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Greenhorn for Greens: Thakker for Treasurer

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Oakland, Calif.

AS second generation Indian-Americans come of age, local politics seem to beckon them increasingly. This time it's yet another novice candidate, who intends to run for a state-wide office in his maiden attempt at public office.

Meet Albany, California resident, Mehul Thakker (29), whose lofty goal is to become the next State Treasurer of the largest state in the US, representing the Green Party. A self-employed, independent financial advisor with a "socially responsible investment firm" called Progressive Asset Management Co., operating in Oakland California, Thakker espouses "more power to the masses" and plans to fund more programs for the socially disadvantaged,

minorities and people of color.

While the Green Party has made huge inroads in Europe, in California the "Greens" have managed to win only in a few local City Council and municipal races. Thakker, who comes across as an idealist, sees this as an opportunity to raise awareness about the Green Party and to make inroads in shaping investing and spending by the state. "Raising the profile of the Green Party; spreading awareness among various communities including Indian-Americans, are my priorities for the election campaign," he says.

Asked why he was specifically running for a State treasurer, Thakker says: "The amount

of funds invested by the state in social programs and infrastructure building shows a tremendous inequity for socially disadvantaged minorities and people of color."



Mehul Thakker

Thakker maintains that he and his party would like to nudge the state spending into programs to benefit the under-represented minority community—which would practically solve the severe cuts seen in recent budget cuts affecting such much needed programs. If the platform sounds vague, it is probably because neither the platform of the party nor the candidate have jelled yet in the eye of the electoral public.

For example, in the 2004 Presidential

elections, arguably the most recognized candidate of the Green Party, Peter Camejo had to finally contest the elections as an independent candidate (alongside veteran activist-turned politician Ralph Nader) and not as a nominee of the Green Party—something Thakker admits was "due to pure politics".

Thakker hopes to change the mindset of State spending by investing in community development, affordable housing and disadvantaged programs. As State treasurer, he maintains he can also look into investments by institutions like the California Public Employees Retirement System (CALPERS) and California State Teachers Retirement systems etc. As an example of policies gone wrong, Thakker points out that the property-

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Finally, Hollywood finds the man who discovered infinity

Two films announced on Ramanujan, the Indian Mathematics genius

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Hollywood

THE global film industry seems to have suddenly discovered the man who discovered infinity. In little over a fortnight, there have been two announcements to make a film on the Indian Mathematics genius Srinivasa Ramanujan Iyengar.

The first announcement came from eminent British actor and writer Stephen Fry about two weeks go. Fry, who met Indian President, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhawan in Delhi on March 20, said the film was being produced in association with leading Indian writer-director Dev Benegal, who would be its co-director.

Then last week, eminent producer Edward R. Pressman announced he has acquired the rights to Robert Kanigel's 1991 biography *The Man Who Knew Infinity: A Life of the Genius Ramanujan*. Making the announcement, Pressman said the production on the film would start this fall. It would be directed by eminent screenwriter Matthew Brown. Production on the film by Fry and Benegal is expected to start next year. The film would focus on life of Ramanujan and his friendship with eminent Cambridge mathematician, G.H. Hardy.



Like the story of Ramanujan and Hardy both Fry and Benegal had for years unknown to one another, dreamt of making a film on this amazing friendship across the cultures and continents. It was at Cambridge that Fry came to learn about Ramanujan and Hardy.

But it was Ramanujan's journey from India to Cambridge and his friendship with the university Maths expert Hardy that propelled Fry to tell this story on the silver screen.

Benegal's passion to tell this story dates back some 20 years when he traveled the entire length of the river Kaveri in a small round boat made of dried palm leaves and came past the towns of Erode and Kumbakonam where Ramanujan was born and studied.

The story has haunted him for years but never found any interest amongst Indian film community. For them Ramanujan's work and ideas are the DNA of what powers digital technology today.

An accidental encounter in 2005 led to Fry and Benegal discovering their passion. Within a few meetings both had found their calling and a big screen version of this story is going to see the light of day soon. Both are co-writing and co-directing the film. It will be a co-production between India and Britain.

Pressman, on the other hand, is a veteran—having produced more than 80 films in the past three decades. Commenting on competition from Fry and Benegal, Pressman told *The Hollywood Reporter*: "While I can't speak for the Fry project, my sense is we're a bit farther along."



Young talents at Bay Area Telugu Association's Ugadi celebration last week.

