Unit 11

Indian Diaspora in the New World — North America

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Learning Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to explain:

- the Indian diasporic situations in Canada and the United States;
- the process of Indian diaspora formation in North America;
- the various facets of growth of Indian diaspora in Canada and the United States; and
- the position of Indian diaspora in North America.

11.1 Introduction

The 'New World' is a problematic term for many reasons. First, it was not actually a *new* world, because the inhabitants of America had known of its existence for at least twenty thousand years. Second, the Americas were also not isolated continents that were really 'discovered' by any European, because the Icelanders had landed in Canada and settled along its coastline earlier on in the thirteenth century. However, as these were unknown facts about the existence of the Americas, it was Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), a Genoese navigator, who convinced Isabella, the Queen of Spain, to underwrite a *western expedition* to *the eastern countries* via the Atlantic because that would be a shorter trip. The general view then was that a western voyage to India would be a disaster, for the ship would have to travel thousands of miles over the open ocean and the crew would starve or die of dehydration long before the journey was complete. But, Columbus believed that the world was considerably smaller than was imagined in the general view. He was, of course, completely mistaken and, in the process, as the Europeans believed, 'discovered' the new continents of the Americas, which they called the 'New World'. As for Columbus, he never acknowledged or believed that the Americas were anything other than Asia. He consequently believed that the 'West Indies,' where he landed was India, although he was puzzled because the 'easterners' were not what the 200-year-old accounts of the Orient by Marco Polo had described them to be. Columbus' voyage of 1492 was intended to discover a shorter all-water route to China and India than the route around Africa that was being opened up by the Portuguese - both aimed at avoiding the Muslim and Byzantine middle-men in the land route through which the spices of the East used to reach Western Europe.

Although Columbus died still believing that he had opened up the 'East Indies' to Spain – which is why Europeans called the native inhabitants of the Americas 'Indians' – it was Amerigo Vespucci after whom the Americas came to be named, who was the first to suggest that a 'new world' of great land mass with gold, silver, and opportunities lay between Europe and the spices of the East.

The term 'North America', when employed in a context other than geography, may mean different things to different people. To many Americans and Canadians the term, in common usage, is often taken to mean "The United States of America and Canada, only", excluding Mexico and the countries of Central America. This is due to the fact that culturally and economically, the USA and Canada are more like each other than they are to the rest of North America. 'North America' thus occupies the northern portion of the landmass generally referred to as the New World, the Western Hemisphere, the Americas, or simply America. Although Columbus himself never set foot on the mainland of North America, the mistaken identity of the 'New World' did establish an early, even if only psychologically, a link between it and India some 500 odd years back. It was much later though, in the early twentieth century that Indians migrated to Canada and the United States in any substantial numbers that could eventually result in the formation of distinctly visible diasporas there.

11.2 Indian Diaspora in Canada

Present Profile

In 1981, there were about 110 thousand Indians in Canada, a number that rose close to 425 thousand in 1991, and under a million by 2001, constituting about 3 per cent of Canada's population of 30 million. Indians ranked the second most rapidly growing ethnic expatriate community (defined as the 'visible minority population' in the Census), after the Chinese during 1991-2001, thereby contributing a significant share in making Canada the world's second most populated country by the proportion of foreign-born at 18 per cent, after Australia's 22 per cent, and ahead of the USA with 11 per cent at the third place. More than 150 thousand Indians immigrated to Canada during 1991-2001, comprising 8.5 per cent of all immigrants, next only to the highest figure of 200 thousand Chinese immigrants at 10.8 per cent amongst a total number of 1.8 million immigrants coming to Canada from all countries. This was a big jump in India's ranking which figured nowhere amongst the top ten countries of birth of immigrants entering Canada before 1961, whereas the Chinese did figure at rank 10th (see Census 2001, Canada). The majority of the immigrants who arrived in Canada during the 1990s were in the working age of 25 to 64 years. Of the 1990s immigrants who spoke a non-official language, about one-third reported Chinese as the most common language spoken at home in 2001; 7 per cent spoke Punjabi, and another 5 per cent Arabic, respectively as the second and the third most common language spoken at home. In terms of the major source countries of the 1990s immigrants, while those born in mainland China were the most likely to report as being unable to conduct a conversation in an official language (29 per cent), immigrants from India (15 per cent) and Taiwan (13 per cent) had the next highest proportions of those unable to converse in either official language, viz. English or French.

Although most of the principal linguistic and ethnic groups of India are represented in the Indo-Canadian population, over one half of all Indians in

Canada today are Sikhs, a quarter Hindus, and the rest belonging to other religions. While movement from India to Canada has been mainly from Punjab as the region of origin, it shows a concentration of settlement in Canada too in terms of destination, with at least four out of every five persons coming from this part of 'South Asia', the Canadian Census category of geographical origin for Indians residing in urban capitals of three largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs), viz., Toronto (the capital of Ontario), Vancouver (the capital of British Columbia), and Montreal (the largest city in Quebec), as well as Calgary and Edmonton. The intensity of settlement patterns thus suggests strong transnational linkages of the diaspora with Punjab. An intensely closed religious-regional bias is visible in the composition of the Indo-Canadian diaspora community to the extent that often non-Sikh or non-Punjabi origin Indian immigrants are called 'not our own' by the local Canadian Sikhs as well as the Indo-Sikhs. While this religious-regional intensity has been accepted as normal in the social norms of behaviour practiced by the Indo-Canadian diaspora for years, hard supporting data of this flow has only been systematically generated by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) since 1998, in response to their formal demands that Canada should open a full-fledged high commission in Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab and Haryana, and process the immigration applications of the region there. The Sikhs and Punjabi composition in the Indo-Canadian diaspora thus reflects a significant political implication, with a number of Indian PIOs rising up to hold important political and bureaucratic positions including, at times, provincial premiership.

The composition of immigration to Canada also illustrates its social basis in terms of the family class migratory networks being the fundamental determinants of these movements. Though individual immigrants from all over India are increasingly entering Canada, the regional bias is still strongly steered by the existing Indo-Canadian diaspora there. Uniquely thus in the case of Indian immigration to Canada, human mobility is overwhelmingly built around the extended family, a diasporic social unit that is larger than nuclear family. In the case of family class immigration, Punjab thus continues to exercise a strong influence, accounting for 80 per cent of all applications in 1998, dropping to just over 55 per cent for all classes. These differences highlight the need to profile the formation of Indian diaspora in Canada by the typology of immigrant class: refugee, skilled worker, business or family class. It should be noted here that the usage of 'class' is not the stratified concept of social classification but as a classificatory category.

Refugee Class

The number of recorded refugee from India to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s never crossed 1,000 until 1996, when it was 1,241. These mainly comprised those fleeing the violent militancy of Khalistan and Sikh separatist movements. In the mid-1980s, when the Punjab troubles were at their height, the Indian consulate in Vancouver had estimated that about 15 to 20 per cent of all Indian immigrants to Canada were illegal. This influx, of mainly Sikh youths, into the established Sikh Canadian diaspora community caused some tension, especially because of the contradiction the militancy posed to the practice of Sikh religion.

Skilled Worker Class

The skilled worker category contains those immigrants selected through the points system of the 1967 immigration policy. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, immigration policy changes had begun to be reflected in the increased

numbers of skilled Indian immigrants. This class of immigration from India has been rising steadily in the last decade and is increasingly incorporating individuals from regions other than Punjab, especially Gujarat and Maharashtra. It is estimated that over 30 per cent of them have jobs in professional and managerial positions, both within the government and in the private sector, whereas 23 per cent work in manufacturing.

Immigrants from India are more likely than other groups to possess a university degree. Indian immigrants have a larger component of persons with mathematics, engineering and applied sciences background than other groups. In general, Indian students and those of Indian origin do well in Canadian universities, particularly in technical faculties like computer science and engineering, medicine, basic sciences, etc. Only the Chinese-Canadian community competes with Indo-Canadians in the educational field. However, the community also has more non-matriculates than other immigrant groups, which is partly explained by the family sponsorship bias of Indian immigration to Canada. At present, the Indian immigrant community in Canada is thus virtually polarized into two categories – either highly educated and professional individuals or persons with less than grade five education and unskilled workers.

Business Class

Apart from the skilled professions, the Indian diaspora engages in the proprietorship of small businesses. Canada's business category includes the self-employed, entrepreneurs and investors. Entrepreneurs are expected to have a net worth in excess of Cdn$300,000, and investors need to invest a minimum of $400,000 in Canada to become eligible for investor visa. Because of this high capital requirement further constrained by low convertibility regime of the Indian rupee, unlike immigrants from Southeast Asia, business immigration from India has remained minimal. As India's foreign exchange regulations became more liberal since January 2000, however, investor immigration to Canada increased. Between 1999 and 2000, the number of principal business class immigrants from India more than doubled, to 122, moving India's ranking as a source region for this class of immigrants from 12th to 7th.

Family Class

Despite an increase in skilled and professional class immigration in more recent years, family class still represents almost half of all Indian migration to Canada. Since diasporic sponsorship still plays a central role in community formation amongst Indians in Canada, India continues to represent the largest source of family class immigrants to Canada by a wide margin. Family class immigration includes spouses, fiancé (e) s, parents or grandparents, children, and adopted orphans. Within the family class category, the largest numbers of immigrants are spouses and parents.

Family-class immigration has thus been the main propeller of Indian diasporic community building in Canada, which in turn provides the nexus support of a network of extended family to the individual immigrants. The importance of family networks and the common practice of arranged marriages, as well as the traditional importance of the eldest son looking after the parents, have created a strong social field that strengthens the practice of family and friends sponsorship from Canada to India. The significance of this is that *economically* motivated mobility is actually operationalised by pre-existing

social factors created by the diaspora. Another important variable working in the same direction is the large proportion of dependants as compared to employed adults in the Indo-Canadian population.

Past Policies

The contemporary improvement in Canada's relationship with India through the present-day diaspora networks contradicts Canada's position a hundred years ago, which was based on the policy of exclusion for Indian migrants. Beginning in 1904, by 1908 a small number of 5,200 Indians had settled in British Columbia as agricultural laborers, when the Canadian government banned Indian immigration. The ban remained in force till 1947. Early twentieth century immigration from India was thus confronted by an exclusionist regime, put into operation by the infamous 'continuous passage' Order-in-Council of 1908. This discriminatory law was challenged in May 1914 by the well-known journey of the *Komagata Maru* from India to Vancouver, though the ship was forced to return without being allowed to dock and disembark the 376 passengers it carried on board, except for the 20 having the resident status.

In the post-World War II period, as immigration rules eased and permitted limited family immigration from non-European countries, slowly the Indian population in Canada grew, resulting in a community dominated by immigrants from Punjab. The majority of Indian immigrants in Canada then hailed not just from anywhere in Punjab, but primarily from one agricultural region within Punjab, known as Doaba. It was not until 1967 that immigration policy lifted discrimination based on race, religion or national origin, moving instead towards a points system based on various qualifications. However, the immigrant numbers changed only slightly throughout the 1960s, due in part to institutional impediments: there was only one immigration office for the whole of India, compared to six in the U.K. Also, the flow of Indian immigrants became highly selective, such that about three-fourths of all the post-war immigrants were highly educated and skilled. By 1971, there were 67,000 Indians in Canada. While the NRIs during this period came from different parts of India, the PIOs migrated from Hong Kong and various other British colonies – Fiji (15,000), East Africa (25,000), South Africa (2,000), Guyana (25,000) and Trinidad (25,000).

Susequently, the year 1976 was a milestone in Canadian immigration history. With the passage of the 1976 Immigration Act, Canada institutionalized fair admission practices and also encouraged the admission of refugees, and family reunification. Not only did the restrictive immigration policies of the early twentieth century create a distinctively narrow Indian diasporic community in Canada, but they also reinforced gendered patriarchal norms of mobility by granting men the power to initiate the movement of women to Canada through marriage. This gendered power imbalance has been reinforced over time as the ongoing importance of unequal gender relations with regard to marriage and family formation not only continued in Canada but also led to frauds, malpractices and corruption through fly-by-night 'arranged' marriages with advance agreements of divorce.

Future Trends

Today, the Indian diaspora in Canada is organised more on the basis of linguistic, regional, religious and other characteristics of their 'home town' roots in India. In contrast, organisations with an overarching all-India character are neither as many in number nor as cohesive as they are in the United

States. Nevertheless, many institutions and NGOs have been set up by Indians in Canada for the promotion of Indian arts and culture, some of which have affiliations with their counterparts in India. Every area with an Indo-Canadian concentration has produced excellent Indian dance schools. Every year several concerts by Indian musicians, singers, film artists, etc., are held at prominent venues in cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal. The Indo-Canadian community has also produced some distinguished writers, artists, dancers, filmmakers & TV personalities. Indo-Canadians celebrate their religious festivals with much fanfare. There are more than a hundred Gurudwaras and temples throughout Canada, which provide a psychological haven for Indo-Canadians.

It is true that the Indian diasporic influence has been increasing in Canada. There are members of Canadian legislatures of Indian origin and there are emerging business lobby groups, such as Canada-India Business Council, and India-Canada Chamber of Commerce. Canadian government agencies like Heritage Canada and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) fund religious, quasi-religious and cultural activities undertaken by the Indian diaspora communities as part of their official mandate of supporting multiculturalism. In addition to constituting a strong socio-cultural bond between Canada and India, the diasporic community has the potential to create stronger economic linkages between the two countries.

The strengthening of Canada-India relations is predicated on the assumption that the Canadians of Indian origin would lead to deeper and broader people-to-people contacts. The Lal Bahadur Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute has made excellent contribution to facilitating interaction between the academic communities of the two countries. A Focus India group would explore ways whereby the Indian community in Canada can play a role of cooperation between the two countries. With the expansion of the knowledge-based industry, the Indo-Canadian diaspora would likely gain importance and strength. This would also expand bilateral ties between India and Canada in the hi-tech and information technology fields. On the other hand, while PIOs and NRIs can be expected to donate to charitable causes in India, the Indo-Canadian diaspora will invest in India only when the investment climate in India is made more attractive and consistently effective. Extra effort will need to be made, both by the diaspora community and India, to maintain and strengthen their special ties and links in future.

11.3 Indian Diaspora in the United States

Hindrance to the Formation of Service Diaspora

In North America, the focus on the Indian diaspora, however, remains in the United States, the country with the largest stock as well as flow of educated and professionally qualified personnel from India today. Ironical as it may sound now, American 'exclusionist' Congressmen of the early twentieth century were a strong lobby to have successfully introduced, even in the face of vehement opposition and two defeated vetoes from President Woodrow Wilson, a 'literacy test' for immigrants so as to specifically restrict them from non-English speaking countries, in particular those of Asiatic origin like India and China. Designed not to selectively attract the literate and educated Indians *per se* but to keep all 'Asian Indians', as the Indian are classified in the U.S. Census, out as the 'least desirable' of all immigrants, this only proves that Indian immigrants to the U.S. then – those working on the Pacific Coast lumber mills, docks etc. – were largely not highly qualified

knowledge workers but illiterate labourers at the lowest rank of *service workers*. Educated Indians coming to the U.S.A. then were either political refugees or students. These early immigrants to the U.S.A. went mostly from the Punjab and, to a lesser extent, from Bengal, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and they settled on the West Coast, primarily California, the state which is even now in the forefront of resistance to immigration of foreign labour by denying the illegal immigrants, to begin with, access to social security benefits, schools and health services. After 1917, when the 'barred zone' included India, it was the Act of 1921, which generally shifted restriction from the qualitative to the quantitative domain, i.e., from barring certain 'undesirable kind of persons' to enforcing a 'national origins quota system' formally introduced in 1924. The new system had introduced a numerical restriction based on the national origins of those comprising the population of the U.S. in 1920, but because, unlike in the case of Canada, the population of Indians in the U.S. had stopped growing at any natural rate ever since the literacy test came into force in 1917, the new Act did not have any quota for them.

Subsequently, though the system was rationalized on the basis of cultural and historical ties by the Immigration Act of 1952, and the 'national origins' quota system was finally done away with in the landmark 1965 Amendments to this Act, thereby bringing Indian immigrants' right to enter the United States at par with that of the citizens of other countries. An earlier 1946 Amendment had ended almost 30 years of exclusion for Indians by setting an annual number of 100 as their quota. This was partly a sequel to the lifting of barriers against the Chinese, but a more important objective was perhaps to ameliorate the growing antagonism of Indians towards American troops that were still stationed in India after the end of World War II. Despite the quota restriction, which was kept intact in the 1952 Act, this was in fact the beginning of the end of the first phase of Indian immigration to the U.S. which incorporated mainly the 'service workers', culminating with the 1965 Amendments that finally opened the gates for absorbing the 'knowledge workers' of India. This small beginning had in fact been consolidated further by the visit of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to the U.S. in October 1949 which hastened this transition from majority service workers to majority knowledge workers in the modern phase of Indian diaspora formation in that country.

Prelude to a Knowledge Diaspora

It was in the 1970s that the US overtook both the UK and Canada as the prime country of destination for Indian migrants. Indian immigration to the US which constituted a minuscule of less than 1 per cent of total immigration from all countries during the 1950s and 1960s, registered a rapid increase during the 1970s, reaching a peak of 3.8 per cent that tapered off in the 1980s till about 1991 but went on the upswing in 1992, touching almost 5 per cent in 1996, and further 7.4 per cent in 2004. The increase in the 1970s is generally attributed to the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965, fully brought into force in 1968. Within the overall kinship-emphasis in family-reunification clause of the amendments, the new legislation gave priority to highly trained and educated professionals, at least for the first seven to ten years explicitly. As a result, this modern phase of Indian immigration was distinctly different from the earlier phase that had comprised mainly the unskilled workers and labourers. Urban, educated and, ironically, 'English speaking' masses of the Indian population became distinctly visible in the USA, carrying a large share of India's human capital to the U.S., and

causing 'brain drain' for India because, as Jenson (1988, p. 280) records, 'Almost a hundred thousand engineers, physicians, scientists, professors, teachers, and their dependents had entered the U.S. by 1975'. However, since the mid-1970s, the annual number of Indians entering the US had leveled off to an average annual figure of 20,000 till 1982 mainly because of such a per country limit of quota in the US immigration law. Thereafter, it was the number of those exempt from this limit, which added to the total—the 'immediate relatives' of the Indian-born naturalized U.S. citizens. Thus, migration of highly qualified Indians to the USA actually did not come down; whatever decline registered since the mid-1970s was mainly a statistical and legalistic illusion of sorts, which also proved to be temporary in retrospect. India's brain drain to the USA had become less 'visible' rather than really declining after the mid-1970s. The 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act remained the principal determinant of Indian immigration into the USA for a quarter of a century between 1968 and 1992. Under these Amendments, immigrants subject to a 'numerical limitation' of 270,000 worldwide and 20,000 per country per year were allocated to a six-category 'preference' regime of the US visa system—two under the 'occupational labour force needs' of the US economy and four under the 'family-reunification objective' of the US population policy.

The H1-B Phenomenon

The 1990 Amendments, brought into effect in 1992, explicitly favoured building up of the human capital capabilities of America by fulfilling its current and future requirements of knowledge workers, finally bringing to relevance the immigration of Indians to the American labour market needs. Whatever few restrictive clauses these amendments had, like the introduction of a new definition for the highly skilled temporary workers, viz., the well-known non-immigrant H1-B visa category, with an annual cap of 65,000 visas per year worldwide, faced with a decline in key undergraduate science degrees, an acute shortage of staff in high technology industries like software development, and exhaustion of the worldwide annual quota too quickly in 1998, of which 42 per cent issued to Indians with four out of every five visas going to IT professionals, the US Senate cleared a bill for a limited expansion of these visas to 337,500 for the three-year period from 1999 to 2001. After 2001, as the American immigration scenario came to be determined more by the post-9/11 security concern in the U.S. than its labour needs on the one hand, and the emergence of a reverse flow of talent or its perception through a burgeoning business process outsourcing (BPO) to developing countries with India in the lead, the U.S. government has been under continuous pressure of different lobby groups, including the American industry and business to increase the H1-B visa limit once again.

Thus, of the three major issues of the US immigration policy viz., (a) ethnic balance in population, (b) illegal immigration and (c) labour force needs, Indian immigration has mainly catered to the last one. Whereas, unlike in Canada, explicitly the second issue has no more than a passing relationship with Indian immigrants' mobility to the U.S., the proposition that assumes significance is that even during the primacy of the first determinant, viz., the population structure-related phase of the US immigration policy, immigration from India has been mainly meeting, though not in any obvious manner, the human capital requirements of the American labour market. In other words, there is evidence which suggests that an increasing number of highly qualified Indians continued to proceed to the USA even in the post mid-70s for long-term residency of one kind or another. These knowledge

workers entered the American geographical territory not through increases in the share of 'occupational preference' visas issued to 'numerically limited' category itself; rather there was a perceptible shift of emphasis in favour of issuing the 'family preference' visas to them. If one calls this 'family preference route' to immigration of knowledge workers Channel A, then there are two more channels for their entry into the U.S., viz., Channel B for entering as 'immediate relatives' of the India-born naturalized US citizens, and Channel C for entering as the 'non-immigrant' visitors like visitors for pleasure' but more as 'students', 'temporary workers and trainees' like the H1-B category, etc., having no limit of a numerical quota, but with the provision of adjusting to the status of permanent residents, viz., the 'green card' holders subsequently.

11.4 Profile of Indian Diaspora in the United States

The strong profile of Indian immigrants, consolidated through both 'limited' and 'exempted' category of immigration in the US labour market in terms of employment, occupation, income and educational attainment, in general supports a proposition that the human capital content in the migration of Indians to the US has been the backbone of Indian diaspora formation there. India's world ranking was 6th (4th in Asia after the Philippines, South Korea, and China) with Mexico at the top and Cuba in third position, in terms of the decennial number of immigrants admitted to the USA from 1970 to 1979. By 1993, the annual ranking placed India in the seventh position after Mexico, PRC, the Philippines, Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, and Dominican Republic, and before Poland, El Salvador, the UK, South Korea, Jamaica, Canada, Iran, and Taiwan. Amongst these, the US intakes from Mexico can, to quite a large extent, be explained by illegal cross-border migration precipitated by geographical proximity and later also the economic grouping with the US and Canada under NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). Similarly, for mainland China, student protection after the Tiananmen Square massacre; ex-American military base connection to many a matrimonial alliance for the Philippines; war reparations for Vietnam; fall of socialism for the former Soviet Union, and political dominion in the case of Dominican Republic have been the main determinants of migration. No other diaspora preceding Indians' rank in terms of the number of immigrants admitted to the U.S. acquired its rank predominantly because of any American demand for its labour skills, which has been the main factor for admitting the Indian knowledge workers on a large scale. By 1996, barring Mexicans and Filipinos, even the extra-labour market considerations of the other countries preceding India had faded into the background, when Indians ranked third. It is hardly surprising therefore if in terms of the place in the US economy indexed by their employment, occupation, education and income of the immigrants, the Indian diaspora continued to rank amongst the top right through the 1970s till the present. These top rankings for Indians in the US holds not within the Asian nationalities only, but also when compared against the averages of all other regional or continental nationalities of the world as well as that of the US nationals.

Employment Status

As a quantitative continuation of the trend, as reflected in the US Bureau of Census, the population of Indian ancestry in the US recorded an increase of about 125 per cent from 0.36 million in 1980 to 0.82 million in 1990. This

growth was not only the highest amongst all Asians except for the Vietnamese but also one that surpassed the projected number of 0.68 million Indians in 1990. The immigrant component in 1980-90 growth of population was 58 per cent. The projected number of 1 million Indians in the US for the year 2000 was touched much sooner, and by the 2000 census it stood at 1.7 million.

According to US 1980 Census figures, 75 per cent of Indian immigrants aged 16 and over were in the US labour force, implying that 3 out of every 4 Indian adults were either employed or looking for jobs, the share being 95 per cent employed and only 5 per cent without a job. The labour market participation figure was thus significantly higher than the average of 56 per cent for all immigrants and noticeably higher than the 62 per cent for the total US population too.

Occupation Profile

Roughly one-third of the Indian immigrants in the 1980s reported an occupation (9,258 out of a total of 27,803 immigrants in 1987), and the rest comprised non-working spouses, children, other dependents and students. This has not only been lower than the average for all (world) immigrants at 39 per cent in 1985 and 40 per cent in 1987 but also been the lowest for Indian immigrants in the three decades of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s so far. However, these lower shares have been more than compensated for by an overwhelmingly higher share of Indians with an occupation in the managerial, professional, and executive occupations – the most prestigious and highly paid job categories held by the knowledge workers in the US economy. Of immigrants from India during 1975-1980, about 36% were reported to have an occupation in these categories, and this share was highest amongst all the developing countries in Asia (i.e. excluding Japan). In 1983, the share of professional and technical immigrants alone accounted for 50% of all immigrants in occupations, implying thereby that every other employed Indian adult in the US was holding a professional or technical job that placed Indian knowledge workers at the top of the list of all Asian countries, including the indomitable Japan. There are over 300,000 PIOs working in the Information Technology sector in the US. Although this number represents only three percent of the total IT workforce in the USA, a substantial number of these are executives in mid and large-sized companies and at least 15 per cent IT start-ups have been created by them.

The occupational profile of all Indian immigrants entering the United States during the three transition years into the 21st Century was such that a substantial majority of Indian immigrants with specified occupations were concentrated in two top categories, viz., 'professional and technical', and 'executive, administrative and managerial'. Their proportion increased significantly during the period - not only as a proportion of all Indian migrants, but also amongst immigrants from all countries. This enhanced the strength of the highly skilled Indian professional work force in the US labour market. Prior to this, amongst the overall 225 thousand Science & Engineering (S&E) teaching faculties, almost 7,000 were of Indian origin, constituting 3 per cent of all faculty, and 15 per cent of all diaspora faculty in S&E. The largest concentration of Indians has been in engineering, followed by mathematics and computer science, where they constituted about 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. A noticeably significant 32 per cent or about one-third of the Indian faculty in life sciences comprised Indian women.

Education Profile

Education-wise, Indian immigrants in America have been better equipped with 'human capital' to enter the higher echelons of the US job market than other immigrants. The US INS does not collect information on immigrants' education, but the 1980 Census showed that as many as 89 per cent of India-born immigrants aged 25 years-and-over had at least high school education and as many as 66 per cent a college degree. Both these figures were well above those for 'all immigrants' (53 and 16 per cent respectively in 1980, still remaining low at 41 and 23 per cent respectively in 1994) and the 'total US population' (67 and 16 per cent respectively), but the differences were extremely significant for those completing college. Similarly, the percentage of those adults over 25 years of age with less than eight years of high school education was substantially low for the India-born (6 per cent) as compared to all immigrants (36 per cent) and all Americans (18 per cent) as well as the Asian (19 per cent) population. This happened in spite of the fact that there has been a lowering of the human capital content among the pos-1975 immigrants from India (57 per cent completed college, 83 per cent completed high school, and 9 per cent had no high school education) as compared to the pre-1975 immigrants (70 per cent, 91 per cent, and 4 per cent respectively). For the limited age group of 25-34, a low percentage of those with less than eight years of schooling amongst the foreign-born, in fact, lifts the proportion of the high school pass-outs in the 'Asian Indian' population in the US as a whole above that of all other *developing-country* ethnic groups (i.e., excepting Japanese) when averaged for males and females taken together.

The US Census 2000 revealed that more than 87 per cent of Indians have completed high school and 62 per cent have some college education compared to just over 20 percent for the US population. The majority of them had acquired their higher educational qualifications in India, particularly in the engineering and IT sectors. This explicitly presents the educational achievement of Indians in the U.S. where it is the third largest community, and education wise, it stands on the top. In 1999, India-born US residents having science, social science, and engineering (S&E) degrees were counted to be 165,000. This accounted for a substantial 13 per cent of all foreign-born residents with S&E degrees, the highest share for any single diaspora group in the USA.

As a sub-group of all S&E degree holders, the 30,000 Indian professionals holding S&E doctorate degrees also accounted for a sizeable share of 16 per cent amongst all foreign-born American residents with science and engineering doctorates, this time second only to the Chinese diaspora in the US.

Many Indian immigrants to the US who fuelled the Silicon Valley were educated in the USA at the post-graduate level after they emigrated with a first engineering degree (B.Tech/B.E.) from Indian institutions of excellence like the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Regional Engineering Colleges, Banaras Hindu University and so on – all institutions of excellence. Similarly, scientists with M.Sc/M.Tech from universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, or the University of Delhi; doctors with MBBS degree from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences; and managers with Post-Graduate Diploma in Business Management from the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have emigrated to pursue higher studies abroad, and then enter the world labour market. According to the published brain-drain estimates from sample surveys

conducted at various times, the magnitudes of brain-drain from three Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have been significant with a substantially large proportions of more than 20-30 per cent of IIT graduate engineers found settled abroad. For migration of health professionals, with 56 per cent or more than half the output of graduate doctors of the 1956-80 batches practicing abroad, the exodus from the premier All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi was even higher.

Clearly, the US has been the most favoured destination country for Indian students, attracting 47,000 in 2001, which accounted for 78 per cent of all Indian students enrolled in the OECD countries. They made up a substantial 4 per cent of all foreign students enrolled in tertiary education in OECD countries in 2001. In the United States, they registered a far larger share of 10 per cent amongst all foreign students. By 2004, this share of Indian students amongst all foreign students in the USA went up further to 14 per cent. According to the National Science Foundation (NSF) data on foreign-born Ph.D. students enrolled in US universities and those finishing degrees there, Indians have been dominant in both categories. In 1996, of the 1,276 Indian recipients of American S&E doctoral degrees, the vast majority had plans to stay on in the US and many already had post-doctoral offers to do so. Figures collated in the *Open Doors 2004*, the annual survey of the US Institute of International Education, reveal that in 2003-04 university enrolments in the US, Indian students accounted for 13.9 per cent of all foreign students in the US and retained the No. 1 position of India for the third year in a row, followed by China, Korea, Japan, Canada, and Taiwan. In 2004-05 too, India has retained its top position.

Income Profile

An overall index of the economic presence of Indian immigrants in the US economy has been their average income. Obviously, with the high labour market participation with a high employment ratio and the placement of a majority of them in prestigious professional and executive occupations, Indians have earned very high average incomes. The 1980 Census figures for median annual income of immigrant workers in 1979 placed Indians at the top of the rank not only for all (i.e., including part-time workers) males ($18,000) and full-time male ($23,000) workers but also for full-time female ($13,000) workers. Given the fact that this position continued in the early 1980s with 60 per cent of the Indians above 15 years of age earning more than $25,000 a year, the sex composition of 50:50 and median age of less than 30 years (29.4 male, 28.8 female) for the 1987 Indian immigrants left plenty of scope to consolidate it further in the 1990s. The radical shift to lower incomes of all immigrants by 1988 actually got reversed after 1989 when more college graduates and people with advanced degrees were reported to have been allowed entry during 1990-94. Even the 1990 Census showed 58 per cent of Indian population over age 25 in the USA to have obtained a Bachelor's or higher degree. Indian immigrants could be said to have played a major role in this reversal by virtue of there being a large number of knowledge workers amidst them. As late as 1993, for example, whereas 52 per cent of immigrants from Mexico—by far the largest immigrant group—identified themselves as labourers (i.e., service workers), excluding homemakers, retirees, and students, a mere 1 per cent did so from India. By contrast, 25 per cent of Indians identified themselves as engineers (i.e., an occupational category amongst the knowledge workers), compared to 0.3 per cent of Mexicans. Of the 1.7 million-strong Indian diaspora in the US, 200,000 families are millionaires

and the median annual income of PIO is US $60,093, which is substantially higher than the US median income of US $38,885. Further, 67 per cent of foreign-born Indian Americans have college degrees, three times greater than the US average, and out of these approximately 44 per cent hold managerial or professional positions.

The Indian diaspora in the US has also done extremely well in owning and running small businesses too. For example PIOs own approximately 77,000 out of the 135,000 convenience stores and these stores provide employment to more than 300,000 people. The Indian diaspora in the US owns approximately 17,000 hotels out of a total of 47,040 hotels and these hotels provide employment to more than 700,000 people in the USA. The American Asian Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) represents this community and it estimates the cumulative market value of these hotels to be approximately US$ 36 billion.

11.5 Indian Diaspora Associations of North America and their Political Potential in the 'New World'

There are over 1000 US-based organizations of Indians in North America, with branches in Canada, although perhaps only a quarter of them are active. These represent various interest groups in India, ranging from region to states to languages, etc. Religion, caste and linguistic identities find significant space in these associations and networks, and cleavages occur along these lines. However, some professional groups are involved in grass-root development activities in India as well as in the welfare of their members abroad in the professions. A sample of associations can be categorized by the main characteristics of their members, and/or their functions as in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1
Indian Diaspora Associations of North America

Category	Example
1. Cultural/Religious Associations	Samband, Assam Association of North America, Telugu Association of North America, American Telugu Association (ATA), World Malayali Council, Bengali Cultural Association, Kenada Koota, Gujarati Samaj, etc.
2. Students/Alumni Association	Mayur at the Carnegie Mellon University; Sangam at MIT; Ashoka at California University; Diya at Duke University; SASA at Brown University; Boston University, India Club, Friends of India, IGSA (Houston University) and Indian Students Associations at various universities.
3. Support Association	MITHAS, Manavi, Sakhi, Asian Indian Women in America (AIWA), Maitri, Narika, IBAW (Indian Business and Professional Women), etc.
4. Professional Association	AAPI, SIPA, NetIP, TiE, EPPIC, SISAB, WIN, AIIMSONIANS, AIPNA, ASEI, IPACA, IFORI, SABHA, and IACEF, etc
5. Development Association	Association for India's Development (AID), AIA, American India Foundation
6. General / Umbrella Network	GOPIO, NFIA, The Indian American Forum for Political Education (IAFPE), The National Association of Americans of Asian Indian Descent (NAAAID), and Federation of Indian Associations (FIA), etc.

Sources: Ministry of NRIs Affairs (www.moia.gov.in) ; website of Indian Embassy in the US; www.garmchai.com; www.nriol.com; www.google.com; www.indiandiaspora.org; www.Indiaday.org.

11.6 Conclusion

The profiles of the Indian diaspora in North America, relatively more so of the United States than of Canada, show that Indian immigrants have continued to occupy high economic positions in the North American society from 1980 onwards. Perhaps this is largely because the initial immigrant batches of the late 1960s had by then crossed the threshold stay of 13 to 15 years in the host country for Indians to get 'economically assimilated' into local society. In addition to becoming a great professional force through the diaspora associations, Indian diaspora have also become a strong voting force in the United States as well as Canada. To form a formidable voting force in the U.S.A., for example, to the number of U.S.-born Indian-Americans who are already U.S. citizens is added the number of India-born naturalized American citizens that comprise no less than one-thirds of the immigrants. This has led Indian-Americans to become increasingly involved in the political system of the United States. Indian-Americans have traditionally exercised the most political influence through their campaign contributions, and are actively involved in fundraising efforts for political candidates on the federal, state and local levels elections. In recent years, they have begun taking a more direct role in politics, as well as continuing to help through their financial contributions. The same is the trend in Canada, though in a smaller and obscure manner. Certainly, the proportion of naturalization amongst the immigrants in North America would increase in the twenty-first century when the dual citizenship granted by India becomes fully operational, and more and more NRIs amongst the diaspora would choose to take up citizenship of the country they live in without having to give up their Indian passports, thus acquiring increasing voting power for the Indian diaspora community as a whole in that part of the 'New World'.

11.7 Further Reading

U. S. Census Bureau. *United States Census 2000* (http://www.census.gov/).

WaltonRoberts, Margaret. 2003. "Transnational Geographies: Indian Immigration to Canada." ***The Canadian Geographer***, Volume 47, Issue 3, pp. 235-250, September.