding in moments of stress or transition.

When families cook together, even occasionally, food becomes a shared language. Children who help prepare meals feel ownership rather than obligation. They learn culture through participation, not pressure. Allowing children to adapt recipes or blend traditions reflects the natural evolution of culture rather than its loss.

Food, at its best, is not a backward-

Janmashtami becomes part of a child's internal calendar. These foods mark time. They signal celebration, reflection, and togetherness. Even

*Success, by its very nature, is outward-facing. It is visible. It can be measured, documented, and celebrated.*

when children do not fully understand the religious or historical significance, they remember the feeling associated with those moments.

Regional dishes deepen this connection further. They root children not only in a broad Indian identity but also in a specific place, language, and lineage. A Gujarati thali, a South Indian breakfast, a Punjabi winter dish, or a Bengali sweet carries with it

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### **Festivals: Joy Before Instruction**

For children, festivals are not first understood—they are felt. Long before they can explain why a diya is lit or why colors are thrown, they absorb the excitement, warmth, and togetherness that surround these moments. This emotional experience, not intellectual explanation, is what allows festivals to take root in a child's memory.

Indian American homes often celebrate festivals like Diwali, Holi, Navratri, and Janmashtami across two worlds. They exist within the rhythms of American life—school schedules, work commitments, neighborhood norms—yet carry traditions shaped over centuries. The way we experience these festivals at home shapes whether they become enduring memories or fleeting events.

Diwali celebrated quietly at home—lighting lamps together, preparing a special meal, sharing stories—often leaves a deeper impression than elaborate gatherings alone. Holi becomes meaningful when it is playful and spontaneous rather than staged for photographs. When kids hear stories informally before bed or witness adults joyfully participate, Janmashtami comes to life. Navratri gains significance when children observe devotion expressed naturally, not formally enforced.

Festivals lose power when they become performances. When children feel evaluated on whether they “know enough” or “do it correctly,” participation turns into pressure. Culture then feels like a test rather than an invitation. In

contrast, festivals that emphasize joy, participation, and family connection create emotional attachment. Meaning follows naturally when curiosity is allowed to develop.

**In America, culture rarely disappears through rejection. It fades through neglect.**

In the American context, temples and community centers play an important role in preserving tradition. Large celebrations offer scale, visibility, and collective energy. They help children see that their culture is shared by many. But temple celebrations alone cannot carry the full weight of cultural transmission. Without reinforcement at home, festivals risk becoming external events rather than internal experiences.

The home offers something temples cannot: intimacy. It is where children observe how culture fits into daily life. A small prayer before lighting a diya, a story told at the dinner table, a family conversation

about why a festival matters—these moments personalize tradition. They allow children to see culture not as something performed occasionally, but as something lived.

Creating meaning without pressure requires restraint. It means resisting the urge to explain everything immediately. Children do not need full understanding to belong. Familiarity comes first. Questions arise later, when children feel safe and curious rather than obligated.

Festivals endure when they are associated with warmth, laughter, and connection. When joy comes first, meaning follows naturally. Passing festivals on in this way ensures they remain sources of comfort and belonging—long after the decorations are put away.

### **Everyday Hinduism: Faith Lived Gently**

For many Hindu families in America, the challenge is not whether faith matters, but how it is expressed. Between the desire to preserve tradition and the fear of imposing belief, parents often struggle to find the right balance. Yet Hinduism, by its very nature, was never meant to





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be enforced. It thrives when it is lived gently and experienced naturally.

Simple practices often carry the deepest impact. A brief prayer in the morning, lighting a lamp in the evening, placing flowers before an image, or telling a story from the epics at bedtime creates familiarity without pressure. These moments do not demand belief or understanding. They offer presence. Over time, familiarity becomes comfort, and comfort becomes connection.

Hinduism has always provided rhythm to daily life. Its rituals mark beginnings and endings, transitions and pauses. In a fast-paced American environment, this rhythm offers grounding. For children navigating academic pressure, social expectations, and constant stimulation, small moments of stillness—folded hands, quiet

reflection, familiar chants—can become sources of calm rather than obligation.

Allowing children to experience faith before explaining it is essential. Intellectual understanding is not the entry point for spiritual connection. Children absorb tone and emotion long before they grasp meaning. When faith is introduced through experience—through sound, gesture, and routine—it feels safe and familiar. Questions emerge naturally when children feel secure, not when they feel tested.

Forced religiosity, however well-intentioned, often produces the opposite effect. When children are required to perform rituals without emotional context or personal agency, faith becomes associated with pressure. The result can lead to resistance, avoidance, or rejection

later in life. Many adults who drift away from religion do so not because they were exposed to it, but because they were overexposed without choice.

Some parents respond by removing faith entirely from home life, believing neutrality will allow children to choose later. Yet absence leaves a void. Children raised without exposure often grow curious but disconnected, unsure how to relate to traditions they never experienced.

Hinduism offers a wide, inclusive framework—one that accommodates inquiry, adaptation, and personal interpretation. When children see faith practiced sincerely but without rigidity, they learn that spirituality is not about perfection but about presence.

Faith that is lived gently does not demand adherence. It offers invitation. It creates an emotional anchor that children can return to at different stages of life. By passing on Hinduism in this way, families do not enforce belief; instead, they preserve a sense of belonging.

### **When the Roots Begin to Fade**

Cultural loss rarely announces itself. It does not usually arrive through rebellion or rejection. More often, it unfolds quietly—through distance, distraction, and gradual disengagement. In many Indian American families, this drift goes unnoticed until much later, when parents realize that something once assumed has slowly slipped away.

Cultural drift is not about children refusing their heritage. It is about growing up without enough exposure to form emotional attachment. Many Indian and Hindu children raised in the United States do not actively reject their culture; they simply never fully inhabit it.



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Some grow up without language. Without hearing their parents' mother tongue spoken regularly at home, they lose access to humor, emotion, and family history embedded in words. Conversations with grandparents become limited. Stories are shortened. Over time, the emotional depth carried by language fades.

Others grow up without ritual familiarity. They may attend temple occasionally or participate in festivals sporadically but lack comfort with everyday practices. Rituals feel foreign rather than familiar. Without repetition, even simple acts—lighting a lamp, offering a prayer, participating in a ceremony—can feel awkward or intimidating.

Perhaps most critically, many grow up without emotional attachment to their cultural traditions. Culture becomes something external—observed but not owned. Without memories tied to warmth, joy, or connection, traditions feel abstract. When culture lacks emotional grounding, it is easily set aside.

This is why many second-generation youth describe feeling “culturally blank.” They feel somewhat

**Culture,  
values, and  
identity do  
not pass  
automatically**

connected to their parents' heritage. They may feel unsure how to explain their background, hesitant to participate in cultural spaces, or uncomfortable navigating expectations from either side.

Educators, counselors, and community leaders increasingly observe this pattern. Many estimate that a significant portion of Indian American youth lose meaningful connection to their cultural roots by early adulthood—not through rejection, but through gradual disengagement.

This reality is difficult to confront, especially for parents who worked hard to create stable, opportunity-rich lives for their children. Yet

recognizing cultural drift is not an admission of failure. It is an opportunity for awareness.

Culture is not lost all at once. It fades when it is postponed, outsourced, or treated as optional background rather than lived experience. But what fades quietly can often be revived gently.

Reconnection does not require drastic measures. It begins with small, intentional acts—shared meals, familiar sounds, casual stories, simple rituals, and genuine presence. Culture returns when it is reintroduced as belonging, not obligation.

Understanding cultural drift with empathy allows families to respond without blame. The goal is not to reverse time but to create meaningful connections moving forward—before the roots disappear entirely.

### **Why Identity Is Lost—Without Anyone Noticing**

Identity is rarely lost through a single decision. It erodes gradually, shaped by the rhythms and pressures of everyday life. In Indian American families, this process often unfolds quietly, not because parents do not care, but because life moves quickly and intentions are repeatedly postponed.

Busy lives often cause culture to fade into the background. Long work hours, academic demands, extracurricular activities, and the constant pull of screens leave little space for reflection or tradition. Convenience culture rewards efficiency over presence. Meals are shortened or separated. Conversations are rushed. Rituals are delayed for “another time.” Over time, what is delayed too often simply disappears.

Many families also outsource cultural transmission, believing that weekend schools, language classes,

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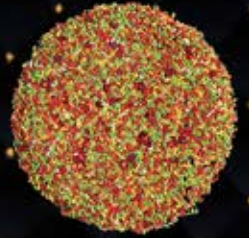
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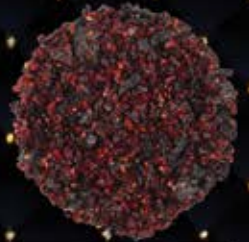
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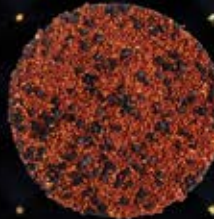
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temples, or cultural organizations can carry the responsibility alone. These institutions play an important role, but they cannot replace daily exposure. Culture cannot survive on scheduled programming alone. Without reinforcement at home, what children learn in structured settings often remains theoretical—something they attend, not something they live.

Fear of “forcing” tradition further complicates this dynamic. Mindful of their own experiences or eager to respect their children’s autonomy, parents hesitate to introduce culture at all. They worry that expectations will create resistance or resentment. While this concern is understandable, absence carries its own consequences.

Children raised without exposure often grow up curious but disconnected, lacking the familiarity needed to engage confidently with their heritage later.

Over-assimilation is another subtle factor. Many immigrant parents equate success with seamless integration. Difference is minimized in the hope that children will belong more easily. Cultural distinctiveness is treated as optional, even inconvenient. Children absorb this message clearly: fitting in matters more than standing rooted.

This belief often goes unquestioned because its effects are not immediate. Children may thrive academically and socially while cultural connection weakens quietly. Only later—often in adolescence or adulthood—does the absence become noticeable, when young adults struggle to articulate

identity, explain traditions, or feel comfortable in cultural spaces.

None of these patterns arise from neglect or indifference. They are the byproducts of noble intentions, shaped by a demanding environment. Yet recognizing them requires honesty.

Identity does not disappear suddenly. It fades when presence is



“ Children do not need full understanding to belong. ”

replaced by efficiency, when culture is delegated rather than lived, and when silence replaces shared experience. Awareness is the first step toward restoration.

Reclaiming identity does not require rejecting American life or overwhelming children with tradition. It requires small, consistent acts of presence—bringing culture back into daily routines where it belongs.

### Passing the Torch Without Burning the Bridge

The desire to preserve culture often carries an undercurrent of anxiety.

Parents worry that if traditions are not actively protected, they will be lost. Yet culture passed through fear rarely survives. What endures is what is associated with joy, comfort, and belonging.

Passing the torch does not mean tightening control or increasing expectations. It means creating an environment where culture feels welcoming rather than demanding. When children associate tradition with warmth and connection, they are far more likely to carry it forward voluntarily.

Invitation is far more powerful than enforcement. Children who feel compelled to perform rituals or conform to expectations often disengage emotionally, even if they comply outwardly. In contrast, when culture is offered as an invitation—to participate, to observe, to ask questions—it fosters genuine connection. Allowing children to step in at their own pace builds trust rather than resistance.

Letting children adapt traditions in ways that resonate with their lives is not cultural dilution; it is cultural continuity. Every generation reinterprets what it inherits. When children are allowed to personalize practices—celebrating festivals differently, blending languages, modifying rituals—they take ownership. Adaptation signals relevance, not loss.

Grandparents play a vital role in this process. They transmit culture

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without agenda, often through stories, memories, and lived examples. Their narratives connect children to family history and ancestral experience. Even when language barriers exist, emotional bonds communicate values that transcend words.

In families separated by distance, maintaining these relationships requires intention. Regular conversations, shared rituals across time zones, visits when possible, and storytelling preserve intergenerational continuity. Culture thrives when it is relational.

Family time, however brief, creates space for these exchanges. Storytelling during meals, casual conversations, and shared activities—all provide opportunities for cultural transmission without formal structure.

Passing the torch gently ensures it remains light enough to carry. When culture is offered with generosity rather than urgency, children receive it not as a burden, but as a gift.

### Closing Reflection: What Endures

Culture does not survive through anxiety. It endures through love. When traditions are carried with fear—fear of loss, fear of change, fear of getting it wrong—they become heavy. Children sense this weight instinctively, and what feels heavy

is often set down. What lasts is what feels welcoming, familiar, and alive.

The torch we speak of throughout this reflection does not need to be heavy to be meaningful. It does not require perfection, completeness, or constant vigilance. Culture survives not because every ritual is performed correctly, but because connection is sustained. A shared meal, a familiar prayer, a story told casually, a festival celebrated imperfectly—these moments accumulate quietly, forming a sense of belonging that does not announce itself but remains steady.

Even small acts matter more than we often realize. A child may not remember every explanation, but they remember how it felt to sit at the table together, to hear a grandparent's voice, and to participate in a celebration that felt joyful rather than obligatory. These experiences leave emotional imprints that resurface later in life, often when least expected.

There is reason for quiet optimism. Culture is resilient when it is lived, not enforced. The next generation does not need to inherit tradition exactly as it was. They need to inherit the freedom to make it their own, grounded in familiarity and affection.

When we pass the torch gently—without urgency or fear—we allow it to illuminate rather than burden. And in doing so, we ensure that what truly endures is not just tradition, but belonging.

## About the Author

### Raj Shah



A software engineer by profession, Indian culture enthusiast, ardent promoter of Hinduism, and a cancer survivor, Raj Shah is a managing editor of *Desh-Videsh Magazine* and co-founder of *Desh Videsh Media Group*. Promoting the rich culture

and heritage of India and Hinduism has been his motto ever since he arrived in the US in 1969.

He has been instrumental in starting and promoting several community organizations such as the Indian Religious and Cultural Center and International Hindu University. Raj has written two books on *Hinduism* titled *Chronology of Hinduism* and *Understanding Hinduism*. He has also written several children books focusing on Hindu culture and religion.

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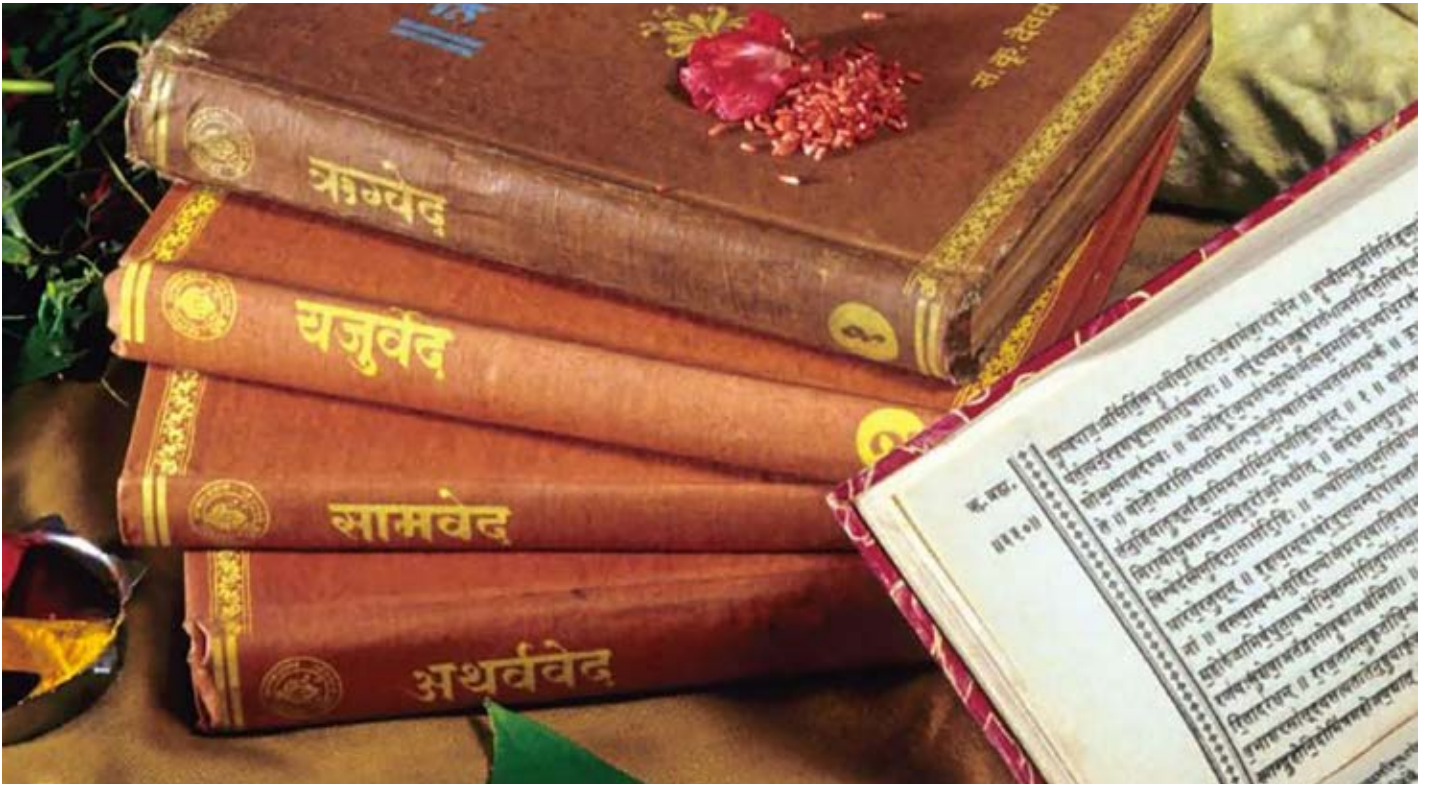


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# Our Heritage:

## The Vedas and the Eternal Truth of India

By Samir Desai

One of the most sacred collections of scriptures in India is known as the Vedas. Originally preserved through oral tradition, these divine teachings were later compiled and systematized by the great sage Rishi Vyasa. He entrusted this vast knowledge to four of his foremost disciples:

- Rishi Paila *Rig Veda*
- Rishi Vaishampayana *Yajur Veda*
- Rishi Jaimini *Sama Veda*
- Rishi Sumanta *Athava Veda*

**Together, these form the four great Vedas.**

Each Veda is traditionally divided into three major sections:

### 1. Mantra Section

This section expresses Truth in

poetic form. It glorifies nature and the eternal Reality, presenting the vision of Truth as seen by the poets.

### 2. Brahmana Section

This part explains rituals and ceremonial practices. It reflects the understanding of Truth as interpreted by priests.

### 3. Upanishads Section

This final section explores Truth philosophically. It presents the deepest inquiry into the nature of life and existence, as seen by philosophers.

**Thus, poets, priests, and philosophers are all contemplating the same eternal Truth from different perspectives. The Vedas honor every individual's right to independently seek and realize Truth.**

**Vedanta and the Meaning of Upanishad**

The Upanishads are considered the essence of the Vedas. Since they appear at the end of each Veda, their philosophy is called Vedanta – Veda (knowledge) + anta (end).

The word *Upanishad* comes from three Sanskrit roots:

- Upa – near
- Ni – below
- Shad – to sit

Thus, *Upanishad* means “to sit near and humbly at the feet of a teacher,” symbolizing the transmission of sacred knowledge from master to disciple.

The word **Veda** comes from the Sanskrit root “**वदि (vid)**”, meaning “to know.” Therefore, **Veda means “knowledge.” The Vedas are eternal not merely as texts, but because the knowledge they convey is eternal.**

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“  
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the same eternal  
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”

### Profound Vedic Declarations

#### 1. Unity of Truth

Sanskrit (Devanagari):

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति।

(Rg Veda 1.164.46)

**Transliteration:**

Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti.

**Meaning:**

*Truth is one; the wise call it by many names.*

#### 2. Welcoming Noble Thoughts

Sanskrit (Devanagari):

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

(Rg Veda 1.89.1)

**Transliteration:**

Ā no bhadrāḥ kratavo yantu viśvataḥ.

**Meaning:**

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every direction.*

Together, these two ślokas reveal a beautiful vision of oneness and harmony. We are urged to welcome knowledge from all traditions, philosophies, and faiths, because the eternal Truth is one, though known by many names.

#### Vision of Universal Unity

This timeless idea is also beautifully expressed in the Mahā Upanishad: The Mahā Upanishad is a lesser known but important philosophical text belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.



Sanskrit (Devanagari):

वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्।

**Transliteration:**

Vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam.

**Meaning:**

*The whole world is one family.*

Since Veda means “knowledge,” Sanātana Dharma is, at its heart, a reverence for knowledge itself – a

sacred pursuit of truth, wisdom, and enlightenment. The central purpose of the Vedas is to affirm the unity of mankind. Let harmony begin within India and then spread across the world.

“This is the grand and timeless vision of our Rishis – a world guided by wisdom, unity, and eternal Truth, as revealed in the Vedas.”

#### About the Author



Samir (Sam) Desai was with Motorola for more than 34 years. He served as Sr. Vice President & General Manager for iDEN@

Networks, managing over six billion dollars' worth of business. He has a MS in electrical engineering

from the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago. He also holds an MBA from Loyola University, Chicago. He is known as a management guru who has applied principles from the Bhagavad Gita in the corporate world. After retiring from Motorola, Sam Desai served as an independent consultant for the Board of Directors of three companies: Larsen & Toubro Infotech, Larsen & Toubro Technology Services, and Welch Allyn.

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## Meditation Made Simple: *Finding Peace in Daily Life*

### Editor's Note:

This article is a follow-up to the inspiring lecture on meditation delivered by **Sister Wady**, head of the *Brahma Kumari Center in Miami*, at the South Florida Hindu Temple on *World Meditation Day*. Her session encouraged attendees to look beyond meditation as a ritual practice and instead experience it as a practical method for inner stability, clarity, and peace in everyday life. The thoughts presented here continue that conversation, expanding on the principles she shared and offering deeper reflection for daily application.

The article is published courtesy of the *Brahma Kumaris* (<https://www.brahmakumaris.com>), an organization dedicated to spiritual awareness, self-transformation, and the practice of Raja Yoga meditation worldwide.

Managing Editor  
Raj Shah

Meditation doesn't have to be a mountain to climb; in fact, Raja Yoga is often called 'Easy Raja Yoga' for a reason. While finding that inner hush might seem daunting at first, getting started is simply a matter of knowing the way. By following this straightforward five-step process, you'll soon find that reaching a state of calm doesn't require a long journey—eventually, a single, focused thought is all it takes to arrive at total stillness.



Eventually, a single, focused thought is all it takes to arrive at total stillness. ”



### Relaxation

Relaxation is about letting go of tension and stress and bringing the mind and body into a state of calm and peace ...

### Concentration

Concentration allows me to use my time productively, once I have relaxed: I focus on the thoughts I choose to have ...

### Contemplation

Contemplation is reflecting deeply on myself, my inner world and my values...

### Realisation

Realisation is when my understanding and feelings combine and I experience a more profound, more meaningful reality within...

### Meditation

Meditation is focusing on a thought and remembering my eternal identity, and re-awakening a wonderful state of well-being ...

### Where to Meditate

Life already feels full – filled with activities and responsibilities, so where can we put in the activity of meditation? That's the beauty of Raja Yoga; you can fit it in anywhere.

### At Home

You don't need a special room or allocated space, any quiet corner or comfortable chair will do. Make a regular appointment to meet up with your innermost self. In time, you'll probably find a particular place that you're drawn to, where the vibrations of your own stillness and reflective practice create a little place of peace. Visit whenever you like. Visit often.

### In your Workplace

Wherever you work, a little creative thought can suggest a place for meditation: quietly holding the phone to your ear for a moment or two while listening to the silence within, instead of a voice on the phone. Or walking down a corridor with a file can give you a few minutes of peacefulness away

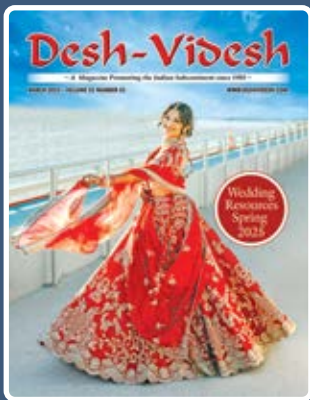
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from your desk. Your colleagues won't notice you meditating, but they may notice your new calmness.

### While Travelling

The time you spend going from one place to another, on foot, travelling by bus or train can be used to visit your internal space of stillness. The open-eyed method of Raja Yoga meditation makes this inner journey possible and practical.

### Outside or Inside

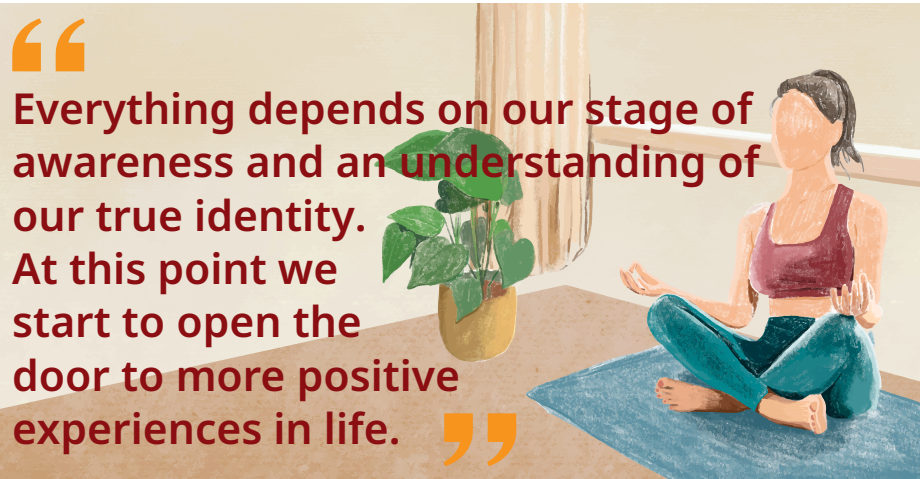
The whole world offers itself to you to select your own special place to connect with yourself and the One. On a sunlit beach or in a supermarket queue, a serene riverbank or a dentist's waiting room, a bench in a city square or a patch of grass somewhere. Everywhere is a fine place to become still and silent. Pick your own place of peace.

### Quiet Among Crowds

As you learn how to create a quiet room within yourself, you'll find that you can slip into it at any time. When there are people around you, or when the world is noisy or challenging, step into the quietest place on the planet – the silent space of the soul.

### Alone or In Company

The most beautiful experiences of meditation can occur when you're just on your own, only in the company of the One. There are also places and times when you might choose to meditate with others. All around the world there are Brahma Kumaris centres and quiet places of peacefulness where anyone can visit



Everything depends on our stage of awareness and an understanding of our true identity. At this point we start to open the door to more positive experiences in life.

to share moments of calm. In some places these are called 'Inner Space'.

There are particular times, too, when like-minded people choose to meditate in unison around the world, with the understanding that sharing positive thoughts at the same moment can increase the power and reach of their good wishes.

### World Meditation Hour

The tradition of creating one hour of peace around the world began in 1978 and it takes place on every third Sunday of the month. The aim is to share good vibrations and donate love and peace for the world and all the people on our precious planet. If we remember that this world is, after all, our global home, then together we can shine a ray of hope that will shed a little light to help to heal our world.

### Retreats – Spaces of Calm

Besides creating oases of calm and quiet throughout each day, we might

sometimes choose to take time out of our normal routine to go on a spiritual retreat.

Going on any form of retreat can be the first step that we take to re-connect with our inner 'self'. We may have the thought to get away from things externally, to make some physical changes outside, by taking time out. But what about the true re-treat, where we go deep within to the core of our being? When we work on ourselves, we can return to the space inside where we can re-connect with our own true 'self'. This is the spiritual 'self', that which is at our core, that part of us that does not change.

Taking time out through the process of meditation is a journey in itself. Meditation allows us to come back to a place of inner balance, where our thoughts, feelings, energy and time are used in a way that has value and is worthwhile. Everything depends on our stage of awareness



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1960

# Family

1980



2000



2020



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and an understanding of our true identity. At this point we start to open the door to more positive experiences in life. We start to value things of a spiritual rather than a material nature. We begin to create a values-based, quality life, where we can afford to be generous and loving. Our thinking becomes clearer and our decision-making power increases.

The real re-treat helps us to return – to get us into a space where we can re-connect to our truth, to understand, to experience and to answer the age old question, “Who am I?” It is only then that we are both at the beginning and the end! This is where this question ends and the experience begins. Enjoy the journey.

### Time for Meditation

Most people say they would like to meditate. Most people say they don't meditate. And why?

Because, they say, they don't have time. So how and when do busy people, like you, make moments to meditate?

### First thing in the Morning

The moment you open your eyes and know you are awake is a great time to start meditating. Start by greeting yourself, the powerful positive soul you are. And then greet the One who never sleeps.

### At Mealtimes

Meditate meal times Before you eat, you can sit for a moment, meditating on the good fortune of having food to eat and with the understanding of how our thoughts

affect our food, what we think, do and become. Filling our food with powerful thoughts of gratitude and grace means we feed ourselves too, with all good things. [Also of interested: The Mindful Kitchen].

### Throughout the day - Traffic Control

We are all drivers on the highway of life, and every now and then it is good to check the direction in which we are travelling. When we drive our car on the road we have to stop at every traffic light, so perhaps we can learn to take advantage of these traffic light moments during the day to practise some meditation. In the same way, by pausing our thoughts from time to time we can check and re-direct them, and create a method to make positive changes that will help to put our mind back into neutral.

Taking short peace breaks for the mind gives us a chance to re-focus our thinking, and helps to put the mind back into the right gear to create a positive flow of thoughts and feelings. By doing this, we will find that our day will run more smoothly and peacefully, because ‘traffic control’ moments allow us to maintain balanced thinking.

### At Night

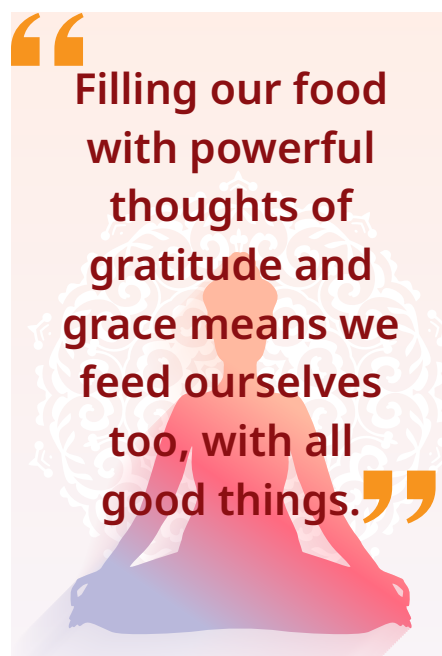
Before you sleep is a good time for your final meditation of the day. Book yourself a little time, as part of your bedtime routine, to sit quietly with yourself and reflect on the day – considering what was well done and what could be done differently tomorrow. Deliberately close up the ‘files’ of the day's activities and put them away in your mind, so you can bring the day to a close and allow yourself to slip into sleep, untroubled and at peace.

### Anytime

Whenever you arrive at a moment of anxiety or indecision, uncertain of the way forward, that could be a moment to go ‘within’ and await an answer.

**In a moment of gratitude and pleasure, why not share it with the One.**

When frustrated, lonely, tired or happy, uplifted, optimistic – all these are moments to find power to deal with negatives and times to enjoy and enrich the positive – anytime is time for a moment of meditation.



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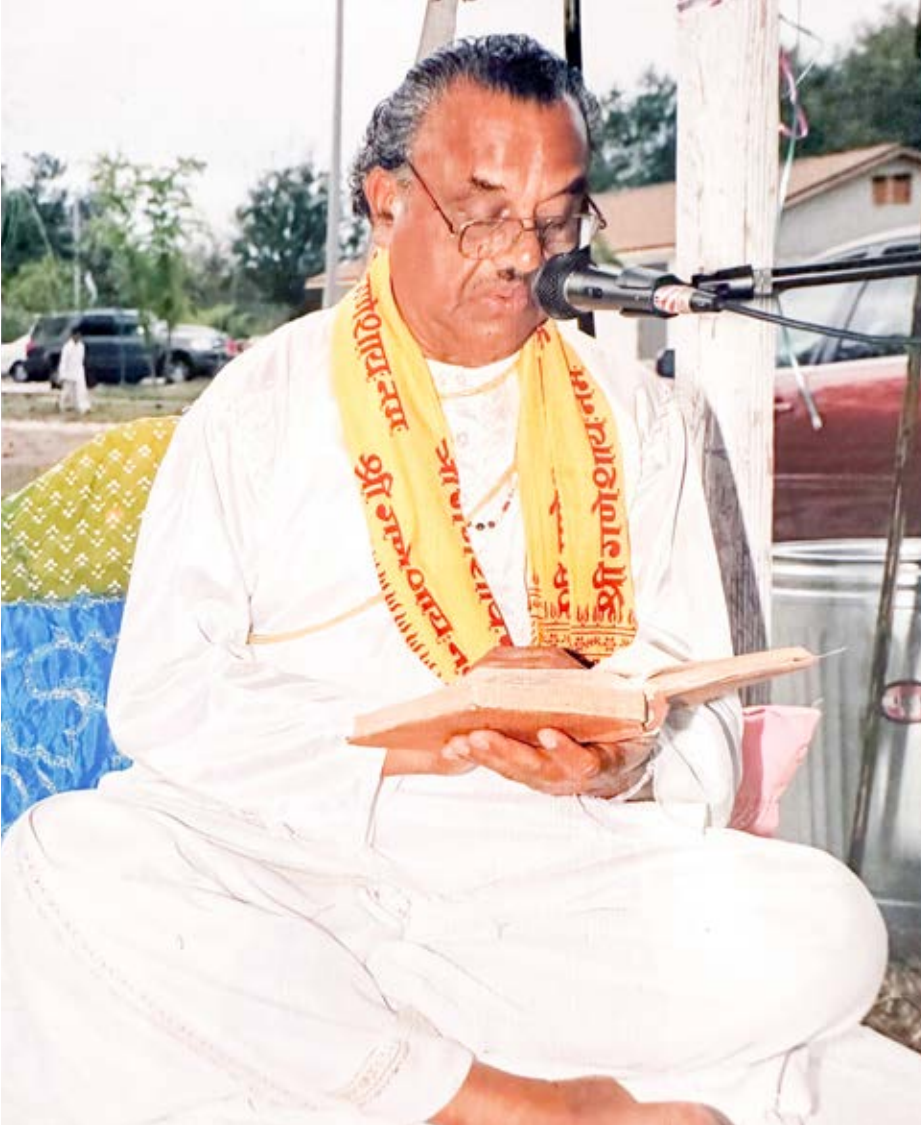
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# Dharmaacharaya Pandit Jadonath

## February 11, 1934 – January 28, 2026

### Father/Mother: Pandit Samacharan & Latchmina



Pandit Jadonath experienced a similar departure as he laid on a bed with Kus Grass (containing the presence of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva/ per our Garuda Puran). It was also Jaya Ekadashi and Rohani Nakshatra was prevailing. Towards the end of his life on earth, Pandit Jadonath was still chanting verses from the Holy

**Bhagavat Gita, Chapter 10 Verse 12.**

अर्जुन उवाच ।

परं ब्रह्म परं धाम पवित्रं परमं भवान् ।

पुरुषं शाश्वतं दिव्यमादिदेवमजं विभुम् ॥ 10-12॥

Paraṁ brahma paraṁ dhāma pavitraṁ  
paramaṁ bhavān |

puruṣaṁ śāśvataṁ divyamādidēvamajaṁ  
vibhum || 10.12 ||

*“You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth. You are the eternal, transcendental, original person, the unborn, the greatest.”*

Pandit Jadonath is survived by his 7 children, 20 grandchildren, and 24 great grandchildren and his younger brother and sister. His Dharmpatni (Wife), the late Pandita Gomati Jadonath, attained Maha Samadhi in 2019.

He was primarily a self-taught scholar who rose from great hardship and challenges into great leadership, while losing both parents at a young and tender age to become one of the most revered spiritual master

**P**andit Jadonath was born on February 11th, 1934 – Maha Shivratri Day and his parents were the Late Pandit Samacharan and Latchmina, in Hague on the West Coast of Demerara, Guyana, South America.

Pandit Jadonath merged into Maha Samadhi on Wednesday, January 28th, 2026 @ 1:35pm in Orlando, Florida. It was a victorious day according to Hindu Astrology – Jaya Ekadashi with Rohani Nakshatra Prevailing. His departure can be likened to that of The Great Mahabharat Kuru Dynasty – Bhishma Pitamah. Bhishma Pitamah laid on a bed of arrows, on Jaya Ekadashi, reciting the Shri Vishnu Sahasranaam, in the presence of the Pandavas Brothers, Vyaas Ji and Lord Shri Krishna, as he waied for Uttaraayanam, indicating the Sun travelling northwards.



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and Leader of his time. A Bhagavad Gita verse which summarizes and aligns 100 percent with his character, morals, values and ethics is Purushottama Yoga, Chapter 15 Verse 5

**निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा**

**अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।**

**द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञै-**

**र्षच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥ 15-5 ॥**

Nirmāna mōhā jita saṅga dōṣā adhyātma nityā vinivṛtta kāmāḥ |

dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkha sañjñair gacchanty amūḍhāḥ padam avyayaṃ tat || 15. 5 ||

“Those who are free from vanity and delusion, who have overcome the evil of attachment, who dwell constantly on the self and on God, who are free from the desire to enjoy the senses, and are beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, such liberated personalities attain My eternal Abode.”

Pandit Jadonath, a superb mathematician, accomplished educator and high school principal/administrator. Pandit Jadonath combined intellect with deep spirituality, Body, Mind and Intellect (BMI). As a Hindi and Sanskrit scholar, he became a legendary Dharmaacharaya and a true torchbearer of Shri Sanatan Dharma, across North and South America, the West Indies and India.

In 1984, Pandit Ji founded the Shri Lakshmi Narayan Mandir – a humble vision that blossomed into a profound center of devotion and community, expanding to temples in both New York City and Florida.

Known for his boundless energy, generous spirit, fearless

determination, Pandit Jadonath believed nothing was impossible. He captured the respect of leaders and the love of thousands of devotees worldwide. As a father, guru, and spiritual mentor, his influence endures through generations. A verse from the Shri Mad Bhagavatam depicts this core value precisely:

**“ Pandit Jadonath is survived by his 7 children, 20 grandchildren, and 24 great grandchildren and his younger brother and sister. His Dharmpatni (Wife), the late Pandita Gomati Jadonath, attained Maha Samadhi in 2019. ”**

**SriMad Bhagavatam Canto 1 Chapter 1 Verse 22**

**त्वं नः संदर्शितो धात्रा दुस्तरं निस्तितीर्षताम् ।**

**कलिं सत्त्वहरं पुंसां कर्णधार इवार्णवम् ॥ 22 ॥**

tvam naḥ saṃdarśito dhātrā dustaram nistitīrṣatām |

kaliṃ sattvaharam puṃsāṃ karṇadhāra ivārṇavam || 22 ||

“We think that we have met Your Goodness by the will of **providence**, just so that we may accept you as captain of the ship for those who desire to cross the difficult ocean of Kali, which deteriorates all the good qualities of a human being.”

**SriMad Bhagavatam Canto 1**

**Chapter 2 Verse 20**

**Evaṃ prasanna-manaso**

**bhagavad-bhakti-yogataḥ**

**bhagavat-tattva-vijñānaṃ**

**mukta-saṅgasya jāyate**

Thus, established in the mode of unalloyed goodness, the man whose mind has been enlivened by contact with devotional service to the Lord gains positive scientific knowledge of Bhagavan in the stage of liberation from all material association.

Pandit Jadonath was a life-long professional Gardner. His hobbies include reading and travelling to India, to name a few. Pandit Ji did eighteen trips to Bharat Mata while he chaperoned more than five hundred individuals to the mother land, India. Pandit Jadonath liked Haridwar, Rishikesh and Varanasi, where he read several Yagnas; Bhagawat Maha Puran, Maha Shiv Puran, Shri Satyanarayan Vrat Katha and more.

We honor and celebrate the iconic life of Dharmaacharya Pandit Jadonath, a trailblazing pioneer of Shri Sanatan Dharma, and we will greatly miss his physical presence in our community and in our lives.

**Bhagavad Gita Chapter 3 Verse 21**

**यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।**

**स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥ 3-21 ॥**

Yadyadācharati śreṣṭhastattadēvētarō janah |

sa yatpramāṇaṃ kurutē

lōkastadanuvartatē || 3.21 ||

“Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by



mām evaiṣyasi yuktvaivam  
ātmanām mat-parāyaṇaḥ

“Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances to Me and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me.”

**Hari Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Shantih:**

**Ram Nam Satya Hai  
Satya Bolo Mukti Hai  
Ram Nam Satya Hai  
Yaha Sabka Gati Hai**

exemplary acts, all the world pursues.”

In departing, Pandit Jadonath would like all devotees of Shri Sanatan Dharma conduct their lives with the teachings of Lord Shri Krishna’s

**Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 9 Verse 34.**

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

मामेवैष्यसि युक्तत्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥ 34 ॥

man-manā bhava mad-bhakto

mad-yāji mām namaskuru

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# IMMIGRATION NEWS

## New Era for Hindu Temples: DHS Removes 1-Year Wait for Pujari ( Priests)

By Anjali V. Deshmukh

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) put out an interim final rule called “Improving Continuity for Religious Organizations and Their Employees” on January 16, 2026. This rule gets rid of the one-year “cooling-off” period that R-1 religious workers had to go through after they had been in the country for five years. Pujari ( Priests) still have to leave the U.S. when they reach the five-year limit, but they can now come back right away after getting a new visa stamp. This feature makes it much easier for Hindu temples to find staff. Hindu temples all over the United States have finally gotten over a problem that has been around for a long time.

Before, a Pujari who had been in the U.S. on an R-1 visa for five years had to live outside the country for a full year before they could apply to come back. For many temples, this meant losing their spiritual leader just when the community needed them the most. Because there were so many people waiting for Green Cards (EB-4), these “one-year gaps” often turned into permanent departures, which meant that temples were always looking for new Pujari.

The new rule for 2026 gets rid of that mandatory wait. Pujaris still have to leave the U.S. after five years, but they can now apply to come back right away. This lets temples file a new petition up to six months ahead of time, so a Pu-

jari can “rotate” back into service as soon as they finish an interview for a visa at an Indian consulate.

This makes sure that our mandirs can always have trusted Pujari on hand for the Hindu-American community. This change recognizes that our Pujaria are important to the moral and social fabric of our community, which will help keep our traditions alive and well for many years to come.

**“ This rule gets rid of the one-year “cooling-off” period that R-1 religious workers had to go through after they had been in the country for five years. Pujari ( Priests) still have to leave the U.S. when they reach the five-year limit, but they can now come back right away after getting a new visa stamp. ”**

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## Comparison: The Old Rule vs. The 2026 Rule

Feature	Old Regulation (Pre-2026)	New Regulation (Current)
<b>Max Stay Limit</b>	5 Years (30 months + 30 months)	<b>5 Years (Unchanged)</b>
<b>Mandatory Departure</b>	Required after 5 years	<b>Required after 5 years</b>
<b>Time Spent Abroad</b>	<b>Minimum 12 Months</b>	<b>No Minimum Time</b>
<b>Re-entry Eligibility</b>	Only after 1 year of foreign residency	<b>Immediate</b> (once new visa is issued)
<b>Impact on Temples</b>	High risk of 12-month staffing gaps	<b>Greater continuity of service</b>

## Current Interview Wait Times (Approximate)

Consulate	“Petition-Based” Work Visas (H, L, O, P, Q, R)	Notes
<b>Mumbai</b>	<b>~1 Month</b>	Currently offering some of the fastest slots for work-related petitions.
<b>Chennai</b>	<b>~2 Months</b>	Highly efficient, but slots for work visas are often released in “batches.”
<b>Hyderabad</b>	<b>~2.5 Months</b>	A reliable alternative if Mumbai is fully booked.
<b>New Delhi</b>	<b>Variable / Limited</b>	Availability fluctuates; often better for student or tourist categories.

### About the Author

Anjali V. Deshmukh is an immigration lawyer in Washington, D.C. who has been working in the field for more than 15 years. She focuses on employment and religious worker visas. She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center and has spent her career helping South Asian non-profits and cultural institutions understand the complicated rules and regulations that govern immigration in the United States. Anjali speaks at national legal forums a lot, and she cares deeply about giving the Indian-American community the legal clarity it needs to protect its rich spiritual and cultural traditions. You can reach her by email at [anjali@deshvidesh.com](mailto:anjali@deshvidesh.com).

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Launched in 1996 as a humble community effort, **Indiafest** has grown into a beloved cultural tradition on the Space Coast. The festival showcases the richness of Indian heritage through music, dance, art, food, and interactive experiences, drawing visitors of all ages to enjoy a weekend of learning, fun, and connection.

In keeping with its mission of cultural harmony and community service, **Indiafest** proudly supports local causes through charitable giving. This year, **WAYS for Life**, a nonprofit offering wraparound youth services to at-risk young adults, including those transitioning out of foster care and experiencing homelessness, has been selected as the festival's beneficiary.

**Indiafest offers something for everyone:**

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- The Discover India exhibit will highlight this year's theme celebrating the strength, spirit, and achievements of Indian women both past and present

Come enjoy a weekend of cultural celebration, community spirit, and inspiration at the **29th Annual Indiafest, March 7th and 8th at Wickham Park in Melbourne!**

Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$4 for children under 12 and, children under 5 are free. To avoid lines, tickets can be purchased in advance at [www.indiafestbrevard.org](http://www.indiafestbrevard.org)

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# The American “I” and the Hindu “We”

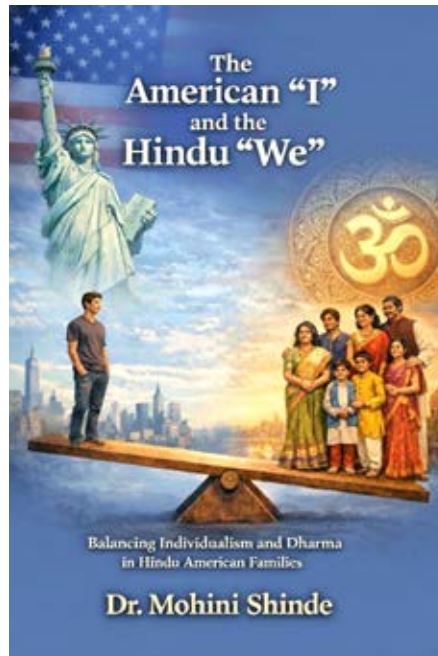
## Balancing Individualism and Dharma in Hindu American Families

By Dr. Mohini Shinde

What does it mean to raise children who feel fully American—yet remain deeply rooted in Hindu values?

Across the United States, millions of Hindu families live at the intersection of two powerful worldviews. One celebrates independence, self-expression, and personal choice—the American “I.” The other emphasizes dharma, family responsibility, spiritual grounding, and collective well-being—the Hindu “We.” For children growing up in this environment, identity is not divided into separate compartments but experienced as a constant, often quiet negotiation between these perspectives.

Hindu American children move fluidly between worlds. In school, they are encouraged to think critically, speak confidently, and define themselves as individuals. At home, they are guided toward respect for elders, commitment to family, moral discipline, and an understanding that life extends beyond the self. Neither set of values is inherently in conflict, yet misunderstandings frequently arise when expectations remain unspoken. What parents see as responsibility, children may perceive as pressure. What children experience as independence, parents may interpret as detachment.



For parents, this duality is both hopeful and unsettling. They want their children to thrive in an open and competitive society—to pursue careers, express opinions, and participate fully in American life. At the same time, they hope to transmit a heritage shaped by continuity across generations: language, rituals, festivals, reverence, and a sense of belonging to something larger than individual achievement. The challenge lies not in choosing one path over the other, but in learning how to integrate both consciously.

In *The American “I” and the Hindu “We”*, **Dr. Mohini Shinde** explores this integration through lived

experience, cultural observation, and contemporary understanding of family dynamics. The book examines how Hindu identity evolves across generations, especially among second- and third-generation families. It looks at parenting styles shaped by Western psychology and traditional expectations, conversations about education and success, and the ways children interpret religious practice while growing up as a minority in a pluralistic society.

The discussion extends beyond the home. Schools, peer groups, media, and social narratives influence how young people understand themselves. Festivals must be balanced with academic calendars. Faith is sometimes reduced to stereotypes. Temples and community organizations attempt to reinforce what families alone cannot always sustain. Grandparents adjust to changing roles in nuclear households, while parents navigate conversations they themselves never had growing up. Each of these forces shapes how the “I” and the “We” either harmonize or drift apart.

Importantly, the book does not frame American and Hindu values as opposing choices. Individual confidence need not negate collective responsibility. Personal freedom does not erase spiritual



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discipline. Adaptation does not require cultural loss. Instead, Dr. Shinde presents a framework in which both perspectives coexist—strengthening identity rather than fragmenting it.

Written for parents, educators, community leaders, and young adults alike, these pages offer an invitation to reflection and dialogue. By naming the dynamics between the American “I” and the Hindu “We,” the book guides families toward clarity, understanding, and harmony—so that the next generation may grow not divided between worlds, but enriched by both.

For more information or to buy this book, please visit [www.deshvideshpublishing.com](http://www.deshvideshpublishing.com).

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## IIMA, Tandons Launch Krishnamurthy Tandon AI School



The Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) has announced a partnership with alumna Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon and her husband Ranjan Tandon to create the Krishnamurthy Tandon School of Artificial Intelligence. The initiative is supported by a \$11 million (₹100 crore) philanthropic endowment.

The MoU was signed in New Delhi in the presence of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, while India's Ambassador to the United States, Vinay Kwatra, joined virtually. The school will function as a specialized center within IIMA, bridging artificial intelligence with management and public policy, and focusing on research that can be applied to real-world challenges across business, governance, and social sectors.

Speaking at the event, Pradhan highlighted that the collaboration aligns with the upcoming India-AI Impact Summit 2026 and underlines India's strategy to strengthen its global leadership in AI. He emphasized that India's progress in AI relies on both technological innovation and skilled human capital. The minister also praised the Tandons for their alumni-led philanthropic contribution, noting that such initiatives bolster academic institutions while expanding national AI capabilities.

The school is designed as a hub connecting faculty, industry leaders, policymakers, and international partners to encourage case-based and application-focused AI research. Key officials at the signing included IIMA Director Prof. Bharat Bhasker, Higher Education Secretary Dr. Vineet Joshi, Joint Secretary Purnendu Banerjee, and other senior ministry representatives.

## Indian American Entrepreneur Runs for Texas Congress



Abhiram Garapati, an Indian American originally from Nuzvid, Andhra Pradesh, is vying for the Republican nomination in Texas' 31st Congressional District ahead of the March 3, 2026 primary. Known for his distinctive cowboy persona, Garapati is a self-funded candidate who has financed his campaign entirely from personal resources. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1997 with only \$500 and became a citizen in 2010, renouncing his Indian citizenship.

A serial entrepreneur, Garapati is President of Ant Savings, a commercial real estate investment firm he founded in 2004. The company manages a multimillion-dollar portfolio across multiple states, including office complexes, hospitals, restaurants, and retail centers. In addition, Garapati is a rancher and farmer, overseeing livestock and hay production on his 200-acre Central Texas property and 60-acre Florence ranch, giving him deep insight into local economies and agricultural challenges.

Garapati holds a bachelor's degree in Electronics and Communications Engineering and completed advanced investment coursework at Stanford University. Politically, he has been a delegate for the 31st District at the 2024 Republican National Convention and has previously contested GOP primaries in 2020, 2022, and 2024.

Unique among candidates, he declines all campaign contributions, congressional salary, and pension, and

will not trade stocks while in office. Married to his high-school sweetheart, he has two children and transitioned from Hinduism to Christianity. His platform emphasizes conservative principles and grassroots engagement, with March 3, 2026, set to reveal whether his unconventional approach resonates with voters.

## Jaya Padmanabhan Takes Helm at American Community Media



American Community Media, a nationwide network supporting ethnic and community journalism, has named Jaya Padmanabhan as its new Executive Director beginning February 1, 2026. She succeeds founder Sandy Close, who is stepping back after decades of leadership to serve in an advisory capacity as Director Emeritus. The change represents a generational shift for an organization that has long played a central role in amplifying diverse voices across the United States.

Padmanabhan brings extensive experience in multicultural journalism and digital storytelling. After initially working as a software engineer in Silicon Valley, she transitioned into media, driven by a commitment to community-focused reporting. Her career includes serving as Editor of India Currents, writing for the San Francisco Examiner, and managing projects at the University of Southern California's Center for Health Care Journalism, where she guided multilingual newsrooms and mentored emerging journalists.

Close has described this leadership transition as timely, noting that ethnic media faces both technological disruption and financial pressure. While digital tools and artificial intelligence are reshaping news production, audiences are increasingly seeking trustworthy, relatable reporting. She emphasized that Padmanabhan's blend of

technical knowledge and editorial experience positions her well to navigate this evolving landscape.

American Community Media works with thousands of ethnic news organizations across all 50 states, facilitating collaboration between journalists, policymakers, and industry experts. The organization hosts conferences, workshops, and training programs while supporting investigative reporting and multilingual content creation.

Sandy Close's career has had a lasting impact on community journalism. She began reporting in Hong Kong in the 1960s before founding a local Oakland newspaper focused on social justice issues. Later, she led Pacific News Service and helped launch youth-driven media initiatives. In 1996, she created New America Media, which became the largest coalition of ethnic news outlets in the country before closing in 2017.

Her contributions have been widely recognized. In 1995, she received a MacArthur "Genius Award," using the \$0.5 million grant to co-produce an Academy Award-winning documentary. She later earned the George Polk Career Achievement Award and the I.F. Stone Medal for her influence on public-interest journalism.

Throughout her career, Close championed inclusive storytelling and collaboration across cultural lines. As she transitions into her new role, she has reiterated her belief that community media must remain connected, visible, and engaged with broader society. Meanwhile, Padmanabhan is expected to guide American Community Media into its next chapter, balancing innovation with its longstanding mission of elevating underrepresented voices.

## Monank Patel Named USA Captain for T20 WC



Monank Patel has been appointed captain of the USA cricket team for the 2026 ICC T20 World Cup, set to take place in India and Sri Lanka. Ten key players from the team's debut 2024 campaign, which featured a notable Super 8 stage finish and a win over Pakistan, will return for this edition.

Alongside Patel, the squad includes Jessy Singh, Andries Gous, Milind Kumar, Shayan Jahangir, Harmeet Singh, Nosthush Kenjige, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Saurabh Netravalkar, and Ali Khan. The experience of players like Harmeet, Milind, and Saurabh, who have played age-group or state cricket in India, is expected to provide the team with a strategic advantage.

Wicketkeeper-batter Andries Gous led the USA in runs during the 2024 edition with 219 runs from six innings at an average of 43.80, including two fifties, while Saurabh Netravalkar topped the team's wicket-taking chart with six wickets at an average of 20.83.

New faces in the squad may include Shubham Ranjane, who could make his T20I debut, and Mohammad Mohsin and Shehan Jayasuriya, who may earn their first international caps. Shubham, born in Pune, previously played four ODIs for the USA and featured in the SA20 tournament for Johannesburg Super Kings, scoring

101 runs in five innings, including a half-century.

USA will play in Group A alongside India, Pakistan, the Netherlands, and Namibia. Their campaign begins on February 7 against India in Mumbai, followed by matches against Pakistan in Colombo on February 10, the Netherlands in Chennai on February 13, and Namibia in Chennai on February 15.

Squad: Monank Patel (C), Jessy Singh, Andries Gous, Shehan Jayasuriya, Milind Kumar, Shayan Jahangir, Saiteja Mukkamala, Sanjay Krishnamurthi, Harmeet Singh, Nosthush Kenjige, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Saurabh Netravalkar, Ali Khan, Mohammad Mohsin, Shubham Ranjane.

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# HOROSCOPE 2026

By Pandit Vijayanand  
February 2026

**F**ebruary 2026 is a monumental month, anchored by a **Full Snow Moon in Leo (Feb 1)** and a **high-stakes Solar Eclipse in Aquarius (Feb 17)**. These lunar events signal a “threshold of a new era,” forcing us to balance personal pride with collective progress.



## Aries

The month begins with a roar as the Leo Full Moon illuminates your sector of romance and creativity. This is your moment to take center stage; a creative project or a blossoming flirtation could reach a thrilling peak. However, the energy shifts dramatically during the Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th. This eclipse acts as a “fateful reset” for your social circles. You may find yourself parting ways with a group that no longer aligns with your values or suddenly stepping into a leadership role within a new community. With Saturn moving into your sign on the 13th, the universe is asking you to trade impulsive heat for long-term authority. Lead with heart, but ground your actions in newfound maturity. By month’s end, Mercury Retrograde invites you to retreat and process these rapid identity shifts.



## Taurus

February pulls you between the private and the public. The Full Moon on the

1st shines a spotlight on your home and family life, perhaps bringing a domestic project to completion or highlighting a need for emotional security. As a fixed sign, you may feel the “tectonic shifts” of the Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th more than others. This eclipse strikes your career sector, signaling an unpredictable breakthrough or a sudden change in professional direction. Don’t be afraid of the “call to adventure”—a launchpad is taking the place of your safety net. With Uranus stationed directly in your sign, your personal metamorphosis is accelerating. Your public reputation is undergoing a transformation that may surprise you. Use the latter half of the month to reflect on how your professional ambitions can better support your soul’s evolution.



## Gemini

Your words carry massive weight this month. The Leo Full Moon on the 1st initiates a breakthrough in communication—anticipate a momentous “aha” moment or a meaningful conversation that clarifies matters. Your curiosity is piqued, and the Aquarius solar eclipse on the 17th pushes you to expand your horizons even further. This eclipse activates your house of higher learning and travel, potentially bringing a sudden opportunity to study abroad, publish work, or shift

your entire worldview. This eclipse provides a refreshing change for individuals who have experienced stagnation. However, with Mercury, your ruling planet, going retrograde on the 26th, double-check all travel plans and keep your “evil twin” in check to avoid unnecessary drama. Focus on resonance over raw data; the truth you seek is found in intuition, not just information.



## Cancer

Financial clarity arrives early with the Leo Full Moon on the 1st, which illuminates your values and earned income. This is a time to audit your budget and recognize your worth. The real intensity, however, lies in the Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th, which activates your sector of intimacy, shared resources, and deep transformation. This eclipse may trigger a “soul contract” renewal or a sudden shift in how you handle joint finances. You are being asked to release old fears surrounding vulnerability and power. With Saturn entering your career house on the 13th, a two-year period of professional responsibility begins. You are taking up more space than ever before. Use the Mercury Retrograde starting on the 26th to revisit travel dreams or spiritual practices that help you stay grounded amidst these deep internal changes.



## Leo

February begins with your personal “glow-up.” The Full Moon in your sign on the 1st is a peak moment of visibility, inviting you to shed the masks you wear for others and stand in your authentic truth. This month is a celebration of you. However, the focus shifts outward during the Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th, which lands in your partnership sector. This event is a “total soul reboot” for your one-on-one relationships. Whether it’s a sudden beginning, a dramatic ending, or a radical shift in a current bond, the universe is clearing space for people who reflect your future, not your past. As your beliefs evolve, you may find that your old social dynamics no longer fit. Practice patience as Mercury goes retrograde on the 26th; some “emotional confessions” may need a second look before they are fully understood.



## Virgo

The month opens with a whisper as the Leo Full Moon illuminates your subconscious. This is a time for deep rest and paying attention to your dreams, as hidden intuitive gifts may surface. The major shift occurs on the 17th with the Aquarius Solar Eclipse in your sector of work and wellness. This marks a professional reset—perhaps a sudden opportunity to enter a unique job market or a total overhaul of your daily routine. You are being pushed to let go of “perfectionism” and embrace innovation. With Saturn moving into your intimacy sector on the 13th, you’re also learning challenging lessons about boundaries and shared responsibilities. On the 26th,

when Mercury retrogrades in your relationship house, you can anticipate the reappearance of former romantic partners or collaborators. Use this time to refine how you connect with others without losing yourself.



## Libra

February is “made for fun and love.” The Leo Full Moon on the 1st lights up your house of friendship and joy, potentially bringing a social event or community project to a beautiful culmination. You are feeling the love from your tribe. But don’t get too comfortable in the status quo; the Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th brings a “creative or romantic rebirth.” This eclipse triggers your sector of passion and self-expression, encouraging you to follow joy unapologetically, even if it feels “weird” or unconventional to others. You are rewriting your personal myth regarding what makes you happy. With Saturn entering your partnership zone on the 13th, your one-on-one bonds are also getting a serious upgrade in commitment. The end-of-month Mercury Retrograde suggests a need to review your daily habits to ensure they support this new, lighter version of yourself.



## Scorpio

The month begins with a close examination of your public image. The Leo Full Moon on the 1st enhances your career and reputation—are people recognizing your genuine abilities? Be bold about what you want to achieve. The Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th, which impacts the foundations of your chart, shifts the energy inward. This eclipse redefines “home” for you, potentially bringing a sudden

move, a change in family dynamics, or a psychological breakthrough regarding your foundations. You are releasing ancestral patterns to build a life that feels genuinely yours. With your ruler Mars causing “plot twists” in your financial sector, stay flexible with your resources. Mercury retrograde at the end of the month may bring back a creative project from the past. Trust the “awakening” happening within; your inner world is currently your greatest source of power.



## Sagittarius

Adventure is calling. The Leo Full Moon on the 1st expands your vision, possibly bringing a teaching or publishing opportunity to life. Trust your intuition—it’s pointing you toward a bigger stage. The Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th then resets your communication sector. This is a “fateful turning point” in how you share your message and connect with your immediate environment. Your words have the ability to innovate, so be prepared for unexpected news or a change in your voice. With Saturn moving into your sector of joy and creativity on the 13th, you’re beginning to take your hobbies and romantic life more seriously. As Mercury goes retrograde on the 26th, home matters or family conversations may become muddled. Take a “pause and meditate” approach to avoid misunderstandings. You are preparing for a massive shift in direction come June.



## Capricorn

The month starts with a lesson in vulnerability. The Leo Full Moon on the 1st asks you to let go of control in



**Adventure is calling. The Leo Full Moon on the 1st expands your vision, possibly bringing a teaching or publishing opportunity to life. Trust your intuition—it's pointing you toward a bigger stage. The Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th then resets your communication sector.**



your intimate bonds and trust the process of healing. Financial matters also reach their peak at this time, leading to the resolution of a shared resource issue. The Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th then triggers a major “restructure of your income and values.” This moment is a fateful opportunity to change how you make money or how you define security. You are building a life based on meaning rather than just duty. With Saturn, your ruler, moving into your home sector on the 13th, the next two years will focus on building a more solid personal foundation. Expect some “delays in initiation” as Mercury goes retrograde on the 26th. Use this time to clear mental clutter and ensure your new financial goals align with your soul's purpose.



### Aquarius

This is your month of “total soul reboot.” While the Leo Full Moon on the 1st highlights relationship truths and

asks you to lead with your heart, all eyes are on you for the Solar Eclipse in your sign on the 17th. This is the first eclipse in Aquarius since 2018, marking a dramatic new chapter in your personal evolution. You are shedding old identities and manifesting a life that resonates with your core. It's a “fateful beginning” that may feel both shocking and liberating. With your ruler Uranus moving direct, the momentum is unstoppable. However, Saturn's move into your communication sector on the 13th demands that you speak with more authority and responsibility. As Mercury turns retrograde on the 26th, take a moment to look back at your finances. You are birthing a new dream; ensure it is anchored in reality.



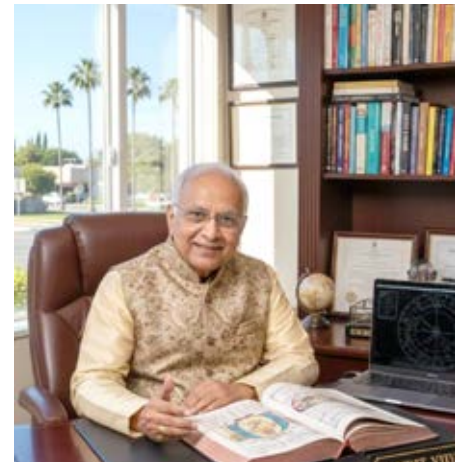
### Pisces

February is a month of “rising from the fog.”

The Leo Full Moon on the 1st reveals how your daily habits affect your well-being—listen to your body's messages. The real magic unfolds during the Aquarius Solar Eclipse on the 17th. Landing in your sector of the subconscious and endings, this eclipse clears “karmic debris” to make way for a new version of you. It is a quiet but powerful “inner world stir.” With Venus and Mercury entering your sign on the 6th and

10th, you are magnetic and artistic, though Mercury's retrograde in your sign on the 26th suggests you should “pause, review, and surrender” rather than rush. Saturn is finally leaving your sign on the 13th, ending a heavy period of personal testing. You are moving toward financial growth and a deeper connection to your spiritual values.

### About Pandit Vijayanand



Pandit Vijayanand is a renowned Indian astrologer based in California, offering expert astrological guidance rooted in the ancient science of Vedic astrology. With extensive education and a strong reputation, Pandit Vijayanand also serves clients all over the US and across the globe. If you have any questions, Please email to pandit ji at [pandit.vijay.anand.108@gmail.com](mailto:pandit.vijay.anand.108@gmail.com)

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# Community News

## Georgia Atlanta Metro

### Valentines Special Bollywood Night Ft Nushrratt Bharuccha

When: 02/15/2026, 10.00 PM  
Where: Sahara Lounge Atlanta  
2077 Beaver Ruin Rd, Norcross,30071  
Contact: 506-789-325  
Email: info@ansarikv.com  
Host: AV Entertainment

### K-pop Demon Hunters Galentine Party For Kids

When: 02/22/2026, 11.00 AM  
Where: Reflections Event Space  
215 Advantage Dr suite 100,  
Cumming,30040  
Email: info@deshvodesh.com  
Host: Desi Vendor

### Rajat Sood Stand-Up Comedy Live 2026

When: 03/08/2026, 7.00 PM  
Where: Lawrenceville Arts Center  
125 N Clayton St,  
Lawrenceville,30046  
Contact: 732-522-1822  
Email: thecosmicevents365@gmail.com  
Host: The Cosmic Events

### Yahoo With Mohammed Rafi & Shammi Kapoor

When: 03/28/2026, 8.30 PM  
Where: Phase Events

12150 Morris Rd, Alpharetta,30005  
Contact: 770-555-6503  
Email: info@tanweermian.com  
Host: Tanweer Mian

### Padmabhushan Pt. Ajoy Chakrabarty

When: 03/29/2026, 6.30 PM  
Where: Studio Theatre, Studio  
Theatre  
1 Galambos Way, Atlanta,30328  
Contact: 470-253-4822  
Email: tickets@parashare.com  
Host: Para Share

### Sit Down Ashish In Alpharetta

When: 04/04/2026, 8.00 PM  
Where: HIRA Banquet  
11105 State Bridge Rd,  
Alpharetta,30022

Email: info@dmevents.co.in  
Host: Dream Merchantz

### Samashti Gita Chanting In Atlanta

When: 04/19/2026, 2 PM - 4 PM  
Where: North Gwinnett High School  
20 Level Creek Rd., Suwanee,30024  
Contact: Anu Nathan 770-401-9366  
Email: atlanta@chinmayamission.org  
Host: Chinmaya Mission Atlanta and  
Alpharetta

### Pratibha Singh Baghel Live

When: 05/01/2026, 7.30 PM  
Where: Phase Events  
12150 Morris Rd #7,  
Alpharetta,30005  
Contact: 470-253-4822  
Email: tickets@parashare.com  
Host: Para Share

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## Florida

### Orlando

#### Holi Puja

When: 03/02/2026, 6.30 PM  
Where: Laxminaraya mandir  
5020 W South Street, Orlando,32811  
Contact: 689-222-5185  
Email: info@gujaratisocietycfl.com  
Host: Gujarati Society

#### Dhuleti

When: 03/08/2026, 10 AM TO 4PM  
Where: Olympia High School  
4301 s Apopka Vineland RD,  
Orlando,32835  
Contact: Kirit Patel 689-222-5185  
Email: info@gujaratisocietycfl.com  
Host: Gujarathi Society

### South Florida

#### Miami Bollywood Valentines Nightout At Bargean

When: 02/14/2026, 10.00 PM  
Where: Bargean Miami  
1010 Southwest 8th Street,  
Miami,33130  
Contact: 917-749-0150  
Email: tamashanights@gmail.com  
Host: Tamahsa Nights

#### Miami Holi Rave A

#### Sundowner Color Fest 2026

When: 02/28/2026, 3.00 AM  
Where: UVA WYNWOOD  
2244 Northwest 1st Court,  
Miami,33127  
Contact: 917-749-0150  
Email: tamashanights@gmail.com  
Host: Tamahsa Nights

#### Holi Picnic

When: 03/01/2026  
Where: Miramar Regional Park  
16801 Miramar Pkwy,  
Miramar Pkwy,33027  
Email: sindhiassociation@ymail.com  
Host: Sindhi Association Of Florida

### Tampa

#### American Natya Idol

When: 02/28/2026, 9.30 AM  
Where: New Tampa Performing Arts  
Center  
5509 Lynn Road, Tampa,33647  
Contact: 314-397-5278  
Email: info@sooryadance.com  
Host: Soorya Performing Arts

#### Florida Holi Mela At Tampa Bay

When: 03/01/2026, 11.00 a.m to 5 p.m  
Where: Sickles High School  
7950 Gunn Hwy Tampa FL,  
Tampa,33626

Contact: Sankul Seth 214-909-4376  
Email: floridaholimela@gmail.com  
Host: Sankul Seth and Aarti Seth

#### Holi Event 2026

When: 03/07/2026, 11.00 AM  
Where: SISIRA FARMS - The Aura  
Venue  
10575 Paul South Buchman Highway,  
Plant City,33565  
Contact: 813-893-9779  
Email: info@deshvidesh.com  
Host: Bharti Kapoor Panigrahi

#### India Fest 2026

When: 03/14/2026, 12 pm - 8 pm  
Where: Alliance For the Arts  
10091, McGregor Blvd, Fort  
Myers,33919  
Contact: Shaila Singh 239-770-8242  
Email: contact@iafortmyers.org  
Host: India Association of Fort  
Myers

### Ekal Musical Event

When: 03/01/2026 , 5 PM onwards  
Where: Hollywood Performing Center  
1770 Monroe Street, Hollywood,33020  
Contact: Vivek Swaroop 954-394-5661  
Email: victor9626@gmail.com  
Host: Ekal Vidyalaya

### Gujarati Convention

When: 05/22/2026  
Where: Renaissance Orlando  
6677 Sea Harbor Dr, Orlando,32821  
Contact: 404-401-4404  
Email: info@fogausa.org  
Host: Federation Of Gujarati Association

# Rema's Ramblings

Thoughts and Musings from Mumbai to Miami.



## When the Picture Matters More Than the Place



Growing up in Mumbai, we had no social media. The internet did not even exist then. Today, of course, people practically live their lives on social media. I can understand wanting to share moments, milestones, or experiences online. What I still struggle to understand, however, is the rise in popularity of influencers – and wannabe influencers – who simply pose for photographs, post them on Instagram, and collect a flurry of likes.

This phenomenon, so common in Western countries, is now clearly visible in India as well. I witnessed it firsthand during a recent trip to Udaipur with my family. Recently, I was in Udaipur, India with my family. While seeing the sights in this beautiful city, we visited a garden called “Saheliyon ki bari”. As I was walking in, I happened to notice many young women also entering, with their respective friends or significant others. What caught my

attention was how dressed up many of them were – skirts or dresses styled carefully, accessorized with belts, booties, jewelry, and more. I assumed that there must be some sort of event at the garden which all these people were attending. Boy, was I wrong.

It soon became apparent that these young women were there for one purpose alone: to pose for photographs at the garden's scenic spots, presumably to post later on social media. At every site within the garden, in front of trees, bushes and fountains, we saw these young ladies posing, while their companions dutifully took photo after photo. It was quite hilarious because very few people seemed to want to enjoy the beauty of the locale – they only wanted to capture their own beauty. The men, in particular, seemed to have a very specific role – photographer – and I imagine that they were being critically evaluated on the quality of every shot.

Life is so busy as it is, that I sometimes wonder what the world has come to, when millions of people spend so much time scrolling through photos and videos of random strangers on the internet. Do we really have nothing better to do than to fuel this artificial popularity and provide so-called influencers with yet another way to earn an income?

In a world busy chasing likes and perfect pictures, I still find myself wondering when we stopped pausing simply to look around and take it all in.

### About the Author



Rema Deo is the Managing Director at 24By7Security, a Cybersecurity and Compliance Consulting firm.

She lives in South Florida with her husband. A proud mother of twin boys, she is also an active member of the local Indian community.

In addition to the professional responsibilities of her function, Rema enjoys the multi-cultural aspect of the job especially as it involves learning different languages, traveling to different countries and meeting and working with people of different backgrounds and cultures. Rema is actively involved in the South Florida community and serves as a Board Member of the Indian Regional and Cultural Center, and has also served on the Board of Trustees of the North Broward Preparatory School.

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## Alia Bhatt Produces Romantic Comedy With Prime Video



Actor-producer Alia Bhatt has partnered with Prime Video to bring the upcoming film *Don't Be Shy* to audiences. The romantic comedy is being produced under her banner Eternal Sunshine Productions, alongside her sister Shaheen Bhatt, Grishma Shah, and Vikesh Bhutani.

The story follows 20-year-old Shyamili 'Shy' Das, a young woman who believes she has her life perfectly mapped out, only to have her plans unravel in unexpected ways. The narrative explores the chaos and unpredictability of youth, capturing both humorous and heartfelt moments.

Alia Bhatt, whose first production was the 2022 release *Darlings*, said the project resonated with her due to its authenticity and coming-of-age perspective. She highlighted that the goal of Eternal Sunshine Productions is to present stories with genuine voices and originality. Alia added that Prime Video proved to be an ideal partner,

supporting bold creative choices and unique storytelling.

Nikhil Madhok, director and head of Originals at Prime Video India, expressed excitement about the collaboration, calling it a "fun yet warm romantic comedy." He praised Alia's ability to identify stories that are emotionally rich, relatable, and entertaining, making *Don't Be Shy* a promising addition to Prime Video's lineup.

The film promises a vibrant, young adult story that blends humor, emotion, and the unpredictability of life, marking another milestone in Alia Bhatt's growing production journey.

## Arijit Singh Reveals Reasons For Playback Retirement



Arijit Singh surprised fans and the music industry by announcing his retirement from Bollywood playback singing on January 28, 2026. Sharing the news via his social media accounts shortly after releasing his latest track *Maatrubhumi* from Salman Khan's *Battle Of Galwan*, the 38-year-old singer expressed gratitude to his fans for years of support. He clarified that he is only stepping away from playback singing and will continue performing classical music and concerts.

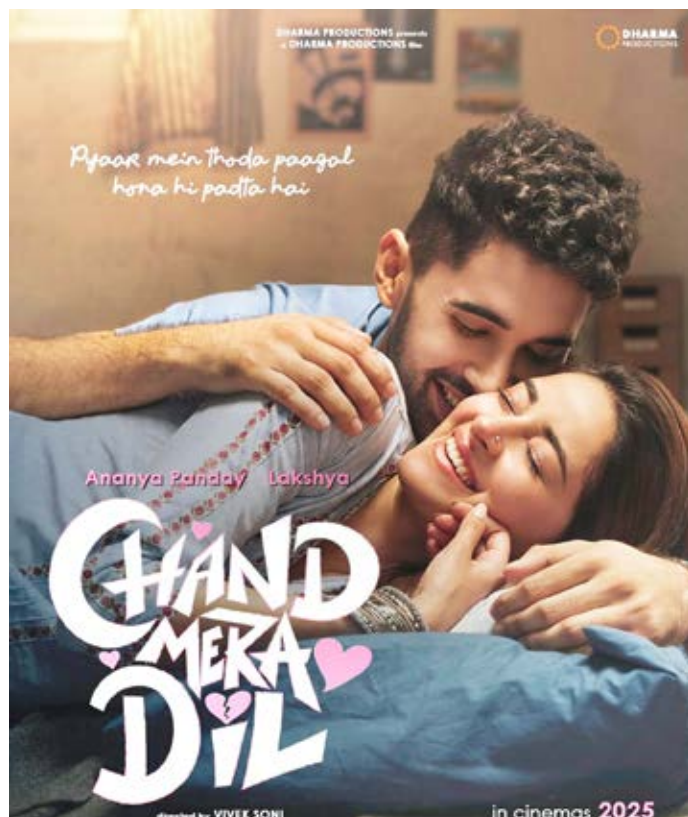
In a series of posts, Arijit explained that his decision was long considered and driven by multiple factors. One key reason, he revealed, is his quick boredom with repeating the same songs, which motivated him to experiment with arrangements during live performances. This restlessness, he said, made him crave new creative challenges. Additionally, Arijit expressed excitement about creating opportunities for emerging singers, seeking fresh talent that could inspire him.

Looking ahead, the singer reassured fans that music remains central to his life. He plans to focus on composing his own music and returning to his classical roots. Pending commitments will be honored, meaning fans may still see some releases this year.

The announcement drew widespread reactions from the music community. Veteran singer Udit Narayan and artists like Armaan Malik, Amaal Mallik, and Badshah expressed admiration and support for his decision, praising his contributions.

Arijit began his career in 2010 as an assistant to composer Pritam and quickly rose to fame with hits like *Tum Hi Ho*, *Channa Mereya*, *Kesariya*, and *Kalank*. He has earned two National Film Awards and is recognized as one of the most influential playback singers of his generation.

## Chand Mera Dil Sets Release Date for May



The romantic drama *Chand Mera Dil*, featuring Ananya Panday and Lakshya, now has an official release date of May 8, 2026. Originally announced in November 2024 with a planned 2025 release, the film experienced delays but is now ready to hit theatres this summer. Directed by Vivek, the project marks his third film after *Meenakshi Sundareswar* starring Sanya Malhotra and Abhimanyu Dassani, and *Aap Jaisa Koi* with R. Madhavan.

This film is the first collaboration between Ananya Panday and Lakshya. Initial reports had suggested an April release, but the makers have confirmed the May 8 date. With its big-screen debut, *Chand Mera Dil* will join other major releases in May, including Akshay Kumar's horror-comedy *Bhooth Bangla* on May 15, and Sidharth Malhotra and Tamannaah Bhatia's *Vvan: Force of the Forest*, which has been postponed to avoid a clash.

On the work front, Lakshya was last seen in the Netflix series *The Ba\*ds of Bollywood*, directed by Aryan Khan, featuring multiple Bollywood stars in cameo roles. He previously made his film debut with *Kill* and is also set to appear in *Dostana 2* alongside Vikrant Massey.

Ananya Panday, meanwhile, was last seen in *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri* with Kartik Aaryan, which released during Christmas 2025 but underperformed at the box office. The film, directed by Sameer Vidwans, received mixed reviews. With *Chand Mera Dil*, fans hope to see a fresh romantic narrative from the young actors this summer.

## Deepika Padukone Shares Travel Secrets With Ranveer



Celebrity couple Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh have once again captured fans' attention with their latest vacation photos, drawing praise for their picture-perfect moments. In a candid interview with *Hindustan Times*, Deepika discussed her passion for travel, emphasizing that it's never about ticking off a checklist but about connecting with a place and spending quality time with loved ones.

Recently, Deepika joined Ranveer as a brand ambassador for Abu Dhabi tourism. She described travel as an essential part of her life, whether for work or leisure, sometimes immersing herself in local culture and history, and at other times enjoying quiet, offbeat escapes. When asked about her travel style, Deepika said she prefers a mix but leans towards soulful experiences, savoring art, architecture, and interactions with local people.

Sharing insights into her life with Ranveer, she revealed that planning a “perfect day” together often includes music and dance. Her ideal day in Abu Dhabi would begin with a morning swim at Corniche Beach, followed by a visit to the Louvre, a desert drive at sunset, and a traditional barbecue dinner under the stars, all infused with their signature playful energy.

Reflecting on the tourism campaign, Deepika highlighted that it captured not just a destination but the emotional journey of experiencing it with someone you love. For the couple, travel represents more than sightseeing—it’s about creating meaningful memories and savoring the intimate moments that linger long after the trip ends.

## Ek Din Teaser Released Starring Sai Pallavi



“ Junaid Khan’s previous outing, the romantic entertainer Loveyapa, received mixed reviews. The film, a remake of Pradeep Ranganathan’s Tamil hit Love Today, was unable to recreate the magic of the original. ”

The production team behind the upcoming film Ek Din has released the official teaser, following the unveiling of the first poster. Starring Junaid Khan and Sai Pallavi in the lead roles, the movie marks the first collaboration between the two actors. Directed by Sunil Pandey, the film is slated for a theatrical release on May 1, 2026.

The teaser was shared on Instagram with the message, “Some stories don’t need time. Watch EK DIN only in theatres 1st May 2026.” Fans were quick to react, praising Junaid’s screen presence, with one noting he exudes a “full Hollywood actor vibe.” Others highlighted the stunning cinematography, saying it enhances the visual appeal of the film. Sai Pallavi also received appreciation, with many anticipating that she will set a new benchmark for acting in Bollywood. Viewers expressed excitement over the fresh love story and the chemistry between the lead pair.

Originally expected in November 2025, the release date was pushed to May 1, 2026. The film’s music is composed by Ram Sampath, and the story is penned by Sneha Desai and Spandan Mishra. Notably, the movie was shot in Sapporo, Japan, promising scenic backdrops for the narrative.

Junaid Khan’s previous outing, the romantic entertainer Loveyapa, received mixed reviews. The film, a remake of Pradeep Ranganathan’s Tamil hit Love Today, was unable to recreate the magic of the original. With Ek Din, audiences are hopeful for a refreshing love story set against visually stunning locales.

For more information on this article or to view additional pictures, please visit <https://www.deshvidesh.com/Feb2026/> or download our Mobile App.



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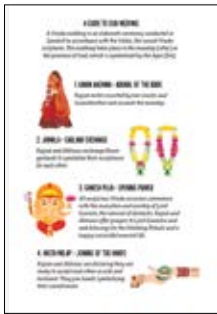
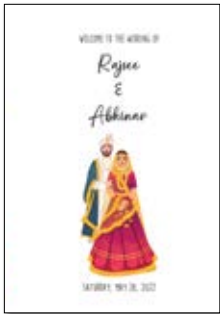


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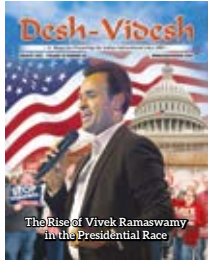
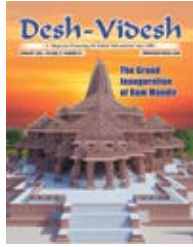
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