

ASIAN INDIAN AMERICAN POPULATION FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?: (from United States Census Bureau)

- ✓ The Asian Indian American population in USA is 1,678,765 (Census 2000.)
- ✓ The Asian Indian-American population in CA is 314,819
- ✓ The Asian Indian-American population in the Tri-city area of Fremont, Union City & Newark is about 26,000 (10% of the population)
- ✓ Indian Americans represent .6 percent of the United States population with 1,678,765 . The total United States population is 281,421,906.
- ✓ Since US Census 1990- the largest growth in the Asian American community was for ASIAN INDIAN-AMERICANS =105.87%. The overall Asian American community grew at a rate of 48.26% from 1990-2000.
- ✓ Indian Americans comprise 16.4% of the Asian American community. Asian Americans = 10,242,998 or 3.6 percent of the United States population.
- ✓ Indian Americans are the 3rd largest constituency in the Asian American community after the Chinese American & the Filipino American community

California- U.S. Census 2000

	Census 2000	Census 1990
CA Total population	33,871,648	29,760,021
CA Asian Indian -American population	314,819	159,973
CA Asian Indian -Americans % of total state population	0.93%	0.54%
CA ALL Asian American population	3,697,513	2,735,060
Asian Indian Americans % of total CA state population	8.51%	5.85%
% Asian Indian Americans in CA- among nationwide Indian -Americans	18.75%	19.62%
% growth Indian American since 1990 CA	96.80%	

ASIAN INDIAN-AMERICAN

Asian-Indian is a term used by the U.S. CENSUS department for the first time in 2000 as a separate category. The various other terms are Indian-American, Indo-American, East Indian etc. Previously all folks of Indian origin were called as Hindus or Hindoos.

EARLY IMMIGRATION: It is estimated that 7348 Asian Indians migrated to the United States and Canada between 1899 & 1920. The Punjab province in India was a great source of Asian Indian immigration to the United States and Canada. The composition of the immigrants from 1900 to 1917 included 85% Sikhs, 13% Muslim and 2% Hindu, though almost all that arrived were termed "Hindus". Many immigrants were part of the British Indian Army, and arrived in the U.S. looking for railroad, lumber or agricultural jobs. Those that became migrant laborers in the Sacramento Valley were known as "Hindu crews." They encountered resistance, both in Canada and the United States. In addition to being viewed as eccentric dressers they were also confronted by legal oppositions. **Canada curtailed immigration in 1909. The immigration Act of 1917 dictated that Indian Laborers were no longer able to enter the United States; this native country existed in the "barred zone" identified in the Act.**

The California Board of Control submitted a report to Governor Stephens in 1920 titled California and the Orientals: Japanese, Chinese and Hindus. It indicated that since 1910, the number of Asian Indians in the United States had increased by 33.5%. **The California Board of Control perceived these immigrants as an economic threat, or competition for native farmers. They were referred to as "a group of laborers becoming landowners and threatening the monopoly of the majority group."**

DISCRIMINATION AND IMMIGRATION LAWS AGAINST ASIAN-INDIAN AMERICANS

The Immigration Act of 1917 dictated that Indian laborers were no longer able to enter the United States; their native country existed in the "barred zone" identified in the Act. And the Immigration Law of 1924 prevented recent immigrants from retrieving family members from their native country. Thus, wives and children were unable to join their husbands and fathers.

The California Alien Land Law

The California Alien Land Law of 1913, revised in 1920, prevented immigrants from owning and leasing their own land, making it a difficult struggle for those who made their living as farmers. A second indication of the discrimination which existed toward Asian Indians appeared in the Stephens report.

The Thind Case

In 1923, the verdict of *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (U.S. vs Thind 261 US 204 (1923)) became a major setback for Asian Indians struggling to survive and exist in a new land. Justice Sutherland decided that East Indian immigrants, referred to as Hindus, were "aliens ineligible to citizenship." They were designated as Caucasian, but this did not mean that they were "white." Citizenship was only allowed for whites and persons of African descent; thus, Asian Indians were not allowed citizenship in the country. The 1946 Luce Celler bill changed this.

MEXICAN HINDUS

[Isabel Singh Garcia, Yuba City, California.](#)

“We took the best of two worlds and made one world. We became one big, close family.”

A small “Mexican-Hindu” community formed in California when male Punjabi immigrants married Hispanic women. The origin of this community was in the Imperial Valley after 1907, near the largest irrigation system of the American hemisphere. A Mexican migration began in the 1910’s, shortly after the Mexican Revolution, with families moving into the United States. These families picked cotton in fields farmed by Punjabi men.

Both cultures shared a rural life and a lower-class status. Many of the men were unable to retrieve their family members from India, and thus were forced to seek new relationships in the United States. Sets of Hispanic sisters or female relatives married Punjabi business partners, forming joint households. Male friendship and female kinship became the structure for family life. Unfortunately, some prejudice did exist against these unions. Technically, no interracial marriages were allowed in the United States during this time period. However, the county clerks often identified both races as “brown” on the marriage certificates, making the marriages legal. The children of these marriages suffered prejudice as well, sometimes being called “dirty Hindus” or “half and halves.” But they gained a unique collective identity through the combination of both parents’ cultures. However, the children usually claimed to be of Hindu descent, and were never restricted to make a certain identity or religious choice in their lives.

Thus, the two cultures shared of themselves and created a tradition which continues today. The two cultures experienced different rights under the law. Punjabi men were unable to legally own land.

The Mexican women, however, could own land, as they were unrestricted by discriminatory laws targeted at Asian immigrants. But if a Mexican woman married a Punjabi man, she would then become ineligible for land rights due to the specifications of the Cable Act. To get around this dilemma, the men turned to Anglo landowners, lawyers and judges to hold land for them, and to honor verbal leases. Later, they also put land in their children’s names, who were American citizens.

This showed their ability to work within the Anglo establishment, and, as a result, move up the stratification system which was imposed upon them by society. The domestic sphere, however, had different conflicts. Divorce and remarriage were common instances among the Mexican-Hindu community. Women maintained power at home, and thus contributed their culture to their children. They received Hispanic names, spoke Spanish, and practiced the Catholic religion. It would appear that the Punjabi culture was lost through these biethnic marriages. However, the men did maintain their culture through food and funeral ceremonies. The children remained very proud of their Indian ancestry although culturally they had become American, American with a biethnic heritage, and therefore in some sense triethnic.

Source: Leonard in [Bibliography](#). Dr. Leonard specializes in this subject. For the full text of Dr. Leonard’s article, “California’s Punjabi Mexican Americans”, *The World and I*, vol 4(5), May 1989, pp. 612-623

Mexican-Hindus

In Yuba City, traces remain of fading Mexican-Hindu culture
Article from Sacramento Bee, 11/11/91 - Page B1

“Once we are gone, we are gone,” said Garcia, 56. “Our race will be a dead race.”

She referred to a group known as “Mexican-Hindus,” something of a misnomer for the children of Mexican women and Sikh, Muslim and Hindu men, mostly from the Punjab area of India. About 500 such marriages took place in the early part of this century in California, the result of romance in a new land and the laws of the time.

The long-ago marriages were celebrated Saturday at the Yuba City Old-Timers dance, begun 17 years to preserve memories of the pairings of Spanish-speaking mothers and mostly Punjabi-speaking fathers.

Only a relative handful of the children, including Garcia, were on hand. The 50 or so Mexican-Hindus now living in the Yuba City area are overshadowed by the 8,000 all-Indian, more recent arrivals.

And despite their Sikh heritage, the men do not wear the traditional turbans and the women do not wear their traditional flowing garments.

When their fathers came to the United States starting about 1906, the men cut their hair even though, for Sikhs, uncut hair under a turban was an important part of their religious upbringing.

Bruce LaBrack, a professor at the University of the Pacific in Stockton who has studied the original immigrants and their descendants, remembers interviewing one Indian man who came to America:

“Well, I came thousands of miles,” he quoted the old man saying. “I walked from Panama up to the U.S. border. If I came across wearing a turban and beard I would get arrested. I would die for my faith, but I didn’t want to be deported for it.”

Yuba City, the Imperial Valley and Fresno were the main agricultural destinations for Sikh farmers. The Sikh, Muslim and Hindu men left to escape poverty and for other reasons.

In India, the first son inherited all family property so other male siblings often left to gain their own land. Also, said LaBrack, the time of immigration was the height of oppressive colonial control by England over India.

But once they got to the United States, they also experienced setbacks. By 1917, the United States would not allow any more immigration, said LaBrack. Even married Punjabi men could not bring their wives to the United States.

Another factor working against the immigrants was that in 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that Indians, although they were Caucasians, could not be citizens because they were not considered white in the popular sense of the word. And, under California law at the time, non-citizens could not own land.

The men married women of Mexican descent, many of whom were American citizens and capable of owning property.

They married in the California Church. Their children were raised Catholic, but the Punjabi men retained their religion.

According to anthropologist Karen Leonard of the University of California, Irvine, children spoke to their mothers in Spanish. Leonard, who is traveling in India, has written that Punjabi fathers did not have the time to teach their children their religion.

The children met prejudice from Anglos and Mexicans, who called them “dirty Hindus.” Leonard said the children were called. “Mexican-Hindus” “half and halves,” or, like their fathers, “Hindus,” an incorrect but common name for all people from India.

Isabel Singh Garcia said that the Mexican-Hindu children had their own little community during her childhood.

“The Mexicans kind of disowned the Mexican women who married Hindus,” she said. “Our social life was to a great extent within our own race of people.”

The marriage of her parents, Memel Singh and Genobeba Loya, was a good one, she said. Her father and her mother have been dead for more than 30 years, but she clearly remembers them and her Sikh uncles.

Growing up on a peach orchard with her parents and sisters provided a mixing of cultures. They attended Catholic services and had regular visits to the Sikh temple in Stockton.

“The Mexicans and the Hindu were compatible,” she said. “They had a lot in common. The Mexicans had tortillas. The Hindus had rotis, a bread that is like a tortilla.”

Even today, Rasul’s El Ranchero restaurant in Yuba City serves a mixed menu that appeals to both cultures. Owner Ali Rasul, whose father was Muslim and mother from Sonora, Mexico, serves enchiladas along with roti, chicken curry and something called the “Hindu pizza.”

“We wanted to make something that appeals to both,” said Rasul’s wife, Rachel. “It has Mexican ingredients, but we put them on a roti. We call it a Hindu pizza.”

A smaller number of Indian men married black, American Indian or white women. G. Dave Teja’s mother was a white woman from Arkansas and his father came to the United States in 1921 from Jalandhar in India.

His parents were married in Arkansas, avoiding the laws at that time prohibiting marriages between whites and Indians in California. The couple’s first 10 acres were in his mother’s name until 1947, when his father became one of the first Indians to get a citizenship, Teja said.

His mother died in 1989, after 58 years of marriage. His father died last year at the age of 93. Teja said there are one or two old-timers of his father’s generation still alive in the Yuba City area.

Teja, the former Sutter County district attorney who prosecuted mass murderer Juan Corona, said he pays dues to the Sikh temple to remain close to his heritage.

“I’m an American,” he said. “But I shared a heritage with these (Indian) people. I couldn’t deny it if I had wanted to.”

By Bill Lindel of Bee Staff Writer

For more information about Mexican-Hindu heritage, refer to “The Mexican-Hindu Connection: In a Search for their Roots, Descendants Discover a Moving Tale of Loneliness and Racism”, by Mark I. Pinsky. Los Angeles Times, December 21, 1987, pt. V, p. 9-12.

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Contact T.S. Sibia -tssibia@ucdavis.edu at Bio/Ag Dept. Shields Library University of California, Davis, California 95616

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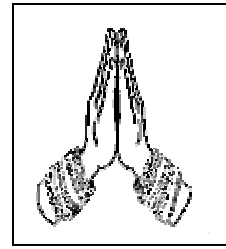
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VIDEO-

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