

INDO-US CHAMBER MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: PAUL GUZZO

Each month, the Indo-Chamber of Commerce highlights one of our members in this spot. This month's winner is **Paul Guzzo**, author of the book *"From Indians to Indian Americans – How Tampa Bay's Indian Community Was Built"*.



1. Tell us about your book.

"The book is called, 'From Indians to Indian Americans: How Tampa Bay's Indian American Community Was Built.' It is a series of profiles that individually highlights 17 leaders in Tampa's Indian community, and when read as a whole, tells the story of this community from its first wave of immigrants to the young leaders of today. It tells the story from the Indian community's early days of practicing their faith in groups in their homes to today's amazing temples. It tells the story of how the early leaders brought the community together and introduced it to the Tampa Bay community as a whole and how today's young leaders are carrying on their tradition. And it tells the stories

of how Indians came to Tampa from all over the world - India, Canada, Africa, and the Caribbean - and came together to form one community."

2. What gravitated you towards this topic?

"This book is the brainchild of Rooney Sahai. While vacationing in Tampa one weekend, he inquired a mutual friend of ours - Mayor Dick Greco - about the size of Tampa's Indian American community and was shocked to hear how large it was and how much it contributes to the growth and wellbeing of Tampa Bay. He went on to lament that the lack of awareness of the Indian American community is a common theme in cities across America and he said that perhaps it is time that someone begins to shed some light on these communities. His idea was to begin with Tampa and then move on to other cities across the country. When all is said and done, he hopes to take all the books and put them together into an Encyclopedia of books about Indian communities around the nation. Each book will be published by the nonprofit he founded for this purpose - *The Center for Understanding Modern Indian American Culture*. Proceeds from book sales will be used to fund these future books

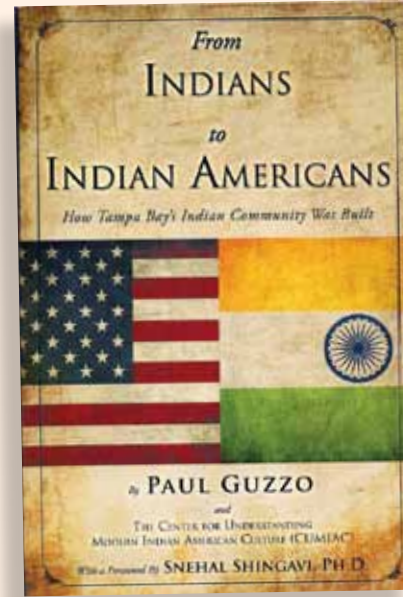
He chose to write the book as a series of profiles because the purpose of this book is not to teach people about India but to teach them about people. We want this and future books to be a tool for future generations of Indian Americans to learn about the founding fathers of their respective communities. Too often we wait until someone is long past to document their lives. By tackling this topic now, we can write about the founding fathers while most are still with us.

In addition, I was drawn to this book because as a writer I am always looking to:

- Write about topics never before covered. This is the first book of its kind in this area and either the first or one of the first ever written in this country. I do not know of any other books written about other Indian communities in other cities, but I cannot definitively state that this is the first.
- Challenge myself. Writing is only part of what I love about my job. I also love that I get paid to learn. I am always looking to write about topics that I was previously uneducated on. I have spent a decade immersed in the Cuban, Spanish, and Italian cultures of Tampa. Learning about a new culture - the India culture - excited me."

3. What are some of the emerging trends that you noticed based on the research conducted for this book?

"The trend I enjoyed documenting is how the younger generation is building upon that which the original generation founded, and are doing so with American ideas. I think the best example is the India International Film Festival (IIFF). Film festivals are becoming a major part of American culture and independent films are becoming as popular as Hollywood. They took this idea and used it as a way to further educate the general public on the Indian culture while simultaneously bringing the community together. IIFF Founder Francis Vayalumkal says it best: "if you only watch Hollywood films you would think America is nothing but guns, war, and drag races. The purpose of independent film is to showcase through film what American culture is really like. If you only watch Bollywood films, you would think that India is nothing but singing and dancing". Vayalumkal and his team brought the IIFF to Tampa to showcase through Indian independent film what the culture is really like. He is helping to educate the Tampa Bay community on Indian culture using an American idea. That seems to be a trend - the younger generation is embracing their American culture and using it to promote their Indian culture.



4. What are some of the common entrepreneurial themes that you noticed from this subset of the population?

"Dr. Ram Ramcharan joked with me that "IT" must stand for Indian Technology because so many of his friends are in that field. While there is some truth to that joke, what I found fascinating is that like every culture in America, the Indian culture can no longer be pigeon holed. It once seemed like all Indians were in the science, medical, or hotel management fields. And while many still are, I also found Indians in politics, banking, education, journalism, book publishing and so on. The theme is

that Indians in Tampa can now be found in every field. I think that is one of the ideas that this book gets across."

5. What are your future plans for this series?

"More books! Rooney mentioned he may want to use me to cover the Indian community in New York. I also want to continue to write about other cities in Florida such as Orlando which would be nice as it is a closer drive for me!"

6. What was the best part of writing this book?

"Learning about a new culture. I, like most, was blind to the contributions of the Indian community in Tampa and blind to the many hurdles they had to overcome just to make it to this country and then to make it in this country. I was ignorant and thought most Indians in this country came from affluent families. I could not have been more wrong. The stories of the founding generation coming to this country from small villages in Africa or the racism they were met with in England amazed me. The level of respect I have for them is immense. I think that will be the most fascinating aspect of this book for most people."

If you are interested in purchasing this book, Paul Guzzo can be reached directly at paulguzzo@hotmail.com. All proceeds will go to *The Center for Understanding Modern Indian American Culture* and will be used to fund future books in this series.

RECAP: 2012 INDO-US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BANYAN BALL

The Indo-US Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual soiree, The Banyan Ball, on Saturday May 19 at the Crowne Plaza Tampa Westshore. This year's elegant black-tie affair attracted 300 local community leaders and guests for an evening of networking, dinner, awards ceremony, keynote address, entertainment, and an exclusive VIP reception.

Suneet Singh Tuli, CEO of *Datawind Ltd.*, served as the evening's keynote speaker and addressed the audience on the topic, *"An Entrepreneurial Journey: Solutions Through Adversity"*. *Datawind* is the maker of the world's cheapest tablet computer, *UbiSlate 7 (Aakash)* and forecasts demand of 7,000,000 units in India in 2012 and a growing



Tuli spoke about how "setting outrageous goals, remaining passionate, and embracing failure created opportunities and solutions, as success comes from continuously moving



forward and learning to connect the dots." He cited his prior entrepreneurial experience at *The Widecom Group*, manufacturer of the world's largest fax machine (as designated by the Guinness Book of World Records), which he took public on the NASDAQ in 1995 at the age of 27. His next venture involved a portable, battery operated hand-held scanner which was a commercially successful undertaking that persevered against a backdrop of naysayers.

The third phase of Tuli's journey involved delivering the mobile internet experience to the masses via a breakthrough web delivery platform that incorporates advances in technology coupled with his patent portfolio. He spoke of separating the user from the payer and shifting the margins away from hardware and into recurring revenue streams such as advertising and subscriptions. Tuli emphasized the nascent market for internet users in India which currently stands at only 4% of the total population. To date, *Datawind* has been named "UK's Most Innovative Mobile Company" by Smart UK and has been featured on Bloomberg TV as "one of the top five technology stories of 2012" amongst other accolades.

The evening also featured the Indo-US Chamber's customary awards ceremony to recognize businesspersons, companies, and community leaders that are emerging in the Tampa Bay region. The 2012 Banyan Ball award recipients are:

- Businessman of the Year: Manmohan "Manny" Singh Bhuller
- Businesswoman of the Year: Tazine Jaffer
- Community Service Person of the Year: Francis Vayalumkal
- Indo-US Chamber Founders Award: Suraj Nayee



The Indo-US Chamber would like to thank all of our attendees and sponsors for an enthralling event and we invite you to join us once again for next year's Banyan Ball!



Upcoming Indo-US Chamber Event:

Monthly Business & Networking Meeting
Date: Wednesday June 20, 2012
Time: 6:30PM- 8:30PM
Location: HCI Building (5300 W. Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33607)
 This is a FREE event. Dinner will be served. No RSVP required.

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INDO-US CHAMBER MISSION

"To provide an active forum in which Asian American professionals and business owners, through an exchange of ideas, with a unified voice, can communicate, interact, and secure a position within the business industry and become a source of inspiration by promoting professionalism and excellence through education and community involvement."