

**POLITICAL PROFILE OF ASIAN INDIANS IN
U.S. : A PARTICIPATORY MODEL, 1970-1995**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

RITU CHAUDHRY

**AMERICAN STUDIES DIVISION
CENTRE FOR AMERICAN AND WEST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067
INDIA
1996**

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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

Centre for American And West European Studies
School of International Studies

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
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MODEL, 1970-1995" submitted by Ritu Chaudhry in partial fulfill-
ment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER
OF PHILOSOPHY has not been previously submitted for any other
degree of this or any other university and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed
before the examiners for evaluation.


PROF. R. P. KAUSHIK
Chairperson


PROF. R. P. KAUSHIK
Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is not the result of solo efforts on my part. While going through the process of writing and drafting this body of work I have been guided and helped by a number of individuals. The short-comings of this thesis, however, are my responsibility alone.

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Ritu
(RITU CHAUDHRY)

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PREFACE

The Asian Indian community in the United States represents a growing force. According to the 1990 census, the Asian Indians constitute 0.3 percent of the total population. As a highly educated, relatively affluent community, Asian Indians have the resources to exercise political influence. Any increase in the political influence exercised by the Asian Indians would not only benefit the Asian Indian community but also greatly increase its ability to influence U.S. policy towards India. Thus, considering U.S.A.'s present status as India's single largest trading partner as well as the sole remaining super power, the pattern of Asian Indians' participation in American political system acquires significance both for the community and for India. It is in this context, that this work makes a modest attempt to explore the patterns of political participation in view of the socio - economic status and the resources available to the community.

Chapter I gives a brief overview of the immigration patterns exhibited by Asian Indians over the years, as well as a brief look at certain population statistics. It also examines the historical background of Asian Indians in America and their political efforts in the years preceeding 1970.

Chapter II examines the structure of Asian Indian community in U.S. Emphasis has been put on the socio - economic status and the resources available to the community. This includes an analysis of the educational level, the occupation, the income as well as the time, money and civic skills at the disposal of the community.

Chapter III deals with the activities and programmes of the various Asian Indian political associations which have emerged in America. These associations have attempted to politically mobilize the Asian Indian community in America and have sought to promote the community's political interests.

In Chapter IV, an attempt has been made to understand the patterns exhibited by the Asian Indians, as they attempted to join the political system of U.S. An important factor in this area has been the degree of assimilation and westernization of

the immigrants.

Chapter V examines the links between the resources available to the Indian community and the exhibited patterns of political participation. It also includes in its ambit speculations about future directions of Asian Indians' political involvement.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Asian Indian Community in U.S. represents a growing force. The 1980 census ranked Asian Indians as the fourth largest Asian group in U.S.A., accounting for 11.2 percent of the total Asian population.¹ Even more relevant was the statistical profile indicated by the census report - 52 percent of adult Asian Indians were college graduates; 47 percent of the foreign born workers in the group were managers, professionals, and executives.²

The 1990 census registered an increase in the number to 815,000 persons, accounting for 0.3 percent of the population.³ According to the population projection figures cited in the 1990 census, it is estimated that by 2000 A.D., the Asian Indian population would cross the one million mark.⁴

As a highly educated, relatively affluent community, Asian Indians have the resources to exercise political influence. However, the Asian Indians have exhibited a low level of political participation. Amrita Basu, holds that the non-white, culturally alien status of the Indians may have initially inhibited them from becoming active in the American political process.⁵

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1. Roger Daniels, Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life (New Delhi, 1992), p.363.
 2. Harry Kitano and Roger Daniels, Asian American: Emerging Minorities (New Jersey, 1988) p.99.
 3. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1993 (Washington, D.C., 1993), p.18.
 4. I bid., p.33.

Paradoxically, the same pattern seems to have been reinforced by their economic success. As a prosperous, successful community, most Indians in the U.S. appear quite content with the status quo.

However, since the 70s, Indians have increasingly recognized the benefit they can achieve through political participation. They have also been politicized in the recent years by discrimination in employment and partially more restrictive immigration policies. This growing political awareness is reflected in the emergence of political associations representing the political interests of Indian immigrants.

The years between 1970 and 1995 indicate the flashpoints of Indian community becoming increasingly conscious of its participatory model. It is more particularly discernible in the fund-raising activities pursued by the various Asian Indian political associations in U.S.

These political associations not only articulate the political aspirations of the Asian Indian community but also attempt to influence U.S. policy towards South Asia. Any increase in the political influence exercised by the Asian Indians would not only benefit the Asian Indian community but also greatly increase its ability to influence U.S. policy towards India. Considering U.S.A.'s present status as India's single largest trading partner as well as the sole remaining superpower, the pattern of Asian Indians' participation in American political system acquires a great significance.

In the subsequent chapters, an attempt has been made to examine and explain the different aspects of the pattern of political activity as

5. Amrita Basu, "The Last Wave: Political Involvement of the Indian Community in the United States". A paper presented at the Conference of Indian Immigrants' in the U.S. at New York, Asia Society, (unpublished, New York, 1986), p.1.

exhibited by Asian Indians in U.S. At this point, however, it would be pertinent to examine the historical background of Asian Indian community in America.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of people from India in the U.S. may readily be divided into two parts. A first and relatively small number - around 10,000 persons or so - came mostly around the turn of the century, when India was a unified colony of Great Britain.⁶ A second, much larger increment of persons have come since India and Pakistan became independent in 1947.

The early Sikh migrants to California, perhaps 5,000 strong, first were employed in lumbering and railroad work but soon turned to agriculture, first as labourers and later as proprietors and tenants.⁷ Concentrated mainly in the Imperial Valley in the south and the Sacramento Valley in the north, they became a numerically significant minority. They faced the same kind of legal and extra-legal discrimination as faced by the other Asians. The U.S. naturalization status had made Asians "aliens ineligible for citizenship." The Naturalization Act of 1870 had limited naturalization to "white persons and persons of African descent." Therefore, the Asian Indians were subject to the provisions of alien land laws in California and other states. These laws prohibited the Indians from buying or leasing agricultural land.

The war all but stopped Indian immigration, and in 1917, the American Congress, as a part of an immigration act whose most heated feature was a

6. Kitano and Daniels, n.2, p.89.

7. Ibid., p.90.

largely ineffective literacy test, excluded almost all Asians and all East Indians by means of a so-called barred zone. Although the exclusion was not effected against professionals, ministers, students, religious leaders, and tourist, the period from 1914 to 1946 showed no sizable immigration of East Indians.⁸

The Act of 1946 drastically changed the pattern of immigration from India. Passed by the Congress on July 2, 1946, the Act was the culmination of the efforts of the Indian League of America to utilize two very different streams of sympathy for India that existed in the mind of many Americans. One stream was religious and cultural, the result of exposure to Hindu religious thought through organization like Swami Vivekananda's Vedanta Society and Swami Yogananda's self-realization fellowship. The second streams was political sympathy, which was largely an outgrowth of American tradition of anti-colonialism and was often abetted by strong anti-British feelings on the part of American ethnocultural groups, particularly Irish and German Americans.⁹ The Indian League of America, under the leadership of J.J. Singh, was thus able to secure the passage of the Act of July 2, 1946 which gave the right of naturalization and a small immigration quota to "persons of races indigenous to India."

The Act of 1946 and the Act of 1952 led to a regeneration of the existing Asian India communities. Fewer than seven thousand 'East Indians' [as they were referred to then] entered U.S.A. as immigrants in the period 1948-65, almost all of them non-quota immigrants.¹⁰

However, it was the Act of 1965 which brought about the greatest change in the pattern of Indian immigration. The 1965 Act allowed upto 20,000

8. Ibid., p.93.

9. Ibid., p.96.

10. Daniels, n.1, p.362.

immigrants a year from any country.¹¹ With the sudden increase in immigration rates in the years following 1965, permanent Asian Indian communities began to emerge in cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

ASIAN INDIAN COMMUNITY IN POST - 1970 PERIOD

It is estimated that by 1970, the Asian Indian community in U.S.A. had grown to the strength of 75,000 persons.¹² Given the relatively favourable employment opportunities and the liberalized immigration laws, the Indians who arrived in the U.S. in 1960s and the 1970s were relatively inactive in political movements, parties or the electoral arena. By the 1980s, a vast majority of the Asian Indian population was well-educated and trained professionals who were quickly able to find comfortable employment niches in the American society. However, the 1970s also saw the politicization of Asian Indians, brought about as the direct result of discrimination experienced by them at work and in society at large.

Thus, the 1970s witnessed the emergence of various political and cultural Indian associations.

The onset of the 1980s saw a change in the pattern of immigration from India. The post-1980 migrants were less well educated and trained. This change in the pattern is evinced by the following phenomena: a large number of these migrants have emerged as small businessman - dabbling in the motel business, ethnic food and clothing shops, etc.

11. Kitano and Daniels, n.2, p.16.

12. Daniels, n.1, p.363.

The subsequent chapters deal with the different aspects of political activity exhibited by the Asian Indians in U.S. These chapters would be dealing with the separate aspect of political participation, especially the resources available to the community, the activities of the Asian Indian political associations and, thus, the pattern followed by the Asian Indians in their attempt to enter the political arena in order to express and protect their interests.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ASIAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

Political participation by citizens of any country is determined, to a large extent, by the resources available i.e. time, money, and the requisite civic skills needed for participation. Certain other factors which determine the pattern of political activity include psychological engagement or interest in politics, and the presence of effective recruitment networks through which citizens are mobilized into politics. However, of these determining factors, the resources available to a particular community is the one determining factor which lends itself to quantitative analysis. As such, it becomes important to study, in detail, the structure of any given community.

It is in this context that a knowledge of the structure of Asian Indian community acquires significance. The education received, the occupation practiced and the economic resources, all are significant indicators of potential and actual level of political activity. Also important are factors like family and community cohesion, and cultural values.

Since 1965, great changes have come in the Asian Indian community. Rather than reinforce old communities, the post-1965 migration has created a new community, one that has few connections in ethnicity, class or location with the majority of its early 20th century predecessors.

It is estimated that by 1970 there were about 75,000 Asian Indians in the U.S.A.¹³ The 1980 census-the first specifically to ask about Indian

nationality and ethnicity and the first to denominate them "Asian Indians" - placed the Asian Indian population at 387,223.¹⁴ The 1990 census found the Asian Indian population increased to 815,000 persons, representing 0.3 percent of entire American population.¹⁵

Statistically, these Asian Indians present a profile somewhat different from that of Asian American generally. In 1980, while nearly 60 percent of Asian Indians lived in the Far West, only 19 percent of Asian Indians did.¹⁶ The Asian Indians are more evenly distributed throughout the nation.

EDUCATIONAL PROFILE

The 1980 census indicated that of adult Asian Indians in this country, a startling 52 percent were college graduates, compared to 35 percent of all Asian Americans age 25 and older.¹⁷ More than 93 percent of Asian Indian males aged 25 to 29 and 87.9 percent of similarly aged females were high school graduates.¹⁸ Comparable figures for whites were 87.0 to 87.2; for blacks, 73.8 percent and 76.4 percent; and for Hispanics, 58.4 percent and 59.2 percent.¹⁹ In 1980, 44.5 percent of all Asian Indians aged 20 -24 were enrolled in school.²⁰ The comparable figure for whites was 23.9 percent; for

13. Roger Daniels, Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life (New Delhi, 1992), p.363.

14. Ibid., p.363.

15. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1993 (Washington, D.C., 1993), p.18.

16. Harry Kitano and Roger Daniels, Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities (New Jersey, 1988), p.98.

17. Ibid., p.99.

18. Ibid., p.99.

19. Ibid., p.99.

20. Ibid., p.99.

Chinese and Japanese American the respective percentage were 48.0 and 59.8 percent.²¹

OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE

An occupational profile of the Asian Indian population shows that 47 percent of foreign born workers in the group were managers, professionals, and executives, as opposed to about half that - 24 percent for the white population.²² Even though many of these were not particularly well compensated proprietors, the median income of full-time Asian Indian workers was reported as \$18,079 in 1979, high than the figure for whites or for any other Asian American group.²³ Asian Indian family income, however, while ahead of that of whites, was close to the Asian American norm and lower than that for Japanese Americans, because a significantly smaller percentage of Asian Indian women were in the labour force for the group that the census calls "female family householders", only 58.2 percent of Asian Indian women were in the labour force as oppose to 72.5 percent of such Japanese American women.²⁴

ECONOMIC PROFILE

We have already examined the Asian Indian individual and family income patterns in the preceeding paragraph. At the other end of the economic

21 Ibid., p.99.

22. Ibid., p.99.

23. Ibid., p.99.

24. Ibid., p.99.

spectrum, Asian Indian families were very unlikely to receive public assistance; only 4.5 percent of these families received assistance in 1979.²⁵ Only they among recent Asian immigrant groups had a figure below that for whites, which was 5.9 percent.

For all Asian Indian families with foreign born wage earners (the vast majority of all Asian Indian families), only 5 percent were below the poverty line, a figure lower than that for the foreign born of any other Asian American group.²⁶ For those who emigrated before 1970, the Asian Indian poverty rate was 2.2 percent of all families; for those who came between 1970 and 1975, the figure was 3.2 percent; and for those who came between 1975 and 1980, the poverty rate was 10.7 percent.²⁷

The statistical profile enumerated above indicates a community which is in possession of ample economic, educational, and occupational resources. Based on these statistics, it would not be inaccurate to consider the Asian Indian community as a potentially potent political force. However, it would be premature to make any definite statement without first examining both the post-1980 trends as well as family cohesion and cultural values.

The post-1980 years saw a shift in the patterns of Indian migration to U.S.A. This change in the pattern of Asian Indian immigration was visible in the fact that a much smaller number of professionals immigrated. A large portion of the post-1980 immigrants are self-employed in small businesses. One of the occupational niches occupied by these later immigrant have been hotel and motel operations. It is estimated that two-fifths of all the motels in the Interstate 75 association are owned and operated by Asian Indians, often as a part of national franchise.²⁸ Other small businesses set up by

25. Ibid., p.99.

26. Ibid., p.99.

27. Ibid., p.100.

these later immigrants include ethnic food and clothing stores, and owning of kiosks in New York subways. This group is less affluent and less westernized than the earlier Indian immigrants. It is also more socially and culturally insulated from American society.

An important result of this social and cultural insulation was an increased emphasis on, ethnic family values and culture, coupled with apathy towards the American political processes. Asian Indian families have always been remarkably stable. In 1980, for example, 92.7 percent of all Asian Indian children under eighteen years of age lived in a two-parent household.²⁹ This pattern seems to have been reinforced in the post-1980 period with emphasis on retaining indigenous Indian cultural values. This attitude is best reflected in a statement made by Hardayal Singh, an Asian Indian settled in New Jersey and working as a security guard for a medical center. Talking about his plans for his daughter (an American citizen by birth), he says, "We plan to send her back to India... We wish her to adopt Indian culture... We will choose a husband for her..."³⁰

Therefore, it would not be erroneous to say that though the Asian Indian community exhibits the potential for significant political presence, the social and cultural isolation of the later migrants from American society, as well as their apathy towards the political system are issues that have to be carefully dealt with in order to maximize the political clout wielded by the community.

28. Ibid., p.101.

29. Ibid., p.101.

30. Joann F.J. Lee, Asian American Experiences in the United States (North Carolina, 1991), p.113.

CHAPTER III

ASIAN INDIAN POLITICAL ASSOCIATION: THEIR EVOLUTION AND IMPACT

Political Associations comprise an important part of a recruitment network through which citizens are mobilized into politics. Along with the necessary resources i.e. time, money and civic skills, they determine the extent and the patterns of political participation by the citizens. Therefore, an understanding is necessary in order to better evaluate the patterns of political activity exhibited by the Asian Indian community.

EMERGENCE OF ASIAN INDIAN POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Although the early decades of this century saw the emergence of a few political associations within the Asian Indian community, particularly those formed with a view to work for the freedom of India, it was only in the years following 1965 that a large number of cultural and political associations emerged. With the sudden increase in immigration rates in the post-1965 years, permanent Indian Communities began to emerge in cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. With the establishment of a permanent Indian community in U.S., social and cultural organizations emerged. The same could broadly be classified as:

(1) Pan-Indian Organizations:- These organizations had a limited membership and their leaders were migrants who had arrived before 1965. The member of

these organizations were eager to give up Indian linguistic differences and adapt fully to the society and culture of United States. The Indian League of America was one such organization.

(2) Cultural Organizations:- These were the associations organized on Indian linguistic and regional basis. The members were reluctant to give up on their Indian identity. These organizations enjoyed a wide membership and were led by immigrants who arrived after 1965. The Association of Indian Muslims of India (AIM) founded in 1985, and East West Cultural Center (EWCC) founded in 1953 are both examples of such cultural organizations.

(3) Political Organizations:- These organizations had a mixed membership and leadership. They attempted to establish liaison with both the Republican and the Democratic parties, though the latter was preferred. The National Association of Americans of Asian Indians Descent (N.A.A.A.I.D) founded in 1980 was one such association.

The formation of these organizations marked the beginning of cultural and political organization of the Asian Indian community. Most of the Indian associations which were formed in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, were particularistic in character, catering to specific regional, religious, and linguistic groups rather than to Indians as a whole. In the recent years, four national Indian associations have departed from this pattern. They have sought to coordinate their activities transcend parochial, sub-national identities in favour of representing the entire Indian community and, most significantly, to represent the political interest of Indian immigrants.

THE NATIONAL INDIAN ASSOCIATIONS

The four major national, political Indian associations are: the Association of Asian Indians in America (AAIA), the National Federation of Asian Indians in America (NFIAA), the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), and the National Association of Americans of Asian Indian Descent (NAAAID).

The AAIA, which was formed in 1967, is the oldest Indian association in America. Today it claims 4,000 members.³¹ Its two most noteworthy political activities are attempts to influence U.S. policy toward South Asia and (successful) efforts to enumerate Asian Indians in the 1980 census. It was during the achievement of the latter that an intragroup conflict regarding the role of Indians in American society was highlighted. The AAIA believed that gaining a minority group status would win benefits for Asian Indians in employment, housing, education, and with respect to loans and health services. But another group, the Indian League of America, opposed the drive towards the minority status, believing that such a designation would provoke hostility from whites, blacks, and hispanics against Asian Indian, who, among all immigrant groups, were the most highly educated and skilled. The AAIA won a victory when the U.S. Small Business Administration concluded that Asian Indians were a "socially disadvantaged minority group" and would be eligible for the agency's programme to promote minority entrepreneurship.

The NFIAA, which was formed in 1971 but renamed and reorganized in 1977, is a federated body of sixty associations. The NFIAA has been more

31. Amrita Basu, "The Last Wave: Political Involvement of the Indian Community in the United States", A paper presented at the Conference of Indian Immigrants in the U.S. at New York, Asia Society, (unpublished, New York, 1986), p. 5.

members of immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere (in accordance with the 1965 Immigration Act).

Second, Indian associations have organized against a provision of the Deficit Reduction Amendment, sponsored in 1985 by Senators Dole and Durenberger, to substantially cut medicare funding to hospitals which employ foreign medical graduates. This measure would have had especially serious consequences for the 20,000 to 25,000 Indian doctors in the U.S. - the largest group of foreign medical graduates in the country. The revised bill, which was passed in March 1986, will not affect practicing physicians. Moreover, medicare funding will not be cut if foreign medical graduates pass the Medical Graduates Exam in Medical Sciences.

Alongside attempts to promote the community's political interests, these associations have attempted to improve the American image of India and Indo-U.S. relations. To do so, they have explicated Indian domestic and foreign policy objectives to American officials and urged a change in U.S. policy towards Pakistan.

Thus, Indian associations have clearly increased their political efficacy in a relatively short period of time. They have gained a sympathetic hearing from the legislature and the executive. In fact, senator Simpson commended Indian associations for persuading him that the preference system of the Immigration Act of 1965 should remain unchanged.

The relatively high political visibility achieved by the Indian associations can be explained by referring to the ambivalent status of Asian Indians: on one hand a minority subject to discrimination, and yet a model minority. It is important to emphasize that Indians constitute a model minority not only with respect to their high levels of education and affluence

but also their attitudes and action. Asian Indians have generally been uncritical of the American political system and have used institutional channels in formal political arena. The moderation exercised by Asian Indians in the political field, coupled with the fact that both the Democratic and the Republican parties stand to gain from the support of this hitherto politically uncommitted, growing, affluent community thus explains the favourable official response that the Asian Indian associations have been accorded.

CHAPTER - IV

PATTERNS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY WITHIN THE ASIAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

The Asian Indian Community in the United States is a highly educated and relatively affluent community. As we have discussed in the preceding chapters, the Asians Indians have both the resources as well as the required mobilization network, in the form of active and visible political associations, to exercise considerable political influence. Therefore, the relatively low level of political participation among Asian Indians in the U.S. constitutes a puzzle for students of ethnic politics.

Indians' non-white, culturally alien status may have inhibited them from becoming active in American political system. Yet paradoxically, if feelings of marginality inhibited Indians' political involvement, so too did their economic success. As a prosperous successful community, most Indians in U.S. appear quite content with the status quo.

Yet if the predominant pattern has been one of political inactivity, there are clear trends in the opposite direction. Indians have increasingly recognised the benefits they can receive through political participation. They also been politicized in the recent years by discrimination in employment and potentially more restrictive immigration policies. Before examining the prevailing pattern of political participation, it would not be remiss to briefly consider the historical background of politicization of Asian Indians.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The pattern described above, i.e. the politicization of Asian Indian community as a result of experience or anticipation of discrimination, has powerful historical analogies.

The first Indian immigrants, Sikhs who settled in California in the early 20th century, were similarly politicized by discrimination. In 1907 a series of race riots were directed against the "rag heads" as Sikhs were demeaningly called.³² Although such brutality ceased, acute forms of discrimination persisted. As small as the Indian community in the U.S. was, it formed several associations to fight for its rights: the Indian League of America, the Indian Association for American citizenship, the Indian National Congress Association of America and the Indian Welfare League.

It was the Indian League of America, under the leadership of J.J. Singh, which was able to secure the naturalization rights and a small immigration quota for the Indians [Act of July 2, 1946].

The most spectacular individual Asian Indian beneficiary of the 1946 Act was Dalip Singh Saund. Soon after becoming a citizen, Saund was elected to Congress as a Democrat. Taking office in January 1957, Saund became the first Asian American Congressperson. He was twice re-elected but was defeated in 1962 after a stroke confined him to a hospital bed.

32. Joan M. Jensen, *Passage From India: Asian American Immigrants in North America* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 42-53.

POLITICIZATION OF ASIAN INDIANS: 1970-80

The pattern, described above, of the politicization of Asian Indians as a result of the actual experience or anticipation of discrimination held true in the post - 1970 period.

For newly arrived immigrants, the major priorities were to adjust socially and establish themselves professionally. The cultural and religious organizational activities in which Indians engaged through the 1970s eased the pain of separation from their home land. Such activities may have further deterred political participation by insulating Indian from American society.

Over time, Indian American society to have been politicized by two seemingly contrary forces. On the other hand their sense of security and efficacy increased. Thus the most politically prominent individuals have been here for a relatively long period of time.

On the other hand, Indians have also been politicized by their growing experience of discrimination in employment. Many professionals who arrived in the U.S. in late 1960s and early 70s found jobs for which they were over qualified. Yet they accepted sacrifices in status and responsibility because they were able to find employment which entailed prospects for mobility and improved working conditions and higher salaries, compared to their previous jobs. However, in the 80s and 90s, the jobs open to Indians in several professions have shrunk. A study conducted by Robert Oxnam in 1986 indicated that occupational discrimination and disappointment is common for Asians in America. Discrimination and racism erects what if called a "glass barrier", effectively shutting out a large number of Asians from the top level of management and organization.

Thus, the later half of the 1970s and 1980s saw the earlier pattern being repeated: the relatively politically inactive migrants who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s to favourable employment opportunities, when faced with increased job discrimination and potentially more restrictive immigration policies formed larger, stronger and more politically active Indian associations.

The emergence of Asian Indian political associations as well as their political activities and efficacy have been discussed in Chapter III. At this point it would suffice to refer again to the reason these associations achieved relatively high political visibility. As mentioned earlier, the Asian Indian find themselves in the paradoxical position of being a minority subject to discrimination, and yet being considered a model minority. This perception of Asian Indians as a model community is based on the moderation exhibited by them in the political arena. However, in the years since 1980, there has been a growing rift between middle class professionals and the affluent Indians. The Indian community can only be a model community as long as it is highly educated and prosperous. Many professionals fear that this status will be jeopardized by the changing character of percent immigrants.

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An examination of the changing character of immigrants since 1980 is required to better understand the changes in patterns of political activity. The most striking difference between the earlier and recent immigrants is the far smaller number of professionals in the latter group. A large proportion of the new arrivals are self-employed in small businesses, many of which cater to the Indian community: food shops, restaurants, news stands, movie

theaters, and travel agencies. Over all this group is less affluent than the earlier, largely professional Indian immigrants. It is also less westernized. Both these factors have had an impact on the political aspirations and actions of these immigrants.

These recent Indian immigrants have been relatively politically inactive. Association members claim that this group is politically apathetic. Conversely, several of the post - 1980 immigrants claim that the associations made little effort to include them. Rather they hold that association members tended to look down of them.

Several factors have contributed to the political quiescence of immigrants who came to U.S.A. after 1980. Due to the shorter duration of their stay in the U.S. and their lesser degree of assimilation and westernization, this group is lacking in a sense of political efficacy. It is also more insulated from American society than middle class professionals, socially and culturally, by virtue of residing among other Indians and by being self-employed. Such insulation, however, has not always protected recent immigrants from competitive and hostile relations with other ethnic minorities in the same businesses.

The insularity of recent immigrants has often been linked to strong regional, linguistic, and ethnic identities. Given the growing sub-national conflict in India, it is probable that the recent immigrants have greater sub-national identifications than Indians who arrived in the U.S. in 1960s and 1970s. This, in turn, has meant that certain political issues- such as Indo-U.S. relations- are unlikely to concern them.

Thus, two disparate political trends can be identified within the Indian community. On the one hand, middle class professionals have become

increasingly politically unified. Yet as the community has grown in size and diversity, possibilities for coordinated political organizing across class, ethnic and religious lines have become more difficult to achieve.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, an attempt has been made to examine and analyse the political profile of Asian Indians. In order to better understand the mode and extent of political participation, by the Asian Indians, in the political system of United State, the resources available to the community have been scrutinized. This chapter will examine, in brief, the nexus between these resources and the mode of political participation. Further, it would than speculate about future directions of Asian Indians' political involvement.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AS A FUNCTION OF ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS

As has been mentioned in Chapter II, the Asian Indians are a highly educated and affluent group. The community has a higher percentage of college and high school graduates than any other Asian American community. The 1980 census records that the Asian Indians have a higher percentage of students enrolled in schools than the whites, although the Chinese and the Japanese record a still higher percentage.

The occupational profile of the community shows that the percentage of individuals working in managerial positions is about twice the percentage for the white population. The Asian Indian family income was ahead of the whites,

although it was close to the Asian American norm. Also, the Indian community had an extremely low percentage of families needing state assistance.

At this point, it would be pertinent to point out that this economically affluent community did not become politically active till the 1970s. In fact it appears that their aforementioned privileged status actually inhibited their political involvement. Indians were among the few immigrant communities in the U.S. who did not flee from poverty or political repression. Rather they left behind material comforts and political freedoms. Thus, in the U.S. in the early years their major priority was professional success and not political agitation.

It was only in the late 1960s and 1970s that they started getting politicized. One of the major catalysts was the fact that not only had the employment opportunities open to the Indians had decreased, but a large number of middle class professionals had encountered increased obstacles to professional advancement. Coupled with their increased sense of security and efficacy (as a result of their relatively long sojourn in the U.S.), this led to the politicization of these immigrants.

This trend towards politicization suffered a setback in the years following 1980. Most of the post - 1980 immigrants were not professionals. A large number of these immigrants set up small businesses. This group is not only less affluent than the earlier immigrants, it is also more socially and culturally isolated from American society. As a result, this group exhibits apathy towards the American political processes.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THE ASIAN INDIAN POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

It was in the years following 1965 that a large number of cultural and political associations emerged. Most of the Indian associations which emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s were particularistic in character, catering to specific regional, religious, and linguistic groups rather than to Indians as a whole. However, in the recent years four national Indian associations departed from this pattern, seeking to represent the political interest of the Asian Indian community as a whole. These four major national association are: the Association of Asian Indians in America (AAIA), the National Federation of Asian Indians Associations (NFIAA), the Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), and the National Association of Americans of Asian Indians Descent (NAAAID). The details of the membership and activities of these associations have been dealt with in Chapter III.

Two issues which have mobilized the Indian association are the Simpson - Mazoli Bill and the Defection Reduction Amendment. Both these issues were satisfactorily resolved due to the efforts of these associations. These associations have also attempted to improve both the American image of India and Indo-U.S. relations.

Indian association have clearly increased their political efficacy in a relatively short period of time. As has been discussed in Chapter III, this phenomenon is the result of dual perception about the community - both a minority subject to discrimination and a "model minority". This perception of Indians as a model minority is strengthened by the fact that they have used only institutional channels in the formal political arena and have rejected agitational tactics. However, it would be pertinent to point out that the Indian community can only be a model minority as long as it is highly educated

and prosperous. Most of the immigrants who arrived after 1980 are neither highly educated nor very affluent. It, therefore, appears doubtful that they would favor the moderate tactics used by these association. With the use of more radical tactics and, thus, with the deviation from the behavior pattern of a "model minority", it is feared that the response of American authorities, to the demands of Indian associations, would no longer be as positive or prompt.

FUTURE TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

The extent and character of Indians' future political activity in the U.S. hinges upon at least three sets of developments. The first concerns the number and socioeconomic background of future Indian immigrants. As we have seen, immigrants' political concerns differ according to their occupations. Although middle class professionals have become politically active in face of discrimination, they have demonstrated moderation in their political methods and goals. Self-employed immigrants are unlikely to behave like a model minority.

The second factor concerns economic and political developments in the U.S. Perhaps most important is the state of the economy, which will shape opportunities for employment and advancement in business and the professions. A related but distinct issue is the general political climate as well as the administration's attitude toward the entry, employment, and social standing of ethnic and racial minorities. Additionally, an important question will be the two parties' responsiveness to the concerns of Indian immigrants.

The third factor concerns political developments in the sub-continent. In India as in the U.S., the state of the economy and the government's approach to matters concerning ethnic and religious minorities are of particular significance. They will influence future patterns of out-migration and the situation of Indian immigrants who are presently in the U.S. The character of the Indo-U.S. relations is also likely to play an important role. Thus while Indian immigrants have forged an autonomous political identity, it is important to emphasize the extent to which they are situated at the intersection of far larger historical forces in the U.S. and in India.

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