

## A Window to the Impact of Education in India: Public Opinion Surveys

Good evening. It's a tremendous honor to be among you for this first-of-its kind workshop. Thank you, President Garimella, President Karad, and Director Dhande. In my brief comments, I hope to give you a window to the impact of education in India from recent public opinion surveys by my colleagues at the Pew Research Center.

I wear a number of hats, but the one I'm wearing tonight is that of a **social** scientist. And if you don't know what a **social** scientist is, it's exactly like a normal scientist, only we're more talkative. Specifically, I'm a **quantitative** social scientist, which means my talkativeness comes in large quantities. It also means that we "quantoids" excel at drawing conclusions from survey data. For example, after years of training in everything from population sampling and survey design to regression analysis and structural equation modeling, I'm pleased to report that the conclusions of all our studies of people in society are consistent, robust, and highly significant at  $p < .001$ . And what are these statistically significant, robust, and entirely consistent survey research conclusions about society? We find that "Some people do, and some people don't."

With these limitations of social science in mind, this evening let's explore a few survey findings about the impact of education on the attitudes of people in India, and then some findings on how education impacts international opinion about India. I'll then share some very interesting survey findings on one of the two topics we're not usually allowed to talk about at the dinner table – religion. I'll finish with a sneak peak of our forthcoming groundbreaking national study with MIT World Peace University, with its commitment to imparting a value-based education which has a blend of science and spirituality, with the noble aim of world peace and harmony.

Let me begin by sharing that **Americans** are the great beneficiary of **Indian attitudes** on education.

- Roughly three-quarters of Indian people think that finding better jobs and furthering education are important reasons why people in India move to other countries.



- This attitude is even more pronounced for Indians with higher incomes and educational attainment. Among this group, more than eight-in-ten cite the pursuit of better career and education opportunities as reasons for moving to other countries.

Yes, this means that we in the United States are the great beneficiaries of this movement of people from India to the U.S., many of whom are now tops in their field. This benefit ranges from six top U.S. tech companies now having India-born CEOs, to people of Indian-origin now contributing to our national political discourse including vice president Kamala Harris, governors Nikki Haley and Bobby Jindal. In fact, the impact of Americans of Indian heritage is literally out of this world. Sunita Williams, one of our most celebrated NASA astronauts, pioneered the ability of humans to spend lengthy times in space. I'm also proud to report that Sunita is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, where I live, and my wife coordinates study abroad (including sending midshipmen to study in India). There are so many examples, but one from Dr Suresh Reddy, president of the American Physicians of Indian-Origin, is especially worth applauding for me personally, given that two of my kids are medical professionals. It is that hundreds of thousands of Indian-origin medical personnel in the U.S. have bravely fought against the coronavirus during the pandemic. I thank them. Indeed, Dr. Reddy estimates that every 7th doctor in the US is of Indian heritage. These examples do not even scratch the surface, as is evidenced by the illustrious participants in this workshop.

While finding better jobs and/or furthering education are important reasons why Indians move abroad, polling also reveals that education plays an important role in Indians seeing the value of being connected globally through trade and commerce.

- Adults with at least a secondary education are far more likely than those with less education (86% vs. 63%) to say that trade is good for India. They are also more likely to believe that trade creates jobs (72% vs. 49%) and boosts wages (71% vs. 50%). Less-educated Indians are roughly three times as likely as more educated Indians to voice no opinion about the impact of trade, highlighting the significance of education in shaping public views of globalization.

Education not only plays a significant role in how Indians see the world, but how the world sees India.



- In many European countries, people with higher levels of education are more likely to think India plays a larger role today than it did 10 years ago. For example, roughly six-in-ten people with a postsecondary degree or more in both France (59%) and the UK (58%) say India's power has grown, compared with only about four-in-ten of those with less education.

Education is also at the root of one of the tremendous socio-economic assets of India – its cultural and religious pluralism and diversity. Perhaps no phrase captures this more fully than “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,” “The World is One Family.” From Nehru to Modi, India's leaders have evoked the spiritual phrase *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, taken from the Maha Upanishad, to elucidate the country's global outlook. And as Dr. Vishwanath Karad, Founding President and Director General of the MIT World Peace University in Pune, India, has said, “Science and spirituality go hand in hand to establish a peace-loving society,” it is therefore quite natural that he also propagates the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

In my work with Fortune 500 companies, I'm also seeing this same principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam at work in the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's corporate sponsors, including Google, the Intel Corporation, Ford Motor Company, DELL Technologies, Coca-Cola Consolidated, PayPal, Equinix, Tyson Foods, Texas Instruments, American Express, SAP, and many more including our global partner American Airlines. All are actively promoting religiously inclusive workplaces.

The spiritually open and inclusive nature not only of these companies but also importantly of Indian society stands in stark contrast to an accelerating lack of openness in the People's Republic of China, where all religions, cultures, and peoples, not to mention economic policies, are subjugated to the ruling Communist Party. According to The Economic Times, the People's Republic of China's campaign to rein in technology companies is pushing more companies towards India, which now offers a more conducive and open environment for tech and innovation-led firms than does the People's Republic of China. Additionally, as trust in the People's Republic of China as a supply chain partner has declined during the pandemic, the capital market in India is growing aggressively, according to Deloitte. As global corporations both explore alternate investment destinations to diversify the supply chain and emphasize the importance of religiously inclusive workplaces, India is a particularly attractive



alternative with its pluralism, religious diversity, democratic governance and relatively high innovation. Indeed, India ranks first in innovation in the Central and Southern Asia Region and second in innovation in its income bracket, according to the 2021 Global Innovation Index.

India, when compared to other emerging economies in a cross-national poll by Pew, India stands out as being the most welcoming of engaging with a diverse global marketplace.

- Specifically, in a recent Pew Research Center survey of 11 emerging economies, a higher share of Indians (68%) than in any of the other countries said that having an increasing number of people of many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities in India makes it a better place to live.
- Notably, more than 2-in-3 people in India report interacting with people of religions, ethnic groups, or races different than their own, much higher than in the other emerging economies.

Another Pew survey of the Indian population found that

- More than 8-in-10 (84%) say that to be “truly Indian,” it is very important to respect all religions.
- Indians also are united in the view that **respecting other religions** is a very important part of what it means to be a member of their own religious community (80%).
- In fact, people in all six of India’s largest religious groups overwhelmingly say they are very free to practice their faiths, and the vast majority (91%) say that people of other faiths also are very free to practice their own religion.

The concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is even reflected in the way people of differing religions share common beliefs:

- After living side by side for generations, India’s minority groups often engage in practices or hold beliefs that are more closely associated with Hindu traditions than with their own. For instance, consider the bindi – the forehead marking associated with Hinduism often worn by married women that also has the meaning of seeing the world through the mind’s eye. Pew Surveys find that wearing the bindi is shared across faiths being worn by many 3-in-10 Sikh



women, (29%), more than 1-in-5 Christian women (22%), and nearly 1-in-5 Muslim (18%) women in India.

- The surveys also find that Muslims in India are just as likely as Hindus to say they believe in karma (77% each). Also, more than half (54%) of Indian Christians believe in karma, which is not a Christian concept.
- What's more, Pew surveys find that sizable numbers of Hindus celebrate Muslim and Christian festivals: over 76 million (7%) Indian Hindus say they celebrate the Muslim festival of Eid, and nearly 200 million (17%) Indian Hindus celebrate Christmas.
- And finally, while Western Christian theologians might scratch their heads to find that nearly a third (29%) of Indian Christians believe in reincarnation, it reveals just how much religious sharing is part of Indian culture.

Before closing, I'd like to share about a research project I'm working on in India, similar to one we've done in the U.S. in which we estimated the economic impact of religion to the economy. Looking at the social, educational, charity and business contributions of religion, we have estimated that these total \$1.2 trillion of economic value annually. That is equivalent to being the world's 15th largest national economy, putting the value of U.S. religion ahead of the GDP of about 180 other countries. We have done this same study in Canada, with studies also underway in Brazil and Chile. I mention this, because in partnership with the MIT World Peace University we are embarking on the same study for India. And very importantly, note that our research approach doesn't compare religions, but looks at all religions collectively from the "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," perspective - "The World is One Family".

The challenges to peace are real. Let me close by leaving you again with the words of Dr. Karad, "Science and spirituality go hand in hand to establish a peace-loving society."

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**Dr. Brian Grim** is an “applied academic” who has lived and worked globally since 1982. He established some of the early student and teacher exchanges between the US and China, and he helped found the first western-style business school in the former Soviet Union. He has also held teaching and curriculum design positions in the Middle East, such as the redesign of the first-year curriculum for UAE University, the country’s flagship university.

Dr. Grim holds a Ph.D. in quantitative sociology from Penn State University, specializing in demographics, survey research, and the “religious economies” approach to the sociology of religion. Dr. Grim currently has research affiliations and/or cooperative projects with Boston University, Baylor University, Brandeis



University, Notre Dame University, Brigham Young University, The Catholic University of America, and Georgetown University, where he recently chaired a doctoral committee.

Dr. Grim is also founding president of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation and Global Chairman of *Dare to Overcome*, which brings together CEOs, Fortune 500 companies and major universities in support of mutual human understanding, open-mindedness, and peace. He lives in the Washington DC area at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis with his wife, Julia Beth, who coordinates study abroad for the Naval Academy. They have four grown children, each with advanced degrees in medicine, physics, and law. They have 13 grandchildren, with 3 more expected in 2022!