

## The World As We Know It My Adventure in India

By DAVID CALVERT

Hindustan. Bharat. The motherland. A long list of names that represent one place teeming with life, culture, and activities: India.

This past summer I spent time in India with a free scholarship program called National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLIY).

The purpose of this program is to teach languages that aren't commonly taught in schools, in this case Hindi. Each one of the 17 of us students stayed with one host family.

What I didn't know was that way more than just Hindi lessons would be happening. My eyes were opened to a

whole new culture. Things that seem so simple here become such challenges in a new world.

Food, or moreover food consumption, is a prime example of this. As you can imagine, Indian food is very different from food we eat here every day. It's not just the typical spicy that everyone thinks (although don't get me wrong, it's hot. It's something more.

The very first thing I noticed culturally when I arrived is how eating works in India. Everyone owns utensils, but they're only for fancy occasions. The primary mode of delivering food to the mouth

is by the hands, no matter the consistency. It could be wet, dry, mushy, or hard, regardless you eat with your hands.

At first this was a little out of my comfort zone, as I usually use forks and knives, but I soon figured out that I just have to let my worries go and join in on the fun. Sure, it was different, but I loved it.

Now, let's go to an uncomfortable topic for right now: the bathroom.

First off, let me clarify how different an Indian bathroom is; primarily, the toilet.

The toilet is simply a hole in the ground that you can flush by filling a bucket with water and pouring it down that hole after use (what a marvel of engineering, right?).

Photo courtesy of David Calvert

There's a large list of questions that one wants to ask their host

The NSLI-Y Program offers summer, and academic year opportunities for immersion in Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Russian and Turkish. Visit [www.nsliforyouth.com](http://www.nsliforyouth.com) for info.



Photo courtesy of David Calvert

### A typical Indian Scene

family, but few have the courage. And yes, they are THOSE uncomfortable questions: How do I use this? Do I have to use an Indian toilet? Where's the toilet paper?! These and more come up quite often.

Now there are two ways to approach this; you can either struggle through trying to figure out the dynamics of an Indian toilet, all the while desperately searching for toilet paper, or you can simply gain some courage and ask for things.

What's different about this culture is that topics like the bathroom are not uncomfortable; they're quite okay to mention, actually. So, in essence, it's only awkward if

you make it so.

You have to step outside of your comfort zone and maybe ask for some toilet paper, eat with your hands, or do something that seems crazy. When trying new things or going new places it's important to be unafraid of doing "awkward" things, and realizing that stepping outside of your comfort zone might not be all that bad.

If you never leave your comfort zone, you'll never get to experience what you're missing out on. I had an amazing time and I am forever changed by the lessons, both Hindi and life, India taught me. If you want to know more about the NSLIY program, feel free to ask me.



Being welcomed to India by children

## Students still active at NCSSM during Summer

By ADAM BEYER

Unlike many schools, NCSSM doesn't shut down during the summer after the students leave for the year. Instead it plays host to numerous programs that further the learning of both NCSSM students and others from around the state.

During the month of June, the Summer Bridge program helped provide enrichment for new juniors coming to NCSSM. Rising seniors served as RLA's and TA's on the residence halls. "I was able to learn a lot of valuable leadership skills," said Senior Ali Eakes, who served as a Humanities TA and RLA.

Another opportunity for Rising Seniors was Summer Research, which doubled in size this year, allowing 80 students from both the residential and online programs to stay on campus and work on projects here or with mentors at Duke, UNC, NCCU, NC State, and with companies in RTP.

At the culmination of their eight-week program, students participated in a symposium for community members where they gave poster and oral presentations.

Several other programs including Labs for Learning, Step Up to STEM, and Summer Leadership and Research Experience (SLARE) met at NCSSM during the summer, all of which provide help getting younger and often

underrepresented minorities interested in STEM fields. Current NCSSM students assisted these programs by living on hall with the students and acting as role models to them.

Green Hope High School in Cary even used NCSSM's campus for their annual marching band camp one weekend.

Of course the atmosphere on campus over the summer was different without as much work and with fewer people.

"There were not many of us on campus, but we got closer to the people who were here," said Senior Shraddha Rathod, who was on campus for research. "There were also lots of loops for us which was nice."

Even though there were no regular courses and assignments for many of the students on campus, they still had valuable learning experiences.

"Research really is a new way of learning," said Senior Vany Nguyen. "There are ups and downs as you try and solve problems that arise."

Senior Evan Brooks, who was a counselor for Labs for Learning, felt he gained a lot from his experience: "Working with the younger students really was a rewarding experience. I felt like it prepared me for things I could expect to happen as an RLA and how to effectively deal with conflicts."



Students present their research July 26th to community members



Summer Leadership and Research Experience students listen to an alumni panel

Photo courtesy of NCSSM

Photo courtesy of NCSSM