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What's next?

Jonaki Ray will be sentenced for voluntary manslaughter April 22 at the Clinton County Courthouse. The crime carries a maximum of 15 years in prison.

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Woman found guilty of voluntary manslaughter in death of professor

By [SHANNON MURPHY](#)

The State News

St. Johns - After more than three hours of deliberations Friday, jurors found a 28-year-old Dewitt Township woman guilty of voluntary manslaughter in the death of her husband, an MSU associate professor.

Jonaki Ray faces a 15-year maximum sentence for the slaying of Dinesh Balagangadhar, who taught mechanical engineering. Balagangadhar died July 1 from a stab wound that penetrated his heart and lungs.

Clinton County Circuit Court Judge Randy Tahvonen will sentence Ray at a April 22 hearing.

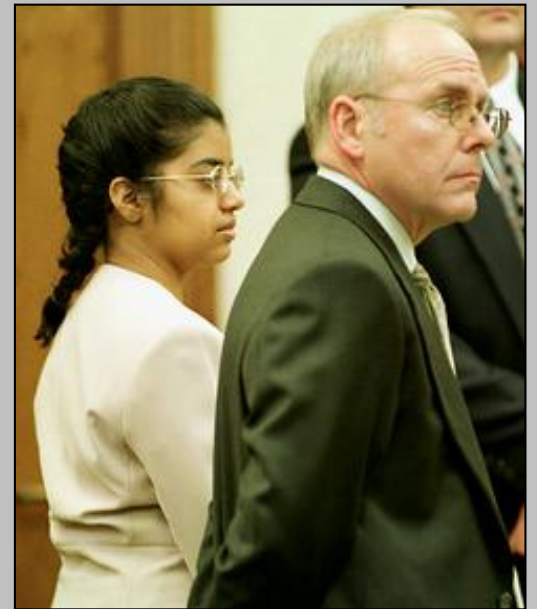
Ray told police after the incident three different stories of how she accidentally stabbed her husband while cutting vegetables at their DeWitt Township home.

At trial, she told the Clinton County Circuit Court that Balagangadhar was abusive and had slapped, pushed and pulled her hair many times. Ray said she and her husband had been in an argument the day of the stabbing and Balagangadhar dragged her by the hair around an island counter in their kitchen.

Ray said she was scared and in pain so she grabbed the first thing that she came across and swung it at her husband.

In closing arguments, Ray's attorney, Frank Reynolds, argued she had not committed any crime and stabbed her husband so he wouldn't hurt her.

Reynolds said the couple, who are natives of India, had married out of love, instead of the



[SHEILA KRISHNAN](#) • The State News

Dewitt Township resident Jonaki Ray, left, waits with her lawyer, Frank Reynolds, for a verdict from the jury in the slaying of her husband, MSU Associate Professor Dinesh Balagangadhar, Friday in Clinton County Circuit Court. Ray was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter, which holds a maximum sentence of 15 years.

arranged marriage their families had hoped for, causing Ray to be ashamed to talk of the abuse. She said she felt she needed to work harder to make their marriage work because of the frustrations they had put their families through.

Reynolds said he was disappointed with the verdict, but felt the jury took its time and looked at all the evidence. He said he will speak with Ray to decide if they will appeal.

"I was confident there would not be a murder charge," he said after the verdict was announced.

Clinton County Prosecutor Charles Sherman sought a second-degree murder verdict after the judge ruled Thursday there wasn't enough evidence to prove first-degree murder. First- and second-degree murder charges carry sentences of up to life in prison.

A first-degree verdict would require the jury to determine the crime had been previously thought out. Manslaughter only requires the jury decide if a killing was the result of a impulsive decision by a person in a reasonable mindset.

"This was a case where the jury heard difficult testimony and had to make a judgment call," he said.

Ray's family declined to comment.

Balagangadhar's brothers, Suresh and Mahesh Balagangadhar, said they felt Ray got a lesser sentence than she deserved.

"She was lying the whole time, the jury didn't get the whole picture," Suresh Balagangadhar said. "She's the only person speaking of what happened because Dinesh is not here."

Friend Subath Kamalasan said Dinesh Balagangadhar was a gentle person and a scholar.

"She took a life that was important to society," Kamalasan said. "It's sad that she was just given voluntary manslaughter."

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