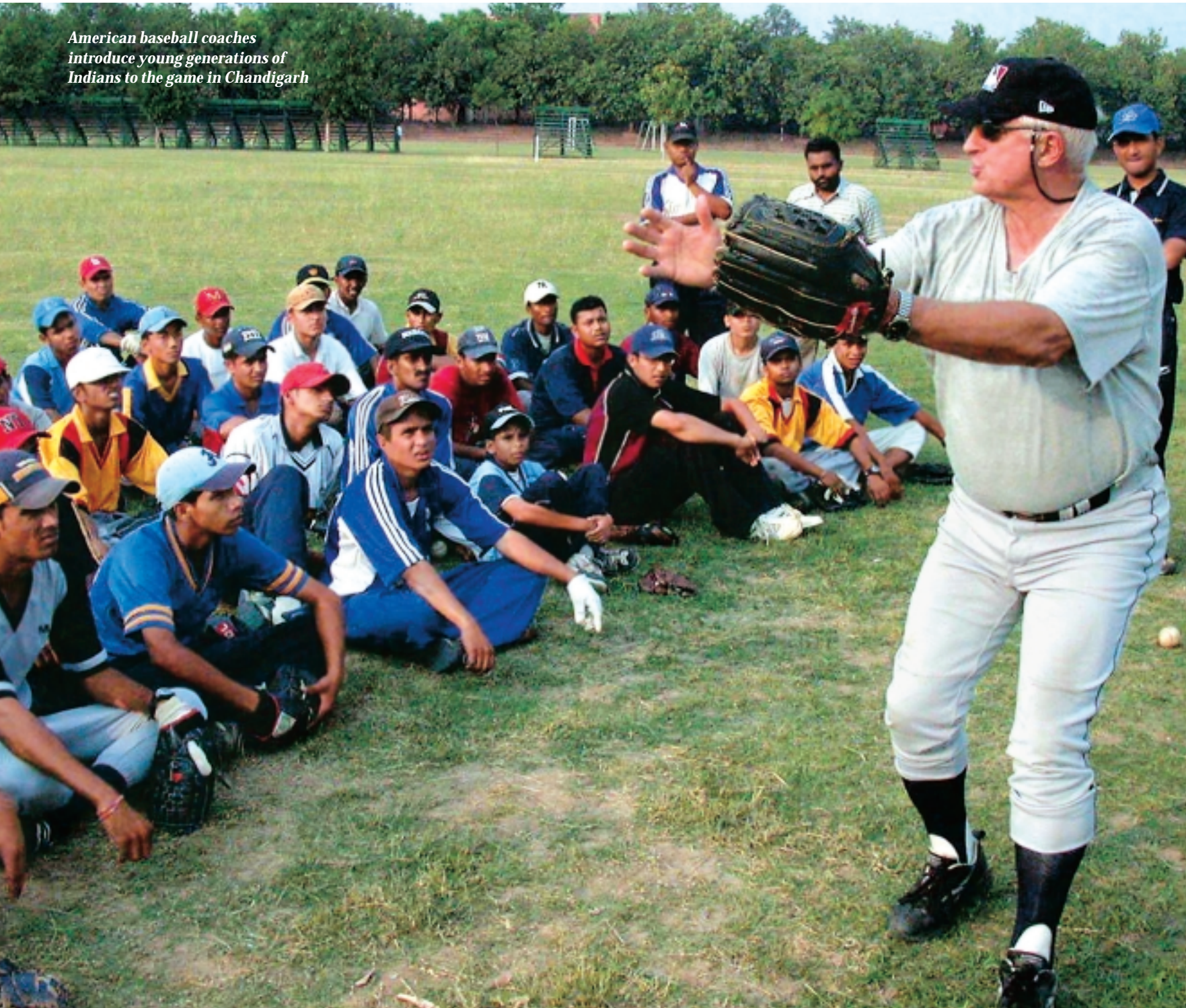


*American baseball coaches  
introduce young generations of  
Indians to the game in Chandigarh*



COURTESY: INDIAN EXPRESS

## PEOPLE TO PEOPLE TIES REACHING OUT

T

he small town of Malerkotla in Punjab has one claim to fame. The Discovery Channel once featured it in a program called “The Legend of Malerkotla,” highlighting its record of communal peace. It is a place where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have lived in harmony for centuries.

Recently, Malerkotla acquired a second distinction, connected to an event that took place halfway across the world in the southern U.S. state of Louisiana. On that particular day, virtually every resident of this town was glued to his or her TV to watch the results of the Baton Rouge elections, a city hardly anyone had heard of in a country most had never been to. It was a historic moment. A bright, young Indian American politician, Bobby Jindal, was in the race for election as Louisiana governor. He lost by a narrow margin. But for those 24 hours, CNN was the channel of choice in Malerkotla and the message was that the U.S., like India, is a vibrant multiracial, multiethnic democracy. Indians learned that the face of America is changing, literally, and that the inclusion of this new and increasing diversity is bringing greater strength and vitality to the U.S.

If there is one element that drives the U.S.-India dynamic, it is the immense emotional power of the people-to-people network, which now goes deeper than anyone could have ever imagined. For example, Indians and Americans alike mourned the death of Haryana-born NASA astronaut Kalpana Chawla in the Columbia space shuttle disaster in 2003. She was a hero to many in both countries, and her tragic death brought the people of both nations, and their dreams,

A.P. PHOTO



Indian American politician Bobby Jindal during his campaign for Louisiana governor

closer together. Even during the years when U.S.-India relations were not at their best, people-to-people ties were expanding, and a variety of U.S. private organizations were engaging with Indians and fostering genuine partnerships.

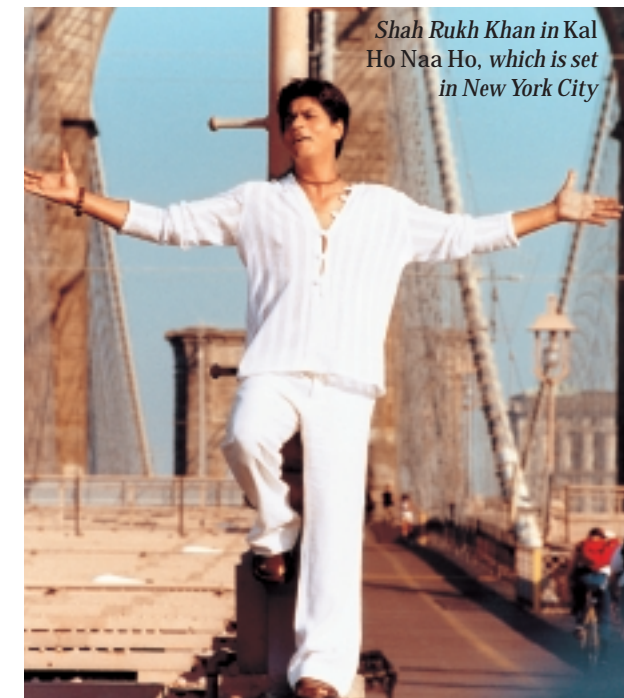
Two compelling images perhaps reveal best the extent to which citizens of the U.S. and India are finding common ground. In December 2003, Lt-General James Campbell, Commander, U.S. Army Pacific Command, traveled to Chandigarh to pay his respects at the cremation, with full military honors, of a young soldier, Sgt. Uday Singh. An Indian national, Singh had migrated to Chicago and enlisted in the U.S. Army. Shortly after his unit was posted to Iraq, his patrol ran into an ambush near Baghdad. "Two great democratic nations pause to mourn the loss of this courageous young man ... a brother-in-arms and India's son," said Campbell. "He made the U.S. Army and the people of the United States proud." Singh's father, P.M. Singh, told reporters, "I am sure he has made all Indians as proud as I am, a father who has lost a son."

The second is the image of Bollywood heartthrob Shah Rukh Khan striking a pose on the Brooklyn Bridge in a recent blockbuster movie, *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, a film set almost entirely in New York City. The film cashes in on a rising trend of greater interest among Americans for Hindi films. Adding to this desire for things Indian are *Bombay Dreams*, a Broadway musical based on Bollywood films, and the continued cross-cultural contributions of personalities such as Mumbai-born filmmaker Ismail Merchant and musician Ravi Shankar. Mr. Shankar's daughters are a great example of the blending

of the two cultures. Norah Jones, a Grammy-winning American singer, and Anoushka Shankar, a traditional Indian musician, are—like their father—popular in both India and the U.S.

Appropriately enough, the enduring basis of the bilateral relationship stems from the fact that more and more Indians are fulfilling their "American Dream," inspired by the success stories of the prosperous, two million-strong Indian-American community in the U.S. Indians now form the second largest group of legal migrants to the U.S. after Mexico, having ousted China from that position two years ago. Indian Americans are making extraordinary and growing contributions to U.S. culture, business, science and technology and, increasingly, politics. India is proud of its nonresident Indians (NRIs), as the annual "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas," a major international conference sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), has shown. The U.S. Embassy has honored the American NRIs at the annual conference by

hosting a reception to learn more about what they are doing to cement the bonds between the two nations.



Shah Rukh Khan in *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, which is set in New York City

And increasingly, American culture and American values are finding greater acceptability in the Indian psyche. A young industrialist in India, Naveen Jindal, inspired by American values, successfully launched a legal campaign to allow Indian citizens the right to fly the national flag from their homes. More widespread has been the explosive growth of the Internet and satellite television, through which Indians can watch CNBC, Bloomberg, MTV, HBO, CNN and ESPN, not to mention popular television shows like *Friends* and *Jay Leno*. All of these media have opened new windows to the U.S.

People-to-people ties create cultural fusion. One of the most visible symbols of Americana, McDonald's, has localized its Indian outlets with Maharaja Macs and McCurry meals. Pizza Hut and Dominos have followed suit. Consequently, these all-American brands have acquired an Indian face.

Cuisine's cultural advance is a two-way street. Indian cuisine, with some help from high-profile fans like former President Bill Clinton, is acquiring mainstream status in the U.S. The mushrooming of Indian restaurants across the country is only one indicator. When Payal Saha started a restaurant in New York selling Calcutta's famous chicken rolls, she had no idea it would become the runaway success it now is. Yoga classes today are almost as common in the United States as Reebok fitness classes are in India, and with Madonna popularizing *mehndi* and *bindi*, Nicole



MIRIAM CARAVELLA

*Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks exchanging views with Indian students*

Kidman performing to Hindi film music in *Moulin Rouge*, and a range of American musicians and rock stars acknowledging Indian musical traditions, "exotic India" is becoming commonplace.

Encouraging cultural cooperation has been an integral component of the work of the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy. Its job is to foster mutual understanding through numerous cultural and educational programs that encourage personal, professional and institutional ties between people and organizations in the two countries. American performers, from jazz musicians to folk singers, visit India regularly to perform and interact with Indian musicians. The latest in a long line of successful performers was Steven Young, the legendary folk singer and guitarist, who recently spent a month touring India, including performing at the Jaipur Heritage International Festival.

The Embassy also hosts U.S. speakers, who exchange views with Indians on a range of issues of mutual interest and concern. Recent American visitors have shared their views on issues such as trade and investment, intellectual property rights, environmental protection, judicial reform, terrorism, HIV/AIDs awareness, trafficking in women and children, and biotechnology. U.S. diplomats have visited a variety of Indian organizations and institutions to encourage greater bilateral dialogue. The Embassy also has fostered citizen exchanges in areas as diverse as alternative conflict resolution and child welfare, and its book donation and book reprint programs have brought

## SEEDS OF PEACE FOSTERING AMITY

### A UNIQUE SUMMER CAMP FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN FROM THE SUBCONTINENT HOLDS OUT HOPE FOR LASTING PEACE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Twelve high school children from Mumbai and 12 more from Lahore had a fantastic summer in 2003. They spent six weeks at a summer camp in Maine, living together, eating together and debating the future of South Asian peace. Fast friends by the end of their vacation, the children returned to their respective homes in India and Pakistan brimming with solutions for peace in the subcontinent. Even though relations between India and Pakistan remained frosty through that summer, these children succeeded in bringing their respective families to the Wagah border to get to know each other and strengthen these new bonds. For the first time, the internationally acclaimed Seeds of Peace program took on a South Asian face, as Indian and Pakistani children came under its spell to build bridges of peace with the next generation. It is

a measure of the quality of the new relationship between U.S. and India that such programs are running virtually in tandem with India's own recently announced peace initiative with Pakistan.

Founded in 1993 by author and journalist John Wallach, Seeds of Peace was started to bring Israeli and Palestinian young people together at a summer camp in Maine. The number of Middle East participants has shot up from 50 in 1993 to more than 400 in 2003. The tremendous success of the program has prompted it to be used in other conflict-ridden parts of the world. In 1998, Greeks and Turkish Cypriots joined the program, and in 2000 Balkan teenagers were added to the list.

Over 1,500 Israeli, Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Qatar, Yemeni, Cypriot, Greek, Turkish and Balkan teenagers, as well as Indians and Pakistanis, have graduated from the program. The approach is to pair the children with other kids whom they would otherwise see as enemies. The children start out with their preconceived attitudes toward each other but gradually look at their combined history from the other side of the fence. By the end of the program, hatred gives way to understanding and peace.



*Indian and Pakistani children at the Seeds of Peace camp in Maine*

SUSI EGGENBERGER



American singer Steve Young and Rajasthani musicians team up for a performance in Jaipur

American information to wider Indian audiences.

The liberalization of the Indian economy has fueled the people-to-people contact between the two countries even further. American business people have been keen to tap into this emerging market, and business travel has increased to the extent that American hotel chains like the Radisson, Sheraton, Marriott and Hyatt are expanding operations and spurring tourism. This trend works both ways. With the Indian government relaxing rules regarding foreign exchange and foreign investment, a higher number of Indian businesspeople and tourists are traveling to the U.S. Earlier, a majority of Indians visited the U.S. to visit friends or relatives. Today, a large proportion of tourists are visiting America on regular conducted tours as opposed to restricting their travel to cities where their relatives are based.

Such interaction has expanded and intensified in the past few years, and today it is routine to see Indian parents dividing their time between their homes in India and their children studying or working

in the U.S. An impressive 500,000 Indians travel to the U.S. every year for everything from business to weddings and pure tourism. But the reverse flow is not nearly as voluminous. There are several reasons for this, ranging from restrictions on the number of flights to India's continued infrastructure problems. Yet, the word is spreading about India as an appealing tourist destination, and just as businesspeople are rapidly forging commercial links between the U.S. and India, American tourists and backpackers are also helping to forge a connection while in search of the "incredible India" experience.

At another level, the emergence of India as a "knowledge" powerhouse means that the U.S. remains the favorite destination for people seeking employment overseas. As a result, Indians receive about 50% of the temporary work visas to the U.S. Though the numbers of H1-B visas came down to 65,000 in 2003, India sent 28,000 professionals to the U.S. in 2003, up from 25,200 in 2002. These are distinct from professionals who travel to the U.S. on L-1 visas that are sponsored by their companies. As more and more American companies set up shop in India, this figure can only go up. Teachers and nurses are the next groups of professionals who are on their way to the U.S., answering a demand in these sectors.

Apart from such interaction is the growing number of both government and privately organized exchanges between India and the U.S. As active democracies, it is perhaps natural to bring the political communities of the U.S. and India closer together. Chicago and New Delhi, for example, have

a "sister city" relationship. Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley recently visited India to foster more business and cultural ties between the two cities and to present a medical van to the Ramakrishna Mission in New Delhi. Denver and Chennai also have a "sister city" connection. The American Council for Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) is active in India. It works with the U.S. Embassy to organize exchanges between politicians in the 25-45 age group at the state, municipal and city levels to visit each other's country and open themselves to different democratic traditions. In 2003, this program

brought a group of young U.S. Republican and Democratic politicians to India; they were hosted by the Congress Party in Delhi, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Hyderabad and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Goa. Through ACYPL and other exchanges, participants on both sides become knowledgeable about international policy issues and political systems and processes.

Emblematic of the transformed relations, the 143-strong India Caucus in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives is the largest group of American lawmakers publicly committed to improving relations with India. This has a lot to do with the fact that people of



SPAN magazine, produced by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, has covered American culture and society for over 40 years

## JAZZ AMBASSADORS

# MUSICAL MESSENGER

**A MOST SOUGHT-AFTER AMERICAN IMPORT TO INDIA, THE JAZZ AMBASSADORS PROGRAM IS AN INSTRUMENTAL PART OF THE CULTURAL CALENDAR OF THE TWO COUNTRIES**

Sandeep Das is an accomplished tabla player. And he has a Grammy nomination to prove it. Teaming up with Iranian spike fiddler Kayhan Kalhor and sitarist Shujaat Hussain Khan, this young tabla player has the makings of greatness. And it didn't take the series of Jazz Ambassadors concerts to figure that out. But it certainly helped when Das, along with three other Indian musicians, teamed up in New Delhi with a visiting American group. The music and the audience were the richer for it.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Jazz Ambassadors program, now in its sixth year, is a sought-after music import from the U.S. in India. And Indian jazz aficionados range from Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee, probably India's most famous jazz enthusiast, to an elderly Bengali gentleman who travels from one remote end of south Calcutta to the American Center, as he has been doing for years, to listen to his favorite jazz numbers.

The Kennedy Center chooses seven quartets of exemplary jazz musicians to represent American music abroad in performances that highlight vocal jazz, an indigenous American art form. In addition to public concerts, Jazz Ambassadors conduct master classes and lecture-recitals for musicians across India. In 2003, the jazz workshops, for the first time, recruited musicians through the Internet. Needless to say, they were flooded with offers. If American music is instinctively associated with rock, pop and country, there's an acquired taste that culturally attuned Indians find particularly appealing: the deep-throated jazz melodies of the American South.



*U.S. Jazz Ambassadors perform in New Delhi during Diwali*

Indian origin make up an influential and affluent section of their own constituencies in the U.S. In the surest sign that India had acquired a toehold in American domestic politics, Indian Americans formally established the U.S.-India Political Affairs Committee (USINPAC) in 2002 to help inform and lobby American legislators. In India, the Indo-U.S. Parliamentary Forum, which has some 80 Members of Parliament as members, is the counterpart to the India Caucus, and it has been active in promoting political ties and dialogue with the U.S.

In fact, the phenomenal growth of the Indian American community in the U.S. has contributed significantly to expanding and enriching the people-to-people network. The fact sheet is impressive enough: Indian Americans already have the highest per capita income among ethnic groups in the U.S. The 50,000 Indian American doctors represent 5% of all American doctors. Of the 52,000 hotels in the U.S., 22,000 are owned and operated by Indian Americans. The community is also responsible for one-third of the start-ups in Silicon Valley. According to USINPAC, Indians donated \$7 million in the 2000 U.S. presidential campaign and expect to raise that to \$10 million in 2004.

The International Visitors Program, run by the U.S. Embassy's Cultural Affairs Office, has helped generations of Indian professionals familiarize themselves with the U.S. and meet counterparts. But

RAMESH JAIN

in the past few years, this program, too, has adapted to the changing bilateral relationship, and a wider cross-section of Indians from different fields and different language groups is now visiting the U.S. under this program. For example, the International Visitors Program has arranged for a number of Indian Muslims from various fields to make professional visits to the U.S. The aim was not merely to expose Muslim leaders and thinkers to American life and culture; it was also to show that the U.S. is not anti-Islam and to foster a genuine cross-cultural dialogue.

The first of several groups of *madrasa* leaders traveled to the U.S. in 2003. It was a familiarization program with a difference, say officials. The aim was to introduce the leaders of these religious schools to U.S. parochial school systems, including Christian, Muslim and Jewish schools. U.S. officials have also

been interacting more with Muslim leaders in India during their visits here. In return, Muslim scholars have visited American universities and think tanks to familiarize themselves with the way these institutions of learning function and to observe the range and richness of the way American Muslims live. Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions in the U.S. today, and American values are, by and large, consistent with Islamic values.

U.S. think tanks and research centers are also focusing on India like never before. For instance, the Brookings Institute's South Asia program is run by a well-known India expert, Dr. Stephen Cohen. Similarly, the School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Johns Hopkins University has a South Asia program which employs another veteran India expert, Dr. Walter Andersen. Brookings now works closely with the new U.S. Study Center at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in New Delhi, and the Aspen Institute has established an India program in cooperation with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Nonprofit U.S. groups as diverse as Special Olympics, the Center for Civic Education, the National Preservation Trust, the American Jewish Committee, the Asia Society, the East-West Center, and the New York and Chicago Councils on Foreign Relations have recently sent groups to India. The Asia Society's new President is an Indian American, Vishanka

## AMBASSADOR'S FUND

# SAVING HISTORY

**THE AMBASSADOR'S CULTURAL FUND HAS BEEN SET UP TO HELP COUNTRIES PRESERVE THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The U.S. Embassy Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund has worked to make five national monuments in India accessible to disabled persons, aided by visiting experts from the U.S. Also, the Fund has assisted the Heritage Trust's work on a special preservation project at the Medhi Talao Ensemble site at Champaner-Pavagadh in the state of Gujarat, which is on the World Monument Fund's list of 100 most endangered heritage sites. The Ambassador's Fund

ANN GRIMES



*Robert Blake of the U.S. Embassy with Heritage Trust President Karan Grover at Champaner-Pavagadh*

was established in 2001 by the U.S. Congress to help less developed countries preserve cultural heritage. Congress noted, "Cultural preservation offers an opportunity to show a different American face to other countries, one that is non-commercial, nonpolitical and nonmilitary."

The fund is administered through the Department of State and, given the large numbers of requests, no more than one grant is made per country each year.

N. Desai, who received her B.A. from Bombay University. Indian organizations, too, have sent delegations to the U.S. to foster more interaction, and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) plans to open a cultural center in Washington, D.C.

Meanwhile, NGOs are making their own contribution to bring the two countries closer. The U.S.-based America-India Foundation (AIF) is one among many involved in India. AIF is dedicated to accelerating social and economic change in India by connecting communities and resources across the U.S. and India. Its projects include grants for Gujarat earthquake rehabilitation and funding to fight the "digital divide" by bringing computer technology to underprivileged Indian schools. Also, it is exchanging technical skills, intellectual resources and culture by bringing young Americans, mainly college graduates, to spend a year living and working in India. Some of these graduates have volunteered because of their Indian roots. Like Shruti Patel, a young business management graduate from New York University, who is spending a year traveling through villages in Gujarat teaching villagers as part of the Learning on Wheels program. There is also Kalaivani Murugesan from Atlanta who has joined an initiative started by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to help weavers in Andhra Pradesh improve their products and become market savvy. Membership in Rotary clubs in India grew almost 18% in 2002, with a net gain of 14,209 members, making the country the world leader in the number of new Rotarians. Rotary has been involved in crucial Indian public health issues, such as the Pulse Polio campaign to rid the country of the polio menace.

Then there are the programs initiated by the American Centers in New Delhi, Calcutta,

*American Information Resource Centers, like this one in Calcutta, have helped cement bonds between India and the U.S.*



AIRC CALCUTTA

Chennai and Mumbai. Long regarded as cultural nerve centers, the centers have played an important role in enabling the transformation of relations between U.S. and India. The American Information Resource Centers (the former USIS Libraries) and the expanded Embassy website (<http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov>) reach out to a variety of people and provide timely, authoritative information on U.S. policy and society.

No mention of U.S. culture and people-to-people ties can be complete without sporting traditions figuring in the equation. Thanks to ESPN, Indians are becoming hooked on National Basketball Association (NBA) games along with baseball, American football and golf. The Amateur Baseball Federation of India received a major boost with the help of U.S. coaches Rick Dell and Tom Dedin who were in India under the Envoy Program to familiarize and coach young Indians in America's favorite sport. Their coaching clinic in Chandigarh was attended by 80 players from 19 states, a startling statistic considering baseball is struggling to find its feet in India. "I think cricket compliments the development of baseball in India as it creates a 'bat-and-ball' mentality," says Dell. And sports popular in India are slowly but surely attracting interest in the U.S.

Eventually, cultural and political affinity work at one level, but at a more subliminal and emotional level, it is the people-to-people contact that strengthens and nurtures the relationship between the two countries. The relationship, expanding in so many areas, would lack vitality were it not for the growing interaction between individual citizens of the world's two largest democracies.