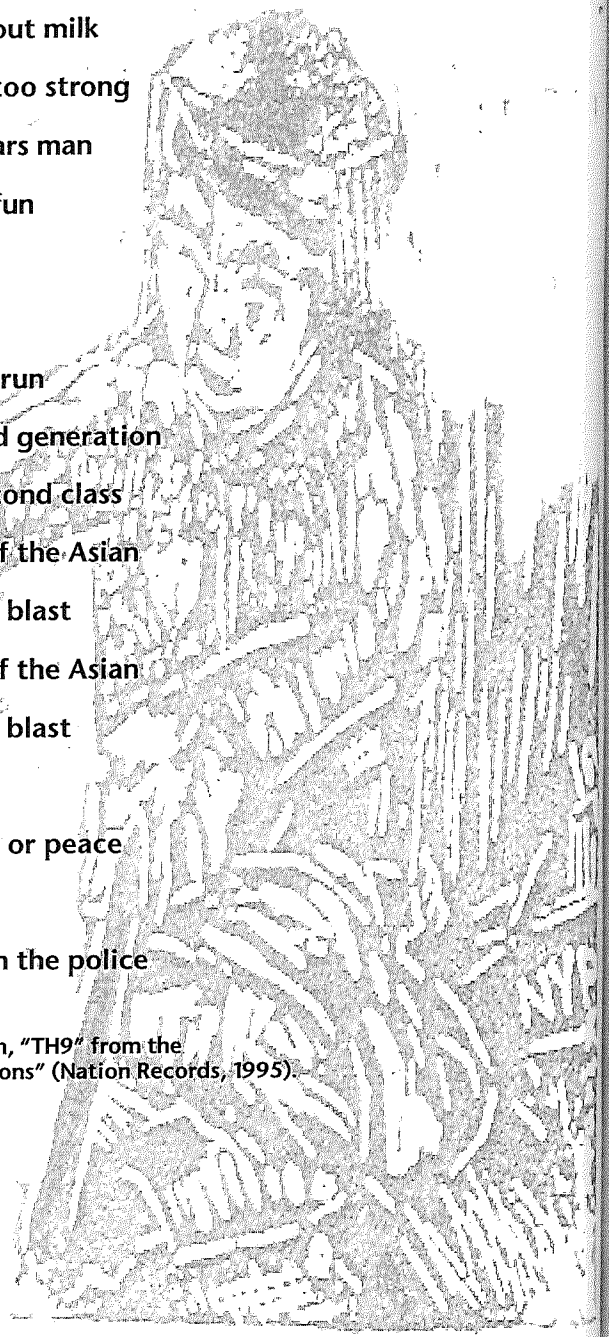

Like coffee without milk
We're too black too strong
For too many years man
you've had your fun
Now it's time
Now it's time
For us to hit and run
'Cos we're second generation
But we're not second class
Now the wrath of the Asian
will hit you like a blast
Now the wrath of the Asian
will hit you like a blast
In this time
there's no justice or peace
In this time
there's no trust in the police

Asian Dub Foundation, "TH9" from the album "Fact and Fictions" (Nation Records, 1995).

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New Immigrants, New Forms of Transnational Community:

Post-1965 Indian Migrations

Sandhya Shukla

In April of 1999, for the negligible sum of one thousand dollars, India began to issue the "Persons of Indian Origin Card" to enable Indians in the diaspora to visit India sans visa, own property, buy government bonds and apply to universities in India, for a period of twenty years.[1] A link between the more cultural yearnings for homeland and the economic agenda of the state might be seen in public officials' divergent justifications for the program: Home Minister L.K. Advani, from the Bharatiya Janata Party, noted: "I have seen the hunger of Indians abroad to have their children linked to their country of origin," while chief commissioner for Investments and Non-Resident Indians at the Indian Investment Center of the government, A.R. Nanda, pronounced: "I hope the new card will encourage more investment."[2] Such statements and the very initiation of a program to give "national" rights to "non-nationals" offer a crystallization of academic arguments about the changing nature of the nation-state, the mutability and mobility of culture, and most of all, the transformed circumstances of migrants in the world, in what some have called the era of "globalization."[3] Group longings for a place and a culture far away give rise to a collective imaginary that is "India," and the flexible accumulation of late capitalism produces both an international economic class of Indians and also a particular trajectory of externally directed development for the emergent nation-state of India.

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In such a moment, it is difficult to clearly delineate what is "local" and what is "global." Contemporary proclamations about the demise of the nation-state seem premature at best in the context of countries all over the world, in Asia most dramatically, increasing their participation in the world economy not only through a relationship with the West, but also through the marshalling of new internal consumer markets and workforces, and enhanced, locally developed, systems of technology for export. The rise of nationalist sentiments conditions rather than contradicts such formations and thus the local-political sphere comes into a sustained dialogue with the international-economic space. The structures and cultures of migrant communities hardly undermine national identifications; in their "transnational"[4] activities that extend across a variety of borders they animate intense attachments to nation-states. And postwar Indian diasporas, in the United States and elsewhere, provide rich analytical terrain for the complex question of where the nation begins and ends.

Conceptualizing cultural moments of the Indian diaspora, however, requires some shift in the consideration of the very idea of "community."[5] Scholars and popular observers alike are accustomed to think of community as comprising a set of peoples with shared interests around work, residence, culture or generation; indeed a group of such factors is commonly cited as integral to "community formation." Geography often plays a central role in how community is understood; many studies of ethnic communities, in particular, have been shaped by an attention to specific parts of urban spaces in which immigrants have located themselves and, eventually, become American, through negotiations between nostalgia for homeland cultures and the demands of work and urban life in the United States.[6] Ideas of ethnic community formation, in their emphasis on U.S.-based localities, have thus been associated with the eventual process of national assimilation that immigrants from northern, southern and eastern Europe were able to accomplish, if not be completely defined by.[7]

But the experiences of many groups of post-1965 immigrants actively militate against classic narratives of national citizenship. Often such contestations take shape through new class identities. Largely middle-class groups of immigrants from the third world, of successful Caribbean Americans, Latin Americans and Asian Americans, for example, have affirmed multiple connections to place, to the nation of origin as well as to the United States. Related to their dispersal through broad swaths of urban America and through a variety of professional occupational spaces, these migrants' group identities have extended far beyond the neighborhood or workplace; it is not possible to locate the meanings of community life within the borders of a few city blocks, or any other urban location. Such new spatial organizations of ethnicity—not only in the context of the United States, but in other parts of the world as well—structurally undermine the premises of assimilation, of absorption into a main body.

Indian migrant subjects' recasting of ideas of community on the levels of ethnicity and nationality—in a form of transnationalism—represents how the discourse of mobility, and of Indianness in its many forms, can be at once a language of locality, of serving to articulate migrants' place in American society, and of (inter-)nationality, to shore up their position in a particular notion (and materiality) of India. This stage of building and defining community across time and space accommodates the specific business and residential concentrations of Indian immigrants in the United States that establish geography as a primary referent for "community," as well as the more generalized constellations of "Indianness," both imaginative and institutionalized, that make for a diasporic social formation, of what might also be called a set of communities. Stories of the past, of colonialism, of independence, of difficulties in immigrating, and of limited economic opportunity all sustain relationships between the different modes of people coming together and self-identifying as a group—claiming an ethnic identity (of being "Indian") within the rubric of multicultural societies like the United States—and of developing a sense of shared political and economic interests—the stuff of "community." Perhaps most of all, there is the nation-state of India, independent for less than twenty years when immigration began to proceed to the United States in full force, developing in the cognizance of many of its peoples desiring a connection to the homeland.

This essay is an attempt to map some of these complexities and contradictions. It moves, like Indian ethnicity itself, between diasporic (and transnational) formations and local renderings of "Indianness," to reveal a multiplicity of meanings for the concepts of community and national citizenship in post-1965 United States. It operates on the assumption that ideas of community, ethnicity, and nationality contain complex relationships that beg unraveling. Through unconventional renderings of community in domestic and international frameworks, we might contemplate how the particularities of Indian migration, as well as the speci-

ficities of its historical period, finesse the transition between the local and the global.

The historical trajectory of Indian diasporic formations begins well before Indian independence and extends from the early 1800s, as agricultural laborers went to the Caribbean and Africa and formed communities in outposts of the British empire that continued to imaginatively engage "India" as a source and site of identification. In the United States, as well, workers from Punjab in the early 1900s participated in a range of political and cultural activities premised on an Indian subjectivity, despite being, in a literal sense, colonial subjects of Great Britain. Political struggles for Indian independence, and against British colonialism, proved tremendously important in creating a sense of shared identity among Indians traveling the world, within and through local communities formed by work and cultural affairs. One might even make the argument that it was outside of India that migrants seized the very freedom to become Indian.

While Indian independence in 1947 signified a profound historical shift in the consciousness of migrants, making them citizens of a nation-state in new ways, the elaborate project of making India independent, expressed in a variety of forms, continues to shape how Indians have thought of themselves in the world during the postwar period. Composing sources for Indian capital formation, identifying audiences for Indian nationalist addresses, as well as creating a public based on consumption might all be seen as operations of the broader project that must link together broad notions of Indianness and local (and material) realities of settlement. The effort to create the category of the Non-Resident Indian, or NRI, illustrates some of the successes of this bridging of the local interests of Indian migrants in the diaspora and broader needs of the nation-state, what in effect is an instance of "Indian community."

The impetus for the Indian migrant community formation of NRIs emerged, interestingly enough, not from the diaspora, but from India itself. In the middle to late 1970s, the nation-state of India, like most in the "third world," faced the increasing concentration of growth in narrow segments of the economy, and the approach of stagnation in its broader industrial sectors, all in the context of a balance of payments crisis. All internal and external counsel at the time, from a variety of political perspectives, pointed toward the inevitability of attracting investors from outside India (as other ascendant Asian countries had done), yet history's admonitions about autonomy (and the language of postwar, third worldist nationalism) also wielded persuasive power. What Partha Chatterjee has described as a "developmental ideology," in which the postcolonial state "acquired its representativeness by directing a program of economic development on behalf of the nation"[8] faced the challenges of a global economy, not only in India, but also in Latin America and the Caribbean. But complex negotiations on the nature of the Indian economy coincided with the increasing economic success and population concentrations of Indian immigrants all over the world, in Hong Kong and southeast Asia, and in western countries like the United States.

While Indians had begun migrating en masse to the United States since the late 1960s, it was during the 1970s that Indians began to develop organizations and newspapers to define themselves self-consciously as a community. Perhaps even more importantly, the United States Indian population was one in which the immigrants had by this time become primarily economically prosperous and well placed in a variety of technical and scientific fields. This was in marked contrast to the British Indian population, which had had a very different history of integration into the labor market, and which was not nearly as financially successful as its American counterpart.

Anchored on one end by Indian professionals in the diaspora, and on the other end, by a "developmental" nation-state, a new international Indian community was formed in the 1970s through, most literally, the processing of financial remittances to the homeland nation—state and more symbolically, the careful nursing among immigrants of an investment very far away. In 1973, the Indian Foreign Exchange Regulation Act discussed the "person not resident in India," and by 1975, members of the Indian Investment Center had begun to approach and hold seminars for immigrant associations in the United States, with the purpose of soliciting monies for new Indian industries.[9]

In these efforts, the Indian state, by defining its national interest in a particular way, and with relation to a specific group of Indians abroad, was in essence creating the material basis for what we might understand as a new kind of migrant community in the 1970s: NRIs. It is significant here that the Indian government (and economy) had a stake and role in how this community formed itself and located its own objectives alongside the physical and psychic dislocations that were producing a desire for a relationship with the homeland among Indian immigrants. The transnational

force of the community worked in two directions, both back to India and out to its migrants, who might also be thought of as nationals. The terms of diaspora itself, then, need some reworking, for the homeland in this case is more than a distant imaginary, it is an important global player in its own right that claims and acts upon its migrants' cultural citizenship in material ways. Yet this is not to discount its symbolic importance; the concept of India, as a national-utopia, was also extremely powerful and functioned in concert with the actual nation-state.

Embedded in the articulations of Indian Americans within this international formation were also the demands and possibilities of settlement in the United States. Relatively new Indian immigrants of this period were located in ambiguous racial contexts, in which they did not easily fit into the established categories of "white," "black" or, even, "Asian," and partly in response to that, actively sought out "Indianness" as a site for identity formation. Recent memories of a powerful anti-colonial struggle created a conceptual landscape in which Indian national identity made a great deal of sense, unlike the case of other immigrants. For example, "being Italian" for Italian Americans who had not recently experienced intense forms of nationalism, required larger scale ideological efforts. Indian immigrants had already begun to build cultural and political associations like the Association of Indians in America and the Federation of Indian Associations and create newspapers, among others, *India Abroad*, to address (and possibly, construct) a diasporic community. And, beginning in the 1970s, investment in India, in manufacturing concerns and technological ventures, had become a major interest for middle-class Indians in the United States.

A number of important cultural productions linked together local social life (and its attendant push for ethnic identity) and new transnational economic practices. The development of the newspaper *India Abroad* reveals the multiple cultural and economic considerations at work in the formation of an NRI community. It was in the late 1960s, at the early stage of the influx of immigrants into the United States, that Gopal Raju, an immigrant from south India living in New York, looked around him and saw the development of significant populations of Indians. He sensed the need for a publication to provide news to these diverse peoples and started *India Abroad* in 1970, first as a monthly, then as a fortnightly and finally as a weekly paper. Addressing the inception of a coherent and self-conscious Indian immigrant community, Raju's choice of a name for the paper reflected the broadly diasporic address necessary to travel through all types of difference: religious, regional and linguistic. The discursive gesture of a nation being constructed outside of its state ("India, abroad") also lent the community formation it mirrored a degree of domestic and international mobility; it created and supported the transnational in ways that are central to how "ethnicity" would be developed.

It was also around this time that Indian immigrants began mobilizing around an effort to introduce "Asian Indian" as a category into the national census questionnaire. The varied classificatory possibilities for Indians in the United States had always been a matter of some debate,[10] even for earlier Indian populations in California and the Pacific Northwest. In the post-1965 period, the ambiguities did not pertain to qualifications for naturalization and citizenship, but instead, more to issues of ethnic identity. Finding a place for themselves in the evolving multicultural landscape of the United States involved for Indians a self- and group-naming within perhaps the most public and authoritative language of all: the government census. While they had previously been able to include themselves under the category of "Asian," which described different countries of descent, or, presumably "white" as well, Indian Americans articulated the need for a term that would singularly express subcontinental Indian origin. This movement must be read against the availability of other choices, like "Asian," that might have produced alternative political (and perhaps, racial) alliances. But even more profoundly, this moment constituted an expression of and investment in Indianness (and, by extension, India) as basic to the production of ethnic identity. Designation of Indian origin in the locality of the United States reveals the symbolic and material reproduction of Indian identity by the nation-state of India, on a more global plane, precisely because of the simultaneity of the movements for ethnic recognition and transnational community. The 1980 census, with its new box marked "Asian Indian," marked a stage in the production of Indians through a range of different spatial locations.

The "Asian Indian" in the United States developed alongside the "NRI." *India Abroad* initially sought a broader audience; editor Gopal Raju noted his original intention to "cover all Indians outside India, including the United States, Canada and Britain."[11] But the explosion of populations of Indians all over North America and Britain (not to mention other places) made such an endeavor too difficult to organize, and the U.S. edition of the

newspaper, with its local reading population, became central to the production of "India, abroad." The discursive imagining of a diasporic community, through this instance of print culture, occurred not through a proposed connection between Indians in the U.S. and Indians in Britain, say, but instead through the continued production of the NRI, and this figure's relationship to India. NRI was becoming a more general, catch-all category for Indian middle classes in the diaspora, and *India Abroad's* embrace of and, perhaps, hand in, that development might be partly seen through Benedict Anderson's discussions of "print capitalism" participating in the production of "imagined communities." He has noted: "If we turn to the newspaper as cultural product, we will be struck by its profound fictiveness."[12] The paper reflected and created community in a construction of India, in symbolic form, but also through material relationships—not easily subsumed under the rubric of "fictions"—that made the very category of NRI so meaningful to a range of subjects.

Political and cultural orientations to India were reflected in the subject matter of *India Abroad*. Early editions of the paper read very much like newspapers from India, with the special inclusion of columns that described cultural events of immigrants residing in the New York area, for dance and music programs especially. The material interests of Indian capitalism were well represented; in article after article of early editions of *India Abroad*, one can see alongside the economic stirrings of immigrants for individual betterment, the clearly articulated needs of the Indian nation-state. Investment in India was the *raison d'etre* for many *India Abroad*-sponsored activities.

Throughout the 1970s, articles touted the stability of developing Indian enterprises, with advice about how to invest in India. In 1974, the Indian embassy and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research of India sponsored a series of seminars in the United States that were devoted, as *India Abroad* opined, to "help India meet her needs."[13] Not only did the newspaper report these activities, it actively participated in their production through a set of relationships with Indian government officials, business groups and immigrants in the United States. Making such links clear, one article reads: "Last year, *India Abroad* had publicized the CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research of India) director-general's visit to this country with a view to introducing him to Indian scientists who would be interested in returning to India. . ."[14] But the director-general himself had a different idea of how those in the diaspora could help India by remaining in the diaspora. The article reports him saying:

> The response has been more than I could possibly handle. . .[but] since it was not possible to provide suitable jobs at that time . . .it was contended that it would be best to work out ways how they might still help India while continuing to live in the United States.

The producers of *India Abroad*, too, soon realized that both the needs of India and the practical goals of the developing immigrant community converged not in realizing the fantasy of return but in the fostering of links between Indian business enterprise and United States capital, as it had begun to reside in the Indian immigrant community. Articles over the next year, 1974, specifically underscored the favorable climate for investment,[15] and at year's end, the chairman of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations visited the offices of the paper in New York.

This close relationship, between a business organization in India and a major organ for immigrant news, is one representation among many of the nurturing of Indian American (NRI) interests around material objectives in India. It also reflects a primary mode of affiliation for a developing Indian diasporic community: economic and political transnationalism. Even at an early stage of development of immigrant populations, an intense concern with the state of the Indian economy and politics back home accompanied the more widely observed cultural connection to things Indian. It is possible to see this tendency not only in the pages of *India Abroad*, but also in other immigrant newspapers that developed in the 1980s, such as *News-India* and *India Monitor*, in the work of political and cultural associations, and, as we shall see below, in the development of entrepreneurial communities. Indeed immigrants' sense of otherness developed simultaneously with the progression of Indian nationalism (both political and economic), along the trajectory from a form of third-worldism (and its counterpart in the non-aligned movement) toward national-global capitalist development.

That the reference point for being Indian in the United States, from the 1970s until the present, has been a sustained interest in India shows how ethnic identity (here), the process of becoming Indian American, has been shaped by that intense national(ist) focus on another place. It is distinct from the homeland nostalgia of earlier immigrant groups precisely because of the specific historical and political conditions of post-1965 immigrant experi-

ence, in which the nation-state of India embarks on a number of new international projects.[16] This form of diasporic community, with political, financial and cultural interests that traverse not only local geographic lines (like the neighborhood) but also national boundaries, is also grounded in the process of class formation. The members of the first large-scale Indian migration to the United States came in the 1960s to greet an economy that was in a period of expansion. The occupational experiences of mostly middle-class and credentialed Indians during this period seemed to match the ideals and actualities of growth and opportunity. Technological transformations meant new jobs in medicine, the sciences (natural and applied), business and education, for which this group of Indians was exceptionally qualified. It was this early group of economically successful migrants that economic (and cultural) appeals from India spoke to. And it was this developing Indian American middle-class that assumed a central role in producing a sense of community in the diaspora: through financial remittances, through the leadership of groups like the Association of Indians in America, and through the production of cultural performances.[17]

While the diasporic Indianness of the community I am describing had a specific class component, it also produced a field of meaning for a whole range of Indians to utilize in building a sense of identity. More material relationships between business enterprises in India and Indian Americans, and between members of Indian political parties and immigrant associations acquired a symbolic importance beyond the literal participation of immigrants in those activities. They had ideological effects, by creating a sense of shared interest and identity outside of the country for those with very different social and economic characteristics. What was in effect a diasporic imaginary, of the nation of India, captured different groups of people, sub-communities, even, but in its totality, also produced a community itself. That invocation of "Indian community," however fictive it might seem for such a diverse group of elements, nonetheless remained present in the lives of many middle-class Indian immigrants.

While the NRI as a diasporic formation embodies some of the shifts in what it means to think of community outside the neighborhood, with Indianness in the transnational, not the local site, more territorial renderings of "Indian community" also yield similar insights. Since the 1970s, with the increasing growth and concentration of Indian populations in a number of U.S. cities, particularly the New York metropolitan area, Chicago and Los Angeles, new centers of Indian American business arose to serve the needs and desires of immigrant consumers. Colloquially and in some cases, formally, known as "Little Indias," these geographical spaces represent possibilities for Indian community formation of a different kind from the NRI-diaspora, but remain in some important ways linked to it.

Jackson Heights, New York, is perhaps the most prominent signifier for an Indian space in the diaspora. Its concentration of electronics stores, sari shops and eateries, in the city of New York where Indian immigrants are most populous, constitute for many an important site for consuming and realizing a sense of being Indian. That process is centered on consumption, so not surprisingly, the beginnings of a "Little India" in Jackson Heights can be indexed to the story of an electronic goods store. In 1973, Subhas Ghai and Raj Gandhi anticipated a market for specific kinds of consumer products when they started "Sam and Raj" on the corner of 74th Street and Broadway in Jackson Heights. These engineer-founders had deliberated for a long time over where to undertake their business venture and finally decided that this location, close to a stop for the number 7 subway train—that cuts a major artery through the heart of Queens—would draw in the increasing Indian populations from all over the borough. Mr. Ghai says that the movement of other Indian stores that quickly followed to the area—like India Sari Palace and Sinha Appliance—was also envisioned, and to some degree, planned. He has noted: "It was our dream."[18]

Sam and Raj were wildly successful, marketing and selling highly desirable 220-volt electronic goods that could be taken to India and Europe. The store achieved legendary name-recognition throughout the diaspora by serving a variety of Indians: American citizens, resident "aliens," and tourists alike. Not only did locals stop in to pick up televisions, radios and video recorders on their way home to India for a visit, but Indian businessmen and others also made it a point to seek out low prices for goods that were very expensive and/or unavailable in the subcontinent.

By 1980, the majority of the 74th Street block between Roosevelt Avenue and 37th Avenue housed South Asian shops. Because the goods—food, clothing, and electronics—had relevance for the cultures more widely of people from Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as from India, non-Indian South Asian merchants also occupied stores in Jackson Heights, and almost all of the businesses

began to market themselves to "Indo-Pak-Bangla" constituencies. The area eventually comprised over a hundred stores in the area (on the block itself and a few surrounding blocks) that were South Asian-owned, and/or had almost exclusively South Asian clientele.[19]

While some Indians have lived in the immediate Jackson Heights area, they did not make up a residential majority or even a significant minority in the extremely diverse area, which to this day continues to have significant numbers of Jewish, Greek, Italian, Columbian, Korean and Japanese peoples. Most of the shopowners live on Long Island or in more well-to-do areas of Queens, and the workers in the stores, when not related to the owners, come from various parts of Queens. Though the resident Indian population in the area certainly frequents the shops, it is hardly central to the production of 74th Street as an ethnic space; merchants rely on a broader, dispersed, constituency for their goods.

The crowds of South Asians in the 74th Street area, that succeed in making this place appear to others to be an "Indian space,"[20] exist on shopping days. The "Indian community" represented here is both transitional and transient, and defined not by residence but by consumption. While territory does play a role in defining this community—it is in and through Jackson Heights that consumption is realized—it is articulated to an audience beyond whom it literally contains. Shared interests here include the distribution and sale of consumer goods like saris and appliances and services, like those in an Indian beauty salon. The ethnic consumer market, almost completely South Asian and in large part Indian, is not specific to the Queens Indian population that can most readily access the area, but more dispersed, extending outward to reach Indian populations throughout New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

"Sam & Raj" gained international fame as the immigrant population increased and as India began to develop important sectors of its economy, in electronics, in particular. And Jackson Heights has become a famously "Indian" area. This ethnic place has stood in for a whole set of historical experiences that span the globe. The representation of 74th Street, even to the locals, vacillates between a broad, diasporic meaning and more localized understandings of community. Popular renderings of such an "Indian community" occurred with reference to both the shopping area and to the shoppers that existed there every day and most especially on weekends, but also assume a xenophobic or exoticist cast, with

an air of being foreign—the very term "Little India" can certainly be read in a variety of ways. Many Indian and American shoppers alike are surprised to hear that Indians do not make up the residential majority in the area.[21]

The production and consumption of ethnic goods in Jackson Heights shuts off at six or seven o'clock. The "community" there is akin to a kind of performance, with a beginning and an end, and regulated by the customs of United States consumer capitalism. Ethnic production and consumption are based only secondarily in local investments, in the city blocks and the residential neighborhood, and assume more meaning in symbolic and material renderings of India, for the most part, and of Pakistan and Bangladesh additionally. International references shape the consumer experiences in Jackson Heights and construct ethnicity for all parties involved. The temporary, almost fleeting nature of that consumption and production of Indianness in Jackson Heights has made for a very different type of ethnic community than those in Italian or Irish neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens, for example.

Jackson Heights is but one example of an entrepreneurial concentration that has responded to the consumer needs of an increasing population of immigrants, and that has produced a relationship between the more materially observable place and the imaginative (re)creation of Indianness. Similar processes can be seen in the development of Artesia, California, on the outskirts of the city of Los Angeles. Though the formal designation of this as a "Little India" has been a matter of some debate,[22] Angelenos and others commonly refer to a three block area, centered around the main thoroughfare of Pioneer Boulevard, just outside the Los Angeles city limits, as such. Using strikingly similar language to Subhas Ghai in Jackson Heights, Ramesh Mahajan, the president of the Little India Chamber of Commerce in Artesia, said the idea for the expansion of a small concentration of Indian shops into its present form, of 120 stores, presented itself in a dream.[23] The area's merchants cater to Indian immigrants who live in nearby Cerritos, as well as to large Indian populations all over Orange County and southern California. Artesia itself only has an Asian population of 15 percent[24]—a number that includes Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino and Indian immigrants—yet it, like Jackson Heights, has become a famously "Indian" area. Consumption-oriented Artesia also serves as a cultural and political focal point for the broader non-resident Indian community; it was there that the fiftieth an-

niversary independence day parade took place, it houses the largest Indian immigrant newspaper in southern California, and in some sense it has become a representative of Indian culture to outsiders. More than Jackson Heights, Artesia has absorbed and accommodated the recent fashion craze over things Indian; stories abound in the area of local shops being frequented by famous Hollywood actresses and designers. In this way, the area performs Indian community for both the "inside" and "outside."

Even in the tri-state (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut) region, Indian business areas are multiplying, as the populations that they serve, reproduce and embody have become more diversified and complex. Edison, New Jersey and Philadelphia also boast of spaces where Indian food can be consumed and saris and jewelry can be purchased; Edison, particularly, serves a more suburban and affluent population that has moved away from and no longer wants to travel to multiethnic and multi-class Queens. While all these areas become represented as "Little Indias," then, they construct different kinds of "Indian community." Jackson Heights now produces Indianness to signify broader South Asian needs and desires, Artesia represents southern California middle-class Indian community, and Edison embodies Indian immigrant community constructed out of occupational specification and, to some extent, white flight.

Interestingly, these ethnic places do similarly illuminate the dynamics of change in metropolitan areas, where "the city" has expanded to include areas previously thought of as suburban, to appeal to middle-class people who put at a premium in their lives access to certain cultural needs. This is also to note that increasing populations of immigrants who have attained some measure of financial security in the United States and yet continue to think of themselves as Indian, Chinese or Korean, for example, are coincident with and contribute to this reorganization of urban space.

New ethnic communities represented by Jackson Heights, Artesia and Edison are formed by a wide range of shared national interests, articulated on one level to economic success in the United States (to the ability to buy and sell) and to cultural and financial attachments to India. Merchants and, to some extent, consumers, actualize a production of "India" through consolations and investments in a local space that, in strategic fashion, can absorb the breadth of a variety of other Indian communities, regional/ethnic, religious, class-specific, and social. Emerging from a certain success of middle-class Indian Americans, "Little Indias" have

effects that radiate outward to encompass working-class south Asians who desire products, like foodstuffs and clothing, to recreate their cultures in a foreign place.

The NRI and the "Little India" illustrate new types of diasporic community formation. Shared interests exist in renderings of the nation, of India, in material, cultural and political terms, for immigrants all over the United States (and the world). In these communities, transnationality, an ability to economically, physically and imaginatively cross borders, shapes the lived experience of their members and participants. In establishing a sense of what Indianness is, on a large scale, these communities may be seen to play down the process of Americanization; this occurs in spite of the fact that evocations of the American dream operate in and through immigrants' ideas about themselves.[25] Aihwa Ong's notion of flexible citizenship, "the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions,"[26] seems relevant here. In the cases I have described, the middle classes authorize Indianness, and seem to draw the parameters of particular forms of "community." But I would argue as well that their products, of an NRI-identity in the pages of *India Abroad*, and of a consumer market in Queens, elicit participation by other class segments of the immigrant population, and thus establish broader meanings for that transnational identity beyond its entrepreneurs.

This is not, however, to say that other communities do not present challenges to this formation of Indian identity, and in the process construct new sites for the construction of ethnicity outside of what are, in effect, mainstream authorities.[27] New generations in particular experience and construct affiliations in altogether different and in some cases more progressive forms. Changes in Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrant populations have also produced shifts in the types of community formed in the United States, most notably around work identities: South Asian cab drivers all over New York and Guyanese Indian factory and airport workers in Queens desire different alliances with each other and with other Indians.

Transnational relationships redefine nations as well as peoples. From the late 1970s to the present, and with the rise of an Indian neoliberalism that can proceed alongside and within discourses of national development, regulations on NRIs have continued to decrease and state appeals to them have multiplied exponen-

tially. The "Persons of Indian Origin Card" program that opened this essay is only the latest chapter in a broader set of developments. One can hardly help but notice the ironies of the nation of India in this contemporary moment claiming as a type of citizen the Indian migrant abroad who has benefitted from the developmentalist policies of the Indian state, such as scientific and technical education, but who nonetheless acts as a "foreign" investor. How we understand this scenario, of nationality and migration, has a great deal to do with the degree of flexibility we can accord to ideas of community, nation and culture.

Notes

This essay took shape from talks I gave in early 1999 at Wesleyan University and the University of California, Irvine. Many thanks to the various interlocutors in those venues whose questions or comments greatly improved the argumentation herein.

1. Celia W. Dugger, "India Offers Rights to Attract Its Offspring's Cash," *The New York Times*, April 4, 1999, 12; P. Jayaram, "Government Launches PIO Card to Attract Diaspora," *India Abroad*, April 9, 1999, 4.
2. *Ibid.*
3. And here I do not mean to suggest that the "global economy" is a new phenomenon; as many have elaborated, the very history of capitalism is international from its outset. But it does make some sense to see recent developments, of investment and "flexibility" as distinctive, much as David Harvey has outlined for the period he calls "late capitalism." (*The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). Essays in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1991) also engage this issue in ways that I have found useful.
4. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York: New York Academy, 1992). I use the term "transnationalism" with obvious reference to the wonderful work of these authors, but extend it to cover imaginaries that lie beyond more material social practices.
5. Sherry Ortner has observed that understanding second-generation middle-class (this is media-influenced) cultures requires similar reorder-ings of what we take to be "the field," in "Generation X: Anthropology in a Media-Saturated World," *Cultural Anthropology* 13:3 (1998), 414-440.
6. The point of reference for such historiographical and social scientific trends is European immigration. David Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989) and Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985) are two fine examples of this scholarship.
7. Though this may in fact have been overstated by meta-histories of these histories; there may be a way in which more social scientific analyses of assimilation (for example, in the Chicago School's work of the 1940s), or public policy accounts, have foregrounded assimilation and the loss of homeland cultures in ways that have not been borne out, even, by the experiences of white ethnic Americans. Robert Orsi's book, for example, never uses terms such as "transnational" or "diaspora," but nonetheless provides more nuanced readings of Italian American culture than any assimilationist explanation could offer.
8. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 203.
9. Maxine Fisher discusses this in her *The Indians of New York City* (Columbia, Missouri: South Asia Books, 1980).
10. The Bhagat Singh Thind Case in 1923, cited by a number of historians, including Joan Jensen, *Passage from India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 256-259 and Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 94, exemplifies the many debates surrounding the racial identity of Indians before United States laws of naturalization and citizenship in the pre-1965 period.
11. Interview with Gopal Raju, New York, February 13, 1995.
12. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), 37.
13. "Indian Scientists in U.S. Discuss Ways to Help India Meet Her Needs," *India Abroad*, November 15, 1974, 5.
14. *Ibid.*
15. See Pavan Sahgal, "India Gives Foreign Investors High Returns: Conditions are Misrepresented by Press Here," *India Abroad*, December 6, 1974, 5.
16. A second part of this argument is the political transnationalism in which Indian political parties maintain strong financial links to NRIs; the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), for example, has developed a group called the Overseas Friends of the BJP, which has financed and publicized the rightist party in India and can even be seen to have contributed to its rise in India.
17. Arthur W. Helweg and Usha M. Helweg, *An Immigrant Success Story: East Indians in America* (London: Hurst & Company, 1990) details some of these developments.
18. Interview with Subhas Ghai, New York, July 14, 1995.
19. Yet, interestingly enough, merchants from a wide variety of national backgrounds, have supported the formal designation of this area as a "Little India" for commercial purposes. For more on this debate,

and its repercussions, see Sandhya Shukla, "India Abroad: Transnational Ethnic Cultures in the United States and Britain, 1947-1997," Ph.D. dissertation, chapter two, 1998.

20. "Bazaar with the Feel of Bombay, Right in Queens," *New York Times*, January 4, 1993, B1; "India Casts its Subtle Spell in Queens," *New York Times*, August 19, 1994, C1.
21. This insight is based on a number of informal interviews that I have conducted with neighborhood residents.
22. Scott Harris, "'Little India,'" *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1992, B1; and "Little India in Artesia—Why Not?," *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1992, M4.
23. Harris, "'Little India,'" D12.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Almost all respondents in the research on Indian Americans that I have conducted cite the American Dream in their stories about themselves. This forms another argument about the simultaneous belief in America and attachment to India that I do not have space to engage here.
26. Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 6.
27. Indeed, the other pieces in this volume on progressive South Asian cultures wonderfully illustrate how those interventions take place.