

Aurora Asian/Pacific Community Partnership  
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**Presentation: Focus on India**

**– by Sudhir Verma, Immediate Past Co-Chair of the Partnership**

Sudhir Verma gave an excellent presentation on India, mentioning little-known facts about the country, giving a brief history and correcting some common myths. The following are some of his comments:

“Namaste” is said with a bow of the head. It is a Sanskrit word that acknowledges the “divinity in you”. Sanskrit is the mother language of most European languages. An ancient culture, India’s people are an Indo-European race, a blend of many cultures with a continuous civilization over the centuries. The swastika is a highly misunderstood symbol that is seen in India. Long before Hitler, India has used the image for good wishes on any auspicious occasion. Two major religions originated in ancient India: Buddhism arose through Siddhartha, the enlightened one, and expanded across the mountains to China; the main religion of India is Hinduism and its related ancient traditions. Jainism is another ancient religion of India that prescribes a path of non-violence toward all living beings. The Mongol campaigns in India could not convert India to Islam.

The name India derived from three different names: Bharat was a king 15,000 years ago and Bharata is the Sanskrit name for India; Hindustan is the ‘place’ of the Hindus; and the English India comes from the Latin ‘Indus’, derived from the land beyond the River Sindus—traveling merchants could not pronounce the ‘s’.

Indian culture spread through its trade with the Roman Empire in 77 CE. The United States of America was founded by Columbus who was on a voyage to India to seek its wealth. That is how we came to call Native Americans “American Indians”.

On India’s flag: Deep saffron is at the top – for the sages and meditation (an uplifting quality); white in the middle is for peace – India has never started a war; green is for agriculture – 80% of India is agricultural. The wheel in the middle is for progress.

India is a progressive democratic nation that gained its independence from Britain in 1947. Education is a top priority. Every child must go to college. India is the third largest tourist destination. Its metro train system is profit-generating, because it is managed very well and everyone rides it. India is the second-largest country in the world with 1.1 billion people. (By 2030, India may take 1<sup>st</sup> place). Indians came as doctors and engineers to the US over 30 years ago, sponsoring their own families. Today, on average, Indians have the highest salaries in the U.S.

Sudhir has been teaching yoga for over 30 years, and he explained that yoga, which originated in India, is for health, a physical and mental discipline, and is not a religion. Sudhir brought homemade Indian samosas as a taste treat for everyone. Delicious! Everyone thanked Sudhir for his informative “Focus on India.”

Quotes on India:

"We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made." -- *Albert Einstein*

"India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition." -- *Mark Twain*