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Middle School: 1st place
winner



IndiaFEST 2011– Essay Contest

What can the Indian community offer the U.S.A.?

Om m m m m..... That sound is echoing in modern day America, across meditation classes, offices, schools, and now even in Poptropica! It is no longer a chant confined to a particular religion. Om, H or Aum, is a hymn, an incantation, a gift from India to the world, just like many other. We know Yoga has gone main-stream, for there are as many training schools for it as for karate or gymnastics. "Bollywood" is now a well known name for the Indian movie industry, and you cannot talk about the software industry without mentioning India and Indians.

As individuals, there are many visible and celebrated success stories amongst Indian Americans. Fareed Zakaria, Vinod Khosla, Manoj Night Shyamalan, Deepak Chopra, and Indra Nooyi have all reserved their names in history. They have excelled in journalism, entrepreneurship, entertainment, self-help, or plain old leadership. They have given Americans thought leadership, job opportunities and spiritual peace.

But what the Indian community has to offer America goes beyond these cultural facts and personal triumphs. Our contribution to society in the basic but critical matters that impact daily life is actually more far-reaching than that: we show that honesty, integrity and hard-work pay off in the end, and are the best way to lead one's lives.

First of all, we have shown that self-discipline is not an ugly phrase. The average Indian American's emphasis on education and commitment to hard-work is a byword in American society. Indians' work-ethic is now legendary – even Dilbert jokes on this are no longer funny, because they are now well accepted truth! Indians are the very definition of the 'Model Minority' in the U.S.A.: we are the highest educated group with 2 in every 3 Indian in America being a college graduate, and 40% with a professional degree. We also have the highest median household income of \$90,429,

way higher than the national average of \$50,221. And Indian Americans lead in stable families too. Talk of being an example!

These are not mere numbers – they have significance beyond a community's achievement. We actually serve to pull the rest of society up with us. Just like Dwight Wade or LeBron James can pull their team to the top of the table, Indians have a positive influence on their schools, jobs and community. Consider this: Indian American parents are the most active ethnic group in school PTAs around the country. They step in for the sake of their children, then stay to help the rest of the school.

While in the past Indians had always been dubbed with the generic 'Asian', today's Indian American has acquired an identity of his or her own. Till the recent past, the 'Indian Doctor' or 'softw are professional' had been the accepted stereotype. Even the fact that Indian kids have had extraordinary success in national spelling bees could lead to a stereotype of its own: introvert and studious without much interaction with the rest of the country.

But now we offer more: we have our own political voice: Governors Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley are only the most prominent faces out there. For every visible name professional like Neel Kashkari, Sanjay Gupta or Rajiv Shah, there are countless others contributing just as much to their job, community and country. We have provided leaders in the financial world, in education, and even in agriculture! Did you know that Indian Americans lead the way in self-created businesses? These provide jobs and opportunities to local populations while putting to rest the accusation that we don't have entrepreneurship. We do too, loads of it, and more than any other community!

The growth of India as a nation earned it a visit by Barack Obama early in his term as President. India is no longer considered a poor nation seeking help; it is now competing with the best of the rest, and is truly a super-power in the making and that in its brief history since independence. This has provided added strength to how the Indian American community perceives itself: we are not in the USA to escape dire poverty at our home country; we come here to make a difference, to lead.

But our story is just starting: we are bound for bigger and better things and not just in academic competitions. At a time when America is hurting, laid low by crippling economic blows the example we set will inspire others and set this country back on the path to glory.