

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## South Asian–Heritage Entrepreneurs Are Big Hits Online

By Howard Cincotta  
Special Correspondent

Washington — With the United States recovering from an economic recession, it would seem the wrong time to launch a new business. But not necessarily — Internet-based startup costs have never been lower, experts say — and certainly not for some young U.S. entrepreneurs whose ideas have pushed them into the spotlight.

The U.S.-based business magazine Inc. recently profiled 30 entrepreneurs under the age of 30 who are part of a rising generation of high-tech and Internet-based innovators. Four are from South Asian backgrounds, including Ooshma Garg, founder of the diversity recruitment firm Anapata, which uses social media to create networking opportunities; and Vikas Reddy, a co-founder of Occipital, which developed RedLaser, a bar-code reader for mobile phones that has become one of the hottest apps for smart phones.

Also profiled were Nareen Selvadurai of the mobile-based social networking company Foursquare, and Sachin Agarwal, a founder of the e-mail blogging service Posterous.

### GARG AND ANAPATA

Garg, 23, grew up in a family of physicians and scientists in Dallas. Her father, born in New Delhi, first came to Texas in 1985. He is now the chief of nutrition and metabolic diseases at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Her mother, also from India, is an anesthesiologist in private practice.

“One of the things I learned from them was following your passion, whatever it might be,” Garg said in an America.gov interview.

Garg attended Stanford University in California, majoring in biomedical engineering, and organized internships and career workshops as co-president of Stanford Women in Business. She witnessed the difficulties experienced by top firms as they tried to recruit qualified women and minorities to make their work forces more diverse.

In 2008, Garg, then a junior, drew up her first business plan for Anapata on a napkin with the help of a marketing expert. Her idea was a job-recruitment business focused on diversity and providing new opportunities for women and minorities. “Social media marketing was a hot strategy,” she wrote for the professional recruitment organization ERE.com. “However, social media recruiting was new.”

Today, Anapata — the word is a Kiswahili verb describing one who finds, attains, achieves — has evolved from notes on a napkin into the first online recruitment service in the legal field that focuses exclusively on students from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds. Garg and her team chose the company name after three days searching in many languages for a word associated with achievement, success and fulfillment.

With Anapata, students can join organizations offering hundreds of job contacts and career possibilities and can subscribe to news feeds from prospective employers — all for free. Law firms, which are charged an annual subscription fee, have access to a national diversity network of qualified applicants, can target their recruitment efforts, and can “brand” themselves by sending Anapata subscribers news about their firm.

Anapata, based in Palo Alto, California, links to more than 200 student organizations and diversity groups, including Muslim, Asian American, Latino, Native American, and black law student associations. It also hosts about 800 employers, including many of the top-ranked law firms in the United States.

Garg is now hiring an executive office so the company can expand beyond the legal field. “We always had a vision of establishing a widespread network of diverse organizations that would become connected, including the medical and financial professions.”

In her limited spare time, Garg goes rock climbing, sings or escapes to a coffee shop with a good book. For her, questions about balancing work and personal life miss the point: “Entrepreneurs like me don’t think about balance because your work is so much fun,” she said. “You wake up every morning so excited that you’re creating something exciting for so many people.”

### REDDY AND OCCIPITAL

The firm Occipital offers a window into the intensely competitive world of technology startup companies, where individuals with ideas but little money jostle for recognition from venture capitalists, individual investors and business “incubators.”

Occipital co-founder Vikas Reddy was born in Detroit; both his parents are from Andhra Pradesh in southeastern India. He recalls always having computers around the house to play with and program.

Reddy met his friend and Occipital co-founder Jeffrey Powers when they were engineering students at the University of Michigan. Powers left his graduate program to start Occipital, and Reddy, who graduated in 2006, left

a startup in New York to join him. A few months later, they were accepted into a technology-mentoring program called TechStars, chosen "because of their incredible technical talent," their mentor Brad Feld recalled.

When Reddy, who had contemplated leaving school before he got his degree, told his parents that he was thinking of quitting school for a risky startup, he said, "They told me they would support me in any way they could."

By the end of their time at TechStars, Reddy and Powers had the makings of a project but no funding. So, Reddy said in an online video interview, he and Powers decided to fund the company themselves, making a critical decision to move into mobile phone technology and the field of computer imaging, or computer vision.

Their shift paid off when they released RedLaser, a mobile bar-code reader for instant comparison shopping that became a roaring hit. Today, RedLaser is one of the most popular applications — or apps — for mobile phones, whether measured by number of users or by total sales. It was recently sold to the online retailing giant eBay.

"Vikas and Jeff are the ultimate bootstrapping entrepreneurs," said Feld, a managing director of Foundry Group, a venture capital firm. "They are incredible visionaries, super smart, and never, ever give up."

Occipital, based in Boulder, Colorado, is hardly a one-hit wonder. Its most recent product is a \$2.99 mobile app called 360 Panorama, which can take a series of still photos from a mobile device and create a single panoramic image, in real time. "What can your mobile device do to recognize and map your surroundings?" is the company's core mission, Reddy said.

"Being a first-generation American, I always found myself moving between two worlds," Reddy said in an America.gov interview, "the world of my parents and Indian culture and traditions, and the world of being an American kid growing up in Michigan. I think going through this has helped me more easily adapt to other situations."

Education, skill and drive have all been key factors in the rise of young entrepreneurs like Selvadurai, Agarwal, Garg and Reddy. So has opportunity. "I think one of the greatest things about America is that what has mattered is what I achieved or created, rather than my descent," Reddy said.

## America's Western Forests in Fight for Life

By Karin Rives  
Staff Writer

Washington — A small, dark-brown beetle, no bigger than a grain of rice, is devastating entire forests in the American West. Scientists believe a warmer climate is contributing to the unprecedented outbreak.

As the result of rising temperatures, beetles that used to be confined to certain areas can now attack trees at higher elevations. Larvae that were once decimated by cold winters, meanwhile, are surviving, leading to a rapid increase in the beetle population.

This may, in turn, lead to even higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions, research shows.

Healthy trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and that "carbon sink" disappears when they die. The decay of millions of large trees will make things worse because organic matter that decomposes produces carbon dioxide that now can't be absorbed, researchers say.

A host of federal and state programs, coupled with possible new protections for threatened trees, are under way to address the havoc the beetles wreak and to try to slow their march into new territories. It's turned into a multistate and national effort that has also engaged environmental groups, logging companies and local towns — all of which have a stake in healthy forests.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering listing the whitebark pine, a tree that adorns the vast Yellowstone and Teton national parks and much of the West, under the Endangered Species Act list to give it special protections. Whitebark pines appear to be the tree of choice for beetles and they easily succumb: a recent study found that 80 percent of whitebark pines in Wyoming, Idaho and Montana are already dead or dying.

In areas not yet fully overtaken by the beetle, certain valuable trees are being sprayed. Another remedy is packs of a nontoxic chemical pheromone that are stapled to trees to repel beetles. The beetles, when smelling the chemical, think that the trees in the area are already occupied and move on.

In areas most affected by the outbreak, however, such measures are fruitless.

"We're not trying to stop the beetle; the only thing we can do is mitigate its effect," said Mary Ann Chambers, a spokeswoman for the Bark Beetle Incident Management Team in the U.S. Forest Service region that includes hard-hit areas in Colorado and southeastern Wyoming.

“Once the insects get to the point of where they are now, they just ignore the packs,” she said. “And spraying the trees is something you do by hand, and you must do it once a year. We’re talking about millions of trees here and in many areas where there are no roads. So there’s no way we can do that.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has allocated \$40 million to address safety concerns and other forest needs in the region. Most of the money is going to Colorado, where 2.9 million acres (1.2 million hectares) of lodgepole pines have been infested since 1996. The rest is earmarked for Wyoming, where beetles are consuming trees on 700,000 acres (283,280 hectares).

The U.S. Forest Service is busy removing infested trees from campgrounds and along roads and trails to avoid accidents when dead trees topple over. Some 100,000 trees will fall daily over the next decade after being killed by beetles in the region, the Forest Service estimates, creating a serious safety issue for visitors and people who live there.

The agency is also pushing electric utilities to clear areas around their power lines, which would otherwise be pulled down by dead trees that crash to the ground. Towns in Colorado are doing their share by passing ordinances requiring local property owners to remove dead and infested trees.

Recent periods of drought in parts of the West have made trees weaker and more susceptible to pests. In the lodgepole pine forest in Colorado and Wyoming, the trees are also the perfect size for beetles, which feed only on trees that are at least 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) in diameter. Much of the region was cleared for mining and logging a century ago, and the trees that have since come back are now 5 inches or wider.

“It’s the perfect storm,” Chambers said. “We have warmer temperatures, trees that are the perfect size for beetles and a lot of trees,” she said. “We’re in the middle of this epidemic.”

Environmental groups are also trying to address the beetle outbreak. Watch [America.gov](http://America.gov)’s video about TreeFight, a Wyoming group that is trying to save trees in Yellowstone National Park.

The Western tree death has widespread implications for entire ecosystems. Grizzly bears depend on the calorie-rich pine nuts before they go into hibernation, and that food supply is now being diminished. The beetle epidemic also causes erosion and threatens watersheds because snow no longer can be held in place when trees have fallen, leading to flooding.

It could be years before the outbreak ends. Chambers said the tree death in her region is slowing “because the beetles are running out of trees to eat. But they’re also moving into new areas,” she added. “They won’t stop until they get to the Plains, where no trees grow.”

### **Diversity Visa Lottery Aims to Widen U.S. Immigrant Pool**

By Louise Fenner  
Staff Writer

Washington – Every year the Diversity Visa Lottery gives 50,000 qualified people from countries that send low numbers of immigrants to the United States a chance to apply for a permanent resident visa, or “green card.”

This year, the entry period for the lottery lasts for 30 days, from October 5 to November 3. The lottery is open to individuals who meet certain education or work requirements and were born in an eligible country. Those whose names are selected by computerized random drawing are permitted to take the next steps in the visa application process.

“The idea was to diversify the immigrant pool,” said John Wilcock, a visa specialist with the State Department, in explaining the 1990 law that created the new class of “diversity immigrants.” He briefed journalists at Washington’s Foreign Press Center September 27.

The Diversity Visa Lottery is open to natives of countries that have sent fewer than 50,000 immigrants to the United States in the last five years. Countries that are the source of high numbers of immigrants are excluded from the lottery.

To ensure that 50,000 permanent resident visas are issued each year, Wilcock said, some additional names are selected in the lottery to make up for people who decide not to apply for a visa or don’t qualify.

The ineligible countries are the same as last year: Brazil, Canada, China (mainland-born), Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, South Korea, United Kingdom (except Northern Ireland) and its dependent territories, and Vietnam. People born in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, Macau SAR and Taiwan are eligible.

#### **THE PROCESS**

Each diversity visa lottery is named after the fiscal year for which it is designed. This version is known as DV-2012 because the visas will be issued during fiscal year 2012 (October 1, 2011–September 30, 2012).

The only way to apply for the lottery is to register online at the designated State Department website. Applications will be accepted only from noon EDT (16:00 GMT), Tuesday, October 5, 2010, to noon EDT (16:00 GMT), Wednesday, November 3, 2010. No applications will be accepted after that. Each applicant will receive a unique confirmation number at the end of the registration process.

The lottery instructions urge applicants not to wait until the last week of the registration period to enter because heavy demand may result in website delays.

Applicants for the DV-2012 lottery will be able to check the status of their entries on the State Department's diversity visa Entrant Status Check website starting on May 1, 2011. (Until then, the site will provide information on the DV-2011 lottery, which was held last year.) Entrants will be asked to provide their confirmation number, last name/family name and year of birth. People who are selected in the lottery will be instructed on how to apply for immigrant visas. They may receive an e-mail from the Kentucky Consular Center advising them to check the website again for additional information, such as confirmation of a visa interview appointment.

People should check the Entrant Status Check website regularly "to see if they're going to get called for an interview. Not everybody will get called for an interview," Wilcock said.

#### FRAUD CAUTION

Wilcock emphasized that notifications will not be sent by regular mail and that e-mails will not contain or ask for personal information. Participation in the Diversity Visa Lottery is free. "The only place that DV applicants should pay money is at the time of their [visa] interview at the embassy or consulate at which they're applying," Wilcock said, referring to mandatory fees connected with the visa application process. "We're encouraging people not to send money or pay money in advance to anybody who's making any promises."

Individuals who submit multiple entries for the lottery will be disqualified — although a husband and wife can each apply separately. Entries should be filled out carefully because incorrect information will disqualify a candidate. For example, parents must include the names of all children under age 21, even if they do not intend to take them to the United States, Wilcock said. The children and the spouses of applicants who are approved for permanent resident visas are also granted visas.

Wilcock was asked if security concerns reduce the chances that people from certain regions would be selected in the lottery. "It does not play at all in terms of who can

participate in the program," he said. Every native of an eligible country can participate, and "each and every applicant is subjected to the same kind of background investigation."

"Individual applicants who have ineligibilities — and that might include security-based ineligibilities — may be restricted from immigrating to the United States," he said. "But that determination is made on a person-by-person basis. We're not putting any group of people into a category and excluding them. That's not the way our immigration system works."

#### **Global Polio Eradication Is Within Reach, Special Envoy Says**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — Global polio eradication is within reach, but this last push will require a renewed international commitment, cooperation and community involvement, says U.S. Special Envoy Rashad Hussain.

"We must encourage persistence, reinvigorate political and technical attention in the face of a disappearing disease and competing priorities, and urgently expand the number of financial and engaged donors beyond those who have historically found the resources, some of which may be struggling to sustain their prior levels of support," Hussain said September 27 at a special conference on polio eradication in New York.

The United States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) co-hosted a panel discussion entitled "From Dushanbe to Dakar: Innovative Partnerships for Polio Eradication in OIC Countries." The panel discussion was held at UNICEF headquarters in New York.

Hussain, the U.S. special envoy to the OIC, said the U.S. partnership with the OIC provides renewed impetus to the global effort to eradicate polio, and has the added benefit of strengthening the United States' cooperation with Muslim communities on issues of common concern.

When President Obama gave his global speech to Muslim communities in Cairo on June 4, 2009, he announced that the United States would work together with them to advance shared goals in the fight to end polio.

"We have started down that path by bringing together a focused and determined community in December 2009 to launch the OIC-U.S. joint initiative on polio," Hussain said. "In addition, the U.S. and the OIC have raised polio eradication in both bilateral and multilateral fora to continue to highlight the importance of polio eradication."

He added that, as the president indicated in his September 22 speech on achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, the effort to eradicate polio has become a significant U.S. foreign policy objective involving global partnerships.

According to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, there have been 663 cases of polio reported worldwide this year, compared with 1,020 cases at this point in 2009. The initiative reports that poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that invades the nervous system and can cause total paralysis in a matter of hours. While the disease can strike at any age, it mainly affects children under the age of 3, who account for more than 50 percent of all cases.

Hussain said that for thousands of years, polio has been endemic. It was not until 1955, when Dr. Jonas Salk developed the first vaccine against polio, that the world was able to begin to cope with the disease. Five years later Dr. Albert Sabin perfected the oral polio vaccine, giving the world a second weapon against the disease, and opened a door to eradication.

"In the United States, the last case of polio caused by a wild poliovirus was reported in the late 1970s," Hussain said.

The United States has provided more than \$1.8 billion to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative since 1988, as well as extensive technical support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Agency for International Development. The president announced his Global Health Initiative proposal of a \$63 billion effort to improve and expand access to health services for the world's poor, which underscores the U.S. commitment to a comprehensive global health strategy, including polio eradication, Hussain said.

"Yet vaccination campaigns and emergency operations in outbreak areas continue to face funding gaps," he said. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative currently faces an \$810 million funding gap for implementation of its 2010-2012 work plan.

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