Chapter 3

Tapping the Indian Diaspora for Indian Development

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Owing to their colonial history and their historic integration with global markets, Indians have been migrating across the world for centuries. Today twenty million Indians live outside India (GOI 2000). They span the spectrum of class, profession, and history—ranging from construction workers in the Middle East and taxi drivers in New Jersey to bank managers in Latin America and information technology (IT) entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. Given the magnitude and diversity of the Indian diaspora, it is surprising how little we know about their activities and their impact on the country of origin.

This chapter, based on the Comparative Immigrant Organizations Project (CIOP), examines how Indian immigrants in the United States have influenced development in India. Development is defined broadly to include policies and practices that aim to improve well-being in the socioeconomic *and* political realms. Surveys have shown that nearly 95 percent of overseas Indians send money to their families or close friends to support education, health, or other personal concerns in the homeland (Sampradaan 2001). For years, India has been the largest recipient of remittances, estimated at $54 billion per year today (World Bank 2009). Nearly 30 percent of these remittances come from the Middle East (where most Indians are blue-collar workers), and 40 percent come from North America (where the majority are professionals and technicians) (Reserve Bank of India 2010). In this chapter, I examine the connections that Indian Americans forge through transnational organizations. Unlike individual remittances, US-

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based organizations founded and led by Indian Americans create formal, sustained linkages with institutions in the home country.

Prior to the mid-1980s, the Indian diaspora's relations with the homeland were weak. Under British rule, Indians abroad were seen as a labor pool designed to benefit mainly the British Empire.[1] In 1947, the newly independent Indian government pushed the diaspora away by using the state's physical boundaries to define the nebulous limits of national identity. Only those residing within the country's borders were deemed "Indian." This message aimed to protect the hundreds of thousands of new migrants who had left present-day Pakistan to enter present-day India and were viewed with suspicion after the partition of independence.

Since the mid-1980s, the Indian government and the diaspora have altered their stance toward one another. In the United States, for example, there has been an expansion in the number of organizations that Indian immigrants have launched to foster linkages with their country of origin. Concurrently, the Indian government has initiated new policies and institutions to strengthen its bonds with the diaspora. In the mid-1980s, it created new bank accounts that allowed nonresident Indians (NRIs) to invest in their home country. In 1999, it launched two new visa status cards for Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI), which facilitated emigrants' ability to travel in and out of India, invest in property, and hold rupee bank accounts.

In 2000, the Indian government commissioned a high-profile committee to write a report on the diaspora. Based on that report, in January 2003 the government inaugurated its first annual conference of overseas Indians, known as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PVD) or Overseas Indian Day. The conference date, 9 January, commemorated the day that Mahatma Gandhi (perhaps India's most famous emigrant) returned from South Africa to launch the independence movement. The PVD conference facilitates networking opportunities between emigrants, the Indian government, and Indian organizations; commemorates emigrants who have contributed to the country's development; and communicates new diaspora policies, such as the recent bill that will enable overseas Indians to vote in their country of origin. Finally, in 2005, India became one of the few nations to create a cabinet-level Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA).

Several factors explain India's recent interest in strengthening transnational linkages with its diaspora. First, the government's early investments in state-funded higher education are translating into a greater share of Indian graduates emigrating to take high-paid jobs across the world. In the United States, the growth of the IT sector has expanded the size and status of the Indian American community, and changed its composition to include more temporary migrants. Today, the annual tax income lost

from high-skilled emigration from India to the United States is estimated to be 0.5 percent of India's gross national product (GNP) or 2.5 percent of total fiscal revenues (Desai et al. 2009). To make up for this shortfall, the government is recognizing that it must reach out to its large and potentially circular diaspora by encouraging its members to move back or send money to India through remittances or investments. These options have become increasingly salient given the role of overseas Chinese in the expansion of China's economy (see Zhou and Lee, this volume).

Second, tapping the potential of overseas Indians (in the United States and elsewhere) has been facilitated by the recent liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy, which have reduced the institutional barriers and negative stigma earlier attached to partnering with those living outside the country.[2] Finally, India's recent rise in economic and geopolitical terms has provided emigrants with the dignity that many crave, as their income and skill have proved insufficient in ensuring their full assimilation into their host countries.

To examine the nature of the recent growth in transnational linkages between Indian Americans and Indians, this study examines the following questions:

1. What is the scope of transnational organizations among Indian immigrants in the United States? When and why did transnational organizations emerge? Who participates in them?
2. How do transnational organizations affect homeland development? In what areas are they concentrated? What explains this concentration?
3. How do transnational linkages affect power dynamics between the Indian government and the Indian diaspora, and between Indian and US organizations?

My findings suggest Indian Americans' high status and their transnational linkages are interdependent and mutually constitutive. Indian transnational organizations serve as a two-way bridge between diaspora members' home and host countries. In one direction, emigrants use transnational organizations to transfer funds and ideas from the United States to advance socioeconomic and political development in their country. In such exchanges, their elite status shapes the focus of their development efforts and influences their power over government in India. In the opposite direction, Indian Americans use transnational organizations to transfer symbolic power from the homeland to bolster their identities in the United States.

Such efforts help Indian Americans fill voids in their assimilation that their professional status promised but failed to fulfill. Most importantly, they help Indian immigrants attract second-generation interest in their

ancestral country. The effects of these transnational linkages have been mixed. Attempts to affect Indian development have been successful at the local level, but less significant on a national scale. Attempts to bolster ideational goals among Indian Americans have been successful among first-generation immigrants, but less successful in the second generation (Fernández-Kelly, this volume).

Methodology

I first compiled an inventory of 624 Indian transnational organizations that operate nationally and in the four metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) where over 55 percent of the Indian American population resides.[3] All organizations in the inventory were established before 2009, have had at least one project in India since 2005, and were founded and are led by a person of Indian origin. These criteria ensure that the inventory reflects sustained transnational efforts motivated by immigrant logics, rather than those of multilateral organizations staffed by Indian Americans. This inventory is the first of its kind for the US-based Indian population. Drawing from the inventory, I conducted sixty-nine semistructured interviews with organization leaders in the United States. The interview sample roughly represented the distribution of organizations by type (Table 3.1). Inter-

Table 3.1. Distribution of Organization Type in Interview Sample and Total Inventory

Organization Type	Number Interviewed	% of Interviewed Organizations	Number in Inventory	% of Inventory Organizations
Arts/cultural	5	7.2	50	8
Development/ health/education	10	14.5	119	19.1
Ethnic/caste/ linguistic/identity	12	17.4	166	26.6
Human rights	3	4.3	17	2.7
Political	2	2.9	16	2.6
Professional/alumni	13	18.8	51	8.2
Religious	8	11.6	178	28.5
Religious combination	16	23.2	27	4.3
Total	69	100	624	100

Note: "Religious combination" refers to organizations that combine religion with another aim, such as "development," "human rights," or "professional/alumni."

views oversampled "religious combination" organizations, because they yield important insights into the transnational politics and identities of Indian immigrants, and professional/alumni organizations, because they represent a primary focus of the Indian government.

I also conducted sixty-three in-person interviews in India with leaders of the partner organizations interviewed in the United States, government officials, and scholars involved in issues concerning overseas Indians.[4] Interviews and site visits were also conducted in India's capital city of Delhi and in the states of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. Unlike in the United States, geographic variation among organizations in India is largely due to the linguistic and cultural boundaries of Indian states. In addition, state-level governments differ in their policies toward their expatriates. For these reasons, the growing Indian American community gradually turned away from initial pan-Indian organizations to form state-based organizations. Both states covered in the study are prosperous, have embraced liberalization and globalization, and have pursued their diasporas as a development resource. Politically and socially, however, they differ in ways that have shaped varying forms of their transnational connections.

The Gujarat government has enacted programs to draw investments from the large overseas Gujarati business community and is one of the few states in India to use homeland associations. In 2000, the Gujarati population in the United States was 150,000, about one-third of the Indian immigrant population in the United States (GOI 2000). A large percentage of Gujarati Americans are business owners. Today, 65 percent of budget motels and 40 percent of all motels in the United States are run by a subsect of Gujaratis (known as "Patels") (Assar 2000). Gujarati Americans, therefore, tend to be permanent immigrants who have recently increased their interest in strengthening relations with their home state. From 1995–2014, Gujarat was ruled by Chief Minister Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a party that supports Hindu nationalism; in 2014, Modi became the Prime Minister of India. Overseas Gujaratis support Modi and draw enormous pride from the state's recent economic success, Modi's conservative social tendencies, his recent overwhelming victory in the national elections, and his attention to the diaspora.

Unlike Gujarat, the catalyst of global integration in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu of the local state party Telugu Desam Party (TDP), earned praise in the West but faced opposition at home. During his rule from 1995 to 2004, Naidu hosted visits by Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, and Bill Gates; earned a "Naidu Day" by the governor of Illinois; and won numerous awards, including South Asian of the Year by *Time Asia* (Singh 1999; Monbiot 2004). Underlying the West's praise for Naidu were his investments in the IT sector and private IT colleges (Xiang 2002).

In 1995, Naidu created the Hyderabad Information Technology Engineering Consultancy City (or Hitec City), where he provided investors with exemptions from statutory power cuts and labor inspections and permission for three-shift operations. Under Naidu, Microsoft chose the state's capital, Hyderabad, for its first foreign research and development center. Naidu was also the first Indian chief minister to digitize state government activities and maintain a state government Web portal.

Unlike in Gujarat, politics in Andhra Pradesh have not been dominated by elite Hindus or national-level parties. Muslims have long retained a large presence and dominated the police and military services; local ethnic parties have attained electoral success; and ethnic separatist movements and a strong Maoist insurgency have challenged mainstream power. In this context, public-sector unions and the rural poor in Andhra Pradesh opposed Naidu for ignoring their needs.

Andhra Pradesh's expanding IT sector became recognized by global employers as a secure source for IT professionals. Telugus (as natives of the state are named) have thus become the majority within the Indian American software professional community, and they represent 23 percent of Indian IT professionals worldwide (Xiang 2002). Unlike Gujaratis, Telegu Americans are professionals and hold temporary visas. Although the Andhra Pradesh government continues to create software technology parks to draw overseas Indian IT entrepreneurs to invest in local start-ups or return to India to work, it is now less active than the Gujarat government. Moreover, Andhra Pradesh's investments in education and IT, combined with its countermovement history, have made Telegu Americans' transnational activities more diverse than those of Gujaratis.

Indian American Transnational Actors: New and Elite

Today, nearly 1.9 foreign-born Indians live in the United States, making them the third-largest immigrant group in the United States after Mexicans and Chinese.[5] While a large percentage of the foreign-born Indians in the United States arrived after the mid-1960s, over 40 percent arrived after 2000. Such immigrants are thus fairly new, and they occupy a strikingly high socioeconomic status. These characteristics have affected their transnational activities.

In the early 1900s, a small minority of Muslim and Sikh men from the Indian state of Punjab migrated to California to work as agricultural laborers. Due to the US legal restrictions on marriage across races at the time, these migrants married Mexican women, forming a unique community (Leonard 2007). Despite their small numbers and their diverse fam-

ily makeup, they launched the first Indian transnational organizations in the United States. Rather than dividing along religious differences, they united along their common language and socioeconomic status. In the United States, they created organizations to fight for "South Asian" representation in local US government *and* for Indian independence. Nearly two thousand of them participated in the Ghadar Movement, going to India to fight British colonial rule.

The second wave of Indian migrants to the United States was highly skilled and arrived in the aftermath of the 1965 liberalization of US immigration laws that targeted professionals and students. Indians were uniquely positioned to take advantage of these legal shifts, because they had been trained in engineering colleges that the Indian government launched in the 1950s to create a cadre of technicians to lead the newly independent nation's industrialization efforts. While many graduates remained in India to advance local development, others migrated to the United States for higher-paying jobs once the borders opened. By the 1970s and 1980s, most had sponsored spouses and extended family members to join them. At first, these migrants formed organizations to create familiar communities and help them assimilate, but they became more involved in transnational activities after the 1980s.

Finally, in the 1990s, a third wave of Indians entered the United States as employers tapped Indian graduates to staff the expanding IT sector. This wave set off an exponential growth in the Indian American population. Significant for transnational linkages, many of these newer immigrants hold temporary visas; Indians have consistently represented 35–55 percent of H-1B visa authorizations that enable US employers to temporarily hire skilled, overseas workers (Terrazas and Batog 2010). Due to the likelihood of their return to India, these migrants have been very active in transnational organizations.

In addition to being one of the largest receivers of Indian immigrants, the United States also attracts the most educated. Seventy percent of Indian Americans over the age of twenty-five (including foreign- and US-born) are college graduates, 67 percent are professionals, their median household income is over $90,000, and their poverty rate is as low as 4.6 percent. Nearly 80 percent report being able to speak English "very well" (American Community Survey 2009). It is this group of highly educated immigrants who I found to be most active in transnational organizations. Six percent of Indian Americans work as taxi drivers, factory workers, newsstand workers, and farmers, and two hundred thousand Indians are estimated to be in the United States illegally (GOI 2000; Terrazas and Batog 2010). Such migrants are active in some religious and ethnic organizations, but they are nearly absent from leadership positions in transnational organizations.[6]

Indian Transnational Organizations in the United States

As shown in Table 3.1, religious groups represent the largest category of Indian American transnational organizations, at nearly 30 percent. As shown in Table 3.2, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians have the largest share of such entities, which is striking given the relatively smaller population of Sikhs and Christians (in the United States and in India). Equally striking is the low share of Indian Muslim organizations in the United States (2.5 percent) given their sizable population in both India and the United States.

Religious organizations are followed in number by those focusing on ethnic identity, development, and professional and alumni interests. Human rights and political organizations are a minority. Particularly striking when compared to other immigrant groups is the near absence of hometown associations reflecting Indians' professional, urban, and elite status. Their transnational organizations range from small, informal groups to large and high-profile groups. Politically, there are a few organizations that identify as leftist; the majority range from center-left to extreme right. This is noteworthy given the large number of leftist social movements in India.

The majority of Indian American transnational organizations are stand-alone entities operating in one location. Approximately one-third are national (in some cases international) with local chapters, and 10 percent serve as umbrella organizations. Approximately 70 percent have less than one thousand members with no paid staff, operating through volunteers.

Table 3.2. Religious Organizations

Kind	Number of Organizations[a]	Share of Religious Organizations (%)[a]	Share of US Population (%)[b]	Share of Indian Population (%)[c]
Buddhist	3	1.5	0	0.8
Christian	61	29.9	4.8	2.3
Hindu	70	34.3	72	80.5
Jain	2	1.0	1.8	0.4
Muslim	5	2.5	10	13.4
Sikh	62	30.4	5.1	1.9
Spiritual	1	0.5		
Total	204	100	100	100

Notes:

[a] From CIOP inventory. Includes religious combination organizations.

[b] From Kapur (2010).

[c] From Census of India (2001).

Only one-quarter have an annual budget over $1,000,000.[7] While most of them appeal only to ethnic Indians, 25 percent recruit non-Indian members, volunteers, staff, donors, and board members.

Men are more active in transnational organizations than women. Although women participate in ethnic organizations (where membership is family-based), they are nearly absent from leadership positions (see Zhou and Lee, this volume, for comparison with Chinese immigrant organizations). In my sixty-nine interviews, I encountered only two women leaders. Consistent with other immigrant groups, first-generation Indians are more active in transnational activities than their children, although exceptions are found in religious and some development organizations (see Fernández-Kelly, this volume). Of first-generation Indian immigrants, the younger cohort (of largely IT professionals ages twenty-five to forty) is very active and has more trust in organizations than the older cohort (of traditional professionals, ages fifty and over).

Most Indian transnational organizations in the United States have emerged in the last two decades. This is explained by two sets of opportunity structures that affected different groups of immigrants. The first came during the early 1990s, just after the end of the Cold War, when India ended its participation in the nonaligned movement and began to thaw relations with the United States, enacted its version of neoliberal reforms and opened its economy to global markets, and witnessed the rise of Hindu fundamentalism at the social and electoral levels. These changes gave many Indian Americans just the impulse needed to reconnect to their homeland after spending decades being ignored by the Indian government and resented by nonmigrants. The second spike came in the early 2000s, when the 11 September 2001 attacks suddenly made Indian immigrants uncomfortable and their loyalties to the US suspect. Simultaneously, the IT boom brought in an unprecedented number of young, educated, high-earning Indian IT workers to the United States. Such changes challenged Indian Americans' expectations of their ability to assimilate in their host country and forced them to use transnational linkages to retain the dignity and respect that their skills and income commanded.[8]

Indian Transnational Organizations as Bridges of Development

Transnational organizations serve as a bridge through which Indian Americans can influence socioeconomic and political development in India. Their elite status enables them to transfer financial resources, ideas, and practices to the homeland. This ability as well shapes their support and complicates their relationship with Indian partners and government. Al-

though these efforts have been significant at the local and state levels, they have been less so at the national level.

Socioeconomic Development Support from Host to Home

Many transnational organizations tap diaspora wealth to raise funds for existing organizations in India. Indian university alumni organizations, for example, raise money among diaspora members to support their alma maters, using American university practices as a role model. The Indian government has supported these efforts by offering incentives for US-based professors and graduate students to teach in India. Creating "world-class universities" has now become a central component of India's economic growth strategy. Professional associations (including physicians, entrepreneurs, and hoteliers) are increasingly trying to form partnerships with institutions to transfer knowledge from the United States to their home country. Government has tried to facilitate such business partnerships by supporting software technology parks and research and development centers (Saxenian 2005).

Religious organizations routinely raise funds for religious bodies (ashrams, gurus, or dioceses) or movements in India. Many have examined the Sikh diaspora's efforts to raise funds in the 1980s to support a separatist movement for Khalistan, a Sikh homeland (Shani 2005; Oberoi 1987; Fair 2005; Biswas 2004). The subject reemerged in the 1990s, highlighting the Hindu diaspora's support for Hindu nationalist movements and political parties in India (Levitt 2008; Kurien 2006; Mathew and Prashad 2000; Rajagopal 2000). Unlike other transnational organizations, religious groups have been able to bypass suspicions of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and access Indian Americans' wealth in the form of donations. Indian religious organizations in the United States are large and most enjoy substantial budgets. In my interviews, funding was rarely mentioned as a primary challenge.

Many development organizations in the United States began simply to raise money from expatriates to support a parent organization in India. In most cases, the organization is well-known in India and enjoys substantial capacity. However, Indian NGOs have had to seek alternative funding sources as multilateral and bilateral aid to India has declined. The growing mass of "high net worth" Indians in the United States thus have become an important source of alternative funding for Indian NGOs. In these cases, the US organization serves as a "younger sibling" and is rarely the source of new ideas or strategic visions. The diaspora is used for its money, but it does not exert much influence over the direction of development back home.

In addition to raising funds for a particular organization, Indian transnational organizations are increasingly raising funds to support direct development projects. Some religious organizations, especially among Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs, have participated in development philanthropy and education in India for decades.[9] Leaders of these religions all spoke of how charity is an important and often articulated part of their practice. In the United States, Indian mosques, churches, and gurudwaras (Sikh places of worship) provide a physical channel through which members can share information about community needs and collect contributions. In 2004, remittances from Sikhs totaled $2–3 billion per year (World Bank 2004).

Although in the past Sikh remittances funded large-scale projects such as building hospitals, memorial archways, and schools, they have recently been used to improve basic civic amenities and sanitation. Dusenbery and Tatla (2009) argue that this change is a function of the improved political and economic status of the diaspora combined with the deterioration of state and economic conditions in the Sikhs' home state of Punjab. More recently, Hindu organizations (in India and the United States) have also engaged in direct poverty-alleviation efforts (Anand 2004). This trend was spurred by an attempt to deflect the negative attention Hindu organizations were receiving for allegedly raising money to support violence against religious minorities in India. Many Hindu organizations now self-classify as "development" organizations. Others call themselves "Indian." Since the controversies, many Hindu organizations have begun to highlight their involvement in community service in India and the United States.

Secular organizations have also been created in the United States to foster development in India. Unlike organizations that raise funds for a parent group in India, these exert more power over their Indian partners. For example, the diaspora has used these organizations to export American ideals of formalized philanthropy, volunteerism, and tax breaks for charitable giving. While surveys of philanthropy in India have shown that traditional forms of individual giving to family members, religious institutions, or beggars is extremely high, institutionalized forms of giving are low (Agarwal 2010).

Underlying these ideals is a strong distrust of government and a privileging of private charity. In my interviews, some NGO leaders in India said that American notions of formalized philanthropy are "un-Indian" and will not spread to the population.[10] Others felt they were necessary, because they could ensure that people give "more wisely" rather than on an ad hoc basis.[11] A number of Indian NGOs are currently working with government officials to decrease the bureaucratic hurdles involved in in-

ternational philanthropy and to improve the tax incentive to give from abroad.

Unlike religious organizations, almost all the development organizations said they spend most of their time fund-raising through efforts that include online campaigns and galas featuring popular actors and musicians from India. Less common were foundation grants and corporate funding. Several organizations expressed interest in tapping the corporate sphere, especially since Indians are so well represented in that sector. Companies are said to be eager to please their large Indian employee base and display their commitment to India as they expand their businesses into that country's market. In several cases, organizations targeted companies that were led by Indians, the American India Foundation being the most famous, with Citibank and McKinsey as active partners and Bill Clinton as a founding supporter. In addition to tapping American companies, many organizations are also tapping Indian companies moving to the United States.

Because Indian Americans are mostly socially and politically conservative, they donate to a limited set of causes. Donors are quick to give to natural disaster relief (Gujarat earthquake, tsunami in Tamil Nadu, floods in Punjab), but sustained development efforts are often underfunded. Many groups focus on children, which are considered an attractive area of philanthropy for Indian expatriates. By far the most popular cause for Indian Americans is education in India. Most Indian immigrants in the United States explain their own "success" as a result of education. For first-generation immigrants, their education was mostly completed in their country of origin, and they remain loyal to the teachers and adults who supported them. They see education as the path out of poverty for India's masses and as a politically noncontroversial subject. The focus on education has not only inspired many transnational development organizations in the United States, but has also forced several organizations that address broad-based development to rebrand themselves as "education-oriented."

Transnational efforts to promote socioeconomic development in India have met with mixed success. At the local level, religious philanthropy has assisted development efforts, but it has been criticized for fostering inequality at the macro level. Diaspora donations to build private schools offering English instruction and following the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) curriculum are said to have widened the quality gap between public and private schools and undermined teachers' morale in public schools. Autar Dhesi (2009: 223) critiques the diaspora's role in rural development, arguing that interventions often ignore cultural sensitivities and give "further impetus to caste-based political and social divides by institutionalizing communalism."

Some leaders of development organizations blame donors' distrust of NGOs for the inefficiencies and inequalities stemming from their projects. For example, donors often want all of their money to go to the cause and none to overhead. As a result, many transnational organizations must rely on an enormous, revolving volunteer base and a small full-time staff. Second, donors often want to donate to their own hometown, where they have relatives and friends who can monitor the use of the money and recognize their donation. That has exacerbated inequalities and diverted the work of development organizations.[12]

Still others blame the Indian government for not being as successful as the Chinese in facilitating diaspora investments in the homeland (Saxenian 2005; Zhu 2007). Although India ranks first in terms of remittance-receiving countries, it ranks low in terms of attracting foreign direct investment from overseas Indians (at less than 1 percent).[13] This is surprising given the number of programs the Indian government has recently launched to lure diaspora investments. Some officials blame structural constraints, arguing investments from overseas Indians will remain low relative to overseas Chinese because of the disproportionate share of professionals (rather than businesspeople) in the Indian American diaspora. Others express frustration with the power dynamic involved in fomenting such links. The secretary of the Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Dr. Didar Singh, was emotional about this topic:

> Let me make one thing clear. We are not standing with begging bowls asking for diaspora investments. Absolutely not! This is the biggest misconception among the diaspora—that we want their money. We are just as happy if they want to invest their money elsewhere. People are investing in India because it's a good place to invest. We will showcase our growth and opportunities and we will facilitate and welcome any investments that come in. But we won't differentiate between NRI [nonresident Indian] investment and others. We believe we have a tremendous economy.[14]

There is irony in this statement from the secretary of the ministry whose express purpose is to differentiate between NRIs and other investors.

Tensions form when Indian diaspora donors use their resources to recommend changes to Indian institutions. In 1999, for example, wealthy Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) alumni in the United States responded to an Indian government request by raising millions of dollars for Indian universities. The issue turned controversial when the alumni associations suggested that the IITs be restructured so as to resemble American universities, with differentiated pay and a broader curriculum. Indian politicians and scientists perceived this as an attempt to dictate the activities of the state-sponsored IITs (Lessinger 2003). Government officials also felt immi-

grant professionals did not give the Indian government enough credit for their success. As Mr. Gurucharan, CEO of the Indian Council of Overseas Employment, explained, "It really is the Nehruvian legacy that laid the foundation for the global IT revolution."[15] The secretary of the MOIA, Dr. Didar Singh, concurred: "We are very proud of our diaspora. We celebrate their success and recognize them at our annual conference. *But* we believe this is the result of their own efforts *combined* with the global brand that is India. As India's economy began to rise and our reputation grew and our importance increased, so the Indians abroad got noticed."[16]

Political Development Support from Host to Home

In addition to raising funds for organizations back home and for economic development projects, Indian transnational organizations also transfer ideas and practices from the United States to support political movements in India. Some religious organizations, for example, advocate secularism and religious equality—principles that are considered foundational to India's constitution but are viewed (especially by members of minority religious groups) as under threat today. Christian organizations in the United States, for example, are involved in raising awareness on anti-Christian violence in India. "When a church in India is burned by Hindutva [Hindu nationalists], we tell the State Department. We want Hindutva to know that these actions will make India poorer," explained Nehemiah Johnson, general secretary of National Association of Asian Indian Christians of the USA.[17] Christian immigrants use their status in the United States and their connections to a global superpower to influence events in their home country.

Others use their own status to directly lobby the Ministry of Education and the prime minister in India. Still others support movements to protect members of religious minorities in the United States and India. Despite the wide variety of Sikh organizations in the United States, for example, the community has worked hard to create a common identity and thus have a stronger voice. The World Sikh Council formed in 1995 in the United States aimed at creating a federation of gurudwaras and Sikh organizations to raise awareness of their culture in America and to fight the dilution of their religion in India.

Muslim organizations also advocate secularism in India, but they do so by raising awareness of the effects of poverty on Muslims.[18] Many Indian Muslim organizations began in the 1980s, but "[t]he massacre in Gujarat pushed people to become more active. It really disturbed us," explained Shaheen Khateeb, founding member and ex–general secretary of the Indian American Muslim Coalition.[19] To this end, they have worked with

Muslim counterparts in India to reframe the anti-Muslim rhetoric from identity and religion to class. Of all transnational Indian organizations, Indian Muslims are unique in their focus on the intersection of culture with class. Like Christians, they use their elite status in the United States to engage in strong advocacy work with the Indian government. They also raise substantial funds for education scholarships for poor Muslims.

Since the 1980s, Indian ethnic and identity organizations have increasingly engaged in bridging functions to support the Indian government's efforts to expand the country's international influence. They do this by offering to "spread Indian culture." As the secretary of the MOIA, Dr. Didar Singh, explained, "The global Indian is a tool of 'soft power.' When the diaspora brings Bollywood and Indian fashion, music, culture, food, etc., to their neighbors, we are converting [*sic*] people to see India."[20] Recently, the Indian government created its first Indian cultural center in the United States as part of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

In addition to fostering social and cultural links, identity organizations strengthen India's international influence by shaping its foreign policy agreements with the United States. "We would like to work more with the US and Canada. If the diaspora assists us in making bridges, then India benefits," said the MOIA secretary, Dr. Singh.[21] These efforts began during the Afghanistan war of the 1980s, when India-US tensions heightened as the United States increased support for Pakistan and India turned to the Soviet Union for help. In 1987, relations improved when then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi announced a pro-West, pro-business approach that appealed to the US government and to Indian Americans. During his first visit to North America, Rajiv Gandhi explicitly reached out to the Indian diaspora as a bridge to thaw the icy US-India relations that were a vestige of the Cold War.[22] He hosted the first reception for members of the Indian diaspora in the United States, to which the leaders of all transnational organizations were invited. He also hosted the first Indian cultural festivals in Washington DC and Paris.

Since then, Indian identity organizations have encouraged members to pressure their congressmen on US-India foreign policy issues and to bring them to receptions at the Indian embassy. The largest overseas group, Global Organization for People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), was instrumental in shaping the recent nuclear deal between India and the United States. They led countless town hall meetings, spearheaded letter-writing campaigns to local congressmen, and advocated in front of the White House. In return for their assistance in affecting foreign policy and spreading Indian culture, identity organizations have advocated for legislative changes in India to facilitate travel, business, and capital transfers

through reduced fees, special credit cards, and bank accounts. These efforts have been very successful.

State-Level Development from Host to Home

At the national level, transnational support for socioeconomic and political development has been relatively small, but at the state and local levels it appears to have been more effective. Public officials in India have only recently begun to tap transnational organizations to benefit their states. Such gestures have been warmly welcomed by Indian Americans.

This is best exemplified by Chief Minister Modi of Gujarat. Although he was famously denied an entry visa to the United States, he has intimately connected with the Gujarati diaspora by shifting the focus from eliciting investments to fomenting cultural ties and social contributions. He sends DVDs of Gujarati cultural programs and a personalized letter to Gujarati organizations on their anniversaries. To encourage transnational philanthropy from overseas Gujaratis, he published a book entitled *Vatan ni Sewa* that showcased projects funded by nonresident Gujaratis (NRGs). He has organized annual conferences that are replete with symbolism and fanfare. After the annual overseas Indians conference in Delhi, for example, the government of Gujarat hosts a smaller gathering. "Gujaratis don't feel too connected to Delhi. So it is a brilliant move by Modi to take advantage of the Gujaratis that are in town for the annual conference," explained Ravi Saxena, acting chief secretary of the NRG Division.[23]

Every year, the Gujarati government also holds a "Vibrant Gujarat" meeting that targets global investors. In 2011, Modi built a massive convention center, called the Mahatma Mandir (named after Gujarat-born Mahatma Gandhi), that would serve as a space to negotiate world peace. Its design, where an ornate garden will connect the Mandir to the state parliament, was inspired by the National Mall in Washington DC. Just in time for the 2011 event, Modi asked NRGs to bring with them soil and water from their host countries and rivers to pour into the foundation of the Mandir. In 2010, Modi orchestrated worldwide celebrations for Gujarat's fiftieth anniversary to help the government connect to NRGs. Although the NRG Division and Foundation began before Modi, he has expanded their budgets, increased their activities, and cemented relations with Gujarati organizations abroad.[24] As Manikant Patel of the New York Gujarati Samaj explained: "*Now* we are very much connected. Modi has done so much for Gujarat, and our members are very excited about him. He put Gujarat on the world map, and we are so proud to be Gujarati! I have constant contact with Modi by email and phone."[25]

Gujaratis are also among the few Indian Americans who organize hometown associations. Because many Gujaratis come from a farmer caste and grew up in rural areas, they provide contributions to their home villages. I visited several villages in Gujarat that rely almost entirely on diaspora contributions. The villages have extremely well organized and professional leaders and village bodies to attract contributions, manage them, and spend them. With overseas monies, these villages have built hospitals, schools, cardiac research centers, heart surgery facilities (that host international patients), yoga retreat centers, water filtration facilities, and biogas production plants. Most donations are made by individuals. Some, however, are organized through hometown associations. As Mr. Bhanji Khadria, president of the Kadwa Patel Samaj of North America explained:

> At first, I was … opposed to creating a caste-based organization. I became a member of my college alumni association instead. But I found that caste loyalties [are] what moved people to give. It is difficult to get money from city people who are schooled in an English milieu. I find the lower-class people from rural areas are more giving. So that is what we did. The money raised is *not* only used for one caste, but we used the shared caste background to motivate people to give.[26]

Recently, Telegu American organizations (from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh) have also become more active in transnational activities as the Telegu community in the United States has grown. One of the largest Telegu organizations, American Telegu Association (ATA), convinced former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley to accept Andhra Pradesh as a sister state with which to conduct business. Telegu American organizations also hold conferences in India to share knowledge on business, agriculture, IT, and pharmaceuticals. They hold seminars to increase awareness of AIDS and inform parents in India about US universities to which they can send their children. Interestingly, in addition to promoting Telegu culture in the United States (by flying Telegu artists from India), these organizations also promote and preserve their culture *in India.* Every year, they go to that country to support arts and rituals that are no longer commonly practiced. "What we saw as children, we don't see any more in India. So we promote it," explained Telegu Association of North America (TANA) President Jayaram Komati.

As the Telegu American community has expanded, the ethnic and cultural divisions present in their home state have been reproduced. The Telangana NRI Association (TeNA), for example, formed in 2007 to resist the perceived cultural domination of the castes of Kammas and Reddys in the largest Telegu American organizations (ATA and TANA). They created a

forum where the minority of Telangana immigrants could showcase their unique heritage. According to Venkat Maroju of TeNA, "Although we speak Telegu and we are all of the same economic class, we felt the mainstream Telegu organizations in the US did not represent Telangana culture and food adequately."[27] Transnational groups also support the Telangana separatist movement in India by helping them articulate a unique identity. For these efforts, Telangana immigrants use websites to spread poetry, fiction, and other written art forms.

Although the government of Andhra Pradesh has been promoting IT development, education, and return migration, it has not been as overt as the Gujarat government in fomenting relations with Telegu organizations in the United States. "These groups have lived in the US for a long time, so they do not send as many remittances or make as much investment as the software engineers or the Gulf workers—who are all on temporary work visas," explained N. V. Ramana Reddy, special secretary to government for political and nonresident Indian (NRI) affairs.[28] Despite their skepticism toward the earlier waves of Telegu emigrants, however, relations appear to be changing, as recent emigrants have more diverse social backgrounds and many of them return to India.

I met with several government officials who had worked with Telegu American organizations and had traveled to the United States to attend their meetings. Officials repeatedly reminded me of the diaspora's interest in Indian real estate. "I would say the entire rise in real estate prices in Hyderabad can be attributed to NRI speculation and investment," said Reddy.[29] Today, the state-level Department of Industries and Commerce provides NRIs with special incentives to invest. Investments beyond real estate, however, have been limited. As Secretary of Industries and Commerce, T.S. Appa Rao, explained, "Telegus in the US are mainly professionals. They are not entrepreneurs, like the Gujaratis."[30]

Indian Transnational Organizations as Bridges for Significance and Identity

In addition to supporting development in India, transnational organizations serve as a bridge to promote the identities of Indians in the United States through the transfer of symbols. For this purpose, India's economic expansion and global presence empowers Indian Americans in ways that their elite status in the United States promised but failed to do. Transnational attempts to bolster the identities of first-generation immigrants have been relatively successful; similar efforts have faced mixed success with the second generation.

Leaders of ethnic and religious organizations stated that transnational linkages were necessary to "preserve their identities," thereby portraying themselves as minorities under threat. Although Hindus are the majority religion in India, they see themselves under attack by the global religions of Islam and Christianity. Sikhs present themselves as threatened in the United States (due to mistaken identity as Muslims) and in India (due to the historically tense relations with the government). Christians think of themselves as under attack in India due to the rise of Hindu fundamentalists. Finally, Muslims (more tentatively and subtly) see themselves as threatened by the war on terror in India and the United States.

Transnational organizations help Indian immigrants boost their legitimacy through ties to the homeland, thus helping to preserve their identities. Scholars have shown how Indian Muslim migrants in the 1960s, who were often connected to the royal family of Hyderabad, tried to maintain their status at home while simultaneously adapting to their new environments through ethnic organizations such as the Hyderabad Foundation (Leonard 2002; Moore 1995). Support for the Sikh separatist movement in India can be partly attributed to the insecurities immigrant Sikhs were feeling in response to the expanding Hindu American community. Organizations such as the Khalistan Council, Babar Khalsa International, and the Khalistan Commando Force emerged during the 1980s to signal support for an independent Khalistan and to enable Sikh diaspora leaders to claim legitimacy and enhance their standing in the US-based community (Biswas 2004).

By the 1970s, many Indian religious organizations had purchased physical structures (a temple, gurudwara, or church) where religious rituals could be formally and publicly practiced. Most of these institutions retain close ties to a parent body back in India. As detailed earlier, they raise substantial funds and other resources to support the parent body back home. In return, they receive symbolic support from the parent organization, which legitimizes their existence in the United States. They also receive assistance from religious leaders who travel to the United States to train local priests. Today these structures serve as "safe" spaces where immigrants can fight invisibility in the United States through community gatherings, education seminars, and public religious practice.

During the 1980s, Indian ethnic organizations used their transnational ties to boost their significance in the United States. Organizations such as GOPIO, National Federation of Indian-American Associations (NFIA), and AIA helped fight discrimination by securing representation in community and political affairs. As Munish Gupta, president of the NFIA India Council, said, "Color brought these early Indians together. Color *matters* in the US. … These people had to struggle for their existence, and

they wanted something better for their children. Community centers were created, but they had to be backed by more powerful associations. That is why we started."[31] These large organizations create newsletters on diaspora affairs, organize an annual India Day parade in New York to boost Indian American visibility and promote Indian businesses, and hold workshops on issues concerning the Indian diaspora.

Even alumni organizations have increasingly used their transnational links to bolster Indians' recognition in the United States. In addition to raising funds for their alma maters and offering social and professional networks for their members, these organizations showcase the contributions that Indians have made to the American economy. They fight resentment based on claims such as "American jobs are being outsourced to India" and "Cheap Indian software engineers are taking American jobs." One organization, PAN-IIT, made a list of eight hundred IIT graduates who have significantly contributed to the American economy and presented it to the US Congress. The list included founders, inventors, and patent holders for flat screens, cell phone towers, LASIK surgery, Sun Microsystems, fiber optics, and more.

Perhaps the most important power Indian organizations in the United States achieve through their transnational linkages is attracting the second generation. A majority of leaders said this is the reason they joined an organization, and nearly all said attracting the second generation was their most important future goal. My findings suggest that organizations that retained active linkages with the homeland were more successful in this goal than others.

Hindu and Sikh religious organizations have been the most successful in drawing second-generation Indian Americans. Part of this success is due to their acceptance of the second generation's loyalties to the United States. Religion is presented as something that can span geographic identities and encompass multiple locations. Conveniently, although immigrants are encouraged to embrace their host country identity, they are also encouraged to recognize India as the birthplace of their religion.[32] In addition to conducting rituals and ceremonies, religious transnational organizations educate second-generation youths with the help of leaders from the home country. Hindu organizations, for example, hold weekly *bal vihar* sessions (roughly equivalent to Sunday schools) and organize Hindu heritage camps in the summer, where second-generation Indian youths learn yoga, prayers, Hindu history, and Hindu texts. "We want to give them a feeling of who they are and where they come from, so when they go to college they can speak with a degree of confidence [to non-Hindus]," explained Abhaya Asthana, general secretary of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP).[33] "We try to give young people clear tips on how they can practice

their own religion in their dorm or on a class trip, but also how to explain it to their peers and answer derogatory questions," asserted the director of media relations at BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, the New York branch of one of the largest Hindu organizations in the world.[34] The international chapters of BAPS are closely overseen by the head organization, based in Gujarat.

Many development organizations found an increased interest among second-generation Indians to "do some good." Some claimed 50 percent of their volunteer base was from the second generation. Others said they often receive requests to volunteer for their projects in India. Leaders admitted, however, that while they were proud of their ability to attract young people's interest, they found it difficult to incorporate such interests into sustained organizational activity. Ironically, many claimed that parents sometimes held their children back from traveling to India due to concerns over safety and health.

The power that active transnational links with India have in attracting second-generation Indian Americans can also be seen in the relative failure of ethnic organizations to achieve the same goal. Leaders of almost every ethnic organization said their main purpose was to ensure that the young do not lose their language, identity, and rituals. These organizations host holiday celebrations and social gatherings; provide health training; offer financial assistance and education sessions; assist in the assimilation of newly arrived senior citizens who lack English-language skills; and serve as a ready marriage market for Indian immigrants. Despite their efforts, organizations repeatedly decried the apathy that second-generation youths showed for their activities. This failure may, in part, be attributed to the weak transnational linkages ethnic organizations have retained with India.

Conclusion

Indian transnational organizations represent an iconic case illustrating the way immigrants are responding to globalization and economic liberalization in the new millennium. Although migration from India to the United States began at the beginning of the twentieth century, it accelerated after 1965 after the passage of legislation that provided incentives for technical and professional workers to move to the United States. The technological revolution of the subsequent decades further expanded the demand for highly skilled workers and contributed to the growth of the Indian population in America.

While the *causes* of Indian migration to the United States are symptomatic of economic and political changes operating at the international

level, its *effects* are still under review and may portend typical forms of adaptation among professional immigrants and their children. In this chapter, I have shown that transnational organizations formed by Indians have aimed at creating stable linkages between the adopted country and the land left behind. Professional and alumni organizations have sought to establish social standing and vindicate identity in America, while at the same time seeking social and economic advantages in India. Either through direct investment and remittances or by tapping social and political connections in the country of birth, Indian Americans in transnational organizations have built new physical and symbolic terrains that allow them to maintain a presence at both ends of the geopolitical spectrum. By focusing on economic development in India, such organized efforts help to bolster a strong presence in India while at the same time contributing to assimilation in the United States.

Equally important, from a theoretical point of view, are the efforts of transnational organizations with respect to second-generation Indians. Although Indian youngsters tend to show limited interest in the transnational practices of their parents, there is a significant exception: their involvement in organizations that focus on religion. In that sense, religion emerges as a new marker of identity enabling the children of Indian immigrants to retain a connection with their ancestral past while at the same time affirming a distinct identity in the United States.

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Notes

  1. This resulted in millions of Indians migrating to the Caribbean, Latin Amer-

ica, and the Pacific Islands to serve as indentured servants, primarily in agriculture. Subsequently, Indian merchants also migrated to these areas.

2. India's efforts to liberalize its economy and open its doors to other economies began in the mid-1980s and were institutionalized in 1991.

3. These are New York City (and northern New Jersey, Long Island, and parts of Connecticut and Pennsylvania); Washington DC and Baltimore (and parts of Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland); Chicago (and Gary and Kenosha); and San Francisco (and Oakland and San Jose). Other significant MSAs of Indians not included in the study include Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Houston. This information was drawn from my analysis of the US Census and the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS-USA).

4. Government officials were from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Ministry of Minority Affairs in Delhi; the Department of Industries and Commerce, the Overseas Manpower Company of the Department of Employment and Training, and the Special Secretary of Non-Resident Indian Affairs in Andhra Pradesh; and the Non-Resident Indian Division of the Government of Gujarat, the Gujarat State Non-Resident Gujarati (NRG) Foundation, and the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Gujarat.

5. Nearly seven hundred thousand second-generation Indians live in the United States.

6. This finding may be attributed to an attempt to present a particular image among Indian Americans. The set of questions in our survey that inquire about education level, English proficiency, and occupation were extremely sensitive.

7. Note many organizations do not have members per se. In those cases we have used the number of volunteers or the donor base as an approximation of "membership."

8. There was also a smaller but significant jump in the mid-1980s, just after the anti-Sikh riots in India and the arrival of a new prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, who was pro-West and pro-business.

9. See, e.g., Dhesi (2010); Dusenbery and Tatla (2009); Gayer (2002); Helweg (1983); Kumar (2003); Singh and Singh (2007); Taylor, Singh, and Booth (2007); Thandi (2000, 1994); Voigt-Graf (2004); Walton-Roberts (2005, 2004a, 2004b).

10. Interview with Sanjay Agarwal, principal and founder of AccountAid, 18 January 2011.

11. Interview with Dr. Pradeepta Kumar Nayak, executive director of Sampradaan, 13 January 2011.

12. See, e.g., Lessinger (1992) and Taylor, Singh, and Booth (2007).

13. While remittances can increase consumption levels, counter local business cycles, and provide direct assistance to poor families, a standard economic approach for developing countries that has not yet reached full production capacity is to increase investments.

14. Interview, 19 January 2011.

15. Interview, 25 January 2011. Here, Gurucharan is referring to Nehru's commitment to training Indian youth to participate in India's heavy industrialization.

16. Interview, 19 January 2011.
17. Interview, 29 April 2011.
18. I found few Indian Christian organizations in the United States supporting a growing movement among Christians in India to include Dalit (or low-caste) Christians in India's reservation quotas (or affirmative action efforts). Many Dalits have been converting to Christianity since the 1920s under the promise that Christianity would offer them a casteless faith. Early Christian leaders fought to exclude Dalit Christians from the reservation quotas provided in the Indian constitution. Despite the immense focus on this issue among Christians in India, the Indian government has not been responsive. In 2006, the Indian government launched a new Ministry of Minority Affairs. It has a small budget and primarily focuses on Muslims. As B. P. Sharma, joint secretary in the ministry, said, "Christians are absolutely fine; they are above the national average on most indicators!" Interview, 26 May 2011.
19. Interview, 27 April 2011.
20. Interview, 19 January 2011. Since 2005, the MOIA has initiated several programs to foster links with Indian identity groups throughout the world. They include a program to host Indian diaspora youths in India, assistance to trace diaspora roots in India, a scholarship program for diaspora youths to study in India, and a welfare fund to assist diaspora members in emergencies.
21. Interview, 19 January 2011.
22. Although then prime minister Indira Gandhi visited the United States in 1983 to improve relations with the US government and Indian Americans, it was not as successful. At that time, many of the Indian identity organizations were formally recognized by the government of India.
23. Interview, 12 March 2011.
24. Additional activities of the Gujarat's NRG Division and Foundation include: working with the University Grants Commission of India to create a Diaspora Research Center in Northern Gujarat University; translating the government of India's guidelines on marrying a nonresident Indian from English to Gujarati and distributing twenty thousand copies to women's organizations; maintaining an updated NRG website of global events; and maintaining a database of seventy thousand NRGs and administering an NRG identity card.
25. Interview, 19 April 2011 (emphasis in original).
26. Interview, 22 April 2011.
27. Interview, 4 May 2011.
28. Interview, 23 May 2011.
29. Ibid.
30. Interview, 14 May 2011.
31. Ibid.
32. Religion is also presented as something that can span class boundaries. Although the leadership and the majority of members of religious organizations were elites, religious organizations showed the largest participation of the minority of working-class Indians.
33. Interview, 7 April 2011.
34. Interview, 29 May 2011; interviewee requested to remain anonymous.

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