

# beyond

## BOLLYWOOD

INDIAN AMERICANS SHAPE THE NATION

In the Western imagination, India conjures up many things: elephants, saris, and spices; gurus, gods, and goddesses; turbans, temples, and a billion faces drawn from ancient and modern history; and the pulsating energy of Bollywood movies.

But in America, India's contributions stretch far beyond these stereotypes.

The story begins with Indian sailors employed on British ships who traveled to the United States as early as the 1790s. Indian traders of silk, spices, and other fine items soon followed. This story includes workers who built railroads and families who formed the backbone of California's farms. The first Asian in Congress. The creator of Hotmail. Athletes. Doctors. Cab drivers. Musicians. Activists.

Today, one out of every 100 Americans traces his or her roots to India. From metropolitan cities to small towns across the U.S., the lives and stories of America's 3.3 million Indian Americans are woven into the larger story of the United States—and have shaped what it is today.



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Curated by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center

Designed, edited, and produced by the Smithsonian Office of Exhibits Central

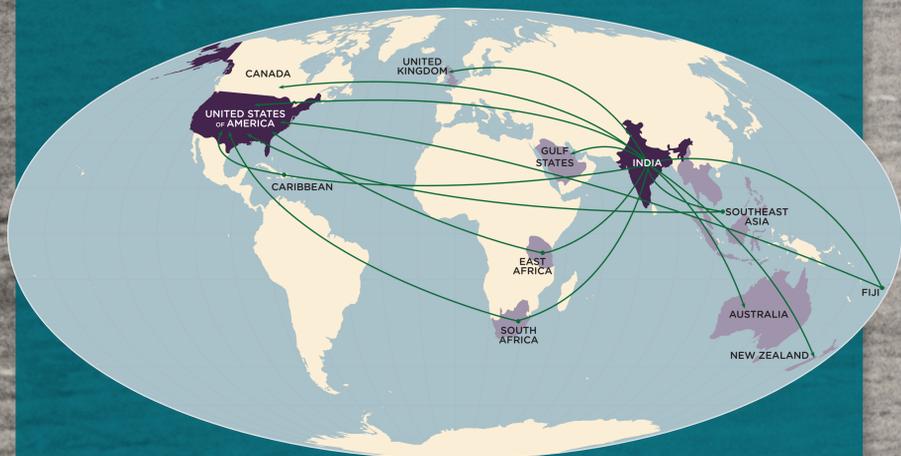
# Passages

The Indian American story is rooted in migration. Some arrived in the late 1800s, joining other immigrants who came to build, and find, the American Dream. Others came in the 1960s, arriving at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, and helped shape a “new” America.

Most Indian immigrants came with just one trunk or suitcase containing some clothing and a few items to remind them of home. Many left their families behind to make the 13,000-kilometer journey, with only hope for new and better opportunities in an unknown place.

“ Grandmother’s sari, freckles of gold poured into silk,  
Koil’s cry, scrap of khadi grandfather spun,  
I pluck all this from my suitcase —  
its buckles dented, zipper torn.  
Also pictures pressed into an album:  
parents by a rosebush,  
Ancestors started in sepia, eyes wide open,  
Who ask — Why have you brought us here? ”

FROM “BRIGHT PASSAGE” BY POET MEENA ALEXANDER



above:

#### Passages to America

Indian immigrants have taken many routes to America. Some came directly from India; others from former British colonies such as Fiji, Guyana, Kenya, and Malaysia.

right:

Wearing garlands presented by family members, an Indian prepares to depart for the United States, 1965.

Courtesy of Hemendra and Hansa Momaya



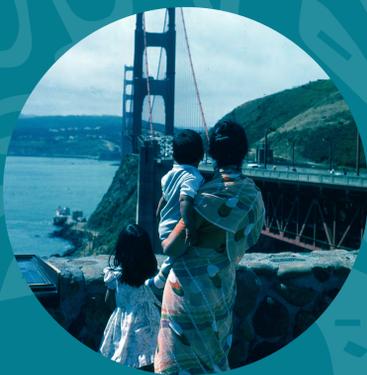
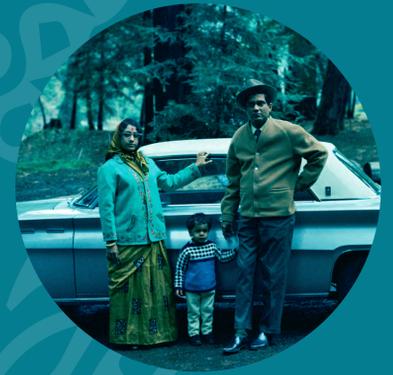


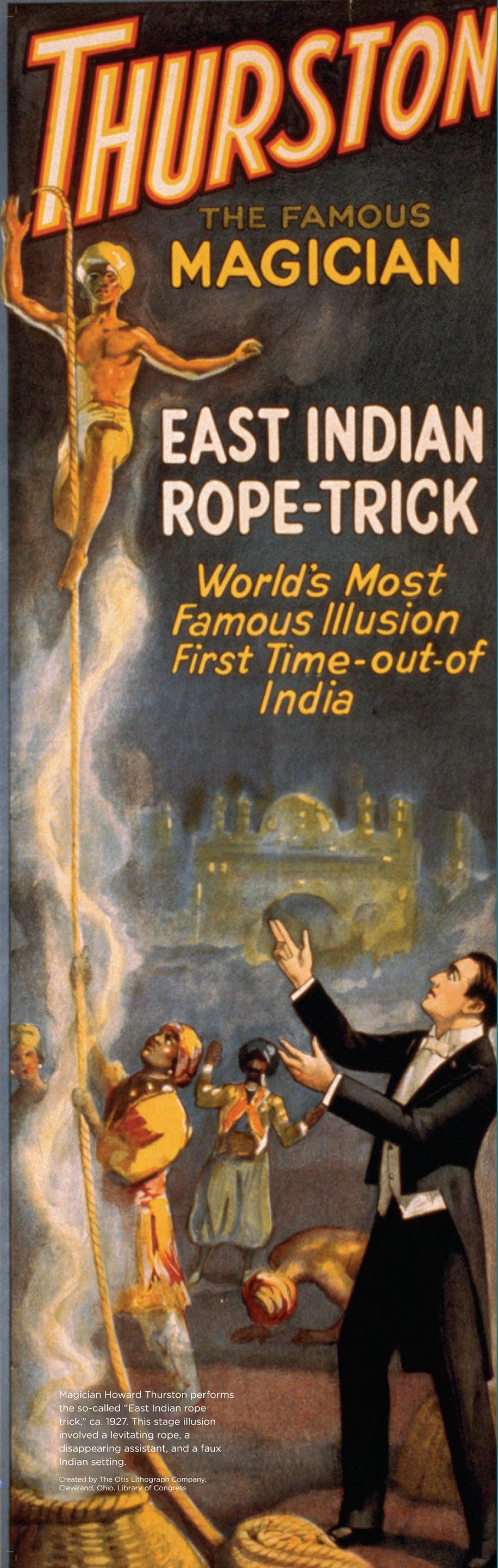
# WHO ARE **Indian** AMERICANS?

Indian immigrants come to the United States from diverse landscapes, practicing different professions and adhering to a wide range of religious and cultural beliefs. They integrate their experiences into the daily fabric of American society and expand American culture by introducing new perspectives and ideas. And they preserve India's rich heritage and traditions in food, fashion, music, dance, language, literature, and religious ritual.



Indian Americans are as diverse as America itself. The United States has a landmass three times the size of India, but its population is less than a third of India's. The U.S. is home to people from all over the world, and nearly 400 languages are spoken there, including Hindi, Urdu, and Gujarati. All of the world's major religions are observed in the U.S., including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, and Sikhism. All of these religious communities count non-Indians amongst their followers.





THE FAMOUS  
MAGICIAN

EAST INDIAN  
ROPE-TRICK

World's Most  
Famous Illusion  
First Time-out-of  
India

## AMERICA imagines INDIA

India is no stranger to America, especially when it comes to popular culture. And although Bollywood now has center stage, it is just one vision of India in the American imagination.

In the 1800s, travel writers, intoxicated by India as a “jewel in the crown” of the British Empire, sketched exotic caricatures of the Indian “Hindoo.” Rudyard Kipling’s story collection *The Jungle Book* (1894) gave generations of Americans the image of India as a “jungle boy” named Mowgli.

In 1922, film actor Rudolph Valentino wore brown-face as *The Young Rajah*. Nowadays, Indian Americans play themselves in films and on television, but they are often typecast as engineers or doctors, or limited to comedic or foreign roles, masking the actual diversity and experiences of Indian Americans.

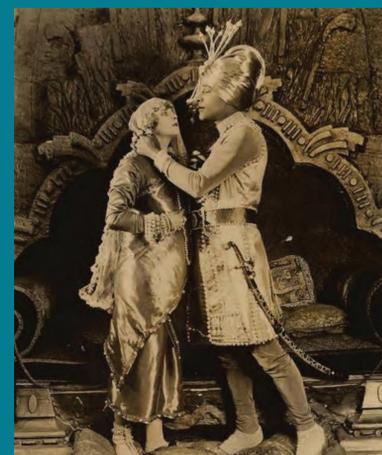
### India Imagines America

The Bollywood film *Pardes* (1997) and the Tamil film *Jeans* (1998) were among the first to show America to Indian audiences. Later, films such as *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (2006) and *English Vinglish* (2012) explored issues of identity and family relationships, while films such as *Kurbaan* (2009) and *My Name Is Khan* (2010) dealt with topics of discrimination, prejudice, and violence.



Sabu Dastagir, an actor of Indian origin, starred in *The Jungle Book*, 1942. The plot was loosely based on Rudyard Kipling’s stories of India.

Alexander Korda Films - United Artists



In the 1922 silent film *The Young Rajah*, Italian-born Rudolph Valentino was one of the first actors to portray Indian royalty for American audiences.

Courtesy of Brad Frick

Magician Howard Thurston performs the so-called “East Indian rope trick,” ca. 1927. This stage illusion involved a levitating rope, a disappearing assistant, and a faux Indian setting.

Created by The Otis Lithograph Company, Cleveland, Ohio. Library of Congress

“ On arriving in the **Sacramento** Valley, one could not help but be reminded of the **Punjab**. Fertile fields stretched across the flat valley to the foothills lying far in the distance. ”

PUNA SINGH, FARMER

## THE first IMMIGRANTS

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, while India was a British colony, Indians began to emigrate to escape conditions at home. Oppressed by taxation and restrictions on land ownership, farmers left Punjab to settle along America's west coast. They worked alongside Chinese immigrants in lumber mills and iron factories, and on railroads to support America's industrial boom.

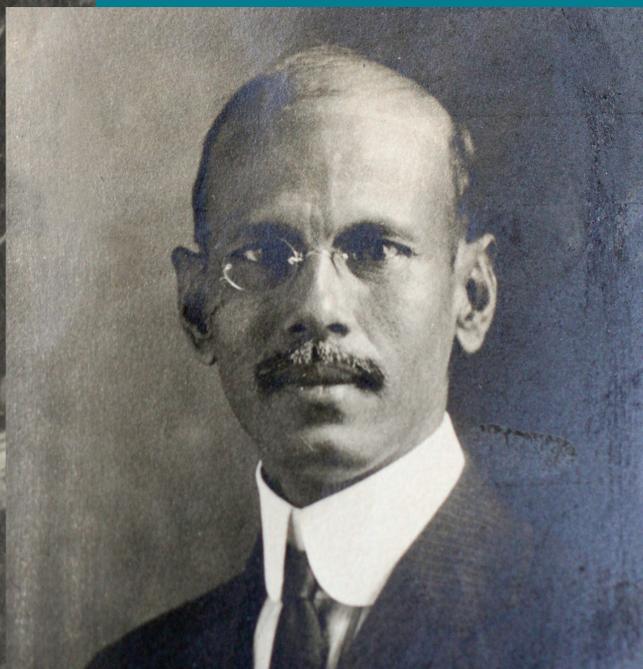
Meanwhile, Indians from Bengal, capitalizing on the American desire for "Oriental" goods such as silk and spices, set up shop along the Atlantic coast. Indian seamen, eager to escape the boiling engine rooms of British steamers, began jumping ship in New York and Baltimore.

Generations later, the descendants of these early immigrants grew in number and wealth to become influential landowners, entrepreneurs, public servants, and organizers for civil rights.



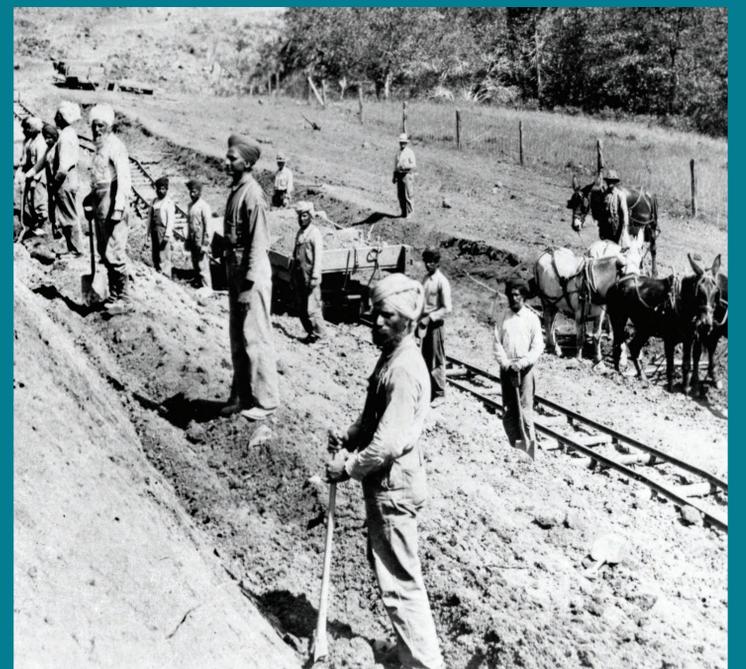
An Indian immigrant worker harvests beets in Hamilton City, California, for the Sacramento Valley Sugar Company, ca. 1907-1915.

California State University, Chico, Meriam Library Special Collections



Roston Ally from Bengal sold embroidered cottons and silks in New Jersey seaports throughout the summer and in New Orleans during the winter months. He sat for this photograph in 1918.

National Archives and Records Administration



Indian immigrants work on railway construction, Pacific and Eastern Railroad, Oregon, ca. 1906.

Southern Oregon Historical Society (#1603)

“ The MEXICAN and the HINDU were COMPATIBLE ... they had a lot in common. The Mexicans had TORTILLAS. The Hindus had ROTIS, a bread that is like a tortilla. ”

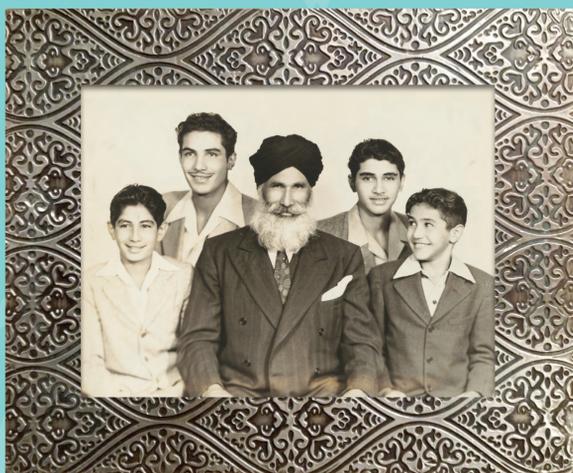
ISABEL SINGH GARCIA, MEMBER OF  
A PUNJABI-MEXICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY

# THE Great Melting POT

In the early 20th century, America experienced a “boom” of industry and needed laborers for manual work. From 1900 to the 1920s, the first sizeable immigration of Indians to America occurred, filling positions in the agricultural fields and lumberyards, and on the railroads. Most settled in the Northwest, working alongside other immigrants and racial minorities.

While promoting the immigration of men to fill the labor void, the U.S. government discouraged the immigration of women out of fear that families would form and establish permanent roots in the country.

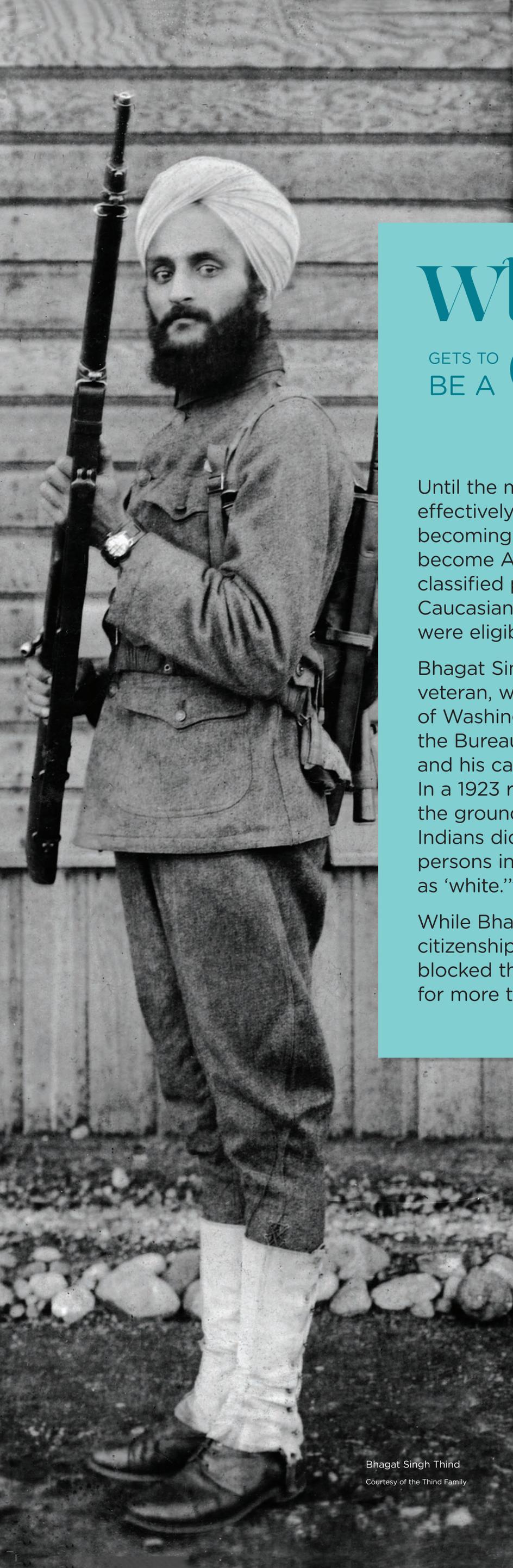
As a result, early Indian immigrants tended to marry other immigrants and racial minorities. Along the West Coast, Punjabi men married Mexican women. In the east and the south, Bengali traders settled in neighborhoods such as Harlem, West Baltimore, and Tremé in New Orleans, marrying Creole, Puerto Rican, and African American women.



1. Bengali-Puerto Rican couple Habib and Victoria Ullah with their two children and other family members, ca. 1952.  
Courtesy of Habib Ullah Jr.
2. Memel Singh with his Punjabi-Mexican son, Manuel.  
Courtesy of Alicia Garcia Phillips
3. Rosa and Jiwan Singh with their daughter Amelia, New Mexico, ca. 1938  
Courtesy of Amelia Singh Netervalva

4. Wedding photo of Memal Singh, an immigrant from India, and Genobeba Loya Singh, an immigrant from Mexico.  
Courtesy of Alicia Garcia Phillips
5. Members of the Indian-Mexican-American Puna Singh family, ca. 1945.  
The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. 2002/78 cz Box 6:22
6. Bisham Singh Sidhu, Semona Rodriguez Sidhu, and their son.  
Courtesy of Alicia Garcia Phillips

7. Rosa Singh with her daughter Amelia, El Paso, Texas, ca. 1939.  
Courtesy of Amelia Singh Netervalva
8. Isabel Singh Garcia, Carmelita Singh Shine, and Alice Singh Hetzfield—all daughters of Indian fathers and Hispanic mothers.  
Courtesy of Alicia Garcia Phillips



# Who GETS TO BE A Citizen?

Until the middle of the 20th century, U.S. laws effectively prevented Asian immigrants from becoming citizens. Only “white” immigrants could become Americans. Since anthropologists at the time classified people with origins in northern India as Caucasian, some Indian immigrants argued that they were eligible to become citizens.

Bhagat Singh Thind, a devout Sikh and U.S. Army veteran, was twice granted citizenship by the State of Washington, in 1918 and again in 1920. Both times, the Bureau of Naturalization revoked his citizenship, and his case proceeded to the U.S. Supreme Court. In a 1923 ruling, the Court rejected Thind’s claim, on the grounds that, although technically “Caucasian,” Indians did not belong to “the various groups of persons in this country commonly recognized as ‘white.’”

While Bhagat Singh Thind was finally granted citizenship in 1936, the 1923 Supreme Court ruling blocked the path to citizenship for many immigrants for more than two decades.

ORDER FOR APPEARANCE.

File No. 28555



SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES.

No. 600, October Term, 1921.

*The United States of America*

vs.  
*Bhagat Singh Thind*

The Clerk will enter my appearance as Counsel for the

*Thind*

(Name)

*Arvind Kumar*

(P. O. Address)

*400 N. 1st St.  
Portland, Ore.*

Bhagat Singh Thind  
Courtesy of the Thind Family

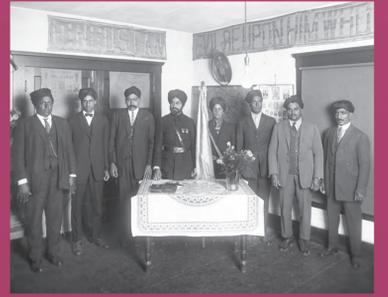
Supreme Court case documents for  
Bhagat Singh Thind v. United States  
U.S. Supreme Court

“ There is no room in the United States of America for second-class citizenship. ”

DALIP SINGH SAUND,  
CONGRESSMAN

# Freedom HERE AND THERE

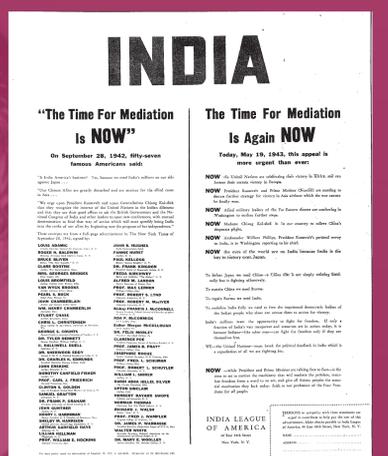
Between 1900 and 1950, while Indians were fighting for freedom from British rule, Indian immigrants in America were fighting for citizenship in the U.S. Early immigrants connected the two struggles. They reasoned that as long as India was a British colony, Indians in America would be treated as second-class persons, without dignity and rights. These campaigners knew that victories on both continents would ensure dignity for future generations and the inalienable rights outlined in America's Declaration of Independence.



## GADAR PARTY

In the early 1900s, immigrants along the Pacific Coast formed the Gadar Party to support India's movement for independence from Britain. Here, a *jatha*, or group of freedom fighters, from the Gadar Party gathered in San Francisco in 1924.

The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. 2002.183-AX



## THE INDIA LOBBY

The India Lobby united Indians of various classes and religions across America to fight for citizenship, beginning in the 1920s. They built coalitions with African Americans, Filipinos, and organized labor. The India Lobby was instrumental in passing the landmark 1946 Luce-Celler Act, granting Indians and Filipinos the rights to U.S. citizenship and land ownership.

From *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies: The India Lobby in the United States, 1900-1946* by Harold A. Gould (New Delhi, 2006)

## CONGRESSMAN SAUND

Dalip Singh Saund, a California farmer, mathematician, and judge from Imperial County, made history in 1957 as the first Indian and first Asian elected to Congress. He served until 1963. Here, Congressman Saund stands with then-Senators John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, 1958.

Courtesy of Eric Saund

“ Belonging  
DOES NOT COME  
WITHOUT A fight. ”

VIJAY PRASHAD, HISTORIAN AND JOURNALIST



# Who Belongs

## IN AMERICA?

What does an American look like? Can a *bindi* or turban signal that one is *not* American? Like other immigrant groups, some Indian Americans experience prejudice based on their country of origin and cultural practices.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, exposed some Indian Americans to backlash and violence committed by people who linked the population to terrorist organizations. Some Sikhs were suddenly assumed to be terrorists because of their beards and turbans. Also, mosques were firebombed, and Hindu temples were vandalized. Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh gas station owner, was shot to death in Mesa, Arizona, by a man who told the police, “I stand for America all the way.”



*left:*  
FIGHTING AGAINST HATE

In 1987, a hate group called the Dotbusters vandalized property and attacked some Indian Americans in New Jersey. Their motivation: growing economic inequality, which they blamed on Indian residents. In response, Indian Youth Against Racism, a group from Columbia University, documented the violence and created programs on South Asian cultures for Jersey City schools.

Photograph by Corky Lee

*above:*

This cartoon of Uncle Sam hugging a Sikh appeared in newspapers nationwide on August 8, 2012, after shootings in a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, left six people dead, including the gunman. The shooting was considered a hate crime.

By permission of Michael Ramirez and Creators Syndicate, Inc.



# Desis

UNITED WE STAND

In America, the word *desi* refers to people who trace their roots to South Asia. Many Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepalis, and Sri Lankans count themselves as *desis*.

In America, the word does not just designate ancestry. For some *desis*, it is a collective identity, binding people into a community that questions stereotypes and fights for human rights, including rights for immigrants and workers.

“GROWN UNCLES  
WERE CRYING  
ON OUR VOICEMAIL.”

SUBHASH KATEEL, DRUM ORGANIZER,  
recalling attacks on Indian Americans  
in the days after September 11, 2001

*Desis* Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) is  
one of many *desi* groups that protest hate  
crimes, racial profiling, and unconstitutional  
detention.

Photograph by Corky Lee

# Desis

## DIVIDED WE FALL

Some *desis* fight against racial inequality, organize for women's rights and lesbian, gay, and transgender rights, and denounce domestic violence—concerns across America. Involvement in these causes highlights the internal complexities that some Indian Americans face as they struggle for acceptance, not only within America, but also within Indian American communities.



In 2000, the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA) pushed the debate over rights for lesbian and gay persons front and center, fighting for and eventually gaining inclusion in New York's India Day Parade as equal members of the *desi* community.

Courtesy of South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association



A 2007 silent march in Edison, New Jersey, protested domestic violence in the South Asian community.

Courtesy of Manavi

*right:*

Transgender Day, New York City, June 2012: Participants gathered to demand an end to police brutality and discrimination against transgendered persons—and to speak up for all who face injustice.

Photograph by Sabelo Narasimhan



# HIP HOP

## ACTIVISM

“ When I hear a good HIP HOP song or I hear a good BHANGRA song, I get the SAME SMILE on my face, so they kind of WORK TOGETHER. ”

DJ REKHA

Hip hop has become an important form of cultural expression for many Americans, including *desis*. The musical genre was created in the 1970s by African Americans as a tool of power, protest, and personal expression. Some *desi* artists have embraced the energy of the hip hop movement to create and perform music that is simultaneously art and activism.

DJ REKHA

D/LO

CHEE MALABAR

RAJÉ SHWARI

KABIR SEN



# Desi Beats IN AMERICA

How can you trace the evolution of a nation? Listen to its music.

American music mirrors the country's cultural and social development. Native and European roots have mixed with African, Asian, and Latin beats, through blues, jazz, rock, disco, and soul. *Desi* musicians have also brought their own sounds and flavor to the American music mosaic.

Scan the QR codes for sample tracks of *desi* beats, instruments, and voices that have influenced American music across genres.



**Ali Akbar Khan**  
"Rag Pilu Baroowa"  
from *Then and Now*, 1955

Sarod maestro Ali Akbar Khan brought Indian music to America, both as a performer and teacher. *Then and Now* was the first album of full-length Indian classical music released in the U.S.



**Asha Puthli**  
"All My Life" from  
*Science Fiction*, 1971

Asha Puthli sang vocals for "All My Life" on jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman's *Science Fiction*, catapulting her into the decorated music career that included recordings in blues, disco, funk, pop, rock, soul, and techno.



**Hariprasad Chaurasia and Zakir Hussain**  
"Rag Ahir Bhairav" from  
*Venu*, 1974

This raga features *bansuri* master Hariprasad Chaurasia and *tabla* virtuoso Zakir Hussain.



**Ravi Shankar with Philip Glass**  
"Offering" from  
*Passages*, 1990

Renowned sitar maestro Ravi Shankar recorded *Passages* with composer Philip Glass, blending North Indian classical music and Glass's American minimalist style. In "Offering," the album's opening track, saxophones carry the melody.



**Sanjay Mishra with Jerry Garcia**  
"Nocturne" from  
*Blue Incantation*, 1995

Legendary electric guitarist Jerry Garcia of The Grateful Dead joins acoustic guitarist Sanjay Mishra for *Nocturne*, which showcases compositional elements and instruments from both Hindustani and rock music.



**Anoushka Shankar and Karsh Kale,**  
featuring Norah Jones  
"Easy," 2007

Musical pathbreaker Anoushka Shankar (daughter of Ravi Shankar) and producer Karsh Kale explore the union of electronica and India, conveyed through the sitar and Norah Jones's vocals.



**Penn Masala**  
"Pehchaan," 2007

Penn Masala, the first Indian American *a cappella* group, was formed in 1996 at the University of Pennsylvania. The group wrote and recorded "Pehchaan" ("identity") as an exploration of self, just as they began to receive international acclaim.



**Falu**  
"Copper Can," 2007

Kids singing and asking for money in a Mumbai train inspired songwriter Gaurav Shah and singer Falguni Shah (Falu) to compose "Copper Can." Their teacher, Ustad Sultan Khan, plays *sarangi* on this track.



**DJ Rekha**  
"Basement Bhangra Anthem" featuring  
Wyclef Jean and  
Bikram Singh, 2007

DJ, producer, and activist Rekha Malhotra, popularly known as DJ Rekha, is credited with popularizing *bhangra* in America. She began her monthly "Basement Bhangra" event in 1997, which has since become a mainstay of the New York club scene.



**Vijay Iyer with Prasanna and Nitin Mitta**  
*Abundance*, 2011

Indian American pianist and Grammy finalist Vijay Iyer teams with two U.S.-based Indian musicians for an album of "21st century global chamber music" with Carnatic music influences.





BHANGRA



KATHAK

# LET'S Dance



BOLLYWOOD

Indian Americans have carried the beautiful traditions of Indian classical, folk, and popular dances to the United States. Dance is part of cultural identity passed down through generations, via classes for young dancers, collegiate dance teams, nationwide competitions, and, most popularly, Indian weddings in America.

America has embraced Bollywood-style dance in Olympic figure skating, flash mobs, and American television series such as *Dancing with the Stars* and *So You Think You Can Dance?* Other classical and folk forms, including Bharatnatyam, Kathak, and Garba-Raas, are also becoming increasingly popular amongst wider audiences.



BHARATNATYAM



KUCHIPUDI



ODISSI



BHANGRA



MODERN



RAAS

from top:

Bhangra (folk dance style from northern India)

Kathak (classical dance from northern India)

Bollywood-style dancers

Bharatnatyam (classical dance from southern India)

Kuchipudi (classical dance from southern India)

Bhangra dancers  
Modern dancer

Raas (folk dance from Gujarat)  
AnnArbor.com, 2010. All rights reserved.  
Used with permission.

Odissi (classical dance from eastern India)

Photographs by John Merrell,  
unless otherwise noted

# Besting the B-E-E



In 1985, Balu Natarajan became the first Indian American to win the Scripps National Spelling Bee, inspiring a generation of youth to compete. Between 1999 and 2014, 13 Indian Americans have won the Scripps National Spelling Bee. This is not just a story of individual or family effort; Indian Americans have started their own community-based and statewide spelling associations, paving the way for national achievements.



BALU NATARAJAN, 1985  
WINNING WORD: MILIEU



RAGESHREE RAMACHANDRAN, 1988  
WINNING WORD: ELEGICAL



NUPUR LALA, 1999  
WINNING WORD: LOGORRHEA



GEORGE THAMPY, 2000  
WINNING WORD: DEMARCHE



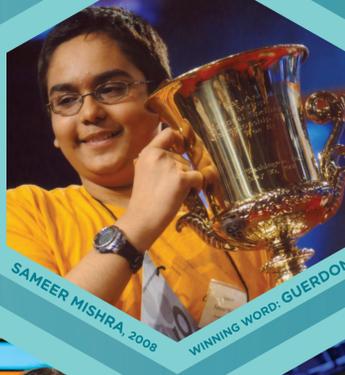
PRATYUSH BUDDIGA, 2002  
WINNING WORD: PROSPICIENCE



SAI GUNTURI, 2003  
WINNING WORD: POCOCCURANTE



ANURAG KASHYAP, 2005  
WINNING WORD: APPOGIATURA



SAMEER MISHRA, 2008  
WINNING WORD: GUERDON



KAVYA SHIVASHANKAR, 2009  
WINNING WORD: LAODICEAN



ANAMIKA VEERAMANI, 2010  
WINNING WORD: STROMUHR



SUKANYA ROY, 2011  
WINNING WORD: CYMOTRICHOUS



SNIGDHA NANDIPATI, 2012  
WINNING WORD: GUETAPENS



ARVIND MAHANKALI, 2013  
WINNING WORD: KNAIDEL



SRIRAM HATHWAR, 2014 (TIE)  
WINNING WORD: STICHOMYTHIA



ANSUN SUJOE, 2014 (TIE)  
WINNING WORD: FEUILLETON

Balu Natarajan: Courtesy of Balu Natarajan  
Rageshree Ramachandran: Courtesy of Sacramento Bee  
All others: Photograph by Mark Bowen, Scripps National Spelling Bee



“ Six short weeks ago an **INDIAN RESTAURANT** was discovered on Eighth Avenue near 42nd Street. Grave Indian gentlemen, with American clothes but with great turbans on their heads, used to come in for their curry and rice. **SIX SHORT WEEKS**—and already the restaurant is half full of **TOURISTS**, eagerly peering at each other for turbans and **LOCAL COLOR**. ”

HELEN BULITT LOWRY, *NEW YORK TIMES*, APRIL 3, 1921,  
ON THE FIRST KNOWN INDIAN RESTAURANT IN AMERICA

## Food, GLORIOUS FOOD

Is Indian food the “American” cuisine of the new millennium?

*Vindaloo* and *tikka masala* sit next to macaroni and cheese on the shelves of American grocery stores. Clusters of Indian restaurants, from Curry Hill in New York to Little India in Los Angeles, are common fixtures in the urban landscape. Indian spices, ranging from cumin to coriander, are staples in many American kitchens. Even a popular weight-loss program offers Indian food as one of its healthy options.

Some say American restaurateurs first discovered Indian food in the early 1900s. Others say the real “boom” started in the 1980s, with a culinary movement of chefs and cookbook authors seeking to find alternatives to the “meat and potatoes” diet and satisfy a changing palate and population.

But if you ask many Americans, there is a much simpler explanation for the growing popularity of Indian food: it is delicious.

Ashima Ganguli  
stands in the kitchen . . .  
combining Rice Krispies and Planters  
peanuts and chopped red onion in a  
bowl. She adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices  
of green chili pepper, wishing there were  
mustard oil to pour into the mix. Ashima has  
been consuming this concoction throughout  
her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the  
snack sold . . . on Calcutta sidewalks and  
on railway platforms throughout India . . .  
it is the one thing she craves.

From *The Namesake* by  
Jhumpa Lahiri (2003)

A *masala dabba* (spice box) is found in  
many Indian American kitchens.

Courtesy of Shar Puskala

# FREEDOM OF Religion



Jain scholar Virchand Gandhi, Buddhist teacher Anagarika Dharmapala, and Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893.

Published with written permission from, and courtesy of, Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Massachusetts, Inc., and obtained from the collection at [www.vivekananda.org](http://www.vivekananda.org)

In 1893, three Indian religious teachers—Swami Vivekananda (Hindu), Anagarika Dharmapala (Buddhist), and Virchand Gandhi (Jain)—shared their philosophies at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Today, Indian Americans identify as Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians, as well as atheists and agnostics. A typical American day now could include a Muslim employee performing *namaaz* during her lunch hour, or a Jain man working an early shift in order to observe *chauvihar*.

America also looks different because of this plurality. It is no longer uncommon for an American city's architectural landscape to include a *dehrasar*, *gurudwara*, *masjid*, and *mandir*. In these houses of worship, Indian Americans congregate, contemplate, pray, and pass on beliefs and traditions to young members.



JAIN



BAHA'I



HINDU



BUDDHIST



CHRISTIAN



SIKH



MUSLIM



JEWISH



ZOROASTRIAN

from left:

Hindu: Devotees perform a *puja*, or ritual, to commemorate the New Year at a Hindu temple in Minnesota.

Photograph by Baskar Gopalan, Harvard Pluralism Project

Buddhist: A candle-lighting ceremony commemorates family birthdays at a Buddhist temple in Fremont, California.

Photograph by Brenda Walsh;

Christian: Worshippers sing hymns at the United Evangelical Christian Fellowship, Metuchen, New Jersey.

Courtesy of the United Evangelical Christian Fellowship

Sikh: A Sikh couple prays during their wedding ceremony.

MPSingh Photography

Muslim: Women offer prayers at a mosque in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Photograph by Robert Nickelsberg

Jewish: New York City Council member Alan Gerson lights the menorah for a Hanukkah celebration at New York's city hall, December 2006.

Courtesy of the Indian Jewish Congregation of USA

Zoroastrian: Priests perform a *jashan* ceremony at a fire temple in Houston, Texas.

Photograph by Yezdu Engineer, member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston

Baha'i: Baha'i House of Worship, Wilmette, Illinois.

Photograph by C.T. Miner, courtesy of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States

Jain: A *dīya* (lamp), lit by Jain devotees at a temple in Milpitas, California, symbolizes the liberation of the soul from the cycles of birth and death.

Courtesy of the Jain Temple of Northern California

# Yoga AMERICA

Yoga may be India's most popular contribution to American culture. Swami Vivekananda introduced it to America in 1893.

In the tumultuous 1960s, yoga intrigued Americans intent on rejecting Western materialism and embracing Eastern spirituality. In the '70s and '80s, Americans increasingly took up yoga as part of a national enthusiasm for exercise. By the 1990s, more than 15 million Americans were practicing yoga.

Today, yoga is both a big business and a lifestyle. Yoga studios are all over major cities and small towns. Americans spend \$5 billion annually on yoga classes, clothes, and accessories.



Yoga instructor Indra Devi, ca. 1953. Born Eugenie Peterson in Latvia, Indra Devi studied yoga in India and developed a version of it that would appeal to Americans.

Indra Devi Yoga Foundation - Argentina



Swami Vivekananda and guests at Green Acre School, Eliot, Maine, ca. 1894. This school, a meeting-place for the study of world religions, was just one stop on a tour in which Vivekananda introduced the West to Hinduism and yoga.

Eliot Baha'i Archives and Maine Memory Network



Kids do yoga at the White House Easter Egg Roll, 2009.

The White House

Swami Satchidananda opens the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, Bethel, New York, 1969. Satchidananda would later found Yogaville, a yoga retreat in Buckingham, Virginia.

Courtesy of Yogaville



# WORKING LIVES Doctors AND DENTISTS



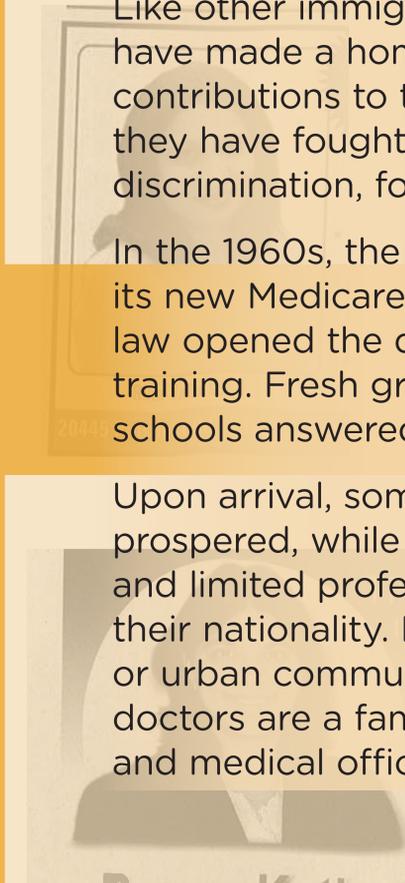
“Hospitals in poor and rural areas NEEDED US foreign medical graduates. Compared to hospitals in India, I liked how ORGANIZED everything was, especially all the charts and the nurses’ notes. I had to ask someone how to tie my tie with a thinner knot so I could fit in. And the only way I could eat the bland HOSPITAL FOOD was to put Tabasco sauce on everything.”

ABRAHAM VERGHESE, M.D., PHYSICIAN AND AUTHOR. HE BEGAN PRACTICING MEDICINE IN JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE, IN THE 1980S.

Like other immigrants, Indian Americans have made a home in America through their contributions to the economy. In the process, they have fought to overcome barriers and discrimination, for themselves and for others.

In the 1960s, the U.S. needed more doctors for its new Medicare system. A 1965 immigration law opened the door to people with medical training. Fresh graduates from India’s medical schools answered the call.

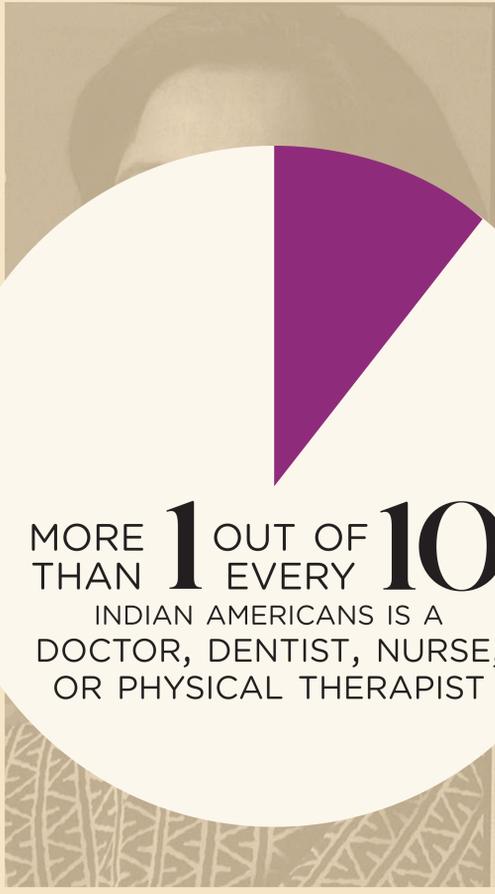
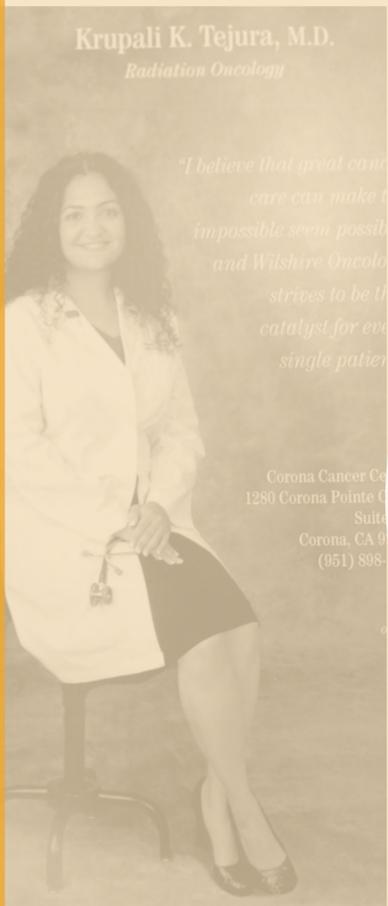
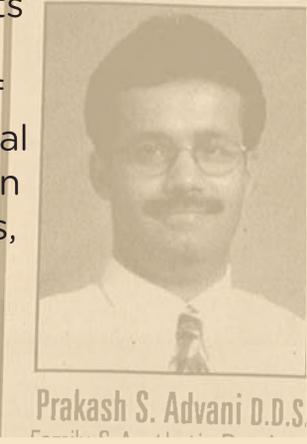
Upon arrival, some Indian doctors and dentists prospered, while others faced hiring barriers and limited professional privileges because of their nationality. Many found work in poor rural or urban communities. Today, Indian American doctors are a familiar sight in hospitals, clinics, and medical offices across the country.



\* Accept All Insur  
\* Saturday & Late E



Dr. Kalai DDS,



MORE THAN **1** OUT OF **10** INDIAN AMERICANS IS A DOCTOR, DENTIST, NURSE, OR PHYSICAL THERAPIST



background:  
Vinay Srinivasan  
Faces of American Medicine, 2013  
digital collage



# WORKING LIVES ENGINEERS AND Scientists

Hotmail. The Pentium chip. Fiber optics. Noise-canceling headphones. All have Indian American inventors. And all these advances are rooted in the influx of Indian engineers to America that began in the 1960s.

In the 1960s, America was faced with the growing threat of a nuclear Soviet Union. A solution: the H-1B visa. This allowed immigrant scientists and engineers to join the nation's efforts and keep the U.S. competitive in the global arms race. Meanwhile, engineering schools proliferated in India after its independence in 1947, training a workforce that would come to work at Apple and Microsoft and eventually lead and support Silicon Valley's startup boom. Today, 36% of all H-1B visas are granted to immigrants from India.

These new Americans and their descendants embraced two enduring American traditions: innovation and entrepreneurship.



PENTIUM CHIP

Electrical engineer Vinod Dham is known as the "father" of the Pentium chip, having overseen its development at Intel. Dham went on to become an independent entrepreneur and venture capitalist.

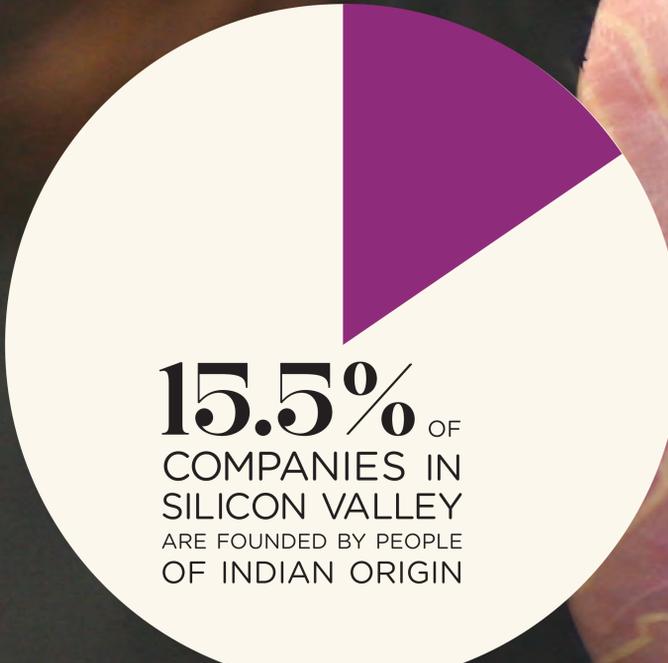
© User:ZyMOS / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA-3.0 / GFDL

far left:

SUMITA PENNATHUR

Dr. Sumita Pennathur has contributed significantly to the fields of nanofluidics and interfacial science. She was one of three Indian Americans awarded the 2011 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on young science and engineering professionals.

Courtesy of Peter Allen, UC Santa Barbara



**15.5%** OF  
COMPANIES IN  
SILICON VALLEY  
ARE FOUNDED BY PEOPLE  
OF INDIAN ORIGIN

WORKING LIVES

# Cab DRIVERS

Taxi driving is one of few jobs open to new immigrants, who often find other jobs closed to them if they have accents or limited English skills and are not U.S. citizens. Indian American cab drivers represent all regions of India and diverse professional backgrounds and religious beliefs. Many are Sikhs who immigrated in the mid-1980s seeking greater religious freedom following anti-Sikh riots in India.

“ A key symbol for us is the TAXI METER, which displays fares in red. A taxi worker begins each day ‘IN THE RED’—in debt—and has to drive himself ‘INTO THE BLACK’ to pay off rental or lease fees, gas, and dues to his employer. So most of a fare doesn’t go to the driver’s pocket. ”

BHAIRAVI DESAI, DIRECTOR OF THE  
NEW YORK TAXI WORKERS ALLIANCE

30%  
OF TAXI  
DRIVERS IN  
NEW YORK  
ARE OF INDIAN  
ORIGIN

A travel prayer hangs from the mirror of an Indian Muslim's taxi as he navigates the streets of New York City.

Photograph by Preston Merchant

right:

Gujarat-born and U.S.-educated, Bhairavi Desai is director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a union that represents some 15,000 cab drivers. On May 13, 1998, the NYTWA launched a daring and ultimately successful strike to protest unfair work regulations, the first taxi strike in New York in 30 years.

Photograph by Stan Schnier



# WORKING LIVES MOTEL Owners

Motels are small businesses that serve as immigrant gateways into the American Dream. Indian Americans own and operate motels and hotels throughout the country, and are credited with reviving what was once thought to be a dying industry.

Success comes at a cost, as many motel owners are tied to their workplaces 24-7, with little separation between work and home life. Many live in their motels, upholding faith, family, and tradition in their private lives while presenting an American “face” to the outside world.

**50%**  
OF ALL MOTELS  
IN THE U.S.  
ARE OWNED BY  
INDIAN  
AMERICANS

Anne Dodge traveled along America's Route 66 highway, documenting iconic motel buildings and their owners. Many Indian Americans and their families own, operate, and preserve these vintage buildings that have come to define American roadside architecture and culture. The Rest Haven Court's neon sign is one of Springfield, Missouri's famous Route 66 icons.

Courtesy of Anne Dodge



Rest Haven Court, Springfield, Missouri, has been owned and managed by Ken Pandya for more than 25 years.

Courtesy of Anne Dodge



Vina Parikh, owner and manager of the Americana Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico. Her family has owned the motel for more than eight years.

Courtesy of Anne Dodge



**KALPANA CHAWLA**  
(1962–2003)

In 1997, Kalpana Chawla, a crew member of the space shuttle *Columbia* STS-87 mission, became the first Indian American astronaut. She died on February 1, 2003, during a landing accident while returning from space on *Columbia* STS-107, her second mission. She spent a total of 31 days, 14 hours, and 54 minutes in space.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

**HARGOBIND KHORANA**  
(1922–2011)

In 1968 Hargobind Khorana became the first Indian American to win the Nobel Prize in Medicine. With fellow Columbia University scientists, he discovered how nucleotides in nucleic acids (which carry the genetic code of the cell) control a cell's synthesis of proteins.

University of Wisconsin-Madison



# Ground- breakers

America is a land of spectacular achievement built on the shoulders of immigrants. Indian Americans are known for success in medicine, engineering, and business, but some have broken ground in other professions. Here are just a few of the Indian American luminaries in the arts and letters, science, and sports.



**MOHINI BHARDWAJ**  
(born 1978)

In 2004, gymnast Mohini Bhardwaj became the first Indian American woman to win an Olympic medal—and the second Indian American to win an Olympic medal, after Alexi Grewal, who won a gold medal in cycling at the 1984 Summer Olympics.

Courtesy of Mohini Bhardwaj



**BRANDON CHILLAR**  
(born 1982)

Brandon Chillar was part of the 2011 champion Green Bay Packers Super Bowl lineup, becoming the first Indian American to play for a winning National Football League championship team.

Photograph by Christian Petersen / Getty Images



**DARSH SINGH**  
(born 1986)

The first turbaned Indian American to play NCAA basketball, Darsh Singh served as co-captain for Trinity University in Texas from 2004 to 2008. As the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) does not allow players to wear headgear, Singh petitioned to wear his turban, a symbol of his Sikh faith, during games.

Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas

YELLAPRAGADA SUBBARAO  
(1895-1948)

In the 1930s, biochemist Yellapragada Subbarao discovered the role of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) as the source of energy in cells. He is also noted for developing one of the first, and still most widely used, anti-cancer drugs—methotrexate.

Courtesy of Venkatesh Kavuluri



ZUBIN MEHTA  
(born 1936)

Zubin Mehta was appointed music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and, later, the New York Philharmonic—the first person of Indian origin to become principal conductor of a major American orchestra.

Photograph by Apoorva Gupta



DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI  
(1890-1936)

In 1928, Dhan Gopal Mukerji won the Newbery Medal, an award given annually to the most distinguished American children's book, for *Gay-Neck, The Story of a Pigeon*. An immigrant who came by ship in 1910, Mukerji wrote to support himself and sought to win respect for Indian culture and philosophy through his writings.

From *Caste and Outcast* by Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1923)



NINA DAVULURI  
(born 1989)

In 2013, Nina Davuluri of New York State was crowned Miss America, the first Indian American to hold the title. Her historic win sparked racist and xenophobic comments, as well as praise from Indians in the U.S. and the American public at large.

Courtesy of The Miss America Organization / Bruce V. Boyajian

In a nation of millions, there is always room for more. Tell us about groundbreakers we may have missed. Post on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @SmithsonianAPA #BeyondBollywood

WHO'S  
**missing?**



MINDY KALING  
(born 1979)

Nicknamed "Mindy" after the sitcom *Mork & Mindy*, actress and comedian Vera Chokalingam, popularly known as Mindy Kaling, became the first Indian American to star in and produce her own show, *The Mindy Project*, in 2012.

Photograph by Damon D'Amato



NAEEM KHAN  
(born 1958)

Descended from designers who made garments for India's royal families, Naeem Khan apprenticed with the minimalist American designer Halston. He launched his own line combining Indian and American aesthetics in 2003, dressing not only First Lady Michelle Obama but also Jordan's Queen Noor and celebrities including Beyoncé, Eva Longoria, Penelope Cruz, and Taylor Swift.

Photograph by Kris Krug



This exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the following individuals and organizations.

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