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# Journey to America: South Asian Diaspora Migration to the United States (1965–2015)

*John P. Williams*

## Abstract

This chapter examines the immigration of South Asian and Indian populations to the United States between 1820 and 2015. More specifically, this effort scrutinizes legislative changes in immigration policy enabling this group to become the second largest immigrant group after Mexicans in the United States. These changes include the following: the removal of national origin quotas, the introduction of temporary skilled worker programs, and the creation of employment-based permanent visas. Because of these policy changes, by 2015, South Asian immigrants, primarily Indians, had become the top recipients of high-skilled H-1B temporary visas and were the second-largest group of international students in the United States. All told, this study will answer the following questions: What are the origins and demographics of these emigrants who make up the South Asia diaspora? What fields of endeavor are they drawn to by their prior education and skill sets? To what geographic locations have they migrated? And how successful are they in assimilating into their new surroundings?

**Keywords:** assimilation, diaspora, immigration, xenophobia, sojourners, US supreme court, H-1B visa

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the diversity within the Asian-American population and their varied, often contrasting, patterns of immigration and experiences have been recognized and underscored in American multi-cultural studies. While the bulk of these work have centered on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean experiences, a new group from across the Pacific has emerged. This group consists of arrivees from India numbering in the millions between 1965 and 2015 with a separate racial identity and demographic status along with two distinct advantages over their Asian brethren—with higher levels of education and income levels ([1], p. 131).

Over 31 million people of Indian birth or descent are part of the Indian diaspora spread around the globe. Their social and cultural diversity is represented in 33 major languages and some 1500 minor ones, seven major religions, and a mélange of six major ethnic groups [1]. Included in this group is more than three million

Indian Americans, or 1% of the total US population.<sup>1</sup> This makes foreign born Indians the second largest immigrant group after Mexicans, who account for almost 6% of the 43.3 million foreign born population ([2], p. 1).<sup>2</sup>

These numbers tell only half of the story. Not only are these migrants doing well, they are inclined to stay connected with their homeland through investments, philanthropy, and personal involvement. For most emigrants who have traveled from India to other parts of the world, they see it as their obligation and a welcome responsibility. The Indian diaspora has established countless highly organized, well-funded, and professionally managed outreach groups for Indian immigrants. These organizations address a broad range of issues and take on many different forms, include philanthropic projects to improve health and education in India, advocacy organizations business and professional networks, media outlets, and societies for the promotion of Indian culture, language, and religion.

Studies of Indian migrants to the United States are often relegated to the field of “third world” or “developing nations” studies. However, given the relative success of these immigrants, they must now be understood in the same context as that of early Western European, East Asian, and recent West African migrants.

Asian Indians are by far the richest and most educated ethnic group in one of the richest and most powerful nations in the world. They are disproportionately employed in high-status, high-skill professions. Their median household income is nearly twice as high as that of white households in the US, and they attain graduate and professional degrees at nearly four times higher than whites. They furnish over 10% of the labor force in computer-related and many other technical fields. These successes have also led to them to the boardrooms and executive offices of some of the most iconic US corporations, including Microsoft, Google, Adobe, PepsiCo, MasterCard, and Citibank. It can be argued they have become a model minority in America since Indian Americans have some of the lowest rates of poverty, incarceration, divorce, and reliance on public welfare in the nation ([3], p. x).

## **2. In the beginning**

The earliest recorded Indian emigrant to the United States was from Madras, who traveled to Massachusetts in 1790. A number of Indians were brought to the United States by seafaring Captains who worked for the East India Company to serve in their households as servants. Only a trickle of other Indian merchants, seaman, travelers, and missionaries followed, amounting to a total population of less than a 1000 by 1900 ([4], p. 3). Many of these transplants were born in British-ruled India after having either completed their military service or jumped ship in port ([5], p. 2).

By 1910, the number of Indian immigrants slowly rose to 3000, having settled on the Pacific Coast as agricultural workers. Many were Sikhs from Punjab seeking better fortunes in the West. Additional immigrants would come and work on the Western Pacific railroad and take employment in the lumber mills of Washington State ([4], p. 3).

<sup>1</sup> In 1907 there were less than 4000 Asian Indians living in America. The first anti-immigration law was passed in 1882, The Chinese Exclusion Act. In 1913, California passed the Alien Land law, mainly targeting Japanese immigrants, after California's attorney general also barred Indians from owning property in the state. The “Hindu invasion” as it was called contributed greatly to many stereotypes and various forms of discrimination.

<sup>2</sup> The United States is the third most popular destination for Indian emigrants worldwide, after the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. Other top destinations include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Kingdom.

With the rising numbers of Asians on the West Coast, racist attacks soon followed. White Americans would single out Chinese, Japanese, and Indians as threats to employment opportunities, land acquisition, and American culture. Organizations such as the Asiatic Exclusion League and the American Federation of Labor stepped up their attacks in the media and lobbied for laws excluding them from housing, education, and labor. Sadly, many Indians were accosted with verbal taunts where they were called “ragheads” or deemed the “Hindu Menace” ([6], p. 5).<sup>3</sup>

In the early twentieth century, hundreds of South Asians, mostly Sikhs but also many Muslims, came to North America from Punjab—the vast majority of them former soldiers who had served in the British colonial army in East Asia. While many Indian laborers came as “sojourners” rather than as settlers; they lived frugally, and their sole object being to return to India with their savings [6]. Instead of returning home to a farming economy under severe stress due to British colonial practices, they sought their fortunes in various settlements on the West Coast, between Vancouver and San Francisco.

Within a few years, many more migrants from Punjab soon followed, establishing the first Indian community in the United States while working on the Western Pacific Railroad, in lumber and construction, or as agricultural laborers. The owners of these industries valued the migrant Indian laborers because they worked long hours for lower wages (about half) than their European immigrant counterparts and showed deep appreciation for the opportunity to work and pursue the American Dream.

While Asian Indian migrants were settling on the West Coast in various jobs, other Indian migrants were settling on the East Coast. These recent transplants, a few Muslim traders from Bengal, began peddling “exotic” wares from India, such as embroidered silks, rugs, and perfumes. While many stayed on the East Coast, others moved inland to cities in the Midwest and in the Deep South. Port cities such as New York City, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Charleston were also popular destinations for many Bengali Muslim sailors who jumped British ships.

Another contingent of migrants from India included university students who came to America to study mathematics, science, engineering, medicine, and law.<sup>4</sup> Many Indian students came to study at the University of California at Berkeley on the West Coast and several Ivy League schools on the East Coast. However, their numbers started to decrease when both the United States and British governments started to cooperate in limiting Indian immigration. Even though the number of students migrating to America for educational purposes was stunted, Indian American immigrants still sought educational opportunities when given the chance ([7], p. 3).

### 3. Anti-Asian sentiment

With the rise of hostilities toward Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Jews who had immigrated to America from eastern and southern Europe, provoking strong xenophobic and nativist hostilities, South Asians also attracted this hostility as well. Fewer than 5000 of them lived in the United States in 1920. This was largely the by-product of them being seen as competitive labor, willing to do local jobs for less pay, and partly because of rampant racism and anti-Asian sentiment.

<sup>3</sup> The use of “Hindu” as a pejorative label for Indian Americans has historical antecedents in the United States and Canada and can be traced to the arrival of the first wave of Indian immigrants in Washington state and later California in the early twentieth century.

<sup>4</sup> An excellent example of an Indian immigrant who took advantage of educational opportunities in America would be Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the future Dalit icon and architect of the Indian constitution, attended Columbia University as a PhD student, in New York City between 1913 and 1916.



These sentiments were the strongest on the West Coast as Indian Americans soon became the newest Asian immigrant group to be targeted by the Asiatic Exclusion League, a San Francisco-based group that successfully pressured immigration officials to deny admission to Indian immigrants by describing “Hindus” as enslaved, effeminate, caste-ridden, and degraded ([6], p. 7). This effort by the Asiatic Exclusion League contributed greatly to xenophobic and racist attitudes directed to East Indians on the West Coast and inspired legislative initiatives to restrict their immigration. Considered the “new menace” by legislators, they were the target of the immigration restriction law of 1917 which led to an “Asiatic barred zone” and mass deportations [6].<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that some 1700 Indians were deported and 1400 left voluntarily.

These anti-Asian sentiments historically were rooted in the backlash associated with the Fourteenth Amendment passed shortly after the Civil War. This Amendment extended citizenship to all African Americans and to anyone born in the United States, including children of Indians and other immigrants. However, only white immigrants could become “naturalized”—granted US citizenship after migrating to the country and fulfilling a set of eligibility criteria. For the next 50 years, very few foreign-born Indian immigrants had become US citizens by exploiting ambiguities in the pseudoscientific race theories of the time, by claiming “north Indian Aryan” ethnicity and hence membership among Caucasians and “free whites.” This loophole was closed for them in 1923 with the passage of the important US Supreme Court ruling.

In *United States vs. Bhaga Singh Thind* (1923), the High Court ruled that while Indians may be Caucasian, they were not white “in the understanding of the common man,” and that this prevailing view would be backed by the law. According to *The Other One Percent* authors, following the judgment the US government took away the right to naturalization from Indian Americans, and even revoked the citizenship of these who had been already naturalized. Sadly, this ruling even took away citizenship from those Indian Americans who had served in the US military ([5], p. 2).

This ruling and subsequent application greatly impacted the daily lives of many naturalized Indian American citizens. They were shut out of white-only schools, swimming pools, and barbershops. White American women who had married Indian men lost their citizenship, becoming stateless in their own country. In turn, this led to many couples not being allowed to marry due to statutes banning marriage between white people and non-white people. Congress went one step further by passing the Immigration Act of 1924, which instituted race-based quotas for immigrants and entirely banned the immigration of Indians as well. In the face of this discrimination and limited opportunities in the United States, many Indians returned to India ([5], p. 3).

After two decades, the Indian population in the United States had reached an all-time low after steady growth prior to 1924 ([4], p. 3).<sup>6</sup> Not only were the numbers low in relation to the general population but so was their educational attainment, as they ranked the lowest among all racial and ethnic groups. However, it would soon start to change as the US government relaxed its ban on Indian immigration to the United States and more economic opportunities opened up for them. The population

<sup>5</sup> While many Asian Indians were deported or left voluntarily, others immigrated to the United States illegally through Mexico.

<sup>6</sup> Bowing to pressures from west coast laborers who contested unlimited immigration from Asia was hurting their employment and economic opportunities, the US Congress passed exclusion laws in 1917 and 1924 which brought Indian immigration to a standstill. It was not until 1946 that Asian quotas were relaxed allowing over 6000 Indians to enter the US between 1946 and 1965.

of Indian Americans would grow steadily by a few hundred, for the next decade with many of them coming from Gujarat, India, and relocating to northern California, mobilizing their caste and kin networks. By 1960, there were over 13,000 Indian Americans in the United States, and their numbers were growing steadily.

#### 4. Post-1965 immigration

By far, the biggest boom to increasing Asian Indian migration to the United States was the passage of the US Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which scrapped the old immigration system completely. This law replaced the old quota system established in the 1920s based on racial and national traits favoring the Global South and Europeans over others, with a system that gave preference to immigrants with specific, in-demand skills in the United States, as well as those who already had family members in the country or who were fleeing persecution.<sup>7</sup>

The passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 opened up the possibility for larger-scale immigration from Asia. This important legislation laid down the legal foundation for future immigration to the United States. The act was significant in two important ways: it abolished discrimination based on race and nation of origin for the purposes of admission and created three major categories—family reunification, professional skills, and refugee status ([8], p. 26). These reforms would remain the primary basis for immigration policy the next 25 years. As some critics would charge, the Emma Lazarus’ mantra “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses” was no longer applicable as this new immigration bill actively recruited a special population to come to America. It was replaced by the maxim “give me your brightest and best.”

The change to the old immigration system was largely attributed to two forces going in the United States in the early 1960s. The first was a shift driven by progressive ideas about racial equality advanced by the US civil rights movement, which helped remove the bias in early immigration policies that favored white European immigrants. The second was largely attributed to the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States, to accelerate its national economic growth, sought out highly skilled workers particularly in technical fields. This in turn led to a boom for Indian immigrants who possessed many of the skills needed to fuel this growth. As the authors of *The Other One Percent* contend, the story of Asian Indian migration to the United States after 1965 is largely one of selection ([8], p. xii). Great emphasis was placed in allowing immigrants to come to America who had something to offer in way of technical skills and services that could directly benefit the American economy and help the government wage the Cold War. All told, post-1965 South Asian immigration was largely dominated by high educated and skilled professions who were able to circumvent earlier episodes of exclusion, racial hostility, and denial of citizenship shown other Asian immigrants’ peasants and laborers who had immigrated earlier to the United States ([8], p. 20).

The post-1965 immigration of Indians coming from India to America is identified by three classifications. The first group called the *Early Movers* (from

<sup>7</sup> While major emphasis was placed in encouraging immigrants to come to America who had backgrounds and skills in high technology related to waging the Cold War, the need for more health care professionals to meet the demands of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society. These demands included staffing programs such as Medicaid and Medicare with additional doctors nurses.

the mid-1960s to the late 1970s) was highly educated, with over 45% of them having acquired professional degrees in medicine, engineering, and computer science (now called STEM fields). There was greater variance in the human capital of the *Families cohorts*, beginning in 1980s to the mid-1990s, as family unification was the driving force for even higher numbers of Indians migrating to America from India. Most recent immigration from India constitutes what the authors of *The Other One Percent* call *The IT Generation*, a group that benefit greatly from the high demand of the information technology sector or other science and technology (STEM) fields. This group migrated in much higher numbers—at five times the rate of the Early Movers and twice the rate of The Families ([8], p. xii).

The authors of *The Other One Percent* also argue that this selection represents a form of “triple selection” that would in turn create unique population of recent Indian immigrants to the United States ([8], p. xii).<sup>8</sup> The first selection is the by-product of India’s social hierarchies and historical discrimination selected certain groups like the Brahmins and other “high” or “dominant” castes for education, ranging from primary levels to college ([5], p. 3).<sup>9</sup> The second one is the rationing of the seats in higher education that created a high stakes, examination-based selection from within the already select group. Third, the US immigration system selected within this doubly selected group when it favored skills, especially skills in engineering and technology, as the basis for awarding employment and students. Ultimately, the majority of Asian Indians who came to the United States after 1965, were triple selected, which benefitted both the immigrants who were trying to improve their lot in life and the United States who needed their technical expertise. This talent pool was comprised almost wholly of men from elite castes and classes, who were only too eager to escape from a country that could not offer them enough opportunity to apply their skills. All told, the demands of the US labor market were able to tap into a ready supply of high technical and skilled candidates. Other subgroups coming to America from India included entrepreneurial spirits who started out as taxi drivers in New York or motel owners of Gujarati origins who would eventually make into the American middle class ([3], p. xiii).

Another factor contributing greatly to mass migration of highly skilled, educated, and talented Indians to America was distance. Distance kept Indians with low human capital from entering the United States illegally in very large numbers (in contrast to illegal immigrants from proximate locations like Mexico and Central America). Another key factor in this immigration was India’s democracy, meaning that a vast majority of those who left did so voluntarily, unlike many other migrants from other developing countries who came as refugees or asylum seekers escaping political chaos or persecution ([3], p. xiii). These characteristics, in combination with the very high volume of skilled labor immigration after 1995, made Indian immigrants “outliers” in the degree to which higher education, especially

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<sup>8</sup> The authors of *The Other One Percent* argue that Indian immigrants enjoyed many suitable characteristics that allowed them to be not only allowed to leave India but also suitable for admission to the United States. These characteristics include age, gender, education, religion, and language. They also note that the Indians also possessed other notable and non-observable traits as well (such as ambition, grit, and luck).

<sup>9</sup> The Indian government invested heavily in English-speaking, higher education in science and technology. In places such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, admissions were mostly fed by urban, English-speaking private schools, even while grossly neglecting public primary education. As a result, this system produced tens of thousands of engineers at the same time that the majority of its citizens were functionally illiterate.



in technical fields, and the US labor market played a larger role relative to other selection mechanisms of US immigration policy.<sup>10</sup>

All told, the factors that came together to encourage so many Indians to migrate to America center on: education (Indian-born population are three times more educated than that in the host country and nine times more educated than the home country's population), class and caste (favoring large margins of upper and dominant classes and castes in India), profession (engineering, IT, and health care), and both the region of origin (Gujarati and Punjabi in the first and second, and Telugu and Tamil in the third phase), and region of settlement (in specific metropolitan clusters in and around New York City, the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Houston, and Dallas) ([3], p. xiii).

Another contributing factor to the selection of Indians and their success in America is their higher proclivity to live in married-couple households, more than any other major immigrant group. This aids in the advantage of keeping the Indian-American poverty-level low (under 5%) and family income high (the highest in the United States) ([3], p. xiii). In addition, there exists a great deal social capital among highly successful ethnic groups, such as linguistic/professional networks like Gujarati entrepreneurs in the hotel industry, Telugu and Tamil workers in IT industry, IIT engineers, Malayali nurses, Bengali academics, etc. Some low-income groups did exist, such as Punjabi taxi drivers in New York, where they did manage to create some social capital (bonding). Even in cases where kinship or linguistic affiliation was lacking, doctors and engineers of Indian descent still managed to organize and prosper by creating bridging social networks and capital ([3], p. xiv).

The rapid growth of Indian immigrant communities to the United States would have remained a hard-to-access phenomenon had it not been for the 1980 US census, which counted Asian as a separate group for the very first time ([9], p. 3).<sup>11</sup> In the new categorization, Indians achieved a record growth rate of 125% between 1980 and 1990, representing one of the fastest growing immigrant groups under the Asian American umbrella. The population totaled over 815,447 in 1990 ([4], p. 1). About one-third were located in the northeast, and the remaining two-thirds were situated in the South, West, and Midwest [4].

The demographic characteristics of Indians in the 1990 census held that this immigrant group was vibrant, young (28.9 years old), married (90%), somewhat monied (49K), and professional. They were found to have taken up employment in the fields of science, medicine, engineering, commerce, and real estate prospectively [4]. Compare these figures to their skilled relatives who came in the 80s, who largely moved into nonprofessional fields such retail-trade, food, and service industries [4].

On the heels of the more affluent and skilled Indian immigrants came newer arrivals who possessed fewer technical and speaking skills. These more recent immigrants, living for the most part on the fringes of society, lacked English skills, basic job skills, and needed remedial education. This group was largely as unsuccessful as other Indian immigrant groups which in turn led to economic stratification within the Indian American community [4].

<sup>10</sup> The Immigration Act of 1990 created a temporary visa category-known as H-1B-for skilled workers, with an annual cap of 65,000, and allowed these workers to petition for permanent resident status during their stay in the United States. Subsequent changes to this program included granting universities and research laboratories permission to issue H-1B beyond the annual limits. The annual cap changed to 195,000 in 2001, and then increased to 250,000 in 2003. These increases contributed greatly to a spike in Asian Indian immigrant to America in the next two decades. The H-1B visa program has been a hot-bed of contention and debate the last two decades at various level of government.

<sup>11</sup> This change was the result of intense Indian lobbying to have a separate group identity established as "Asian Indian" within the "racial" category "Asian and Pacific Islanders."



Indians who immigrated to America came from every state in India, each with own distinct language and cultural heritage. They also belong to many religious faiths including Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Not always hailing directly from India, many also arrived from England, Canada, South Africa, Tanzania, Fiji, Guyana, and Trinidad ([4], p. 3). More than half of immigrants from India resided in five states: California (20%), New Jersey (11%), Texas (9%), and New York and Illinois (7% each). The metropolitan areas with the most Indian immigrants were the greater New York, Chicago, San Jose, and San Francisco Areas. These four metro areas were home to one-third of Indians in the United States ([2], p. 2).

The fact that Asian Indians come from such vast social and cultural diversity in India, with 33 major languages and some 1500 minor ones, seven major religions including a mélange of six major ethnic groups finding homogeneous groups in American has led to a largely heterogeneous existence in America. The absence of homogeneity among Asian Indians is reflected in their emigration and settlement patterns not only in the United States but also the world. All told, the heterogeneity of Asian Indian culture and customs has prevented the emergence of pigeonholed Indian settlements and Indian towns in the United States ([1], p. 133).

Unlike their pre-1965 immigrant Asian Indian predecessors who were largely agricultural and unskilled laborers, post-1965 Asian Indian immigrants enjoy a common bond related to their backgrounds in education and social-economic classes. The fact that they came from mercantile and professional classes, their status of being middle-class secured afforded them to some degree homogeneity existence professionally, while living heterogeneously. While these two groups do not necessarily enjoy the same degree of socio-economic status or success, they have both sought the vestiges of the American dream as most immigrants do coming to America: a nice home, a good job, excellent schools, and safe neighborhoods. Asian Indians also cherished being a country that celebrated democratic and pluralistic ways, mores, and values.

Asian Indian immigrant groups while they have transformed themselves most in the workplace by adopting American clothes, manners, competitive work habits, and “behaving like Americans,” they have on the other hand managed to remain steadfast and strengthened within the home by maintaining vestiges of their diverse ethnic culture: respective religious, social, cultural, and dietary habits. They buy ethnic goods and services needed to maintain their desired lifestyle and insulate their ethnic lifestyles within their homes and communities, away from the scrutiny of the larger society. This has in turn allowed many Asian Indian immigrants and their descendants to transmit Indian culture within their primary groups such as family, cliques of close friends, and voluntary organizations.

Another way that Asian Indian immigrants to America have maintained their cultural identity is by preserving ties to their extended families in India. This is accomplished through financial contributions and almost yearly visits. This effort serves as a duality of sorts, maintaining ties to their homeland, while also embracing America as their new homeland. The financial contributions that are made by these immigrants while although considered merger by some make a great difference in the economic status and well-being of their families back home in India.

Another important facet of keeping ties to their homeland is networking. The most powerful tool is the spread of information through word of mouth. Asia Indians, even though scattered all over the United States and quite heterogeneous in their background, keep close contact with relatives and friends by oral and written discourse by sharing common interests. This effort is promoted by a plethora of news outlets as well as modern technology. There exist several Asian Indian

newspapers (*India Abroad*), glossy monthly magazines with political, cultural, religious, and business features. In addition, local cable outlets carry cable programming from news outlets such as *TV Asia*, *Eye on Asia*, and *This is India*. In addition to having access to Old World home channels along with American ones, they also have access to Bombay and Bollywood movies and other cultural programs.

Notwithstanding the linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic heterogeneity among first and second generation Asian Indian immigrants since 1965, the vast majority of them share some common principles and perspectives. These include valuing immigration to America as an economic gain, saving their earnings for education and retirement, and overcoming discrimination and prejudice by tolerance and resolve instead of direct confrontation. More importantly, Asian Indians celebrate, respect, and admire their economic relative economic success and high-standing professional talents parochial.

Within the context of Asian Indian immigrants who have come to America in recent decades, there still resides some vestiges of the well-established gender roles and expectations. This is especially true when recent immigrants elect to bring older family members from India to America. Herein lies the culprit for tensions within the family when it comes to joint and extended family obligations, which tended to be conservative, backed by female-subordination. Whereas in India, there is a strict code of conduct for men and women, in America, both men and women have undergone a metamorphosis of sorts. For example, Indian women had found life in America much easier with regard to material comforts and conveniences. Not to mention better opportunities to work outside the home and make financial contributions to not only to the family, but toward their own development as well. All told, this new freedom and the opportunity to maximize economic security and family income with dignity transcends economic, political, and cultural boundaries.

The success of Asian Indians in migrating and assimilating to America culture while maintaining cultural and ethnic ties is keeping with the tradition of immigrants making the best out of their American experience. From their collective experiences abetted with separating from their homeland, they continue to find ways to embrace the best that America has to offer, while maintaining their cultural roots and identities as Asian Indians. Moreover, they have integrated themselves into a pluralistic society, which values competitiveness, achievement orientation, equalitarianism, and objective individualism in order to achieve success and contribute effectively into a larger society.

## 5. Conclusion

The emigrants of the Indian diaspora who ventured from India to America and other localities throughout the world represent an ongoing phenomenon heading in a pluralistic direction. The success of the Indian diaspora is one aspect of a complex story being moved by economic, political, and social forces largely driven by technology transfers, labor needs, and a collection of immigrants seeking a better life in foreign lands. While Indian immigrant populations in America have been largely successful in the arenas of income, educational attainment, and entrepreneurial endeavors for the last 100 years, it stands to reason that other venues of success are on the horizon. These include becoming successful political leaders, thinkers, historians, artists, writers, activists, musicians, and lawyers.

To better understand and appreciate the successes and the potentials of future endeavors, it serves well to seek answers to the following questions: what are the

motivational origins of the Indian diaspora? What efforts cultivated this success? To what degree did they meet resistance and how did they handle it? More importantly, what connections do these successful immigrants have to their former homelands, and to what extent is their success in America helping their homeland?

The story of American history is in every respect the story of immigration. The Indian diaspora that traveled to the United States between 1820 and 2015 represents another success story in the long line of successful immigration by not only Europeans, but also peoples of Asian and African descent. What makes this effort unique is not why they came, but how they came: highly educated, technically skilled, and endowed with a will to succeed making them likely candidates to enter the middle and upper classes in a relatively short period of time.

## **Author details**

John P. Williams  
University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, USA

\*Address all correspondence to: [yoprofessor11@utdallas.edu](mailto:yoprofessor11@utdallas.edu)

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