

INDIANS IN AMERICA: DOING GREAT
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In September 2014, Prime Minister Modi received a roaring reception in New York City from some 20,000 Indian Americans, or NRIs. During his five-day visit to the United States, PM Modi addressed the UN General Assembly, met with leading U.S. business leaders and was hosted by President Barack Obama for an intimate state dinner at the White House. In September 2019, some 50,000 attended the popular “Howdy, Modi” program in Houston, TX. President Trump joined Modi at the stage, to a thunderous applause.

President Biden has also reached out to PM Modi. India is seen as a weight against the rising threat of China. India is a member of the newly-minted Quad: an alliance among four countries: US, India, Japan and Australia.



The positive reception received by Modi highlighted the growing power and presence of the Indian American community in the US. Two state level state governors in 2016, Bobby Jindal of Louisiana and Nikki Haley of South Carolina were of Indian ancestry. Nikki Haley later served as the Ambassador to the United Nations under President Trump (2017-2018). Preet Bharara was the much acclaimed State Attorney or Prosecutor in New York City (2009-2017). Sri

Srinivasan was appointed to the DC Appeals Court in 2014, a position which may lead someday to an appointment to the Supreme Court.

An estimated 35,000 Indian physicians provide health care in the United States; and some 10,000 professors hold research and teaching positions at America’s leading colleges and universities (these are estimates). Richard Rahul Verma, whose family hailed from Punjab, was the US Ambassador to India (2015-2017).



Kamala Devi Harris, the daughter of Shyamala Gopalan and Jamaican father Dr. Donald Harris, is the 2020 elected Vice-President of the United States. Kamala credits her mother

for inheriting her assertiveness and grit. Kamala's younger sister Maya Lakshmi Harris, an attorney, professor and writer, is equally distinguished.

The list of Indian business and high-tech luminaries is a long one: Sundar Pichai heads Google, Satya Nadella heads Microsoft, and Indra Nooyi (former head of Pepsi) now sits on the Amazon Board of Directors.

While Indians excel at the individual level, they seldom pull together in unison. They lack solidarity as a cohesive community. When Indians do get together, turf battles usually ensue. This weakens their collective strength.

In the US Census, Indian Americans are designated as "Asian Indian." This nomenclature distinguishes them from American Indians or Native Americans. The number of Indian Americans has increased dramatically in the recent decades. The 2017 estimate was 3.9 million, up from 2.8 million in 2010. This represented about 1.2 percent of the U.S. population of 320 million. The 2020 estimate is 4.0 to 4.5 million. The 2020 census data, when released, shall provide a more accurate picture.

Indian migration increased in the decades after 1965, when drastic changes were made in the U.S. immigration laws. Given below is a brief history of U.S. immigration policy.

HISTORY OF AMERICAN IMMIGRATION IN BRIEF

The history of America is a history of waves of migrations. People have come here from all known civilizations. The blood that flows in American veins has received sustenance from every bloodline. In the 17th century, the English Puritans settled in the New England States as the Spanish settled in Florida. Early in the 19th century (1815-1865) came a great flood of Irish and Germans -- 2 million Irish and 1.5 million Germans. The next wave brought some 10 million to between 1880 and 1890. These were mostly Western European -- English, Dutch, Swedes, and Norwegians. The third wave was even bigger: 16 million from 1890 to 1914. Most of the newcomers (80%) were Eastern and Southern Europeans -- Italians, Greeks, Poles, Czechs, and Russians. A small number of Asians also entered the United States in the 19th Century. Nearly 200,000 Chinese laborers came to the West to build the railroads, but in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act eliminated this flow. Indians also worked on the railroads.

Indian immigration to the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is a tale of woe. Indians, called "Hindoos" in that time period, were characterized as "dirty, lazy and shiftless." Bhagat Singh Thind, a US

serviceman, was denied citizenship by the US Supreme Court in 1923. Why? Because Hindoos are not white in the “common understanding” of that term, argued the Supreme Court. Curiously, a Parsi immigrant from India could be awarded citizenship because his bloodline was Persian, considered white. Indians presently are ignorant of the early history of discrimination. Watch Shefali Chandan’s excellent description of early history on YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= GwhD3jUYek](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwhD3jUYek)

A larger description of the History of Asian immigration is available at my article: “Asian Americans” at uwf.edu/lgoel .

CONCLUSION

America is a country that endlessly reinvents itself. The secret to American genius is that it adds new bloodlines every generation, thus renewing and refurbishing the genetic pool. The energy of new combinations produces something different and better. The faces of immigrants are different now, mostly Asian. They do not arrive at Ellis Island as previous European generations did; they come through airport terminals. The end result is the same - a more vigorous and vibrant America.

Today Indians enrich the American bloodline.

The data presented in the following table will change with the release of 2020 census.

ASIAN POPULATION IN THE U.S. (ROUNDED)

K=thousand; m=million

	<u>1990 Census</u>	<u>2000 Census</u>	<u>2020 Est</u>
Chinese	1.6m	2.4m	4.9m
Indian	815K	1.7m	4.1m
Filipino	1.4m	1.8m	4.0m
Vietnamese	614K	1.1m	1.9m
Korean	799K	1.1m	1.8m
Japanese	848K	797K	1.4m
All Other Asian	924K	2.1m	4.0m
Total Asian	7.0 m	11.0 m	21.0 m
Pct of US Popul.	2.8 %	4.0 %	6.0 %

ADDITIONAL USEFUL INFORMATION

1. For Asian and Indian data, visit: [Asian Americans | Pew Research Center](#)
2. "[Asian Population Demographics | Largest Asian Growth](#)". Proximityone.com.
3. "[Asian Indian Women in America](#)". Aiwausa.org.
4. "[US India Political Action Committee | www.usinpac.com](#)".
5. "A historical perspective of Americans of Asian Indian origin."
https://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/h_es/h_es_korit_histical.htm
6. *The Namesake: A Novel* , by Jhumpa Lahiri (2004). The book narrates the struggles and promises of a Bengali immigrant family in America. It was made into a movie.
7. Hindu American Foundation: www.hinduamerican.org
8. Rishi Reddi, *Passage West* , HarperCollins, 2020. It is a moving story of the struggle of early Punjabi and other Asian farmers in Imperial Valley, California (the hottest place on earth). The California Alien Land Law of 1913 prohibited any person ineligible for US citizenship to own land in California. In that time period Asians were ineligible for US citizenship. Interestingly, Mexicans were eligible for citizenship. This led to some unusual marital relationships between Indians and Mexicans. Subsequently, the law was invalidated by the US Supreme Court in 1952 as being a violation of basic human rights.