

Dr. Romesh Japra, the founder of FOG as well as the Chairman of the Federation of Indo-Americans of Northern California, was kind enough to share information about this marvelous endeavor which promotes artistic talent as well as cultural and social awareness, both locally and across the world.



Dr. Romesh Japra, the founder of Festival of Globe

Mike Barnum: For those who are not familiar with the Festival of Globe, how would you describe it?

Dr. Romesh Japra: Festival of Globe's (FOG) mission is to empower and integrate global cultures and communities through film arts, performing arts, visual arts, and folk arts. FOG creates various platforms and activities to champion social causes such as women's issues, child advocacy and the prevention of child abuse, youth development, elderly and senior support, ending hunger and homelessness, free health care, supporting the physically challenged, supporting disaster and relief efforts, and promoting individual freedom. The sense of mobilizing and empowering immigrant communities to give back to our local communities is a vital component of our goal of working with all ethnic communities towards these objectives. For the last 25 years the Festival of the Globe has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to building collaboration and creating opportunities for ethnic communities to work towards solving some of the most complex issues facing the United States. Through various events FOG has worked towards promoting art and culture as the common theme by which we create greater awareness amongst each other.

The effort of the Festival of the Globe – Silicon Valley has been in recognizing the need for communities to work together for a larger good. Through film, culture, dance, and art, we plan to be the largest festival that aims to engage global participation. Festival of the Globe will provide participants, brands, and audiences interacting with each other. Also, through the Global Movie Festival we want to amplify some of the burning issues of the day to a larger audience. Another goal is to introduce the global talent pool of movie makers to

Silicon Valley investors.

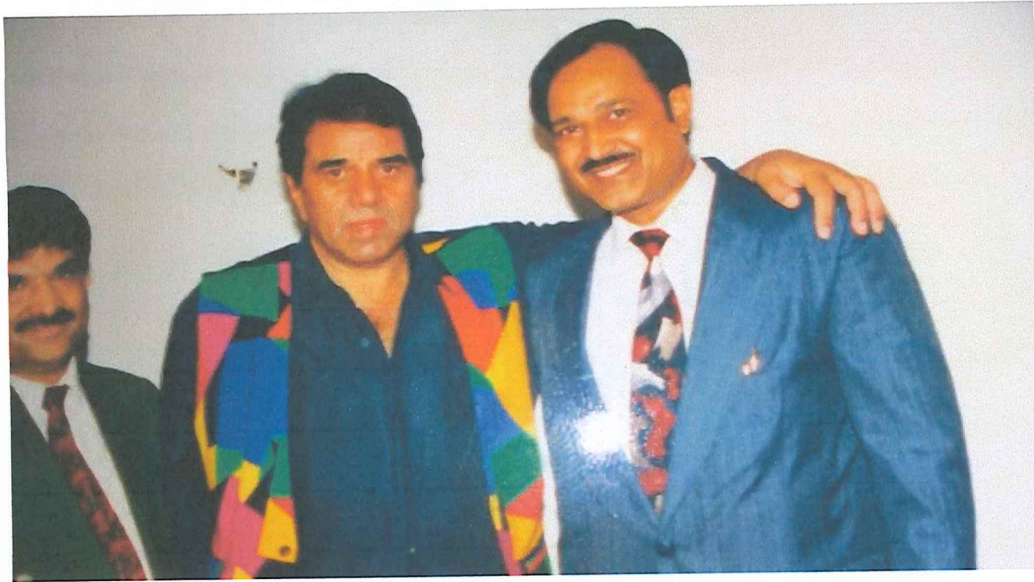


Bappi Lahiri gets a red carpet welcome at 2015 Festival of Globe.

MB: How did the idea for this festival come about?

RJ: I take pride in being a cultural and social entrepreneur. I have been empowering the Indian-American community for the last 25 years by hosting the Festival of India and Parade here every year. It grew from 5,000 to 150,000 people during this time. Now we are engaging other ethnic communities and going from local to global and aiming for a million people. Besides performing arts, visual arts and folk arts, I jumped into film arts and entertainment as well, to integrate diverse communities of the globe through FOG.





Dr. Romesh Japra with Dharmendra when he appeared for the India Day Parade.

MB: As an opportunity for filmmakers, are there any guidelines for getting a film shown at the festival?

RJ: At this point there are no specific guidelines. All submitted films by independent filmmakers are reviewed by our jury with a point system and then selected. In general, we favor films with a social message.

MB: Each year FOG has a theme. What is this year's theme?

RJ: The festival's theme is usually to promote a social initiative. This year it's "Celebrate Diversity."



MB: What are some of the other events to be found at FOG?

RJ: We have multiple cultural events. There will be a dance competition, FOG Idol singing contest, Freedom Fighters Reflections Contest, Youth Innovation Contest, Fashion Fest, Music Fest, FOG Awards, FOG Summit, a fair with arts, crafts and food stalls and a Grand Parade to celebrate freedom and democracy through India's Independence Day festivities.

MB: How has the festival evolved over the years?

RJ: It has been a wonderful journey. In 1993, it started with the parade and fair with 5,000 attendees. Last year, we had 150,000. FOG Movie Fest was added in 2014 and now we have 12 different verticals as part of FOG Extravaganza.



A float from a previous parade.

MB: Will there be celebrities in attendance?

RJ: Yes, film celebrities do attend and participate in many events including the parade. Last 25 years the parade had hosted legends like Amitabh Bachchan, Shatrughan Sinha, Vinod Khanna, Dev Anand, Dharmendra, Vyjayanthimala, and younger actors like Sushmita Sen, Sonu Sood, Aftab Shivdasani, Jimmy Sheirgill, Ayushman Khurana. With FOG, we have had the likes of Rajat Kapoor, Saurabh Shukla, Richa Chaddha, Divya Khosla Kumar, Krishika Lulla, Bappi Lahiri, Gulshan Grover, Randeep Hooda, Deepti Naval, Guneet Monga, Prashantt Gupta, Prosenjit Chatterjee and Raima Sen in attendance.



Guneet Monga, Richa Chadda, and Divya Khosla at the 2015 Festival of Globe

MB: Actor Prashantt Gupta has taken on the duties of ambassador. What are those duties and how did he become involved?



Prashantt Gupta and Dr. Romesh Japra

RJ: We have been blessed with his association with Festival of Globe since 2014. He first came as an actor with the film *Identity Card* and bagged an award as Best Actor in Supporting Role. He saw an opportunity to get involved right from the growing stage and we were more than happy to have him on board. Since 2015 he has been our India Ambassador. He has the passion, dedication and commitment to take the Festival to the next level. He is not only a great advocate and brand of the Festival but also gets engaged in details of it.



Filmmaker and actor Rajat Kapoor attended FOG in 2015.

Actor Prashantt Gupta, whose films include the thriller *6+5=2* and last year's highly acclaimed *Neerja*, and who I had the pleasure of interviewing recently about his film career, has been an integral part of FOG, acting as a mediator between the USA and India, assisting with marketing and in locating films and talent for the festival. I've asked Prashantt to give some info on one of the big events taking place at FOG, the FOG Summit.



Prashantt Gupta (far left) presents an Q&A at last year's FOG.

MB: Prashantt, what can you tell me about the FOG Summit?

Prashantt: The FOG Summit is basically a tie-up with the Headquarters of Facebook in Menlo Park. I like to call it the place where Mark goes to work (laughs). It was initiated last year with the purpose of addressing core issues that revolve around entertainment as a whole. I was the moderator last year, and will again moderate it this year. The main subject line this year is *Emerging Trends in Entertainment*. Last year, it was more about celebrities and social media and I was able to have a very in-depth chat with Bengali superstars Prosenjit Chatterjee, Raima Sen and veteran Indian actor Gulshan Grover about this subject. The audience loved it, it went live too. In essence, Facebook is an attractive location and it helps that the audience is engaged into the Q&A of notable speakers and celebs.