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MIGRATION & DEVELOPMENT

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June 2025, Working Paper No. 13

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Abstract: The United States of America (USA) is a land of immigrants. However, for a long period only white populations were permitted to immigrate and settle down there. Attempts to migrate by a few Indian youths from Punjab were frustrated by the hostility of the predominant white population. At the time of India's independence in 1947, there were reportedly only 2405 Indians living in the United States. It was only after 1946, the USA started to admit non-whites though on a nominal scale. Such a policy change was precipitated by the Second World War which elevated America as the leader of the free world. She had to abandon the exclusionist policy to placate the interests of the non-white nations which became her allies. However, large scale migration was allowed from 1965 onwards. In turn, immigration took an upward trend and, the size of Indian population which was only 12,300 in 1960 swelled to a phenomenal figure of 5.4 million by 2024. In this process, persons belonging to all linguistic groups and religious denominations have become partners. Though they engaged in various occupations, there was a tilt in favour of IT related works. Since the bulk of the migrants were well educated and highly qualified, they could command better rates of remuneration in the United States, than in their native countries. Many of them could reach dizzy heights in political, economic and social arena of life. However, they formed only a tiny minority of about 1.5 per cent of the population of the USA. Enlightened self-interest rather than egalitarian norms rule the roost in the whole process by luring the best brains to the USA from other parts of the world. Nevertheless, the immigrants could give expression to their inborn talents in the congenial environment of USA.

Keywords: Immigration, Second World War, brain drain

Introduction

The citizens of the United States of America are immigrants from other countries. The ball started rolling with the arrival of Pilgrim Fathers in Plymouth, Massachusetts, on Dec 16, 1620. Since then, migrants from different parts of Europe flocked to the present USA. Between 1840 and 1920, as many as 36 million aliens flocked to the state. More than 90 per cent of them were from Europe¹. However, practically, nobody arrived from Asia. America was following a white only policy in naturalizing immigrants till the middle of 20th century. As a matter of fact, The Naturalization Act of 1790 had stipulated that whites alone are eligible for becoming citizens of USA. Only from 1946 onwards, non-whites, that too on a limited scale, could become citizens of the US. It was only after the enactment of the Naturalization Act of 1965 that non-whites were allowed to immigrate and become citizens in the USA. At present, a sizable number of the US citizens are non-whites with "browns" from India accounting to about 1.5 per cent of the population. This paper is an attempt to uncover the migration of Indians to the USA from a historical perspective, delineating the different stages of migration with particular emphasis on the socio-economic profile on the latter day immigrants from India.

¹ 1 Brinley Thomas (1961): *International Migration and Economic Development ; A Trend Report and Bibliography* (UNESCO, Paris)p, 9

Beginning of Immigration from India

Though America was following a white exclusive policy from the beginning, trickles of immigrants from India started to arrive in the USA towards the end of the 19th century. The ground was cleared by intellectuals such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and others, who, attracted by Indian philosophy, began to propagate Indian philosophy and religious teachings. This interest culminated in the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, in which Indian sage Swami Vivekananda impressed scholars from other nations with his masterly speech. As an aftermath of Vivekananda's speech, Vedanta societies were formed across the USA.

During the subsequent years, Sikh youths began to arrive in the west coast of America. The pauperized Sikh youths from Punjab who had sought their fortunes in far off places, reached first reached Hong Kong, then a British colony, and from there sailed to the west coast of Canada, also under British rule, towards the close of the 19th century.. They enrolled as workers in various occupations requiring manual labour. Since they did not receive a friendly welcome, they moved to the West coast of USA².

In USA, they enrolled themselves as workers in lumber mills, plantations and railway construction works. Since the hard working youths were ready to work at lower wages, the white workers viewed Indians as threats to their interests and began confronting them, eventually culminating in riots. Indians were attacked and their properties looted in Bellingham in Washington state in 1907³. The authorities seemed to have condoned the issue by adopting a hostile stand towards the Indians, who were then termed as East Indians. A Federal Investigating Committee even reported in 1911 that "the East Indians on the Pacific Coast as the least desirable race of immigrants thus far admitted in the United States"⁴. The lukewarm attitude of the authorities towards them, coupled with the continuation of hostility, compelled Sikh youths to move to California where communities of Chinese and Mexican immigrants had settled earlier. Though not as bad as in Washington, the Indians were not welcomed as a friendly community in California either. Despite being Sikhs, they were called unclean "Hindoos" by the host community. Their beard and turban were treated as symbols of unclean standards. Due to limited education and language barriers, they were unable to communicate effectively with the host society. Eventually an organisation, the Anti Migration League was formed to protest against the entry of Indians. They were not only denied citizenship, but also the right to own land and the right to marry white women⁵. These restrictions were partially circumvented by marrying Mexican women and transferring the ownership of land to their children. Unfortunately, many of these marriages resulted in litigations and divorces.

Citizenship remained a thorny issue till 1946 for Indian migrants, as only whites were eligible for citizenship under the provisions of the Naturalization Act of 1790. Since Indians

² Srirajasekhar Bobby Koritala : " A Historical Perspective of Americans of Indian Origin"
<https://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandal/h>

³ Srirajasekhar : op cit

⁴ quoted from Roger Daniels (1994): " Indian Diaspora in the United States" In Judith Brown and Rose Mary Foot (ed): *Migration :The Asian Experience*(St Martin's Press, Oxford) p 86

⁵ Vinay Lal(1999): " Indians in US Establishing Roots: Engendering Awareness__A Political History of Asian Indians in the United States" (in Leela Prasad (ed): *Live Like The Banyan Tree: Images of Indian American Experience* (Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies ,Philadelphia)

consisted of Aryans, belonging to the white Caucasian race, some Indians argued that they were also eligible for naturalization. Interestingly Bhicaji Balsara, a Parsi of Indian origin, who was adjudged as a pure member of the Persian sect was treated as a free white person and accordingly was granted citizenship in 1910⁶. Some Indians managed to gain citizenship in deference to this ruling. However, the USA Supreme Court in a landmark judgement of 1923, quashed those claims of whiteness of Indians and decreed that only whites of European origin alone can claim citizenship⁷. As a result, Indians who has previously managed to secure citizenship earlier, lost it. On account of such a decision, and the persistence of the hostile attitude of the white community, a large number returned to India. Furthermore, the creation of the “barred zone” through the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1917, virtually banned the entry of Indians into USA. As Roger Daniel concurs “following the so called “barred zone” Act, immigration of Indians to the United States was halted for more than three decades”⁸. As a result, the Indian population which was stated to be around 10,000 during the beginning of the 20th century came down to about 3,000 by 1940⁹. According to some authors the size was only about 2,405 in 1945¹⁰.

While such upheavals were going on, the migration of a few students who came for higher education and also of some political activists who were seeking political asylum was also on the anvil. Prominent among them were Tarak Nath Das, Lala Har Dayal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Jaiprakash Narayan and so on¹¹. Some of the political activists formed a revolutionary party, called Ghadar to fight for the freedom of India and began the publication of the magazine Ghadar. Later, as America entered the First World War, the party was banned and some of the leaders were imprisoned. However the paper continued publication under the new name “Hindustan Ghadar” till the attainment of Indian independence. During this period, the moderate group of Indians formed The Home Rule League in the East coast of America. They also started the periodical “Young India” which could get the support of some Americans¹².

Though migration was, by and large, a Punjabi phenomenon during the initial stages, others also began to arrive in trickles. Most important among them was the Gujaratis. Unlike the unskilled Sikh workers, Gujaratis belonged predominantly to an entrepreneurial class who came with bits of capital. They concentrated in hoteliering as their main activity and in course of time, Patel hotels became popular in the USA.

Opening of the Doors

Immigration and naturalization of non-whites in the USA became a pressing issue during the Second World War. The USA became the leader of the free world in which white and non-white nations were members. As Daniel succinctly adds “During World War II, it had been important to accommodate one’s allies. During the Cold War when the United States aspired

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_American

⁷ Vinay Lal : *op cit*

⁸ Roger Daniels : *op cit* p,86

⁹ Vinay Lal : *op cit*.

¹⁰ According to Kondapi there were only 2405 Indians in US in 1947 see Kondapi C.(1951) : *Indians Abroad 1834-1949* (Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi)

¹¹ Surendra K.Gupta (2013): *Indian Diaspora :A Study of Emerging Sandwich Cultures* (Atlantic Publishers and Distributors , New Delhi)

¹² Surendra Gupta : *op cit*

global leadership, it was important not to alienate potential recruits to the free world”¹³. In other words, global political issues tilted the scale in favour of immigration from India. Consequently, the United States naturally turned their attention to satisfy the interests of the non-whites; legalization of immigration and naturalization of the non-whites were outstanding demands of the non-whites. The first concrete step taken in this regard is the enactment of the Luce Cellar Act of 1946, which legalized the naturalization of Indians. With the enactment of the ACT Indians could own properties in the USA and their families could also join their spouses in the USA. However, the law provided for the naturalization of only 100 persons per year and migration ensued only nominally. One prominent Indian immigrant Dilip Singh Saund, a native of Punjab became the first Indian to become a member of the House of Representatives from California in 1956. Fr. Mathew Thekkekkara, a Catholic priest from Kerala and a scientist migrated to the USA and went on to serve as an advisor to NASA¹⁴. M.E. Chacko, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, was another prominent figure who migrated to the USA during the 1960s. With limited scale of migration, the size of Indian population in the USA, which was only 2405 in 1947 went up to 12300 by 1960¹⁵.

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

An important development, which can be reckoned as an epoch-making event in the migration of Indians to the USA, was the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. By that time, America had become more liberal and open-minded due mainly to the Civil Rights Movement of Martin Luther King Jr., who fought for the abolition of racial and colour prejudices. The Act, which incorporated many of his demands, provided for the removal of racial prejudices in immigration to the USA and the doors of the USA were thrown open to all nationals irrespective of colour, race, or nationality. The quantum of immigration from each country was fixed at 20,000 people per year. By virtue of the Act, near relatives of the immigrants were exempt from quota limitations on the right to immigrate and become citizens of the USA. Immigration of the educated and technically qualified persons was accorded priority. As per the provisions of the Act, “--- individuals and their dependents, who have extraordinary ability or significant knowledge in arts, sciences, business or entertainment; skilled workers in sectors facing labour shortage; investors willing to make large sum investments in the USA economy ----”, constituted the prioritized category to be welcomed to the United States¹⁶. In a sense, the Act paved the way for what is now known as brain drain from the rest of the world to the USA. The destination society’s willingness to accommodate migrants from other societies became apparent with the enactment of the new law. The Act, as Surendra Nath Gupta observes, “changed the nature of immigrant population from unskilled, uneducated and self-employed to the professionally oriented and technically trained personnel”¹⁷. From the insignificant number of 99 Indian

¹³ Roger Daniels: *op cit*, p,92

¹⁴ Joseph. K V.(2020): “ Indian presence in USA” article in Deepika Malayalam daily dated 22-12-2020

¹⁵ Monica Whately and Jeanne Batalova(2013): “ Indian Immigrants in the United States Article 2013,” in the Migration Information Organisation

¹⁶ [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration and Nationality Act of 1961](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_and_Nationality_Act_of_1961)

¹⁷ Surendra. K.Gupta : *op cit*, p ,57

immigrants in 1965, the number rose to 946 in 1966, the year in which the act was passed, and to 9,742 by 1970. It continued to swell beyond imagination since then¹⁸.

Table 3.1 Growth of Indian Population in the USA over the Years, 1960-2024

| Year | Immigrants | Other categories of ethnic Indians | Indian Americans |
|------|------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1960 | 12300 | | |
| 1970 | 51000 | | |
| 1980 | 206100 | 181123 | 387223 |
| 1990 | 450400 | 365047 | 815447 |
| 2000 | 1022600 | 622910 | 1645510 |
| 2010 | 1780300 | 1063091 | 2843391 |
| 2020 | 1280000 | 3180000 | 4460000 |
| 2024 | 2077158 | 3331904 | 5409062 |

Sources (i) Number of Indian immigrants from 1960 to 2010 from Monica Whatley and Jeanne Batalova in Article 2013 Indian immigrants in the united states of Migration Policy Organisation¹⁹ ; (ii) Immigrants in 2020 and 2024 from Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; (iii) third column Indians in USA from Indian Americans in Wikipedia and MEA Government of India²⁰.

Note: The Table gives three sets of figures; Column 1 gives the figures of actual migrants from India. Column 2 gives the figures of other categories of persons of Indian origin. It consists of the progenies of migrants from India and the migrants of Indian origin who migrated from other countries where they had migrated earlier. The third column gives the totals of all categories of Indians living in the USA termed 'Indian Americans'.

As can be inferred, immigration remained minimal until 1960, as the size of the actual migrants including the backlog totaled to just 12,300 that year. By 1970, the number went up to 51,000, reflecting an increase of 414 per cent in a decade. Such abnormal increase was likely an outcome of the Immigration Act of 1965. The number started to go up further and reaching 2,06,100 in 1980, 4,50,400 in 1990, 10,22,600 in 2000 and 17,80,300 in 2010 - recording a percentage increase of 14,474 with 1960 as the base. The fall in the actual number of the immigrants in 2020 and 2024 as shown in the table 3,1 could have been due to the methodology of calculation adopted by the Ministry of External Affairs of Government of India. Significantly as on 2024 while those who migrated before 2000 accounted for only 30.42 per cent, those who migrated after 2000 formed 69.52 per cent. Apparently, the intensity of immigration from India is gaining strength as years go.

Indians in the USA are not limited with the actual immigrants per se. Persons of Indian origin comprise the migrants proper and offsprings of the immigrants from India and

¹⁸ en. wikipedia .org/wiki/Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

¹⁹ Monica Whatley and Jeanne Batalova {2013} : "Indian Immigrants in the United States Article 2013" :in Migration information organisation

²⁰ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs(2024): "Population of Overseas Indians".

Mary Hanna and Jeanne Batalova(2020) : "Indian Immigrants in the United States" in Immigration Policy Organisation

the persons of Indian origin migrating from other countries to USA. Actually, there are also large number of Indians living in the African countries and countries like Great Britain, Canada, and Malaysia etc. Many of such Indians have also opted to migrate to the USA at different periods of time. They also belong to the category of other ethnic Indians. Their number together with the offspring's went up from 1,84,123 in 1980 to 33,31,924 in 2024. Persons of such other Indian groups together with the immigrants form, to use government of India's classification, "Indian Americans ". They numbered 54,09,062 in 2024 made up of 20,77,158 non-resident Indians and 33,31,904 persons of Indian origin on the basis of the calculation made by the Ministry of External affairs (MEA, 2024), Apparently the Indian Americans form twice the number of Immigrants. Significantly there was a phenomenal increase in the Indian Americans from 2,405 in 1947 to 54,09,062 in 2024 making a percentage increase of 2,24,909 within a short period of 77 years since independence. Furthermore, Indians form approximately 1.5 per cent of USA Population. The Indians who reached America opted to move to all the states. Table 3.2 gives the breakup of Indians in the different states of USA.

Table 3.2 Distribution of Indian Americans in Different States of USA as on 2010

| No | Name of the state | No: of Indian Americans | Percentage of the state population |
|----|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | Arizona | 36047 | 0.56 |
| 2 | California | 528176 | 1.42 |
| 3 | Colorado | 20369 | 0.41 |
| 4 | Connecticut | 46415 | 1.3 |
| 5 | Florida | 128735 | 0.68 |
| 6 | Georgia | 96116 | 0.99 |
| 7 | Illinois | 188328 | 1.47 |
| 8 | Indiana | 27598 | 0.43 |
| 9 | Iowa | 11061 | 0.36 |
| 10 | Maryland | 79051 | 1.37 |
| 11 | Massachusetts | 77177 | 1.18 |
| 12 | Michigan | 77132 | 0.78 |
| 13 | Minnesota | 33031 | 0.62 |
| 14 | Missouri | 23223 | 0.39 |
| 15 | New Jersey | 292256 | 3.32 |
| 16 | New York | 313620 | |
| 17 | North Karolina | 57400 | 0.6 |
| 18 | Ohio | 64187 | 0.56 |
| 19 | Pennsylvania | 103026 | 0.81 |
| 20 | Tennessee | 23900 | 0.38 |
| 21 | Texas | 245961 | 0.98 |
| 22 | Virginia | 103916 | 2.3 |
| 23 | Washington | 61124 | 0.91 |
| 24 | Wisconsin | 22899 | 0.4 |
| | Other states | 166422 | |
| | United States | 2843391 | 0.92 |

Source: Indian Americans in Wikipedia.²¹

²¹ Wikipedia Indian American: *op cit*

California forms the state where the largest number of Indians congregated with as many as 5,28,126 Indians. Significantly it was the state where the pioneering migrants from India settled. With a population of 3,13,620, New York occupies the second place, followed by New Jersey with a population of 2,92,256. Texas, Florida, Illinois, Virginia, and Pennsylvania occupy ranks in the descending order with more than 1,00,000 Indians each. These states with 1903918 immigrants contain more than 50 per cent of the immigrant Indians. Other 24 states hold more than 10,000 immigrants each. The remaining states also hold Indians immigrants. Thus Indians are to be found in all the USA states.

Though California contains the largest number of Indians, they account for only 1.42 per cent of the Californian population. On the other hand in New Jersey Indians form 3.32 per cent of the state population. Other states where Indians form more than 1 per cent of the population are Connecticut (1.3 per cent), Delaware (1.2 per cent), Illinois (1.47 per cent), Maryland (1.37 per cent), Massachusetts (1.18 per cent), New York (1.62 per cent), Virginia (1.3 per cent) and so on.

There has been substantial increase in the size of Indian population since 2010. Accordingly there would be changes in the size and distribution in various states since 2010. The size of Indian American population, for instance went upto 9,02,621 by 2020. The size of Indian population in some of the states in 2020 has been respectively 5,07,479 in Texas, 4,34,368 in New York, 4,32,882 in New Jersey and 2,75,570 in Illinois²². In other states also, similar increase would have taken place.

Rationale for the Large Scale Influx of Migrants Since 1970

With the enactment of the Naturalization Act of 1965 the ground was cleared for the entry and naturalization of non-whites who were an unwanted class of people in the past. The demand for skilled workers for meeting the needs of the economy seems to have been the main reason for enacting such a law. Countries like India could take advantage of the opportunity by sending her sons and daughters in no time the prevailing conditions in India with the large number of educated unemployed reinforced the out flow in quick succession.

Though Indian economy was growing, population was also increasing at a fast rate with insufficient spurt in job opportunities. The opening in the USA came as a god sent opportunity to the aspiring Indians. The scope for improving ones economic prospects offered additional leverage to the outflow. The income which they could get in the USA stands 10 to 20 times higher than they are getting here. The average annual income of a nurse in the USA, for example was \$86,070 in May 2023. When converted into Indian currency it would be Rs 68,80,000. On the other hand, the earnings of a nurse in India would be Rs 4,80,000²³. Apparently, the earnings of a nurse were 15 times higher in the USA. This income differential stands as the crucial factor for the large scale migration. With the possibility of earning abnormally high levels of income the prospects for leading a luxurious life have become a reality to the bulk of the migrants. Needless to say, improvement in living conditions is one of the aspirations of the youngsters.

²² AAPI Data Guide 2020

²³ Joseph K.V. (2024): "The Societal Dangers of Student Migration" Article dated 18-10-2024 in New Indian Express

It was around 1970s that IT industry began to surface with the USA becoming the leading partner. English is being utilized as the main means of communication in IT field. Apparently, there was growing demand for English knowing youngsters for handling the booming IT industry. The widespread knowledge of English in India, became a favourable factor in facilitating large scale migration of educated youngsters from India. Such qualified persons enter the USA by obtaining H.IB Visas which have necessarily to be sponsored by some employers in the US. Those who do not possess sufficient qualification can enter the USA only illegally. Still the number of illegal entrants is pretty high. While Biden has been very lenient towards the H.IB Visa holders and even to illegal immigrants, it is a matter of concern that Donald Trump may not be so lenient as to be inferred from his previous records and his pronouncements during the election campaign.

Side by side, migration of students has emerged as a major component of migration from India to the USA during recent years. In 2023 for example, as many as 2,68,293 students traveled from India to the USA for higher education. Such large scale migration of students takes place, as they can secure jobs with attractive salary in USA, once the education is over²⁴.

Linguistic and Religious Groupings of Indian Americans

Unlike other nations, India is a land of linguistic plurality with people speaking different languages. Immigrants belonging to all the linguistic communities of India find their berth in the USA. It was the Punjabis who set the ball rolling. Close to their heels, though not in large numbers, Gujaratis also stepped in. Once migration became brisk almost all the other linguistic groups began to move to USA in large numbers. As an authority has pointed out, there has been a shift in the Indian American population from being dominated by immigrants from Gujarat and Punjab to being increasingly represented by those from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra²⁵. As a matter of fact, there was an upsurge in the immigration from Kerala from where as many as 6,44,097 immigrants were stated to have reached the USA by 2010²⁶. The percentage of people belonging to different Indian linguistic communities from India, based on a survey made by Carnegie Foundation in 2020, has been as given in Table 3.3. The survey covered 1,200 persons of Indian origin.

Table 3.3 Percentage Distribution of Different Linguistic Groups in the USA

| | | | |
|---------|-------|-----------|------|
| Hindi | 19.0 | Gujarati | 14.0 |
| English | 10.0 | Telugu | 10.0 |
| Tamil | 9.0 | Punjabi | 7.0 |
| Bengali | 7.0 | Malayalam | 7.0 |
| Urdu | 5.0 | Marathi | 4.0 |
| Kannada | 3.0 | Others | 5.0 |
| Total | 100.0 | | |

Source: Carnegie Foundation: Indian American Attitude Survey 2020²⁷.

²⁴ <https://in.usembassy.gov/news-and-events> Nov 2023

²⁵ Indian Americans Wikipedia :*op cit*

²⁶ Greater Atlanta Malayalee Association: gamaatt.org/history/the-malayalee

²⁷ Carnegie foundation for International peace: "Report of the Indian American Attitude Survey 2020"

Most immigrants speak their mother tongue at home, although they are well-versed in English. It is reported that as many as 12 per cent use English at home. As per the findings of the survey, Hindi topped the list with 19 per cent in the linguistic composition of the immigrants, followed by Gujarati with 14 per cent and Telugu by 10 percent. While more than 26.6 per cent of Indians speak Hindi as their mother tongue in India, the proportion of Hindi speaking population among the migrants is very low. On the other hand the proportion of Malayalees among the immigrants is pretty high. While 2.76 per cent of Indians speak Malayalam as their mother tongue in Kerala, 7 per cent of the immigrants speak Malayalam at home. This percentage might have risen further as the intensity of migration from Kerala has gone up higher since 2010.

The people who have identified with their mother tongues hail from those states where those are the regional languages. Among the respondents, only 64 per cent have indicated their state of origin. The rest might be either second-generation immigrants or those who migrated from other countries like Great Britain or Malaysia. Among the respondents, 14 per cent were from Gujarat, followed by Maharashtra with 12 per cent, Andhra Pradesh with 12 per cent, Tamil Nadu with 9 per cent, Delhi with 9 per cent, Punjab 8 per cent and Kerala with 7 per cent respectively.

All the linguistic groups have formed cultural forums to preserve their own cultures which often get layered within the host society. These forums celebrate festivals such as *Onam* by Keralites, *Pongal* by Tamilians, and *Holi* by north Indians and so on. Indian Americans seem to prioritise their regional identity than to project all India image.

All religious communities from India have migrated to America. Among them Hindus form 48 percent, Christians 15 percent, Muslims 8 Percent, Sikhs and other religious groups 11 per cent and the rest not identifying with any religion²⁸. Though Christians account for only 2 per cent of Indian population, their proportion among Indian immigrants is high at 15 percent. Hindu temples, Muslim mosques and Sikh gurdwaras have sprung up in different parts of the USA. The Sikh community was able to construct a Gurdwara in California as far back as 1912. Different Syrian Communities from Kerala have established their bishoprics and parish churches in the USA. Malayalam speaking priests from Kerala also migrate to the USA to render pastoral service there. Such measures are designed to insulate their religious heritage in the new world. At the same time, as the Carnegie Foundation report enjoins, “The social networks of Indian Americans are more homogenous in terms of religion than either Indian region (state) of origin or caste”²⁹. How far it can hold good in the years to come is a question, hanging in the air.

Migrants are an uprooted class of people in an alien land where the language, customs and the behavioural pattern of the host society will be different from their own. Even the migrants from one country or region will not be known to each other. They have to adjust with the ground realities of the new country. Fortunately, the host society is not hostile towards the

²⁸ PEW Research Organisation: “India American: A Survey Data Snapshot 2024”. However, according to Carnegie Foundation, Hindus accounted for 54 per cent, Muslims 13 per cent, Christians 11 per cent and Sikhs and others 7 per cent; those not identified with any religion 16 per cent: See, “Report of the Indian American Attitude Survey 2020”

²⁹ Carnegie Foundation for International Peace: “Report of the Attitude Survey of Indian Americans 2020”

Indians during recent period unlike the bitter attitude of the past. Acculturation of the immigrants seems to be gaining. Even then, the Indians are keen to maintain their values by sticking on to endogamous marriages and preserving their religious customs. As Surendra Gupta concurs, “Majority of the Indians prefer cultural preservation with economic integration”³⁰.

Occupational Profile of the Migrants from India.

Indians in the USA stand on a higher pedestal in various criteria of socio-economic profile. Nearly 80 per cent of Indians fall within the age group of 18-65. Children accounted for only 7 per cent, while elders formed 13 per cent. In educational qualifications, the ranking of Indians stands higher than that of other immigrants as well as the average American. Nearly 80 per cent of the Indians, well above 25 years, were degree holders. In a sense, migration from India amounts to a brain drain. Since they are well educated, they could secure lucrative jobs in professional categories. (See Table 3.4)

Table 3.4: Occupational Distribution of Indian Immigrants in the USA

| Category of occupation | Percentage-males | Percentage-females |
|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Information technology | 29.3 | 15.5 |
| Management, finance, business | 21.4 | 19.2 |
| Medical, nursing, health care | 7.0 | 16.1 |
| Engineering, other services | 9.5 | 5.3 |
| Administrative support | 4.1 | 10.3 |
| Sales | 10.6 | 11.3 |
| Education, media, entertainment | 4.3 | 8.0 |
| Other services | 13.7 | 14.3 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Monica Whatley and Jeanne Batalova: “Indian Immigrants in the United States Aug 21 2013”: Migration Information Service³¹

The percentage distribution covers a universe of 7,17,000 male and 4,15,000 female workers found in different occupations. They are employed in almost all categories of occupation. As can be seen the largest number of Indians are employed in the information technology sector. According to some reports there are well over 3,00,000 IT professionals in the USA from India. It is also reported that Indians dominate Silicon Valley. As stated by the CEO of Silicon Valley Central Chamber of Commerce “Indians are the largest leaders of innovation in Silicon Valley and America’s technical industry cannot survive without them.” Furthermore, Indians head many major corporations such as Google, YouTube, and so on³². Large number of the immigrants from India is engaged in management finance and business. Equally large numbers are employed in engineering and health services. The number of doctors exceeds 59,000 and nurses 32,000 from India³³. In addition there are large number of business executives, engineers, academicians and other categories of skilled workers. Some of the Indians belong to the entrepreneurial class. Nevertheless, the ranks of Indians also include

³⁰ Surendra K .Gupta: *op cit* p.139

³¹ Monica Whatley and Jeanne Batalova: “Article 2013 Indian Immigration in the United States” in Migration Policy Organisation.

³² *Times of India* dated May 7th 2024

³³ *Times of India* dated June 15th 2024

taxi drivers and personnel of hospitality services. In 2021 the average income of an Indian family was \$1,50,000 against \$70,000 for an American family, while only 5 percent of the Indians were below the poverty line against 13 per cent among other immigrants³⁴.

Conclusion

The story of Indian immigration to the United States, a country inhabited exclusively by European whites up to 1945, can be epitomized as the accommodation of the hitherto unwanted brown Aryans in the American society. The election of Ms Kamala Harris as the Vice -President of the USA in 2020 and the election of many dignitaries of Indian origin as Governors of various states and as Senators and Representatives of the USA Congress stand as clear manifestation of the esteem with which the American society looks upon the tiny Indian immigrants in their country. Besides it is a matter of pride that, the wife of the new vice president is another immigrant of Indian origin. This is in sharp contrast to the hostile attitude shown towards them when the pioneering migrants from India arrived in the USA during the beginning of 20th century .They were treated as the most unwanted “Hindoos” whose attempts for citizenship was turned down by the USA Supreme Court exactly 100 years back as mentioned earlier that Indians belong to the brown Aryans differing from the pure whites of European origin. The turning point dawned with the enactment of Naturalization Act of 1965, by which the gates of the USA were thrown open to all nationalities. Since then, there was an influx of Indians to the USA and eventually, the country has become the haven of dignitaries of Indian origin in the fields of science, education, technology, education business management, art and so on. Apparently, some of the prominent Indians would not have reached such dizzy heights, but for the migration to the US. Last but not least, the Indian society could enrich itself by getting remittances from the immigrants. At the same time, the material prosperity of the US would not have attained but for the toils of the immigrants including those from India. The statement of Biden the then president of the USA that “We bring the best out of every single solitary culture in the world here in the United States of America and we give the people an opportunity to let their dreams run forward” epitomizes the significance of this migration to the USA ³⁵.

Biden’s observations point to two aspects pertaining to migration. First, American doors are opened to attract the best brains from other countries. In so doing, enlightened self-interest rather than egalitarian norms stand behind the welcome gesture shown towards the migrants. Apparently, the migration to the USA stands basically as a brain drain. In turn USA becomes the real beneficiary. To a large extent, the prosperity of the USA depends on the toils of the immigrants. Secondly the immigrants are able to give expression to their inborn talents in the congenial atmosphere available in the USA. The sending countries become beneficiaries by getting remittances from the immigrants.

However, what the future holds for the migrant stands as a pertinent question posing for an answer in the context of the hostile attitude of President Trump towards immigrants. He has described migrants as “bad guys” who bring “bad genes” to the USA. Nevertheless, Trump is not hostile to all immigrants. Trump’s hostility is against undocumented migrants. That

³⁴ PEW Research Organisation : *op cit*

³⁵ Remarks made by Biden in a telephonic conversation with Swati Mohan , an Indian scientist in March 2021 as reported in “Attitude Survey of Indian Americans” :of Carnegie Foundation: *op cit*

means, so long as America remains a free society, there may not be any cause for worry to the immigrants from India.