

# WestCoastNewsline

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## Dr Mani Bhaumik gets Gandhi Humanitarian Award

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Beverly Hills, Calif

EMINENT Indian physicist Dr Mani Bhaumik has been awarded this year's Mahatma Gandhi Humanitarian Award. Instituted by the Indian American Heritage Foundation, the award is a recognition for Dr Bhaumik's contribution to science and humanity. Last week, thespian Sir Ben Kingsley presented the award to Dr Bhaumik at a glittering function attended by the who's who of Hollywood and the cream of the Indian American community.

Dr Bhaumik is best known as the co-inventor of the excimer laser technology that has made the lasik eye surgical procedure popular. Reportedly, 15 million people have undergone this surgery over the years.

In the past 25 years, he has headed the chemical physics division of Quantum Physics at Xerox, served as the director of Laser technology lab of Northrop Corp. Research Center, been a fellow of the American Physical Society, and has been awarded a honorary D.S.C. degree by his alma mater, IIT-Kharagpur. His opulent lifestyle got him an episode on the *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*.

Of late, he has been in news for his best-selling book, *Code Name God*. The book tells the story of Dr Bhaumik's journey from rags to riches, from an impoverished village in Bengal to the manicured gardens of Bel Aire. It is the story of the discovery of the oneness of science and spirituality, the story of the discovery of a deep-rooted spirituality that surfaced just when Dr Bhaumik had become saturated with the decadence that his fame and wealth brought on.

As a young man, Dr Bhaumik had the opportunity to live with Mahatma Gandhi and the impact of that experience led him to try to bridge the gap between modern physics, spirituality and cosmology.

Kingsley, whose magnetic presence seemed almost as large as his persona in his portrayal of Gandhi in the Sir Richard Attenborough film, charmed the audience. Kings-



Dr Bhaumik with Kingsley and Inder Singh

ley presented a plaque to Dr Bhaumik.

In his address, Kingsley said, "We must learn from our similarities and feel empathy which is really a simple process...one man brought about the downfall of the British Empire in India and that man was the ticket master on the train Gandhi was riding on in South Africa during the days of severe discrimination. This ticket master empowered Gandhi to fight his battle for freedom and equality to all of humanity. On the same note, Dr Bhaumik has empowered people to see with his contribution of the Lasik procedure to the world and also by sponsoring the revolving annual trophy to honor the best science student of Indian descent through the India Heritage Foundation."

Dr Bhaumik said: "Science without spirituality is incomplete. It is just like asking one if the mind is separate from the body. Both need to be present and functioning to be complete. The time I spent with Gandhiji made me reflect on the fact that Gandhiji spoke little but spoke the truth. His message he said was his life. He also said that we should be the

### Like Mahatma, get creative in anger: Kingsley

■ My voice is my instrument. I have a need to be a storyteller and to be that I have to find the voice for it. Filmmakers and actors can create empathy through their roles and this process though very simple can work wonders. I am proud to be a storyteller and to be a part of the grand narrative tradition that tells stories to the world.

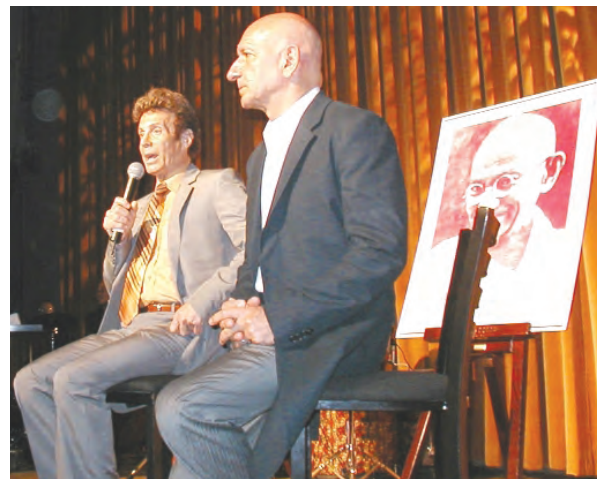
■ Empowerment is a very useful thing. For example, the fall of the British Empire was triggered by the empowerment Mahatma Gandhi got when a ticket master threw him

out of a train because he was not white. This small act brought the British Empire to its knees. Mahatma Gandhi, through his education and choices changed history. The poor young boys in France, when pushed into a corner ran for their lives, torched everything they encountered. We need to make our young more empowered than that. We need to teach them to say, "I will not take abuse from you. I will tell somebody, I will shout!" We need to empower our children to say no to the mercenaries who trade in drugs that rob them of their education and their sense of values."

■ Anger can be creative and productive. Mahatma Gandhi was an angry man and he used this anger to give force and energy to his actions.

■ I wish I could say that playing the role of Mahatma Gandhi change my life...or made me a better person. I still have a long way to go to become a better person.

■ My message in life is to live in abundance. Part of living in abundance is to be able to help someone less fortunate than us.



Kingsley with TV host Paul Ryan

change we wish to see in the world. Two attempts that we can make in this world to be that change is help get rid of poverty and to get spiritual and feel the oneness of science and spirituality."

The IAHF also honored California State Assemblyman Rudy Bermudez for his outstanding services to the Indian American community on the occasion. Bermudez piloted the landmark resolution AJR-1 that led to the government announcing the obser-

vance of September 20 as an annual day in honor of Dalip S. Saund, the first Asian American to be elected to the US Congress.

IAHF president Inder Singh, traced the progress made by IAHF since its inception in 1987. "This organization was started to recognize excellence among Indian Americans. The Foundation has been annually recognizing Indian American students who excel in visual and performing arts, science and technology, sports and community service."

## Chahal to head Santa Clara disability panel

SAM RAO

San Jose, Calif.

THE SC Board of Supervisors of Santa Clara County (SCC), California has appointed Avtar Singh Chahal as a Commissioner on the Disability Advisory Commission for Santa Clara County. His term extends till 2009.

The Advisory Commission for

Persons with Disabilities was established by the SCC Board of Supervisors on August 9, 1965.

The general purpose of the Commission is to act in an advisory capacity in reviewing and evaluating the needs, services, facilities and special problems of persons with disabilities in Santa Clara



Chahal served in the US Post Office (Federal Government) and re-

County, California.

Chahal, who hails from Punjab, India has a Masters degree in English and has served as a police inspector with the Indian government.

He migrated to the US in 1984. In the US,

retired a year ago. He is also licensed with the State of California as a Real Estate Associate and Notary Public.

A prominent community leader in the Bay area, Chahal was elected a director of the Fremont Gurudwara in 1996.

Speaking about his new job, Chahal said: "I feel I can significantly contribute through my vast

experience in community service to minimize the difficulties faced by disabled people in the county."

He said he was always available to the people of his county and can also be contacted at [mravtar@hotmail.com](mailto:mravtar@hotmail.com).

Chahal lives in South-East San Jose neighborhood of Evergreen with wife Arjinder and two sons Gurbaksh and Taj. His sons founded ClickAgents Network, a performance-based online advertising network. The company sold for \$31 million a few years ago.

