

Humanities
Moyer

Notes-Asian Americans (1940s-Present)

Prejudice & Discrimination:

Population Increases:

McCarran-Walter Act (1952):

Immigration Act of 1965:

You have been given a short reading on a particular group of Asian Americans. Answer the questions provided for your particular reading. You will each present the information that you found to your group members who will provide you with information on their assigned readings. You will find the questions on the back of this sheet.

Chinese Americans

Chinese immigration remained low during the 1950s. Why?

Describe the conditions new immigrants from China found when they arrived in the United States.

Japanese Americans

Explain the financial losses interned Japanese Americans suffered during World War II.

Describe the significance of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

Why has immigration from Japan declined since the end of WWII?

Korean and Filipino Americans

What led many Koreans to move to the United States after World War II?

Where have most recent Korean immigrants to the U.S. chosen to live? Why do you think they have chosen these cities?

Why have many Filipinos come to the U.S. in recent years?

Indian Americans

To what does the term "Little India" refer?

Indian American immigrants are not segregated from the mainstream. Why?

From ABC-CLIO's American History website
<https://americanhistory.abc-clio.com/>

LITTLE INDIA

Indian Americans

The generic name "Little India" is commonly applied to a social and cultural milieu created by Indians outside their home country. Most particularly, it refers to a collection of streets or locales that contain a large concentration and eclectic mix of businesses and entrepreneurs from India. Also known as Indian Street, India Bazaar, or India Town, these milieus offer their own spatial and functional characteristics and tourist attractions. In the United States, a substantial immigrant population from India, known as Indian Americans, has carved out immigrant/ethnic enclaves in major cities, keeping their traditions and culture alive and active by celebrating festivals and national and religious events. In many ways, such activities and celebrations become a microcosm and serve the role of the mother country for those living far away. Little India also becomes a gathering place for Indian Americans and like-minded South Asians, including Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Nepalese, and Sri Lankans, and all those who love Indian food, culture, ethnic goods, clothes, music, and Bollywood films. Another attraction of such ethnic enclaves are the temples, gurdwaras, mosques, and other religious institutes built within them or close by. Because Little India reflects India's cultural diversity in terms of language, religion, cuisine, worship, and different marriage traditions, its various businesses cater to all Indian Americans and their culture. Little India is therefore a symbol and expression of cultural pride and political and ethnic consciousness.

Over the past several decades, the number of Indian Americans has increased dramatically. For example, in 2000, the United States Census Bureau reported 1.9 million Indian Americans, who now constitute 12% of Asian immigrants and 4% of all immigrants. Roughly 83% of Indian immigrants are Hindus, with another 14 % Muslims, and about 3% from other religious groups. Of these, Hindi speakers constitute the largest group, followed by Gujarati, Punjabi, and Bengali speakers. Indian Americans in general are among the wealthiest and best educated Americans, with nearly 65% possessing a graduate degree,

higher than any other single group and exceeding the average educational level of the white population. Almost three-fourths of Indian immigrants are in professional or managerial occupations, including information technology, higher education, engineering, medicine, and consulting. The remainder operates small businesses such as convenience stores, jewelry shops, sweet shops, beauty salons, boutiques, gas stations, (traditional) clothing stores, movie theaters, and specialty shops like those that carry Bollywood films and Indian music or South Asian imports. Many immigrants own restaurants that offer delicious red-tinted chicken tandoori, curries, kababs, chaat (traditional snacks), and spicy vegetables, and mouth-watering breads like garlic naan and aloo (potato) paranthas. Some Indian Americans own hotels, and the number of Indian family-owned motels, more than one-quarter of all motels in the United States, has produced the saying, "No motel without a Patel." Others engage in small enterprises like taxi and truck driving or paan (betel leaf) shops. Today, many Indian Americans are also opting for more nontraditional careers like art, advertising, or media, or as agents for travel or cultural services.

In terms of location, unlike some black, Hispanic, and Asian immigrant communities, Indian American immigrants are not segregated from the mainstream. There are, however, five regional concentrations: (1) along the northeast megalopolis, centered in New York; (2) a location in Edison, New Jersey, known as Oak Tree Road; (3) along the west coast of California, centered in Southern California and the San Francisco Bay Area; (4) the Houston and Dallas areas; and (5) Illinois, centered in Chicago. A few Indian American enclaves are also found in Newark, New Jersey; Chicago; Los Angeles; Washington, D.C.; Cincinnati, and San Jose. As is apparent, these Little Indias, all of which play a significant role in diffusing Indian folklore to Indian Americans and keeping the culture alive, tend to be concentrated in large metropolitan areas, particularly in the suburbs. This concentration can be attributed to higher socioeconomic status, a better knowledge of English, and lower segregation than in many other ethnic groups. Indian Americans are also doing very well in the United States because they tend to be young,

vibrant, and constantly growing in numbers.

Every regional concentration has its hub for shopping, dining out, and entertainment. In New York City, the heart of Little India is 74th Street in Jackson Heights, Queens. In Chicago, it is Devon Avenue, also known as Gandhi Marg, in the epicenter of Chicago's South Asian community between Hyde Park and Oak Park. In Artesia, Southern California, Pioneer Boulevard (roughly between 183rd and 187th Streets) contains another agglomeration of Indian American commerce—including eateries, markets, and specialty stores selling handicrafts, jewelry, and textiles—whose heart lies at the intersection of Pioneer Boulevard and 186th East Street. In Northern California, Little Indias are found in El Camino Real, Santa Clara, and Fremont in the Bay Area, as well as along Chatham Street in Cary, North Carolina, and in Millbourne, Pennsylvania. Communities in these locations organize many cultural events and festivals like Indian Independence Day, Diwali, and Eid celebrations, thereby retaining the culture and diffusing it to nearby areas. Not surprisingly, these events impact the local culture, becoming a focal point not only for Indian Americans but for other ethnic groups.

In this manner, the culture, folklore, and values of India are disseminated to second-generation Indian Americans and to other ethnicities. For example, one cultural tradition that has become popular among both Indian Americans and non-Indians is the art of mehendi (henna) decoration applied to women's hands and feet on special occasions. Henna, besides being part of folk culture (i.e., to distract the bride from wedding jitters during the prenuptial celebrations), is also used by Vedic and Buddhist communities for medicinal purposes, as well as for fingernail dye and hair colorant and conditioner. Thus, many of Little India's products, including folklore, language, culture, history, and food, are impacting and transforming the American urban space.

Rajrani Kalra

Further Reading