

Carole F. Stice

## **A Murky Dispute**

*Atlanta Journal—Constitution*

Mother Violates Judge's Ruling in Settlement Case. Police Swear-out Arrest Warrant.

September 9, 2009 by Yolanda Johnson

In an acrimonious divorce last year between locally prominent Richfield “Dick” Anderson and his wife of thirteen years, Gita Shastry Anderson, Judge Clyde Dunnaway gave Mrs. Anderson a generous settlement as well as sole custody of the couple’s two minor children. Under a pre-settlement agreement Mrs. Anderson was required to remain in Atlanta so the children’s father would have “reasonable visitation.” Last week, Mrs. Anderson violated the terms of that agreement, taking the children and fleeing the country. Atlanta police have sworn out an arrest warrant for Mrs. Anderson on charges of kidnapping. Judge Dunnaway immediately reversed his custody ruling in favor of Mr. Anderson.

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New Delhi, India

Thursday, 01st October, 5:25 pm EST by Tara Bindar

CNN/IBN.com American Arrested in Delhi for Child Abduction!

An American, Mr. Richfield Anderson, was arrested today in India following an aborted attempt to take his children back from his ex-wife, who brought them here nearly a month ago. Before Mr. Anderson was apprehended by Indian authorities, a U.S. court had already issued an arrest warrant for the mother. Mr. Anderson nabbed his children, an 8-year-old girl and a 6-year-old boy, as they were crossing a street in the southwest quadrant of Delhi to meet him for supper, separating them from their mother and maternal grandfather and forcing them into a car. Mr. Anderson then drove away, according to Mukul Chatterjee, a police spokesman.

Anderson’s ex-wife, Gita Shastry Anderson, phoned police as she witnessed the abductions. Paige Turner, a spokeswoman at the U.S. Embassy, confirmed that Mr. Anderson, a 38-year-old computer software executive from the United States, was arrested attempting to enter the Embassy with one of his children.

Anderson is chief executive of Fantasy Land Games, a computer software company located in Delhi that makes, among other things, the widely popular *American Mahjongg*, a series of pattern-

finding games with redesigned tiles using American icons instead of Chinese, according to the company's website. The divorced couple and their children were living in Georgia, in the U.S, when Gita brought the youngsters to her parents' home in Delhi without permission of the U.S. court or her ex-husband's knowledge and consent.

According to an affidavit filed with the arrest warrant against Mrs. Anderson, Mr. Anderson discovered his children missing, and phoned the school the next day where the principal said the children had failed to appear for fall enrollment. Anderson then phoned his former in-laws in India, learned the children were indeed there, and flew there to reclaim them, said Peter Goldstone, one of Anderson's U.S. attorneys. "Children are increasingly caught in the middle of these legal battles," Goldstone said. "In addition to the cost of travel, shared custody presents enormous obstacles when such distances are involved."

India, along with several other nations including Brazil and Japan, is a non-signatory of the 1980 Hague Convention on International Child Abduction, which seeks to ensure that custody decisions are made by the appropriate authority, so that the rights to access by both parents are protected. The Andersons were divorced in the U.S. nine months ago and the mother given primary custody, while the father was granted limited time with the children, according to Georgia court records. Anderson has since remarried. His current wife, Molly, originally of Mountainair, North Carolina, told NBC's "The Today Show" that the children's mother would not allow them to communicate with their father after she took them back to India, which prompted his actions. "Any loving father would have done the same," she said.

Local police in Delhi received court permission to keep Anderson in jail for fifteen days without formally charging him. According to Vejay Chowdray, Anderson's Indian attorney, Anderson is not expected to face further jail time.

An aide for U.S. Senator Carter Cole, a North Carolina Republican, told The Associated Press that Senator Cole's office was contacted two weeks ago seeking assistance in the case. "The Senator is appalled by this clear and blatant miscarriage of justice," and has since introduced a bill called the International Child Abduction Penalties Act of 2013, which, when passed, will penalize countries that show a pattern of non-cooperation with U.S. laws in the resolution of such cases. Penalties could include being denied military, as well as monetary aid, the aide reported.

Posted Comments:

This *is* an Outrage! I'm a divorced father and what I want to know

## *Kestrel*

is when are women going to understand that fathers have rights, too. Why aren't we sending in Interpol to arrest this woman? How is this case any different from that little Cuban boy when the mother took him back to Cuba and then she died and the father couldn't get him back?

Peace of Mind Maybe the children will find a way to get to an American Embassy. Mr. Anderson's American lawyer can tell them to do that. Then they can request asylum and be returned to the U.S. How could that mother expect children raised in America to be happy living in India even if they are half Indian? The selfishness of some people without regard for the feelings and needs of others whose lives they affect is absolutely appalling. I hope this guy gets his kids back and the mother has to do without so she can see how it feels and he can finally have some peace of mind.

Too Good to be True What has happened to even-handed journalism in this country? Or is this just another example of how ethical considerations and behavior no longer apply in the United States? There are two sides to every story. I don't care how much money his father's family had or how many years his mother was a member of the Junior League. This man became an ex-patriot living in India for more than a decade. Then he divorces his Indian wife nine months ago and remarries eight months ago! What does that tell you? If I'd been there, I'd have helped the first Mrs. Anderson pack.

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Text Messages: Originated Brookhaven, Georgia

10.02.09 7:35 AM

From Kate S. to Brian M: Can u believe all the crazy postings on the net?

10.02.09 7:39 AM

From Brian to Kate: A few people are starting to figure it out. If we depended on the media for all our information we'd be screwed.

10.02.09 7:45 AM

From Kate to Brian: We do depend on the media and we are screwed. How are you holding up? What is going on with the boys?

10.02.09 7:50 AM

From Brian to Kate: I'm ok. The kids miss their mother. Luke is just confused. He doesn't know where she is. Molly's actions have destroyed two families. Josh is really upset. He misses Amit. Now he doesn't have anyone to hang with when he's at his mother's new house.

10.02.09 7:59 AM

From Kate to Brian: Since she's been in new york publicizing this thing with Dick and his kids, has she even asked about her own children?

10.02.09 8:03 AM

From Brian to Kate: She's been gone five days and has not asked once!

10.02.09 8:05 AM

From Kate to Brian: What are Dick's kids' names? I forget.

10.02.09 8:06 AM

From Brian to Kate: The boy is amit and the girl is taj.

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E-mails: 09.08.09 Originated Delhi, India

Dear Sumita,

You were right. Mother and father were overjoyed to have us back. The children are up this morning and outside playing with their friends. I am drinking tea and watching them through the kitchen window. If I didn't know better, I might think this past year never happened. Write when you can. Your loving sister, Gita

09.09.09 Originated Mumbai

Dear Gita,

Does Dick know you brought the children home? What do you think he will do? I am worried. Keep us informed. Love, Sumita

Originated Delhi

Dear Sumita,

Dick is someone else's problem now. I don't know what he will do and I don't care. Molly wanted him so badly she divorced her husband and gave her sons away half of the time to be with my husband. What kind of woman does that? Dick promised to stay in India forever. Even though he could not become a citizen here, part of his business is here; he said he loved it here. He told me we were soul mates and I believed him. I was such an idiot. I wonder what he told her.

Of course none of the reporters say that Amit and Taj were born and reared here in Delhi. Or that after eleven years of marriage, Dick decides he wants to go back to the States and marry his old high school girlfriend that he reconnected with on Facebook and I'm supposed to divorce him quietly get nothing and do whatever he tells me to do! As they say in the states--I don't think so.

He forced me to go there to divorce him in the U.S. courts. He tried to make me live there. There was a small Indian community there, mostly university professors and their wives, but as an unmarried woman I was not invited to anything. It was too lonely. And Taj and Amit were not happy there. I told the court I did not want to live in the U.S. and I told Dick, but he refused to listen.

Come to see us when you can. Love, Gita

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Channel 2 Nightly News: NBC Affiliate 09.15.09  
Atlanta, GA (Transcript)

Anchor: (Time 10:02) Georgia native, Richfield Anderson, is devastated tonight after learning that his ex-wife has kidnapped his two young children and taken them to India. For more on this story of one father's anguish, stay tuned.

Anchor: (Time 10:24) Seven days ago, local business man, Richfield Anderson of Atlanta, learned that his 2 young children had been kidnapped by Anderson's ex-wife and taken out of the country to India.

(Pre-recorded Interview with Anderson and his current wife, Molly:)

Reporter Silvia Stein: Mr. Anderson, how did you learn of your children's abductions?

Anderson: When I realized the house was empty, I was terrified. I didn't know whether it was foul play or what; I was frantic until I finally spoke to the children's grandmother in Delhi and she told me not to worry, that the children were safe there with them. Not to worry! How am I going to see my children again?

Stein: What did you do?

Anderson: First, before I knew where they were, I called the police immediately and reported them missing and probably kidnapped and then I called the judge. I had told him she [Gita Anderson] was a flight risk. I was afraid she would do exactly this. I asked the court for full custody but the judge gave custody to Gita anyway. I warned him, but he wouldn't listen. Now they believe me, when it's too late. Why didn't he listen?

Stein: Mrs. Anderson, how do you feel about the loss of your stepchildren?

Molly Anderson: I have two children of my own and we are all devastated. My oldest boy and Amit, Dick's son, became very close, almost like twins. They shared a room. Amit's favorite stuffed animal is still on his bed upstairs. I don't know whether to keep it there or put it away. His clothes are in the dresser. Will he be coming back? I don't think so. (Molly wipes her eyes.) It's terrible.

Stein: And how long have you and Mr. Anderson been married?

Molly Anderson: Nearly a year now. But we have known each other for years.

Stein: I see. (Turning to Mr. Anderson) What are your immediate plans?

Anderson: We are talking with the State Department to determine the best course of action. But I don't have much hope. Gita

belongs in prison.

Stein: (Looks at camera) There you have it—a family in mourning, a father trying to cope with an overwhelming loss. This is Silvia Stein for Channel 2 News, reporting live from Buckhead Ridge.

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E-mails: 09.28.09 Originated Mumbai

Dear Gita,

I was just watching CNN. Did you know you are a criminal in the United States? How could they do such a thing? What is wrong with those people? This is so unfair. What will you do? Write to me!

09.28.09 Originated Delhi

Dear Sumita,

Dick and his new wife are appearing on TV in the States telling their side and CNN picked it up. Georgia has issued a warrant for my arrest for kidnapping. That means I cannot bring the children over to see their father even if I wanted to. I am upset, of course, trying to keep this from the children. They are so happy here; I do not want to spoil it. Dick called here yesterday screaming at me over the phone. I hung up on him. Let the lawyers talk for us. I do not have to take his abuse ever again. He is the one who cut off access to his children. I was prepared to be reasonable—except for living in Atlanta. I will let you know what happens next. Love, Gita

09.30.09 Originated Delhi

Dear Sumita,

My attorney says since I took the children in violation of the custody agreement, which let Dick see them only every other weekend (did I tell you that?), the court there has now granted him full custody. They cannot take into consideration that I never wanted to live in the U.S. I should have gone back to court and asked for permission to bring them home. But that would have been so demeaning. I had full custody. And I do not think they would have allowed me to move back here with them anyway.

By coming home, though, I forfeit the monthly support, which was set at \$7000 so that should make him and the new wife happy. Of course I can keep the two million cash settlement. At least, with that I can live respectably and send the children to good schools. And, no one can come here and arrest me, so do not worry.

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Emergency cell-phone call to police (audio-tape recorded): 09.30.09

7:29 PM Delhi From Gita S. Anderson

91 11-3722-4141

Operator: Emergency assistance.

## *Kestrel*

Gita Anderson: Help me! My children! Their father is kidnapping them. He forced them into a car. Help! He intends taking them out of the country. I know he does.

Operator: Where are you?

G.A.: Near the Bukhara, on Sadar Patel. Please hurry. He must be taking them to the airport. He is an American. He will take them out of the country. (Caller screams into phone) Help! He has stolen my children!

Operator: Your name please?

G.A. (more voices and incoherent screaming)

Operator: Who is calling? Your name please?

G.A.: What? I'm sorry. I am so upset. Gita. This is Mrs. Gita Sastry Anderson.

Operator: Stay on the line Mrs. Anderson. The police are being notified. Are you alone? Do you require police assistance yourself?

G.A.: No. No. I'm fine. My father brought us here to meet my ex-husband for supper to discuss our situation. (Sobs) We were supposed to resolve how we are going to handle custody and visitations. I can't believe this! Oh my god. My children! (More sobbing into phone) What am I going to do? Tell the police to hurry. Please! He'll go to the airport. No. Wait. My father says he'll go to the American Embassy. To the U.S. Embassy. Hurry! Please! Oh god. (Screaming)

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Crimechasers.com: True Crime Stories from the Producers of (CCI) Crime-chasers-Interpol (10.04.09) Paris, FRANCE  
A Father's Attempt to Rescue his Children Thwarted by Indian Police:

Richland "Dick" Anderson is imprisoned tonight in a jail cell in Delhi, India for kidnapping his own children while they were crossing a busy city street with their mother. Anderson contends that his ex-wife, "Gita is the real kidnapper." Back in late August, she snatched the children from America and fled with them to India even though Mr. Anderson had been granted full custody by an American court.

"I want people to know what's happening to us," Molly Anderson, Dick's current wife, told CNN's Piers Morgan. "My husband didn't do anything wrong. Children have the right to see both parents. They need that."

Crime-viewers, and NBC News, have been unable to reach Gita Anderson in Delhi for comment. Her U.S. attorney refused to speak with us on the record, although off the record he didn't have anything good to say about Mr. Anderson.

According to Mr. Anderson's Indian attorney, the law in India sides with the estranged wife. "Indian people think she is the victim,"

Molly Anderson said, “even though here in the U.S., she is a criminal.”

During the fifteen-minute interview with Mr. Anderson, he appeared exhausted from his ordeal. With tears in his eyes, Mr. Anderson sent a message to his children. “I love you Amit and Taj,” he told the reporter. “Remember that. Daddy loves you. Never forget it. I’ll be patient, and you must be strong, until the day comes that we can all be together again.”

When Anderson saw the Delhi police blocking his way to the U. S. Embassy, he picked up his son, leaving his daughter in the middle of the street, and made a mad dash for the embassy gates, screaming for them to let him in. The gates remained closed.

Mr. Anderson may be facing several years in prison for what is considered in India to be a case of spousal abuse and parental kidnapping. As with many countries, India does not recognize U.S. custody rulings in such matters.

Molly says her husband “must have been totally desperate” when he grabbed the children and began running for the Embassy gates. “When we called the house, we could hear Taj in the background crying, ‘I want my daddy.’ Then she was too sad to talk. That is how we all feel. We’re just heartbroken.”

Faced with the awful reality that she may not see her stepchildren for years, Molly Anderson said, “We hope they will come to the U. S. when they are older and find us.”

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Text Messages: Originated Brookhaven, Georgia

10.05.09 7:29 AM

From Brian to Kate: Molly called last night from new york. Wants me to contact senator cole’s office and ask him to use his influence to help get dick out of jail in india. Can you believe that?

10.02.09 7:40 AM

From Kate to Brian: The woman has chutzpah, i’ll give her that. What did you say?

10.05.09 7:50 AM

From Brian to Kate: I told her no way. I can’t believe we were ever married.

10.05.09 7:53 AM

From Kate to Brian: At least you have your children.

10.05.09 7:55 AM

From Brian to Kate: I know, but children of divorce have to deal with the problems it causes for years? That makes it hard for me to even be civil to molly.

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New Delhi, India

Monday, 26th October, 9:02 pm EST by Tara Bindar

CNN/IBN.com The American arrested in Delhi for attempting to re-abduct his children is going home.

The American father arrested here nearly three weeks ago for attempting to abduct his own children is going home tonight. Richfield Anderson has been released from jail and is on his way to the airport for a return flight to the U.S. He has been officially warned that he is not to return to India for a period of twelve months and then only with the knowledge and permission of authorities so that protection can be provided to Mrs. Anderson and the children. Violation of this condition will result in Mr. Anderson's arrest and prosecution for domestic cruelty and parental kidnapping. This case exposes a murky diplomatic dispute where one country is a signatory of the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction and the other is not.

Unlike many countries, divorce is still very uncommon in India with the rate remaining at roughly 1 in every 100 marriages. The stigma of being a divorced woman in India is sharp. By contrast, for middle class Indian women, being separated with spousal support is becoming increasingly tolerated and in some locales viewed as a symbol of economic status, according to Sara Kumari, attorney and chairwoman of the newly formed National Council on Women's Health and Welfare.

In the case of non-resident Indians, the process of divorce has often proved calamitous, usually for the husband. The spouses separate. The wife returns to India with the children and as much of her husband's wealth and assets as she can bring with her. The husband cannot set foot in the country without being arrested. The Supreme Court of India has described such conduct as "legal terrorism," Kumari asserted.

However, Mrs. Anderson's attorney pointed out that her client's case does not fit under the U.S. caveat. "This is certainly not a case of 'legal terrorism'. Mrs. Anderson had already sued Mr. Anderson for divorce here in India eighteen months ago and was granted full custody of her minor children here. At that time she had no choice but to denounce him as being guilty of cruelty toward her since he had already left the country and was living with another woman when the suit was filed." Mrs. Anderson could not be reached for comment. Mr. Anderson asked to see his children before leaving the country, but was denied permission, according to his attorney.

"I think the authorities should have stayed out of this and let my ex-wife and myself work this out privately," Anderson said. "After all, this is a domestic dispute, not an international incident." Mr. Anderson also acknowledged how anxious he was to see his current wife and to be going back to the U.S., but that he missed his children

here in India and would continue to do so, “until we are reunited again.”

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Text Messages: Brookhaven, Georgia

10.27.09 12:01 PM

From Kate to Brian: When will dick be back in the U.S?

10.27.09 12:20 PM

From Brian to Kate: This weekend, but without his children.

10.27.09 12:30 PM

From Kate to Brian: It’s sad that he has lost them. If he hadn’t tried to kidnap them, maybe he and gita really could have worked out reasonable visitation. Winters there, summers here. Something like that.

10.27.09 12:42 PM

From Brian to Kate: We’ll never know now, will we. Are you sitting down? Dick is stopping off in new york to discuss a book and movie deal.

10.27.09 12:45 PM

From Kate to Brian: You’re kidding! Do you think that’s what he had in mind all along?

10.27.09 12:49 PM

From Brian to Kate: No idea, but that may be what happens. Unbelievable!

10.27.09 12:55 PM

From Kate to Brian: Unfortunately, we live in an era where average people can air their dirty linen in public for fun and profit.

10.27.09 1:09 PM

From Brian to Kate: Tonight, let’s do thai take-out and rent a movie all the kids can watch.

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Urgent! E-mail: 10.27.09 1:31 PM Originated Brookhaven, Georgia

From Kate to Brian: OOPS! I hit send and accidentally dropped my phone in the toilet, so I don’t know if my message got through. Take-out and movie sound great. I’m on my way to buy a smart phone. Hope its smart enough to be waterproof? Will contact you later. Love, kate

