Nov 13, 2013, Wed

Indian American, Dr Rahul Jindal, Awarded the Outstanding American by Choice Award by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) organization

Chitra Divakaruni with desideewar......Read on.

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May 26 2013: Indian American to be the first South Asian Judge to America’s second highest court

On May 23rd 2013, the Chandigarh-born, 46-year-old, Srikanth Srinivasan, of Virginia, became the first Indian American, in fact, the first South Asian, to be a United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Srinivasan was nominated by US President Barack Obama. “Sri is a trailblazer who personifies the best of America,” Obama is quoted as saying by the Hindu. His nomination was unanimously approved by the Senate with 97-0 voting in his favor last Thursday.

See voting results at- http://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/113-2013/s136

Srinivasan received his BA with honors and distinction in 1989 from Stanford University, his JD (Juris Doctor) with distinction in 1995 from Stanford Law School and also his MBA in 1998 from Stanford Graduate School.
NDTV reported that Srinivasan received the Attorney General’s Award for Excellence in Furthering US National Security in 2003 and the Office of the Secretary of Defence Award for Excellence in 2005.

India’s Ambassador to the U.S. Niranama Rao welcomed Mr. Srinivasan’s elevation, describing it as “a matter of great pride and satisfaction for India and the Indian American community”, according to the Hindu.

ABC News of America recently covered Srinivasan’s nomination saying, “Many believe that Srinivasan, considered one of the best appellate advocates in the country, would top the list of potential Supreme Court nominees if a seat became available during the Obama administration.”

ABC News also reported Republicans on the committee praised Srinivasan, who clerked for Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III on the US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit as well as Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. He worked in private practice for O’Melveny & Myers in Washington, D.C., and served as a career civil servant in the Solicitor General’s office during the Bush administration.

Srinivasan’s parents moved to the US in the late 1960s along with him and his two younger sisters. His father was a professor of mathematics at the University of Kansas, and his mother worked at the Computer science department also in University of Kansas. Having grown up in the ‘basketball-crazy’ town of Lawrence, Kansas, he himself is a good basketball player. According to BLT, the Blog of Legal Times, he played for the basketball team of Lawrence High School where his teammate was the famous Danny Manning, a top player for the University of Kansas Jayhawks who went on to star in the National Basketball Association and is now assistant coach for the Jayhawks.

Show Me The Curry

Turning hobby into a business and friendship into a partnership

(Written by Sonal Kulkrestha, May 13 2013)

When Anuja Balasubramanian and Hetal Jannu turned their friendship into a partnership and their hobby into a business, the result was Show Me The Curry, an online cooking show that teaches its viewers cooking delicious Indian cuisine in a step by step manner. I have been following their progress and impressive growth in the recent years and was glad to finally get a chance to interview these two wonderful women living the dreams of many men and women out there who long to take their skill to that next level but haven’t quite taken that step yet. The interview with them was exactly what I thought it would be- inspirational!

So how did it all start? I asked Anuja and Hetal. They were happy to fill me in. It all started six years back, “We were friends living in the same neighborhood, at the same stage of our lives- after having worked before the kids were born, we had both been home since having kids. The younger ones (both have 2 sons each) had started school”, says Anuja. So they found themselves wondering about what’s next for them, “Then video was just coming up and there weren’t any cooking videos for Indian cooking. My husband suggested that we make videos and teach people how to cook Indian food”, says Hetal. They laughed at the idea but did end up considering the idea. That was when their first video was born. It was recorded by both of their husbands who uploaded it on youtube. They taught how to cook Varan dal. They laughed at how amateurish it was. But it got over 100 views, people loved it and wanted more. There was no looking back for Hetal and Anuja after that.

What started as a hobby soon became a business. Anuja and Hetal continued churning out recipes or
whipping up their versions of it. The business spread by word of mouth. Soon they got featured in popular newspapers like Dallas Morning News, Good Morning Texas, USA Today and Canada's national newspaper, The Globe and Mail. And as hobby turned into a business, friendship turned into a partnership. We hear all the time that don't involve friends into your business, and that friendship is ruined if you do so. How do they avoid 'ruining' their friendship, I asked. Both of them are quick to tell me how much fun they have together, how they have the exact same taste with respect to food and how they may have different opinion on matters, but its' about respecting the other. Are there ground rules? Yes, there are ground rules. Ones they don't break. In fact, that's what has kept the business still a hobby and partnership still a friendship, is what I gather.

So how do they come up with these recipes? They inform me that while most of the recipes are their own, they welcome recipes from their friends and others and give credit to them. Show Me The Curry has videos of over 600 recipes so far. Their recipes get awesome feedbacks from their viewers. And there lies their motivation. They recount this one incident where a man wrote to them how they had saved his life. He had lost his wife who was a very good cook. SMTC helped him get back on track as he picked up the pieces of his life after losing her. There are numerous such stories that keep them going.

Do go on, Anuja and Hetal. We wish you the very best. Your success is our inspiration!

As I wind up the interview, I had to ask them to pick four quick and easy recipes from their collection for our 'Four Weeknights of Dinner’ segment. And they did. So look out for their picks this week.

Hetal and Anuja had a surprise for us. They have recently co-authored a book, The Healthy Indian Diet. They donated a copy of the book for our 'For A Cause. Together.” segment. We certainly appreciate it.

Having spoken to them, I could see how diligent and consistent they have been since they started. It reminded me of a Margaret Thacher quote, “I do not know anyone who has gotten to the top without hard work. That is the recipe. It will not always get you to the top, but it will get you pretty near.”

(written by Sonal Kulshrestha for desideewar)

I knew Sonali Maniar fourteen years back when she lived here in Dallas, Texas. After getting a Masters Degree in Graphic Design, she worked with Fossil Watches, designing their brochures and pamphlets. She soon became a freelance designer. We all had our first-borns together during which time we were home. Sonali’s creativity always impressed us. Her custom invitation cards and beautiful scrap-books epitomized her passion for design. Later they moved to Hong Kong and then to Bangalore, India, when her husband got an opportunity to head the India division of Sabre (an American company that has its headquarters in Dallas). That was June of 2006. Seven years of being in India, Sonali now has a successful Paper Design venture. Over the years, thanks to facebook, I followed her updates as she started her first store in Mumbai, and continued to follow her updates on running a now highly successful business. I was planning on interviewing her to cover her success story on desideewar, but The Economic Times beat me to it. She was recently featured in it. But interview her I did.

Paper Products & Designs - The Venture That Stemmed From Her Passion

So what exactly does your Paper Designs venture entail? I asked Sonali. “The business has two parts”, she explains. There’s the retail part that is the store itself - Temptree. The store sells various different kinds of paper products ranging from greeting cards, thank you notes, notebooks to albums and paper boxes. There’s a whole line made from newspaper. The second aspect of her business is the design. All of the cards are designed by Sonali. Lot of the paper products in the store are also designed by her. She designs customized cards and products relating to an entire event.

Family – The Support That Augments Success

Sonali opened her first store in Mumbai, in her parents’ garage, while she lived in Bangalore. She says her parents support was absolutely vital during that initial phase. Her mother would email her every evening with sales statistics that was critical to inventory planning. Sonali’s dad helped with all the accounts. That despite the fact that her parents, Mr. & Mrs. Parekh, run their own garden landscaping business, teaching Bonsai to several groups all over the world.

Sonali also talks of her husband’s immense support. With her having to travel to and fro between Mumbai and Bangalore, meant Shah having to take care of their two boys, now 14 and 11. Plus, he was the perfect person to bounce ideas off of.

Returning to India

I had to ask Sonali about life in India. I told her how I tell all of my friends here about what she once told me upon moving to India, about how she has a “staff” working for her. For those of us who live in America and have to do our own dishes and laundry and yard work and driving, know only too well how heavenly that sounds. Yes, that’s a luxury you get to enjoy to the fullest, she agrees. Just like most homes in her gated community, there are separate quarters for staff in the backyard with a room and bathroom, well-furnished with a TV by the owners.

I also asked her about India with respect to business opportunity. While she agrees that the infrastructure and other challenges can make things hard, the fact that the market is big and that the people are always on the look out for something new and different is a big plus. And that’s where her business fitted perfectly into the scene. It brought something unique to the market- paper products that are fun, contemporary & with a touch of traditional.

Where is the Business Now?

Sonali is reaching new heights each year. In five to six years, her business already has a turn-over of Rs 15 to 20 lakhs and is projected to earn revenue of Rs 20-22 lakhs by 2014. Currently she has two locations in Bangalore, one next to her house and one in Whitefield. She has recently implemented Point of sale system to track inventory. She has partnered with Rachana Palamreddy, who'll be managing marketing, sales & working with clients. Temptree now has two full-time and one part-time employees. As for the kind of business they get, she says the orders have evolved into much bigger ones. Last year they had three orders of over 2500 customized invitation cards for big events. They manage the entire package in such events like - invitation cards, monogram design, gift boxes, mailers and thank you notes. Events include birthdays, weddings and other ceremonies common in south like thread-ceremony, sari-ceremony, etc.

Final Note
Feb 16th 2013

India's Pride - Indian American Padma Awardee - Part I

We have all heard about the Padma Awards, India’s highest civilian awards. The President of India announces the recipients on the occasion of Republic Day each year. These awards, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri are bestowed upon Indians, both in India and those living abroad, and also to some foreigners, for extraordinary contributions in their fields. This year, President Pranab Mukherjee announced 4 Padma Vibhushan, 24 Padma Bhushan and 80 Padma Shri Awards, a total of 108 Padma Awards. The awards will be presented sometime in March/April on a date that will be decided by the President's office.

Now, we all know that Rajesh Khanna and Jaspal Singh Bhatti were amongst the beloved actors we lost in 2012 who would be awarded Padma Bhushan posthumously. We also heard that others from the world of Hindi Cinema are Sharmila Tagore for Padma Bhushan and Sridevi and Nana Patekar for Padma Shri.

Noted physicist Yash Pal, space scientist Roddam Narasimha, renowned sculptor Raghunath Mohapatra and painter S. Haider Raza are the four to be conferred the highest of the Padma Awards, the Padma Vibhushan.

However, we want to focus our attention on the three Indian American awardees in the category of Foreigners / NRIs/ PIOs who were bestowed with the coveted Padma Bhushan. They are-
1. Prof. Satya N. Atluri, Science and Engineering, USA
2. Prof. Jogesh Chandra Pati, Science and Engineering, USA
3. Prof. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Literature & Education, USA.

We'll try to cover their stories in three parts.

Today, our focus is Dr Satya Atluri.

Prof. Satya N. Atluri is an Indian American Distinguished Professor in the Department of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering at UCI.

I came to this country when I was about 20 years of age, with 8 US dollars in my pocket, and was educated at MIT in Cambridge, Mass. MIT supported me financially fully, to receive a Doctor of Science degree in aeronautics and...
Mr. Alturi earned the Doctor of Science degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1969 and since then has received several honors from universities across the world. He is the Founder & Chairman of FSL: A Global Forum on Structural Longevity.

We approached Dr. Alturi and asked him a few questions, to which he very promptly responded. And we're delighted to publish his interview. So here goes-

1. desideeewar: We know that you were recognized for outstanding contribution in the field of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering. We also know that you have been awarded several other notable awards such as the Excellence in Aviation Award (FAA) (1998), Outstanding Achievement Award (U.S. National Academy of Engineering, 1995), The Hibbert Medal (2003), etc.

Could you tell us about three contributions that are closest to your heart and that you are most proud of?

Mr. Alturi: It is hard for me, or for any academic, to answer this question. I have collaborated with, and mentored, more than 400 graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, visiting scholars, and visiting professors, from around the globe, over the years. With each of them I researched and found something, or something of value. I have documented them in archival scientific literature, for posterity. At the time we wrote them as research papers, I was intellectually excited about each and every paper. To look back and pick three best contributions is as difficult as declaring in public who your favorite child is, among the many. Every father must love all his children equally, even if one of them has eleven fingers . . .

2. desideeewar: We know that you are founder and was or is the Editor-in-Chief of many journals. In 1986, you founded a scientific association - ICCES: International Conference on Computational & Experimental Engineering & Sciences that holds annual meetings of scientists from various countries in general, and Asia in particular, all over the world.

You have established several international awards, one of them being, Satya N. Alturi Gold Medal. Tell us about it.

Mr. Alturi: My former students, friends, and colleagues have established this Satya N. Alturi Medal. It is given annually to someone who has had a far-reaching global impact on society at large, in terms of quality of life, quality of thought, etc. This award has been given to giants such as Dr. Ratan N Tata, the former Chair of Tata Sons of Mumbai. Dr. Tata is a person whom I have admired greatly, for most ethically steering the Tata company to be a global engineering and knowledge-economy conglomerate, and for continuing his family's centuries old philanthropy. I studied at the Indian Institute of Science, which I consider as my intellectual birth place, and which exists largely due to the foresight and generosity of the Tata family. I am very heartened to note that Dr. Ratan Tata was earlier honored by the President of India, with a Padma Vibhushan. The Alturi Medal has been given to others whose contributions have been similar to those of Dr. Tata.

3. desideeewar: You moved here very early on in your career. What kind of opportunities did this country offer that has shaped you into achieving what you have? We think that the fruits of research, no matter where the research occurs, are for the entire global community to share. How do you think the world has benefitted from your research and what are the next steps?

The 2013 Annual Grammy Awards Evening is next Sunday, Feb 10th. As we get ready to watch it, we are more than ready to cheer for Arun Shenoy. We covered the story of the music producer and composer, Arun Shenoy when his nomination in the category of Best Pop Instrumental Album was announced last Dec for his debut world fusion record titled ‘Rumbadoodle’ (2012), produced by his music company, Arun Shenoy Music Publishing (ASMP), Singapore. The
album was released on August 30 2012 and was recorded in
countries across the world through India, Spain, Canada, UK,
Pakistan and the United States of America.

As the 55th Grammy Awards night approaches, we
approached the young 34 years old achiever and asked him a
few questions. We must say that in spite of being away from
Singapore, he was extremely prompt in his responses to
desideewar and very helpful in providing us with the pictures
and the video that we were looking for. Really touched with
the humility, professionalism and vivacity that he exhibits.

So here goes our questions and his awe-inspiring answers.

Desideewar: When did you first start learning music and what
form of music did you learn?
Arun: Well. It was kind of accidental. I joined a guitar class in
Bangalore after my 10th grade exams (ICSE, Frank Anthony
Public School) in 2003. It started out with just my curiosity
around the instrument, and well, what can I say, it just took off
in ways I never imagined.

Desideewar: Who was/ is your guru?
Arun: Oh. I never had a guru ever. The guitar class I went for
was very basic, with no formal education on theory or
harmony. But after that, I learnt everything I know along the
way from friends and other musicians I met along the way over
many years. So, to this day, all of my music is done by ear.
Almost all of the people I work with also do it by ear. Very
often I get questions around sheet music for my work, and I
don't have any. I guess that is quite standard in rock n roll
compared to other forms like classical music.

Desideewar: When and how did you realize that you were
good at it.
Arun: I never really consider myself as a guitarist. Sure I do
play, but on Rumbadoodle, I prefer to work as a composer,
arranger and producer and work with professional studio
session guitarists and other instrumentalists to record all of
the tracks on the album, to bring the music to life. My primary
skill lies in end-to-end production, right from taking simple
songwriting ideas to recording, arranging, mixing and
mastering the music to finally create a shelf ready product.

Desideewar: What inspires you?
Arun: Well. Music across all genres. I grew up on rock n roll,
but have always loved all forms of world music. With
Rumbadoodle, I decided to try and create my own signature
sound with a blend of Spanish Rumba Flamenco with other
popular forms like Pop, Rock and Jazz. With the follow up
album, I am working on an Indian Fusion album, that is a kind
of journey back to my cultural roots. Currently busy with tons
of auditions in India to find the right people to work with, tabla
players, classical and folk singer, Indian violin players etc.

Desideewar: What would you say about your journey to being a
Grammy nominee?
Arun: Well. It has been an incredible journey. Fair share of
ups and downs, right from not finding the right people at
specific times, for specific songs, creative blocks and of
course the all important financial aspect, since I had funded
the entire production myself. Expensive sounding recordings
sound expensive for a reason, because they are expensive to
make. So after exhausting all of my savings, I had to depend
on debt to continue working on the music and this phase was
especially stressful. But in the end glad it all worked out in the
end. I think when you strongly believe in something, it always
works out in the end.

Desideewar: Words of inspirations to our readers!
Arun: Never give up on your dreams. Dreams are nothing but work in progress. And
the impossible journey of a 1000 miles starts with a single step and as you move
along, you just find yourself gaining so much momentum, at times, it is hard to even
slow yourself down. Better to have tried, than spend an entire lifetime wondering what
it. This can be for anything. Music, movies, arts, starting a business. Money comes
and goes, but the time never does. The time is now.

Desideewar: Wow! Thank you so much for your responses! It truly is a very
inspirational story and a perfect example of what happens when you follow your
heart. Do you have any anecdote to share with the readers?
Arun: The title track Rumbadoodle was originally a guitar jam between me (on
electric lead guitar) and Glenn Sharp (on Flamenco guitar). After it was some, some
reviews I received suggested it sounded very Santana. Now Carlos Santana has been
a big influence in my music, but not something I wanted to showcase in this track.
So I decided to redo the song, and ending up dropping all of my guitar parts and
instead having Ian Cameron from Canada lay down some blazing violin parts instead,
Dec 15 2012:

So 2013 Grammy Nominations were announced early this month. We talked about the three-time Grammy Awards winner, Pt Pandit Ravi Shankar being nominated for his album ‘The Living Room Sessions Part 1’. We also talked about his daughter Anous... hka, a two-time Grammy nominee being nominated in the same category for her album, Traveller (2011).

Now, we bring you the news of another Indian who has been nominated for the 55th Grammy Awards. Arun Shenoy. Arun’s debut world fusion record, ‘Rumbadoodle’ has been nominated for the 2013 Grammy award in the category of Best Pop Instrumental. The album was released on August 30 2012 and was recorded in countries across the world through India, Spain, Canada, UK, Pakistan and the United States of America.

According to Arun’s website, the Grammy nominated album explores a bold new perspective of the gypsy rumba flamenco, combining elements of the traditional art form with a myriad of popular music forms. Recorded almost entirely live across the Globe, this record is an explorative journey, doodling across genre boundaries as we know it today, creating a unique and true masterpiece along the way, an Arun Shenoy signature.
Do check out the doodled video at: http://arunshenoy.com/videos/world/arun-shenoy-rumbadoodle/

According to article on him on Coastaldigest, 34 year old Arun was born in Manipal in coastal Karnataka and went to school and college in Bangalore. He returned to Manipal for an engineering degree but the college rock scene showed this guitar player what he really wanted to do with his life. And while he joined the Tata Consultancy Service after graduating, later moving to IBM, it was music production that was his passion. His musical journey has taken him to Singapore, first for a Master’s degree in Computation Audio – and it is where he now works as a music producer and composer. His productions include the genres of rock n roll, world-beat and new age music. Arun writes and produces music for his own solo productions but also for other bands and solo artistes. The article also mentions that Arun’s wife, Roshni Mohapatra has teamed up with him as the Art Director on Rumbadoodle. He is now working on a follow up album to Rumbadoodle that should be out in 2013.

Well, Mr Arun Shenoy, we wish you the very best. We do believe your unique music and your journey to the Grammy Awards are both inspirational to millions of other youth who express themselves through their very own style of music! And yes, we’ll be watching the the 55th annual Grammy awards on February 10 2013 and will cheer you on as you walk the red carpet that night.