

Excerpt from the Bhagavad Gita:

*Nainam chindanti sastrani
Nainam dahati pavakah
Na cainam kledayanty apo
Na sosayati marulah*

English Translation:

The Soul is indestructible
No weapon in the universe can cut it to pieces
The most intense fire cannot destroy it
Neither can it be withered
By strong winds nor drowned by water
The Soul is truly eternal



Thank you all for your love and support.

Rita Manoj Desai



February 3, 1953 – December 21, 2006

Rita Desai, daughter of Bhanumati and Ambhashanker Nagar, was born February 3, 1953 in Mehsana, Gujarat into a highly cultured family. Growing up in a family of exceptional talent in music and art, music instantly became her first love. Her formal education took place in Baroda and Ahmedabad as she pursued a Bachelors of Science degree in Chemistry and a Masters in Organic Chemistry. After earning these credentials, Rita began teaching at S.L.U. Homescience College in Ahmedabad.

Rita met Manoj through a mutual family friend and they were wed shortly after on February 2, 1978. After fulfilling her commitment of teaching, Rita joined Manoj in Cleveland, Ohio, where Manoj was doing his pediatric residency. Here, Rita worked for a year as a Chemistry lab technician. The couple then decided to move to California, which turned out to be a 3-week journey as they took scenic routes through the Midwest to get to California. In April of 1979, they purchased their first home in El Sobrante to start what would become a loving family. Rita aided Manoj in starting up his pediatric practice in San Pablo, and with her sharp computer skills, helped him in setting up the computer systems for the next 12 years. She decided to pursue her masters once again at Golden Gate University in Computer Science in 1989 while also continuing to be an outstanding mother to her two young daughters, Toral and Tejal. In 1990, she gave birth to their third child, Vivek. After graduating from Golden Gate University, she worked 1 year with the Internal Revenue Service in SF as a computer analyst.

Although moving to a new country is a big step in one's life, she adapted quickly and embraced both American and Indian cultures. She continued to embrace her passion for music and dancing by holding music programs, singing at family gatherings and participating in annual garbas. With music in her blood, singing came naturally to her. Whether it was Bhajans, Film, Sugam Sangeet, or Garba, her versatility and knowledge were unparalleled. Her love and affection for music was reflected in her ever eagerness to host music programs for all the artists visiting from India. Always energetic, she would be the last one to leave the Garba floor irrespective of her health status.

Providing her children with high quality education was always a top priority for Rita. In 1993, she and Manoj decided to move to Orinda to achieve this goal. In Orinda, she started pursuing a career in Pharmaceuticals and joined Fisons Pharmaceutical Corporation. She then decided to change companies and worked for Schering, where she scaled to immense heights. With her bubbly nature and always-smiling face, she made many physician friends while taking her products to an all time high. She won several awards from her company for being number one in the district and also for recording one of the fastest growing rates in sales. To further widen her work experience, she then joined Pharmacia. Here, she continued with her golden touch and quickly rose to top positions, accumulating several awards and popularity amongst both colleagues and physicians.

In November, 2003 Rita began to experience blurry vision. She persisted endlessly until a diagnosis was reached. The diagnosis was a very rude awakening as she turned out to have Lung Cancer with Brain Metastases. While some physicians predicted that she had 3-6 months to live, she refused to agree. She decided to fight the cancer head-on and challenged anyone who remotely suggested of the dreaded time frame. She showed full courage and determination by visiting India twice and going on an Alaskan cruise in the short period of her illness. The first of her two visits to India was to attend family marriages, where her enthusiasm and energy at the dance surprised everyone and brought to the dance floor even those who had never danced in their life. Her second visit to India was during the hot summer months of April-May 2006 for just 8 days, something even the healthiest amongst us are scared of undertaking. This visit was specifically to meet family members on both sides, especially her parents and mother-in-law. Willing to try all available treatment options without the slightest hesitation, she fought with great courage and determination. Her very strong will to live, bubbly nature and infectious smile certainly was a picture of happiness for everyone around. She has left a void that cannot be filled by any measure. God bless her and may she rest in eternal peace.