CHAPTER II

Professional Placement of Asian Indians in the United States
The movement of people across national boundaries, which began a long time ago, is a matter of interest and an issue of concern at the beginning of the twenty first century. This current attention is not just a function of the present situation. Rather, it is because the pressures of the international migration are considerable and appear to be mounting despite restrictive immigration laws. Further, in a world where the differences in demographic pressures and income levels between countries are vast, the spread of education and communication has increased the mobility of labor, which again contributes to migration. In this chapter, the focus will continue to be on the Indian migration to the US and the gradual settlement of this population. Fundamentally, this chapter would seek to gauge the different levels of achievements of the Asian Indian community and the present current trends. It will probe the class determinants of Asian Indians' professional growth. Finally, it revolves around the central theme of how Asian Indian community has economically become the most successful ethnic group in the US.
Push and Pull factors of Immigration:-

In the realm of economics, the factors underlying the decision to migrate and the effect of migration on economic welfare are the basic themes in existing studies which focus on migrant workers or migrant household.¹

As studies have shown, the earliest wave of Indian migration was due to disturbances in the homeland, it was the devastation of 1899 famine that forced many in the Punjab who found themselves deep in debt to leave their homeland and seek work abroad. These individuals were the ones who really constituted the wave of Indian immigrants during this period. Many, like those from other Asian countries before them, aimed to make enough money to return to India and purchase farmland. The majority settled in the state of Washington to work in the lumber mills and in California to work in agriculture.²

Emigration was also influenced by other factors. As a soldier in the British army, many Sikhs had traveled to China to

¹ Deepak, Nayyar, Migration, Remittances and Capital Flows: The Indian Experience, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p. ix
help suppress the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and they returned with tales from the Chinese of the money that could be made in America. However, the decision to emigrate was not an individual one but reflected the joint decision of the family. It was based on the need to supplement family income and fulfill kinship responsibilities. Some families even mortgaged part, if not all, of their lands so that the sons could travel to the land of opportunity.

Although the effects of natural disasters on resources and lifestyle were instrumental in moving a significant number of the emigrants who arrived in the United States at the turn of twentieth century, those were by no means the only environmental or societal causes. An important factor was the financial difficulties created by British colonial oppression in India. The perception of many Indian emigrants that they could further cause of India’s independence better from abroad was another impetus for emigration.³

The Indian presence there stretches back to nineteenth century pioneer precursors. Unlike the other major streams of

Indian migrants to the new world which brought large numbers of indentured laborers to the Circum-Caribbean; all of those who came to the United States came as free persons. No Indians are known to have been recruited by North American employees. By the early twentieth century, when Indian laborers first began to arrive in British Columbia and the American West Coast, the major labor recruitment phase of Asian immigration to North America had ended. That phase had brought hundreds of thousands of Chinese and Japanese workers to the mainland and Hawaii and provoked an anti-Asian movement which eventually all but halted the immigration of Asians to the United States for several decades. Although Indians had not participated in the labor migration to North America, which produced the nativist anti-Asian legislation, they suffered under it during the decades of little or no migration when Indians, along with other Asians, were ineligible for naturalization and denied other basic civil rights. In the United States the struggle against that legislation, seen by some as a kind of parallel to the freedom struggle being waged in India, was a salient aspect of Asian Indian community life. Indian American lobbyists achieved an important victory in 1946 when the Congress
dropped all legal discrimination against ‘natives of India’, but far more important for the future of Americans from India known as ‘Asian-Indians’ from the 1980 Census onward. The era of liberalization of immigration law in the United States had begun.

Looking back, historically, over the past few centuries, although a few Indian seamen were reported in North Atlantic ports from the end of the eighteenth century and there were occasional Indian merchants, lived in cities such as New York and Philadelphia in the mid-nineteenth century, it was only in recent decades that Indians made any kind of an impact in the United States.

The vast majority of the Indian immigrants who came in the first decade of the 1900s were from the Punjab and most of these were Sikhs. The immigrants were initially concentrated on both sides of the 49th parallel in the Pacific North west and worked chiefly on rail roads and in lumber mills. The railroad workers were widely dispersed in ‘section gangs’ but the lumber mill workers, concentrated in cities, drew the ire of the white working men. In 1907, there were riots against Asian immigrants throughout the Pacific North west. The worst of them, to be directed against Indians occurred in Bellingham, Washington, a
small industrial city on the eastern shore of Puget Sound 18 miles south of the Canadian border.\textsuperscript{4}

The Asian Indians moved to South and found employment in California as agricultural laborers. The Asian Indians were paid less than the Japanese laborers. These agricultural laborers found associations called ‘Gang’. They elected a head, who found employment for them and settled the terms with the employee. By 1920s the Asian Indians farm workers were able to negotiate their wages equal to the Japanese and white workers. A few, Asian Indians had become tenant farmers and even farm owners. But after the enactment of the 1920 ‘Alien Land Law’ and the 1923 ‘Third Decision’, Asian Indians were denied the rights to own land in California. To counter this, most of the Asian Indians utilized a ‘Front Man’ strategy for buying or leasing land whereby they worked out verbal agreements to have the property placed under the names of Anglo farmers, bankers and lawyers.\textsuperscript{5}


The push out of India is generally economic, and the pull to Western countries, likewise, is the possibility of an improved quality of life. Like the Chinese immigrants to the United States, Indian immigrants because of visa constraints, are usually highly professional and educated, family members of U.S. citizens, or undocumented entrants or "overstays". A primary reason for both legal and illegal immigration is the lack of economic opportunity in the region of one's birth. This appears to cut across all socio-economic levels of immigrants, from the poor, who may live at a relatively low subsistence level or who leave to escape unemployment, to the highly educated and wealthy, who cannot attain their aspirations at home. Thus both those who have little in their own such as migrant workers from Mexico, and those with more education and assets, such as computer software experts from India and China, may migrate to improve their options. This push may be internal, causing individuals to seek emigration opportunities for themselves. On the other hand, it is a strategy for survival of the family that sends a member to a land where employment options are greater and income earned abroad can be filtered back to support remaining
family members. Such cases can be found in the example of Patel brothers' shops that North Virginia and Maryland.⁶

In addition to environmental and national conditions that push people out of their home country, personal dissatisfaction, sparse individual resources and unique constraints that prevent individuals from attaining their goals in their homelands also results in migration. For example, many graduates from Indian Institute of Technologies (IITs) have found it more convenient to seek employment in the US and have remained there.

The pull of another country or region works in tandem with the push from the home country. In the absence of dissatisfaction in the country of origin, it is not likely that individuals will move, but moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar occurs because something in United States is more attractive than whatever an individual or group currently possesses in India and the prospect of acquiring or achieving that 'something' is impossible or difficult without the move.⁷

Awareness that there are economic opportunities in United States is itself a draw for the Indians who are interested in

⁷ Uma, A. Segal, 2002, footnote no. 3, p.62
improving their personal situations. Many immigrants, especially in the recent years have left India in search of better or higher education. These people then stay on in USA to gain experience and to solidify their knowledge. Educational opportunities blend into professional and vocational opportunities and as the draw that attracted Indian immigrants to United States changes, so do their goals and aspirations, and they remain in United States.

**Indian Immigrants post 1965** :-

Once the Indian immigrants established themselves in the United States, they formed a short of network with their family members. This provided a channel through which family members were recruited from India for employment in United States.

The life style of the new immigrants i.e. post 1965 to 1985 had little in common with that of the early Indian community of California with its agrarian orientations, predominance of illiterate males, and willingness to get married to non-Indians, specially, poor Hispanics. Yet, their determination to “make it big” in the US drove them towards further adaptation of the U.S.
life styles and Culture. An eminent scholar pointed out, whatever distinctive religions and political ideology and values the Asian Indian might otherwise profess as symbols of their ethnic identity, one thing that stands out is their full participation in the so called American materialistic culture. They are driven by the same economic and social imperatives as the white American upper-middle class. Following the life style and aspirations of this class, it should not come as a surprise if their spatial distribution is also similar to the general American population. For Asian-Indians, proximity to other Indians appeared to be less important than the desirability of a given residential area on grounds such as property value and education.

Since the problem of acculturation for the Asian-Indians were relatively few and dependence upon others for initial support was usually for a limited time, the need or desire to form ethnic cluster, seems to have been minimal. Though in recent times, some change in this situation have occurred as secondary less educated and elderly relatives arrive, sponsored by the primary immigrants. In addition, the occasional act of violence with strong ethnic overtones may cause a local Indian

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8 Ravindra, K. Jain, Indian community Abroad: Themes and Literature, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1993, p. 38
community to reach by increased ‘encapsulation’ especially in the post 9/11 period. Repeated attacks on turbaned Sikhs, (as they were wrongly presumed to be Muslim terrorists), in recent times, has certainly led to a rethink among the Indian community.

Thus it is very clear that as the Indian immigrants are successful economically. Several studies point to the major causes. For instance, one study has revealed that a unique characteristic of Indian immigrants is found in the combination of talents: their education system had a distinct western, European, particularly British orientation. As a result, most are fluent in English and have had exposures to the values and beliefs that both facilitate and enhance entry into modern American society. Further, they have high levels of educational attainment and specialized occupational skills which are much in demand in today’s America.10

What needs to be kept in mind is that those Indians who have sought foreign education and particularly in America are highly unrepresentative of the general economic standards of

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9 Ibid, p. 38
their country of birth and early formative socialization. They can be characterized as rich persons from an economically poor country, metropolitans from a predominantly rural society, and a highly educated group from a still largely illiterate society.

Quite unlike the earlier Indian immigrants who were “tired, poor and hungry masses”, and who used to “huddle” at Ellis Island, Indians of the 1980s and the 1990s in general and students in particular mostly come from a privileged stratum of society that can afford to pay for high levels of education and more specialized and costly graduate training they may get in America. They have chosen to go there for better opportunities, not to escape poverty.

 Whereas the earlier Indian immigrants to the United States were largely poor, uneducated, unskilled and from rural backgrounds or urban ghettos, Indians now by and large hail from upper or upper middle classes, higher castes and metropolitan areas. Instead of taking cargo ships, they come by jet planes, and they do not settle in semi-segregated ethnic slums, factory environments, or farms but tend to concentrate around universities and prestigious neighborhoods.
Due to higher educational qualifications and advanced training and skills, Indian students more often than not transcend their American counterparts. The Asian Indians success, many a times, carries an element of economic threat, to the native white population. The bills introduced against Foreign Medical Graduates (FMGs) in 1984-85 does draw the attention towards the same, though vehemently denied by the policy makers.

At this juncture, it would be worthwhile to present some data, which explain the actual number of Indian who migrated, an analysis of cross section of such data would enable us to examine at length the role of Indian Diaspora in the United States economic context. In other words, it would be possible to derive their professional placement.

**Indian immigrants to the US 1965-1996**

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<td>1986</td>
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*Source*: Immigration and Naturalization Service, USA.1997
Evidence point to the fact that the overwhelming majority of more than one and half million (1.67 million) persons of Indian birth or ancestry presently in the United States have either come in the last quarter century or are the children of these immigrants.

**Professional categories and Incomes of Asian Indians** :-

The post-1965 immigrants as already mentioned were highly educated and technically qualified. The data for income and occupation show that Asian Indians were relatively well off and engaged in essentially middle-class occupations. Income figures for 1979 (which include wage and salaries only) show Asian Indian males earning US $ 20,643 annually as opposed to US $ 18,759 for whites. For Asian-Indian females the gap was wider: they averaged US $ 9,685 as opposed to US $ 7,908 for whites. Almost two thirds of the Asian-Indian males reporting occupation were in the jobs which the US Census Bureau classified as executive administrative or managerial (14.9 per cent), professional (14.7 per cent), or technical (8 per cent). The corresponding figure for the whites was just over a quarter; while for Blacks it was nearly a seventh. Just over two-fifths of the
employed female Asian Indians were in the same three categories, as opposed to just over a quarter of white females and nearly a fifth of Black females.\textsuperscript{11} Ten years later, the 1990 census pointed out that Asian Indians had the highest average household income of US $ 48,320 in 1989. It provided details suggesting that 47 per cent of Asian-Indians held managerial and professional jobs – the highest among all the Asians, and Asian Indians ranked highest 34 per cent in professional specialty among all the ethnic groups. In the 2000 census, the average income of Asian-Indian households is as much as 30 per cent higher than for all U.S. households. The Asian Indian households earn US $ 60093 on an average versus US $ 38885 for all US households. As many as 43.6 per cent of the male Asian Indian immigrants hold managerial or professional positions: 33.2 per cent in the technical, sales and service sectors and the remaining 23.3 per cent are skilled laborers.\textsuperscript{12}

Another estimate available point to the penetration of Asian Indians into professional categories. For instance, study reveals that 60 per cent doctors in America are Asian Indians, 12 per

\textsuperscript{11} Judith M. Brown, Rosemary Foot, 1994, footnote no.4, p. 46
cent are scientists, 36 per cent are NASA employees, 29 per cent are Microsoft employees, 28 per cent are IBM employees and 17 per cent are INTEL employees are Asian-Indians.13

Not only men, but Indian women too are playing an important part in the economic development of their families and in contributing to America’s G.N.P. Probably three out of four Asian Indian women work and because most are professionally qualified, their earnings are better than those of their American counter-parts and so also is their productivity per person.

An examination of professional occupations shows some of the specialization within the Indian community. More than two fifths of male professionals are engineers and over a quarter physicians. No doubt its common of Asian Indians to speak of their community as having three main occupational groups --- doctors, engineers and information technology professionals. Among female professionals too more than three fifths are in health-diagnosing occupations.14

Physicians were prominent among the new immigrants until 1977, and India became the world’s largest exporter of

doctors. There were around 20,000 Indian physicians and as many as 700 psychiatrists than in India itself.

Since physicians had priority as immigrants between 1966 and 1977, the number grew rapidly, reaching its peak in 1972 when 46 per cent of all new physicians licensed in the United States of America were foreigners who had been trained abroad. What is significant here is that many Indian physicians who came to the United States of America went on to provide significant leadership and financial support for Asian Indians organizations. The organization of American Association of Indian Physicians provides ample evidence of their activities and intervention within the American context. Moreover, of the 46000 employed Asian Indian immigrants coming in the decade after the change in the 1965 Immigration Law, in 1974, 16000 were engineers, 4000 were scientists, and 7000 were physicians or surgeons. By 1975, 93 per cent of the Indians admitted were classified as either “professional or technical workers”, or “spouses and children of professional and technical workers”. Almost half of the immigrants over sixteen years of age born in India were employed in what are designated “professional specialty occupations".
Many scholars probing the strands of Asian Indian immigration have sought to provide some evidence on the early professionals. Such evidences point to some interesting details. For example, the first known Indian-American medical graduate was a woman, Anandibai Joshee, who graduated from the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia in 1886.\textsuperscript{15} Another early Indian-American pioneer Yellapragada Subba Rao, discovered the antibiotic Tetracycline in the 1930s.

The Asian Indians physicians number about 40,000 in the United States out of a total of 70,000 practicing physicians. One out of every five Foreign Medical Graduates (FMGs) is from Asian Indian community and Asian Indians form the largest single ethnic medical group. This was pointed out by Dr. Navin Shah, the founder president of the American Association of Physicians of India Origin (AAPI).\textsuperscript{16} However, several State Licensing Boards had started tightening their rules for giving licenses to the graduates of foreign medical schools. All the FMGs (new and old) had been affected; for example a physician licensed in Illinois for


\textsuperscript{16} Rajghatta Chidnand, "Andrew Rocta Save's Victim's life", The Times of India, New Delhi, October 23, 2002.
10 years might not be able to practice in Connecticut unless he/she qualifies for FMGEMs again. All of the 50 states have their own rules for licensing and some of the rules are clearly discriminatory to the Foreign Medical Graduates.

**Professional Growth and Impact of Legislation**

During 1984-85, a spate of Bills were introduced in the U.S. Senate and the Congress, most of them discriminated against Foreign Medical Graduates. Some of them explicitly aimed at reducing if not out rightly banning the entry of FMGs. In the perception of many Asian Indians, the moves were not only discriminatory, but also diluted the hard work done by these doctors. They pointed out that, many of the Asian Indian physicians had been practicing for more than 30 years and about 20 per cent of them held prestigious faculty positions in well-known universities. Further, many Asian Indian physicians served in areas where the graduates from the American Medical Schools did not want to go. The stance taken by the law makers and organized medicine in USA was resented by the graduates of the Foreign Medical schools. Giving credence to these perceptions, in May 1990, the General Accounting Office, an arm
of the US Congress, in its study confirmed that there had been instances of discrimination against Foreign Medical Graduates.\(^{17}\)

Several organizations began to work together with the lawmakers to redress these issues. They lobbied the Congress to rectify this situation. In particular, the American Association of Physicians from India (AAPI) had taken up these issues with several law makers. This powerful organization not only enabled them to better promote their interests, but also served as a focal point for other lobbying efforts. By mid 1990s AAPI had opened up a full time legislative office in Washington D.C.\(^{18}\)

At this juncture, it is useful to have a broad classification of the Asian Indians in the United States as they are dispersed in various fields. Several accounts point to the following facts a large number of Asian Indian scientists are contributing to the research and development in various fields such as defense, aerospace, health and medicine. Asian Indian researchers have been involved in developing new materials as well as new technologies in defense and aerospace. In the medical research, the Asian Indian scientists have been successful in developing

\(^{17}\) Jagat Motwani, America and India in a ‘Give & Take’ Relationship, New York, Centre for Asian, African and Caribbean Studies, 2003, p. 235 also see Pravin Sheth, 2001, footnote no.4, p.245

\(^{18}\) see AAPI’s website www.aapi.org
The following broad occupational categorization helps elucidate the levels and trends of the Asian Indians professional presence.

(a) **Medicine, Engineering and Law** :-

These professionals arrived in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s following the easing of immigration rules, and establishing themselves well before the Information Technology influx took place in the 1990s. One of the many areas in which Asian Indians have done the country of their origin proud has been in science and technology – engineering, biotechnology and medicine. In biotechnology, the Asian Indians have done extremely well. A number of Indian scientists and engineers work in sensitive US government owned laboratories, including nuclear laboratories. Boeing and NASA employ a significant number of Asian Indians in their technical work force. It is estimated that 35 per cent of Boeing’s technical work force is Asian Indians.\(^{20}\) Late Dr. Kalpana Chawla also worked for NASA in various capacities. In 1995 she was chosen as an astronaut.

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\(^{19}\) Jagat K. Matwani, Jyoti Barot, Mahine Gosine, 1993, footnote no.15, p.253

\(^{20}\) Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *“Report of the High level Committee on Indian Diaspora”* Publication Division, New Delhi, 2001, p. 170
In 1996 she was assigned as Mission specialist and prime robotic arm operator on STS-87. In 1998 she was assigned as crew representative for Shuttle Columbia and station flight crew equipment. Subsequently, she was assigned as the leader for Astronaut officer's Crew System and Habitability Section. In 2000, she was also assigned to the crew of STS-107 scheduled for launch in 2003. On February 1, 2003 Shuttle Columbia broke apart over Texas 16 minutes before it was supposed to land in Florida, killing all the seven crew members including Dr. Kalpana Chawla.21

(b) Information Technology :-

Enterprising Asian Indians with vision and courage have been making good in Silicon Valley and have formed the Silicon Valley Asian Indian Professional Association. Many graduates of India emigrate to the United States causing the Indian Government anxiety over the brain drain of its brightest. A full 30 per cent of the graduating class – over 500 students – headed to United States for post graduate degrees and better job opportunities in 1998. In the more popular science programs,

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nearly 80 per cent leave for Silicon Valley.\textsuperscript{22} About 300000 Asian Indians work in technology firms in California's Silicon Valley. They account for more than 15 per cent of high-tech start-ups and their average annual income is estimated at $ 200000. There are about 700 Asian Indians owned companies in the Silicon Valley, with more appearing every day. The impact by prominent Asian Indians is nothing short of extraordinary. Vinod Dham, Father of the Pentium Chip, Sabeer Bhatia, founder of Net based email (Hotmail), Vinod Khosla, Kanwal Rekhi and K.B. Chandershekar, are just some of the illustrious names in this field.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{(c) International Finance and Management : -}

In the corporate field, Asian Indians have made strides. However, when it comes to level of top positions of medium and large corporations, Asian Indians have not been able to make much impact. Asian Indians are present in diverse fields as heads from financial services - banking and consultancy to infotech. A new study from the San Francisco-based Public

\textsuperscript{22} Manjeet, Kripalani, Pete Engardio, "IIT Bombay, Universities and Colleges in India", \textit{Business Week}, New Delhi, July 12, 1998.

\textsuperscript{23} Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "\textit{Report of the High level Committee on Indian Diaspora}" Publication Division, New Delhi, 2001, p. 170
Policy Institute of California authored by Ms. Annalee Saxenian, shows that highly skilled Asian immigrants are now senior executives at one quarter of new technology businesses in the tech-heavy valley of south of San-Francisco.24

Pressure-cooker conditions and occasionally chilling winds characterize as well the environment inside the New York Stock Exchange and numerous other trading and financial institutions that line The Street. Working on Wall Street is not for everyone. It requires energy, stamina intelligence, and ambition to a degree that few possess, but among the few, Indians are a prominent presence.

The internationally renowned financial firm of Morgan Stanley alone employs some 140 Asian Indians in its various divisions in New York, according to Business Week. In an article in year 1994 headlined “Suddenly Asian Indians are hot properties on the street,” Business Week said that “Asian Indians have cracked wall Street’s performance-based world” It also quoted Joan C. Zimmerman of G.Z. Stephens Inc., an executive-recruitment firm specializing in Wall Street, who says: “What is interesting is not only their penetration at the managing director

and partner level but also the breath of their capabilities in asset management, sales and trading research, and investing banking.”

Narayan Mani, an analyst at Kidder Peabody, a large investment bank, says, “while the Asian Indians are only about .6 per cent of American Population, about five per cent of Wall Street is already Asian Indian.” If they haven’t gotten much press, it’s because reticence and secrecy shroud America’s corporate finance departments.

Among the reasons often cited for the success of Asian Indians on the trading floors and in the boardrooms of America’s financial capital are their capacity to work hard, ambition, fluency in English, and ability to operate in western-style bureaucracies. Says Ann La Rue, an immigration attorney at the Manhattan law firm of Zurhellen and La Rue, “They are very bright and sophisticated and cosmopolitan, educated in England or here in the United States.” Another reason is the Asian Indians national flair for numbers. As Business Week noted: “with many of the Street’s newest niches – such as derivatives and mortgage-backed securities – depending heavily on mathematical formulas and computer know-how, Asian Indians
have carved out roles for themselves”. Barton M. Biggs, Chairman of Morgan Stanley Asset Management, call Asian Indians “real powerhouse people.”

An equally important though not very often articulated, reason is the fact that most Asian Indians in America, many of whom go there to pursue higher studies, are acutely conscious of the high price of failure in an alien land. They develop resilience, tenacity, and initiative to survive. Yet, it should be noted that such characteristics are common with other immigrants as well. The difference is the high level of education that separates Asian Indians from the other ethnic groups.

Any attempt to understand why Asian Indians chose to work at these financial markets, can be aided by looking at the statements of those people themselves. For instance, Narayan Mani stated that money is usually the prime motivator for ambitious young people to join Wall Street. The second is the prestige that comes with working there. Mani believes that they key characteristics to success on Wall street are “ambition resilience, and hard work – in that order.”

Deepa A. also works in The Wall Street. Vijay Sharma, 30, is the assistant Vice-President in the marketing division of
Deutsche Bank. He says that the whole business is driven by money. Unless you’re interested in money, there’s no great compelling reason to be on Wall Street. I work well under pressure, I like the tension. Now, some people don’t and they experience burnout.” Others point to the fact that if burnout doesn’t get you, a market crash might when the stock market plummeted in 1987, thousands of Wall streeters were laid off, which led to severe crisis for many workers. Yet, Wall Street is becoming more attractive as a destination for Asian Indians.

“Wall Street is becoming more respectable,” says Neela Banerjee, a first generation Asian Indian who has witnessed the explosion of Asian Indian talent there. “Compared with our parents generation when everyone became doctors, engineers, or scientists, now you have more and more young Indians drawn to Wall Street.”

With globalization and the importance of emerging markets, one of the most prominent of which, of course, is India, Wall Street firms can expect more bright, ambitious, and “street-smart” Asian Indians to “search for gold” here. Many of them probably succeed and continue to be there others may also decide to return to India to use their knowledge and expertise to
make megabucks and spur development in the country of their birth.25

(d) Schools and Higher Education :

Several American Universities, including those of the Ivy League, have prominent Asian Indian Faculty member. The trail was blazed in the twenties and thirties by Dr. Sudhindra Nath Bose, Professor of Political Science, Iowa State University and Professor S.L. Joshi from Baroda, Dartmouth College. In the forties, having abandoned his 24 hour self-imposed task of interpreting Mahatma Gandhi and India, Dr. Haridas T. Mazumdar, as Professor of Sociology in Midwestern university and colleges, blazed the trial for new crop of academic professionals. Today scores of professors in various fields in universities and colleges all over the United States including Harvard, M.I.T. and Columbia are of Indian origin.26

The Asian Indians are also teaching in the schools and they are recruited directly from India as well. Michael Vanjani, founder of the New York based Teachers Placement Group, that recruits Indian teachers to teach in America, says a host of

26 Jagat Motwani, Jyoti Barot, Mahine Gosine, 1993, footnote no.15, p. 276

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factors are driving school districts (an administrative unit comprising many primary and secondary schools) to recruit Indian teachers. Their knowledge of subjects – especially Mathematics and Science – as well as the schools' interest is enhancing their cultural diversity make them strong candidates. Vanjni pointed out that American educators feel international teachers need to teach a lot of their schools so that they can learn about the world, not just America. Mrs. Vidya Madadi, a Mathematics teacher from Hyderabad now earns about US $ 36,000 per annum compared to Rs. 50,000 per annum she earned in Hyderabad. Chennai’s Giridhar Reddivari also earns around US $ 35,000 a year. Jemina Tadikonda from Vishakhapatnam teaches in Elkton, Maryland and there are many other who teach in the various schools in different states of America.27 Niharika Tyagi also pointed out that it is easier to teach in the U.S. schools. She had migrated on a dependent visa. She is not employed permanently because she has not passed the examination conducted in the U.S. to be employed permanently.28

28 Interview with Mrs. Niharika Tyagi on October 25, 2003, Herndon, Virginia.
The Asian Indian community has also started to fund chairs on Indian studies, like the chairs on Indian History at Brown University, University of California at Berkeley. Indian Study Centre at State University of New York at Stony Brook, Columbia University, University of Chicago, University of Texas at Austin, University of Michigan and many more. These centers are designed to promote the understanding of India and its culture, not only among Americans, but also among second and future generations of Asian Indians.

(e) **Mainstream Media, Journalism, Writing, Films and Music:**

Prominent journalists, writers, musicians and film-makers from India have also made a noteworthy contribution to the U.S. culture. Asian Indian writing in English is now recognized, with Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* winning the Citizen Prize in 2000, while Bharti Mukharjee, Anita Desai and others won acclaim earlier.

There are many distinguished editors and correspondents for Indian ethnic news journals as well as promising professors of journalism and communication like Dr. Anatham Bobbili, at

29 see [www.lib.berkeley.edu/ssea](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/ssea) University of California, Berkeley.
Texas Christian University and Sreenath Sreenivasan at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Dr. Fareed Zakaria after a distinguished stint as editor of the prestigious *Foreign Affairs* has taken over as editor of *Newsweek*. Pankaj Mishra and Shashi Tharoor write regularly for the *New York Times*. Shyama Patel, the fashion editor of *New York Magazine* is a Harvard University graduate. The other major Asian Indian names in the American media are Subrato Chakravarthy, former assistant managing editor of *Forbes* and now a Boston Consulting Group employee Pranay Gupta, the ebullient editor, publisher and founder of the *Earth Times*, was also elected to the Board of Directors on the American Forum for Global Education, a prestigious organization that helps influence policy-making in education.  

Asian Indians are also becoming more visible in the offices of the *Wall Street Journal*, often called the Bible of Wall Street. Several Asian Indians men and women, work on the Journal. Neela Banerjee, one of the employees said that working

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conditions at the Journal are very relaxed when contrasted with those of stock traders and deal makers.

South Asian Journalists Associations has been formed. It has its members from whole of United States. There are ethnic newspapers, which carry out the ethnic news and issues of concern to them and Indo-US relations. The prominent newspapers are *India Abroad, India This Week, India Post, South Asia Tribune, India West* and *Asian Fortune*. All these have online editions and websites which help connect them to India.

The recognition given to Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan and Zakir Hussain who have settled in the United States, brought Indian music into mainstream consciousness, while Zubin Mehta's success was also a tribute to the talent in the Asian Indian community. Mira Nair's off-beat films on Indian themes have won much acclaim.\(^{32}\) Manoj Night Shyamalan and Shekhar Kapoor have carved a niche for themselves in USA. Indian newspapers have also painted the picture of some of Asian Indians. Jay Chandrashekar, a second generation Asian Indian according to *The Times of India*, had created a stir in Hollywood country with his maiden movie "Puddle Cruiser". This man,

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followed up his first tango with Super Troopers, a comedy which rocked the Sundance Film Festival, said the *Times of India*.\(^{33}\)

There are many Asian Indian actors also like Anjil Nigam played Rahman on NBC’s Silver Strand, Ravi Kapoor was Dr. Sid Shankar on ABC’s prestigious new drama Gideon’s Crossing; Meera Simhan played the recurring role of reporter Andrea Bhutto on CBS’s The District, Purva Bedi played third year medical student Priya Shailendra on the season premiere of NBC’s ER, Kal Penn (who also appeared alongside Purva in Piyush Dinker Pandya’s American Born Confused Desi) appeared as a guest star in Warner Bros’ Sabrina, The Teenage Witch.\(^{34}\)

(f) *Traditional Business* :-

Many Asian Indians are entrepreneurs. In most large American cities, tandoori or other Indian restaurants (vegetarian, South Indian, Mughlai etc) are the most visible signs of this, although in some ethnic neighborhood sari shops, grocery and recorded music stores are prominent. There is an ethnic logic in these businesses but not same is the case in two other niches that Asian Indians have come to occupy disproportionately;


\(^{34}\) Viral Bhayani, 'Nona Walia, “Global Desis”, *The Times of India*, New Delhi, Nov. 12, 2000.
Motel and (Petrol) Stations. Both are ideal for immigrants practicing chain migration in the each is a labor intensive enterprise with relatively small capital requirement and skill. Family, extended family and clan members perform much of the semiskilled labor. Some new arrivals with zeal to stand on their own after learning the trade and raising capital, establish similar business of their own. So much of the Asian Motel business is in the hands of Gujaratis who share the surname Patel that in popular parlance “Hotel, Motel, Patel,” has become a euphemism.

The hotel owners of Indian origin have formed an association called the Asian Indian Hotel Owners Association (AIHOA). The Asian Indians own hotel in every major city of United States. It is estimated that about twenty five per cent of the small motels and hotels are owned by people of Indian origin. They are also members of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), but 90 percent of the members are of Asian Indians.35 It was started in 1989 with a membership of 100 and now the membership has grown to over 8000. In 1994, there were 7200 Asian Indian owners of 12500 hotels in the "economy lodging" segment. In all 720,000 franchised and 175,000

35 Pravin Sheth, 2001, footnote no.6, p. 287
independent rooms were let out in 1995. They currently own over 900,000 hotel rooms nationally, representing 50 percent of the economy lodging sector and 37 percent of all hotels. This is the fastest growing segment in the hospitality industry. They dominate the landscape of hospitality industry in Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Alabama and North Carolina. They had launched a monthly magazine called, AAHOA Lodging Business.

As in the motel ownership saga, the petrol pump ownership story follows the same course. Here too, the requirements are the same – low capital investment and labor intensive unit. In New York City perhaps 40 per cent of all Petrol Stations are now operated by South Asians.

Most of the unskilled immigrants to the United States are working as taxi drivers, factory workers, news stand workers and farmers. The Indian immigrant who are not able to get proper jobs in accordance to their educational qualification start as taxi drivers, cooks in the Indian restaurants and news stand workers. The taxi drivers earn about US $ 125-150 per day and bus

37 see www.aahoa.com, also see Pravin Sheth, 2001, footnote no.6, p. 287-297
38 Interviews with the Asian Indian taxi drivers on October 28, 2003 at the Greenbelt Metro Station, Maryland.
drivers earn US $15 per hour.\textsuperscript{39} The New York City Taxi Workers' Alliance had a membership of more than 5000 in July 2003, about 60 per cent are South Asians. It is headed by Bhairavi Desai and the Alliance works to safeguard the rights of the taxi drivers.\textsuperscript{40}

Employment rates are high among the Asian Indians. Occupational requirements for permanent resident visas and strong educational credentials make finding and holding a job both essential and relatively easy. The overwhelming majority of the men are employed full-time. However, nearly one in ten of the single men were not employed. The higher rates of unemployment appear related to their generally more recent entry into the United States and the fact that some were not looking for employment because of educational commitments.

Many married women are also employed, 40 per cent working full-time, 10 per cent occasionally, and 7 per cent part-time. This is largely a function of their desire to assist financially in the building of a family, and their own education and

\textsuperscript{39} Interview with Mr. Balbir Singh on October 23, 2003 on the way to West Falls Metro Station to Herndon. He earlier worked in an Indian restaurant as a cook. Now he caters food to small Indian parties and drives the bus on contract.

\textsuperscript{40} Ashish Kumar Sen, "Driving Miss Desai", \textit{The Sunday Times}, New Delhi, July 6, 2003.
occupational skills, which give them a considerable competitive advantage in finding employment.\textsuperscript{41}

Three-quarter of these men who had previously been employed in India had worked at professional and technical jobs, most often as engineers, physicians, and other types of health professionals. Nearly one-fifth had been engaged in managerial and administrative work there. This leaves only 6 per cent of the men who had worked in clerical, sales, or manual positions while still in India.

For those who had previously worked in India the transition to the American labor often brought about a change in occupation. Only 60 per cent men had found work in the same occupational title. Others were less able to find positions in the United States suitable to the skills they had developed in India. Many of those in semi-professional occupations outside the health field were in this position. Those trained in Law were also hard put to translate their Indian training into an equivalent American position. For these people, who dropped in occupational status into clerical, sales, and manual positions

upon arriving in the United States, the main outlet was to start one's own business. Indian owned and operated insurance agencies, restaurants, clothing and variety stores, grocery shops, and travel agencies, have been opened in even increasingly numbers in the New York and other metropolitan areas --- most often operated by people who had not been involved in similar occupational endeavors while in India. The Indian entrepreneur had arrived, whose ancestors worked for others, was now employing others, instead of being led, he was a leader.

Physicians were most successful in retaining their occupational status, with 95 per cent of those who practiced medicine in India finding similar positions in the United States. However, for these doctors, and for many other workers described here, while the occupation might remain the same, the work itself often entailed an initial lessening in responsibilities and rewards. Accountants (80 per cent) and engineers (70 per cent) were also found equivalent positions in the transition from India to United States. Of these less likely than average to do so, it was the scientists (28 per cent) who found the transition
particularly difficult, as did those who had worked as managers and administrators when they were in India.\textsuperscript{42}

Those who found their first jobs after arriving fared more poorly than those who arrived with experience. Only 50 per cent of this group found professional jobs compared to 70 per cent of those arriving with experience in any area. Secondly, some 40 per cent of those finding their first jobs in the United States were employed in clerical, sales, and manual positions compared to only 20 per cent of those with Indian work experience. Both groups were about equal in proportion entering managerial and administrative positions. In sum, previous work experience in India resulted in higher entry-level positions in the United States. However, such positions frequently carried lower prestige and less responsibility than their talents and skills might have gained for them in India.

Immigrants as a whole often claim that “bettering” themselves is their prime motivation for establishing residence in a new country. If these results are any indication of the experience of Indians across the United States, their first

encounters with the American occupational system were often considerably less than a fulfillment of that goal.

However, over two-thirds of the Asian Indians found second jobs, with some going through a variety of different types of occupational positions until they reached their present levels. For most of them such movement within the occupation system raised their levels of occupational prestige, responsibility and income.

Comparing first jobs with current ones, nearly three-quarters of Asian Indians remained in the same field. Further, there was a general upgrading of occupational status, with many of the semi-professionals and those with technical occupations becoming physicians, scientists, and engineers of those with managerial and administrative positions in their own or another’s business, 83 per cent remained in that type of work. Their numbers nearly doubled when including those with commercial experience in the United States in clerical, sales and manual work, and a variety of displaced professional and technical workers.43

The overall survey of the economic scene within the Indian Diaspora, does at time obscure the enormous variation, that exists, in the American society. But a practical advantage in studying data regarding Asian Indian in the economic milieu, is that here Asian Indian beliefs and actions are related together in a far more stringent way. The enclosed social world of Indian home or ‘family’ makes it very difficult to pry open and distinguish the interconnection between the personal beliefs of the diasporic community at the one hand and the American society at the other.

Economic prosperity in the United States is often said to be important as a repository and symbol of the central values of the society: individualism, hard work, personal freedom and private enterprise. The Indian diaspora, in its general existence, supports the American way of life – in toto.