ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS AND RITUAL

DYNAMICS: EXPLORATION OF AN ASIAN INDIAN

COMMUNITY

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the ethnic identity among the Asian Indian Community in a large metropolitan area in south central United States.[1] For an ethnic group that is one of the fastest growing minority populations, studies on Asian Indians have been very scarce to find.[2] Few studies that have been published usually focus on the denser pockets of Asian Indian settlements that lie on the eastern and western coasts thus ignoring many ethnic communities spanning the vast expanse in between, which are comparatively small yet vibrant in their existence. They provide a potential scope for sociologists to bring in their tools of research in documenting the significance of that ethnicity and the efforts of those communities in articulating their identity amidst an alien and all encompassing boundary. It is one such community that this research tries to understand by looking at the ritual dynamics of that group and how their ethnic identity is displayed, maintained and even celebrated through different ethnic organizations and social networks.

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[1] Asian Indians refer to the immigrants from India. They are also referred to many a time as East Indians, East India Indians and Indian Americans. See Appendix for more information on India.
[2] Demographic dynamics in terms of immigrants, especially the minority groups in recent times are very interesting. Asians are the fastest growing population segment with 108% increase during the 1980s followed by Hispanics (53%) and African Americans (13%).
Hispanics comprised of 10% of the total population in mid-1995, but according to the projections of Census Bureau, by the year 2050 they will grow up to 23% (a 13% increase); where as Asians grow from 3% to 10% (a 7% increase) and African Americans from 12% to 16% (a 4% increase). Therefore, in terms of percentage of the total population of the country, Hispanics will grow the most followed by Asians and then African Americans. (Source: Shankar, Lavina Dhingra and Srikanth, Rajini, 1998)

It can be said without any hesitation that the presence of both formal organizations as well as informal social networks is almost a certainty among Asian Indian communities (or any other ethnic community for that matter). It is this social capital that is at work in playing a major role promoting their culture and providing a platform for their ethnic identity. As an example, on the Oklahoma State University (OSU) campus, there is a presence of Asian Indian population in minority yet significant numbers. The students are more or less busy in their academic pursuits and maintaining a close association with the people of their own kind. Hence, celebration of their culture and identity very openly needs special occasions such as 'Diwali Night' (festival of lights), which is a very popular cultural event on the campus. There are also 'members only' kind of occasions like Independence Day, Republic Day, screenings of weekend movies and cricket matches, etc., coordinated by the India Student Association.[3] This formal organization on campus provides a cultural base for the Asian Indian students, but the Asian Indians who might not be a part of OSU (like spouses of the students or employees) have their own informal gatherings for religious purposes, for finding babysitters, involving in gardening, and vocational training such as sewing the quilts etc. This is just an example of a student community that is not so dense or cohesive. This tendency to celebrate one's ethnicity can be observed at most of the American colleges not only among Asian Indian student community but also amongst other ethnic communities on the campus.

In spite of such ubiquitous organizational presence nationwide there is a lack of study in the social sciences regarding ethnic organizations, especially Asian Indian

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[3] 'Members only' doesn't imply that the event is restricted to the members of the organization (Indian Students Association) or even for that matter to the Indian student community only. It is open for all but usually the attendance is almost 100 percent Indian students, faculty or their spouses.

organizations. There is one major work focusing on ethnic organizations among the Asian Indians in the Chicago region (Bacon, 1996) and few other works that make passing references to these organizations. (Maira, 2002; Angelo, 1997; Leonard, 1997; Helweg, 2002; Helweg, 2004; Mohammad-Arif, 2002; Melendy, 1977; Rao, Rao, & Fernande, 1990). These works on ethnic organizations will be appraised a little later in chapters 2 and 3. While building up on such existing literature and expanding the scope of this research, my focus is to look into the activities of Asian Indian ethnic organizations and ritual dynamics that they promote. The social experiences and identity of this ethnic group provides us an opportunity to analyze and understand the dynamics that define and sustain its socio-cultural boundaries. To gain a better and unique perspective on this ethnic community we employ structural ritualization theory (Knottnerus, 1997). Before we explore structural ritualization theory and its possible contributions to our understanding of the Asian Indian community, I would like to present some background information and a brief overview of U.S. immigration history, immigration policy and the Asian Indian immigration to the United States.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Concise history of Indian emigration[4]:

Formation of Indian diaspora is usually discussed in the light of colonial rule, though there has been documentation of the Indian emigration prior to that, mostly due to

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[4] In this section attention is given to the context in which Asian Indian emigration took place from India to different parts of the world, other than United States. Just for this section the words, 'Indian', 'Indian emigration' and 'Indian Diaspora' refers to the Asian Indians or people from India. Usually the problem with using the label 'Indian' for Asian Indians within the American context arises since there could be confusion between identifying Asian Indians and Native Americans, where the latter are popularly known as Indians in everyday vocabulary.

mercantile reasons[5]. We can say with certainty that the bulky pockets of this Indian diaspora owes to the seeds sown by the British colonial empire, which are now nourished by the forces of globalization. As far back as 2000 years ago people from India were settling in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Japan, and the coast of East Africa. In fact, this tendency to migrate has its origins in the Indus Valley Civilization (2500-1000 B.C). Also major emigration movements are documented after the death of Buddha (563-483 B.C.) when his disciples carried his teachings to Eastern and Central Asia to spread Buddhism. This project of Buddhist proselytization has been encouraged by Emperor Asoka (265-237 B.C.) that led Indians into present day Sri Lanka and other neighboring kingdoms. In later years, Indian traders maintained strong commercial ties with the Byzantine, Persian, and Arab neighbors, as well as trading partners as far away as Europe and the Middle East.

Though trade and religious zeal paved way for most Indian emigration before colonial rule, an Indian diaspora has not developed. According to Helweg (2004), "Trade and the influence of Indian culture came from both Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhism was the dominant religion, but the epics of the Ramayana and Mahabharata became a prominent part of the mythology of East and Southeast Asia to this day. However, virtually no lasting colonies comprising people of Indian origin were established." Thus it was not until the British rule in India that migration of local population in bulk took place

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[5] Though usually diaspora refers to the Jewish population residing outside of Israel and the way they were exiled from their homeland, Barrier and Dusenbery (1989), expanded the definition of this term by including "the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions."

and provided indentured labor to feed the colonial interests overseas.[6] Arthur Helweg (2004) provides the context in which this indentured system was created:

> The British, like the Dutch, had been involved in the lucrative slave trade. The abolitionists had their way when legislation prohibited British ships to clear a port with a cargo of slaves after May 1, 1807, and after March 1, 1808, no slave could be landed in any British colony. The British parliament tried to include safeguards but the European plantation owners needed cheap labor, especially in Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, and Guiana. It was also a time of rural poverty and starvation in British India. The solution was what Hugh Tinker has termed "A New System of Slavery." – more specifically, an indenture system." (Helweg, 2004; Tinker, 1974)

This population movement resulted in the formation of Indian communities where plantation economies existed such as, Fiji, Malaysia, Mauritius, and British Guiana. The indentured system lasted from 1830 to 1920 and about 30 million Indians were sent out as indentured laborers between 1834 and 1934.

All the migration under colonial rule was not of indentured nature; there were also some that were on military and other on administrative or managerial errands. British officials enlisted the services of certain local populations that served in the military overseas. It was actually one of these Indian military contingents that were placed in Hong Kong and Singapore that first came to Canada and then to the United States. On the other hand, migration of Indians to East Africa consisted mostly of artisans and clerks who worked on public projects (e.g. Ugandan Railway), ran bureaucracy, developed agriculture, and built business and industry. The end of indentured system provided an opportunity to the people of Indian diaspora to climb out of the positions of servitude and take an active role in the society of their adopted land. Settlement and consolidation of

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[6] Indenture was a system of labor recruitment where, according to the contract, the subject worked abroad and then returned to India once the terms of the contract were honored. Abuse of this system was prevalent since the workers had no recourse to justice; in a sense that they were almost enslaved.

Indian diaspora witnessed hybrid elements of 'creolization' and 'bastardization', as well as strong adherence to their ethnic culture by certain groups. (Helweg, 2004)

Emigration has continued even after India's independence in 1947; in fact spreading to nations such as United States, Australia, and the Middle East; thus by not limiting itself to Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries. By 1984, five major Indian overseas settlements existed – Sri Lanka (1,027,000), United Kingdom (719,000), Mauritius (697,000), United States of America (520,000), and Guyana (500,400). (Helweg, 2004) Starting in the 1950s and 60s, Indian emigration to the United States, especially among students, became very popular and remains so today. It is this passage of Asian Indians into America that is under investigation here.

U.S. Immigration Policy and Asian Indian Immigration:

The United States is one of the nations that built its unique national identity from very divergent racial and ethnic groups. In fact the western European migrants quickly established the initial colony, in spite of the gradual and traumatic displacement of the indigenous native populations, and eventually emerged into the United States of America. Since then most of the work force as well as the cultural rubric was formed by the inflowing waves of immigrants even to this day.

Studies on race and ethnicity have a unique place in the American academia as well as having concrete implications towards the American society. This is the nation that is made of immigrants from different nations, continents, and ethnic groups. The history of such immigration gave a unique character to the population and has a lot of bearing on the race relations in this country. The scholars concerned with immigration to the United States usually talk about the inflow of population in terms of different waves. The initial

waves were from the northwest Europe who became the mainstream American population identified with a broader nametag of 'Caucasians.' A look at those migratory patterns over a period of time would be interesting when we talk about the American society itself.

If we look at the diagram that follows there is a gradual rise in the immigrants initially during 1820-1990. From a mere 1% inflow of immigrants during 1820-1840, they gradually increased to 9% during 1861-1880. Then we can see a huge boost in the immigration especially between 1881-1900 (16%) and between 1901-1920 (24%). Through these statistical figures and diagrams, Reed Ueda (1994) explains the well-known reasons for the sudden boost as well as the recession in the immigrant numbers.

Figure 1: Immigrants admitted into the United States between 1820-1990
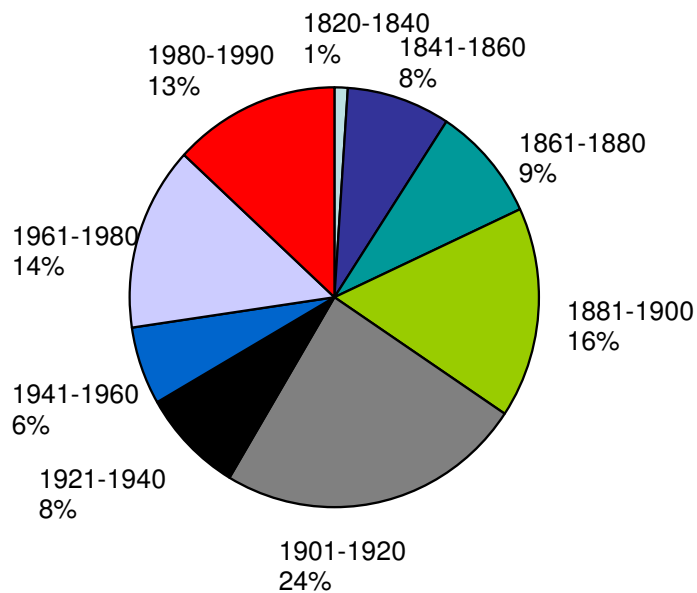
Source: Ueda, (1994), p. 2.

The boost in the numbers during the late 19th and early 20th century can be explained by both the push factors at the place of origin for these migrants as well as the

pull factors in the United States. Largest number of migrants during this period came from southern and eastern Europe, which was experiencing the second phase of 'demographic transition', where there was higher birth rate and lower death rate due to the improved nutrition and health support systems. The numbers increased faster than the economy could contain in these regions, forcing the most mobile populations to emigrate.

On the other end, United States is thriving with the capitalistic spirit that was seeking potential labor force to keep it afloat and sailing. Thus the economic activity in America and the opportunity it provided for those migrants served as a pull factor. In the words of Ueda, "From 1870, however, capital investment preceded changes in immigration. Moreover, throughout the industrializing era from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, immigration tended to respond to increases in economic productivity in the United States. Whether immigration precede or responded to economic growth, it consistently had a positive and galvanizing effect on it by increasing the pool of productive workers, savers, entrepreneurs, and consumers." (Ueda, 1994:9-10)

The in-coming population hasn't always been steady and consistent. There are certain factors that contributed to the recession in the number of immigrants after 1920's. It could be attributed to the restrictions on immigration by the United States government that are evident in the first quota act of 1921 and the immigration act of 1924. Thus Ueda provides us a picture that depicts how much the United States attracted the immigrants when compared to the other colonies of the British Empire. He says, "In the 110 years before the Great Depression, the United States attracted three-fifths of all immigrants – more than all other nations in the world combined." (Ueda, 1994:3) The following figure

(Fig. # 2) would give us a better visual perspective on the flow of immigration into United States when compared to other places that attracted immigrants.

This massive inflow of immigrants over a period of time is usually identified to have happened in successive waves, each wave with its own unique set of populations. The people from northern and western Europe mark the initial immigration where as the next wave of immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th century are from southern and eastern Europe. In the words of Reed Ueda (1994), "By the Civil War, the chief sources of immigration had spread outside of Great Britain to northern and western Europe.

After 1890, the flow of American immigration was fed increasingly by streams originating from southern and eastern Europe, principally from the states of Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. The label "Old Immigrant" was affixed to groups arriving from northern and western Europe, the label "New Immigrant" to groups from southern and eastern Europe." (Ueda, 1994:5)

It is along with the "New Immigrants" from southern and eastern Europe that this country has witnessed the first glimpse of immigrants also from the Asian continent. But their numbers during this period were very small and those of Asian Indians were even smaller. Between 1850-1924, there have been 368,000 Chinese immigrants and between 1890-1824 there were 270,000 Japanese immigrants into the United States. On the other hand, between 1899-1924 there were 9,200 immigrants from Korea and 8,200 from India; these numbers are obviously minute when compared to those of Chinese and Japanese.

Figure 2: Distribution of immigration among few colonial countries between 1820-1930
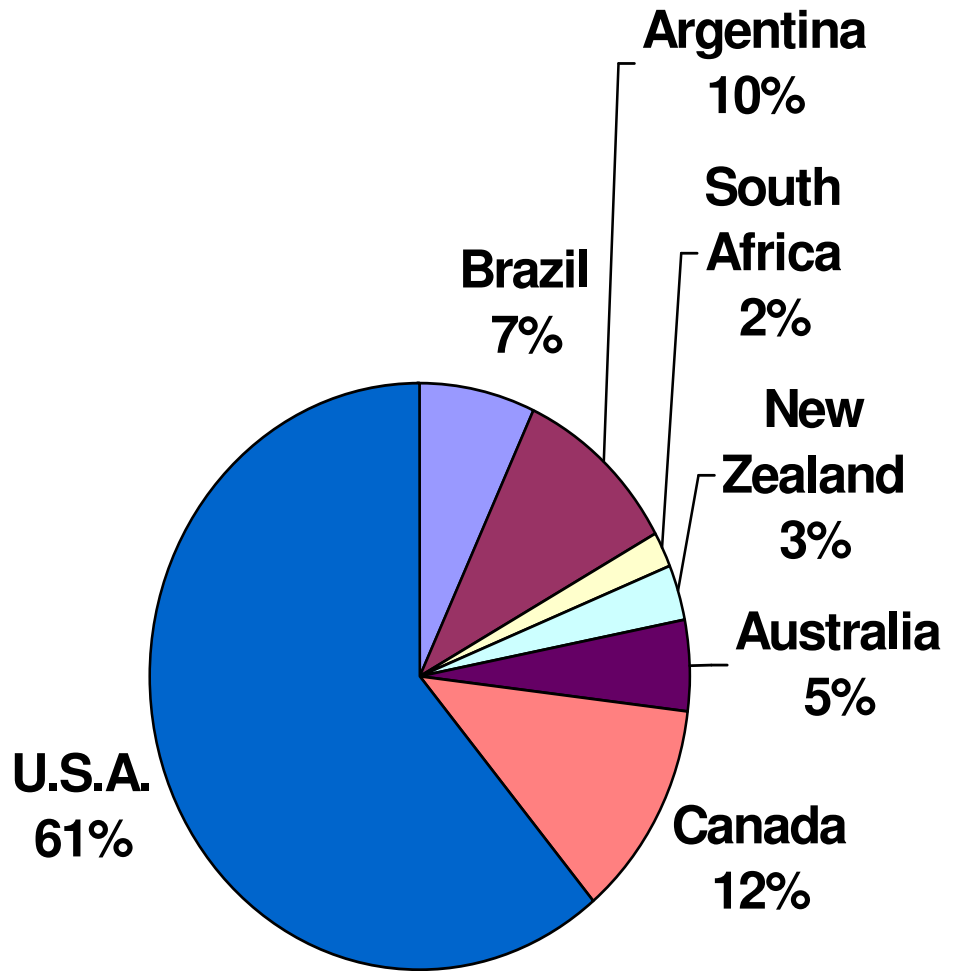
This brief surge of Asian immigration did not last due to the restriction laws that were passed especially against the Asian population and the immigrants in general as well. These growing numbers of Asians, how ever small in number they are when compared to mainstream immigrants, rang an alarm among the American authorities as they felt that these oriental populations were unassimilable in terms of their race. According to Ueda, "Because of what most Americans regarded as ineradicable racial and cultural differences between Asians and Whites, immigration from China and Japan could not be allowed to grow freely. It was treated as a special and separate case apart from European immigrants and as perhaps a unique problem of far western communities." (Ueda, 1994:19)

Restrictions against Asian immigration were set up in the form of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, extended further in 1892, 1902, and 1904; for the Japanese it came with the "Gentleman's Agreement" in 1907. These restriction laws were extended to other Asian countries very soon. This is what Yaukey and Anderton say about these developments, "In 1882 congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. In 1907 came the "Gentleman's Agreement," which required Japan to refuse passports to the United States for Japanese laborers. In 1917, Congress set up an Asiatic Barred Zone that declared any native of India, Burma, Siam, the Malay States, the East Indies, or the Polynesian Islands to be inadmissible to the United States" (Yaukey and Anderton, 2001:302). These authors categorized such early restriction laws as qualitative ones, which refers to the restrictive rhetoric based on the quality of the populations being restricted i.e., quality in terms of racial and cultural qualities. Where as the later restrictive laws that came up in 1921,

1924 and 1952 are more quantitative in nature as they aimed to control the immigrant numbers by using quota system for different nationalities.

Ueda explains the way 1921 Quota Act restricts different nationalities, "In 1921 congress passed the First Quota Act, which ranked immigrant nationalities according to the discriminatory hierarchy of quotas. That act ruled that the number of aliens admitted annually from any country could not exceed 3 percent of the foreign-born of that nationality in the United States in 1910" (Ueda, 1994:20). The Second Quota Act passed by the Congress in 1924 tries to be harder on the immigration. As Yaukey and Anderton reveal those intentions, "The Immigration Act of 1924 went even further, lowering the percentage and basing it not on the most current census but that of 1890, when the population composition of the country had been less influenced by recent immigration from southern and eastern Europe" (Yaukey and Anderton, 2001:303). Such restrictions have ensured the cut down on the Asian immigrant numbers. After the Second Quota Act in 1924, the total immigration under quota system in any given year could not exceed 165,000, but when we look specifically at how these quotas are distributed we can notice the restrictive motives in these numbers, as the western and northern Europe gets 141,000 out of 165,000, which makes 86 % of the total admissions. On the other hand southern and eastern Europe was allotted 21,000 visas making 13% of the total, and 3,000 visas to the rest of the world making it 1% of the total visas. (Ueda, 1994: 22)

Much later in 1952, McCarran-Walter Act stands out as another important legislation, upholding the restrictionist policies. Though it retained the quota system based on the nationalities of the immigrants, it gave up on declaring the denial of admission based on racial factors. Though there is this laxation of restrictions on the

Asian immigrants still the quotas allotted were mere tokens. To quote Ueda on the distribution of this quota and its implications, "Japan received a quota of 185, China a quota of 105, and countries within a zone called the Asia-Pacific Triangle a quota of 100. While these were token quotas, the 1952 law demolished the long-standing principle of Asian exclusion. As a whole, the 1952 omnibus law reaffirmed the validity of discriminatory admissions, but it made the national origins system apply without racial exclusion to the entire world for the first time" (Ueda, 1994:43). Another character of this 1952 McCarran-Walter Act is that it shifted its criterion of admission from a racial basis to a more economically viable one. It placed a greater preference on the immigrants who had desirable technical or professional job expertise and their immediate family members.

All the restriction laws that are discussed above reveal a difference in immigration policy for different nations. The Hart-Celler Act in 1965 is a major shift from all the previous immigration laws. This Act is an amendment of the McCarran-Walter Act but is entirely revolutionary when compared to all the previously existing restrictionist legislation. Ueda provides a socio-political context in which this law was passed. According to him,

> "Finally, in 1965 Congress amended the McCarran-Walter Act by passing a revolutionary new law, the Hart-Celler Act, which abolished the discriminatory national origins quotas and the Asia-Pacific Triangle, the last vestige of the exclusionary Asiatic barred Zone. This act can be understood as a part of the evolutionary trend in federal policy after World War II to end legal discrimination based on race and ethnicity. The liberalization of immigration policy was a concomitant of the Civil Rights Act of 1965, the federal peacemaking laws designed to abolish racial discrimination, particularly against black Americans" (Ueda, 1994:44).

Thus this legislation reflects the glimpses of 'anti-restrictionist sentiment' present even during the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act and coming to fruition along with the ongoing political and social consciousness of the Civil Rights Movement.

These various factors influencing the immigration policy and further amendments to the Hart-Celler Act in 1976 and 1978 witnessed an upsurge in the inflow of Asian immigration and Asian Indians as well. However meager the scope for immigration from the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, it can be seen in almost a quadruple increase in the Asian Indian Settlement of 2,398 in 1950 to 8,746 in 1960. Further continuation of this trend, increase in Asian Indian immigration, can also be related to the Hart-Celler Act in 1965 and the follow up amendments in 1976 and 1978. This is evident in the enormous, almost 30 times, increase in the size of immigrants from 1970 (13,149) to 1980 (387,223). (Leonard, 1997) Based on the 2000 census, there are 1.7 million people in the United States who identify themselves as Asian Indians or Indian Americans. (Helweg, 2004)

It is not just a numerical increase in the Asian Indian immigrants that matters; more importantly, it has to be understood in the socio-historical context in which these migratory patterns developed. The Asian Indian immigration can be understood in two prominent waves. The early immigration was marked by a very few Asian Indians among the Asian population during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Where as the later wave of immigration followed the post Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, which mostly consisted of skilled and professional persons. The characteristics of both these Asian Indian immigrant populations is discussed by Karen Isaksen Leonard,

> "The early phase of South Asian immigration, consisted largely of men from the British Indian province of the Punjab. They came from predominantly farming backgrounds and worked in agriculture in California. These Punjabi men came at the end of a series of Asian

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migrations to the West Coast, which started in the mid-nineteenth century; a series that ended because U.S. immigration laws were changed to discriminate against Asians in 1917 and 1924. The second phase of South Asian immigration began after 1965, when the new Immigration and Naturalization Act reversed the historic patterns to give preference to Asian immigrants with needed skills. Thus the American context was significantly different for the first and second waves of South Asian immigration." (Leonard, 1997: 39)

The early Asian Indian migrants who came from the Punjab region had a unique history of their own centered on their own religion (Sikhism) and their own political leaders. They maintained a distinct political as well as cultural identity until the British colonial authority took over their territory. There is no doubt that the British had seen a lot of potential in this fertile and prosperous province. The British takeover also provided a new occupational opportunity for the Punjabi men who were recruited in large numbers into the British military. The options of joining the military and migration for this population arose out of certain structural changes of the times. As Leonard spells it out,

> "By the early twentieth century, Punjabi peasant proprietors were being incorporated into the world economy. At this time overseas emigration, initially thought of as a temporary move became a common strategy. The primary forces behind migration were population pressure, subdivision of land, and rural debt – and probably a quest for status and adventure. The central agricultural region of the Punjab became the chief source of immigrants to the American Pacific coast. Land fragmentation in the Punjab increased as mortality decreased and more sons survived to inherit equal shares of the patrimony; thus, the sons of cultivators took up military services or wage labor abroad." (Leonard, 1997: 44)

This development with in the Punjabi population resonates with the demographic transition theory where the push factor was identified to be the decreasing mortality rates associated with an increase in the fertility rates. Here in the situation of Punjabi migrants the growth in the population levied an increasing pressure on the land that is available and this turned out to be a crucial element since their lives and economy were based on

land and agriculture. The pressure on land resulted in the land fragmentation to an extent that the work had to seek after in places other than farming. This is when there has been an increasing enlistment of Punjabi men in the military and this is shown to us by Karen Isaken Leonard when she cites Ellinwood saying that "At the outbreak of World War I, more than 65% of Indian combat troops came from the Punjab; by 1917, Punjabi enlistments accounted for almost 50% of the men recruited in India." (Leonard, 1997: 44) Another option before the Punjabi men in search of work is to go abroad as a worker and earn the money. These economic obligations along with the stories about the United States as a land of opportunity motivated them to migrate towards America and Canada.

While the first wave of Asian Indian immigration is marked by the very few Punjabi migrants, the second wave is marked by more varied populations from the Indian subcontinent who are mostly middle-class, educated, urban, professional sections. This later wave has its own socio-political and economic context for its occurrence. Karen Isaken Leonard talking about the second wave of Asian Indian immigration says, "South Asians coming to the United States are responding not only to changing U.S. immigration policies but to the global political economy. The structuring of international capitalism, wage differences between countries, political instability in South Asia, family reunification, - all these and other political factors have produced levels of international migration unprecedented in history." In the same flow she also tries to presume some other possible reasons for this trend, "The South Asian countries do not restrict emigration, perhaps because of their continuing problems of unemployment (particularly among the educated) or because of the welcome infusion of foreign-currency remittances sent to the homelands by emigrants." (Leonard, 1997: 65)

Large presence of Asian Indian immigrants in the professional and managerial work force or at least in such work force contributing student body is highly visible in the 1980s when Asian Indian immigration was in a full flow. According to Ueda, "in 1975, three-quarters of employed Indian immigrants were professional, technical, or managerial workers. Highly trained elites often came through a two-stage process in which they first entered the United States on temporary visas as students in American universities and later applied successfully for permanent residency." (Ueda, 1994: 65) Highest percent of college graduates among the immigrant nationalities come from India in 1980. It surpassed not only other Asian immigrant populations like Philippines, Korea, China, and Vietnam but also western nations such as U.K. and Canada. The same trend in the arrival of student population is also noted by Helweg (2004):

> Large scale movement to the United States began in the mid-1950s, especially among students. Financial aid was available and those who did not have it could obtain jobs to pay for their studies. The United States was perceived as superior technology, business, and general sciences. Wider scale migration to the United States, Canada, and Australia began in the mid-1960s, when revised immigration regulations removed racial barriers and began to emphasize skills that would guarantee economic self-sufficiency. Educated Indians, primarily from Punjab, Gujarat, and Kerala, took advantage of these policy changes. As a result, west gained a cadre of educated immigrants who contributed to both their homeland and their country of residence." (Helweg, 2004)

This increase in Asian Indian numbers as well as diverse backgrounds that they arrive from makes them a distinct ethnic group in the United States.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORING THE FIELD OF ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES

Even before its birth as a sovereign nation the United States attracted diverse populations, primarily from Western Europe. This diversity has only grown in leaps and bounds since its independence to the present day and is confidently projected to continue to do so. The inbound immigrants provided this country with a motley composition and a unique cultural dynamism in terms of ethnic and race relations. Population trends like these that are affecting and transforming every aspect of social life are a little hard to be ignored, especially by social scientists. Whether it is a puzzle of assimilation or advocacy of pluralism the prime underlying concern seems to be the social cohesion of the society. Especially the new immigrants from eastern and southern Europe at the turn of the 19th century kept the public, government, journalistic media and even sociologists thinking if they have the capacity to blend in and be indistinguishable. The concern was over the apparent differences that are evident in their alien cultural baggage they carried over here (and for certain immigrant groups even physical features) to leave a discordant note with the mainstream society. These concerns spilled into the academic discourse of that time as well, along with affecting the United States immigration policy towards these new immigrants.

Sociologists belonging to the Chicago School articulated the ideas of assimilation, especially Robert Parks (1924), in different stages. According to him race relations in American society played out cyclically – first by contact, then competition, conflict, accommodation and eventually assimilation. This view on race relations hasn't been

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contested until 1960s and 70s when there was a sudden resurgence in the study of race and ethnicity. This new line of researchers discovered that the third- and the fourth-generation immigrants were insisting on their ethnic identity (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Novak, 1972). These third- and fourth-generation immigrants who were distant from the authentic ethnicity of their ancestors were involved in the symbolic display of ethnicity, which was occasional and variable within the array of ethnic heritage one carries (an element of choice in selecting an Irish or German or Native American or whatever be the other ethnic pedigrees they carry). This symbolic interactionist dimension with scope for negotiation provided an alternative and newly discovered perspective to the issue of ethnic identity (Gans, 1979; Waters, 1990).

The post 1965 period of immigration focused on the increased flow of new immigrants. This was the period that witnessed the revival and advocacy of ethnic identities such as Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics and Latinos. The studies looked at external structural factors that would not let them assimilate and thus contributed to the necessity of such ethnic identities (Espiritu, 1992; Nagel, 1982; Padilla, 1985). This emphasis on ethnic identity as well as adjustment of these immigrant groups into the host society can be seen in the studies focused on each ethnic group.

The term Ethnicity:

These terms such as ethnic group and ethnic identity that are used to describe Asian Indian immigrants in this study, just like many other ethnic groups, need to be understood as articulated by various sociologists. The term ethnicity itself is a relatively new in English vernacular. The scholars, Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon MacDonald, and Malcolm Chapman (1989), in their edited book *History and Ethnicity* trace the origin of

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this word and its resurgence in the common usage as well as in academia. According to them, the word *ethnicity* has its first recorded usage in the Oxford English Dictionary in the year 1953. These authors look at the concept of ethnicity having an exclusionary element to it as against race, which is an inclusive. In their own words this is how the duality between the terms race and ethnicity reemerged:

> …the terms seem to have rediscovered, even without intention, the 'us and them' duality that related terms have had through most of the recorded history. 'Race' as a term did not, so to speak, discriminate. Within the discourse of race, everybody had one, everybody belonged to one. In actual use, however, not everybody belongs to an 'ethnic group', or has an 'ethnicity'. In their common employment, the terms have a strong and familiar bias towards 'difference' and 'otherness'. (Tonkin, et al., 1989: 15)

Thus, when the term ethnicity came into usage it gave a whole new meaning to the term race. This exclusionary aspect inherent in the term ethnicity itself is attributed to its roots in the Greek language from which it is derived. The Greek word *ethnos*, from which English words such as ethnic and ethnicity are formulated, means a 'gentile' or an outsider. This is how Greeks defined themselves against the 'non-structured', peripheral, and tribal people around them. A similar meaning has seeped into English in its Greek New Testament sense denoting it to be a 'gentile', 'pagan', or 'non-Christian'. (Tonkin, et al., 1989)

Such an orthodox Christian use of this term during Byzantine and medieval period slowly made its way into the academia. As suggested by Tonkin et al (1989), "From about the mid-nineteenth century, however, scholarship has made of *ethnos* a word meaning something like 'group of people of shared characteristics'. The term *ethnos* itself has not passed into common Anglophone intellectual discourse, but a variety of

compound and derived terms have been formed, which are now in common academic use - ethnology, ethnography, ethnocentric, ethnic, ethnicity, and others." All these variations of the term *ethnos,* in one way or another always signify the 'other'. Sometimes this 'other' might refer to a totally exotic and a distant life altogether but most often, especially in the multi-racial and multi-ethnic societies; it points out the very neighbor who happens to be the 'other'.

This aspect of ethnic being synonymous with a minority group is a common feature in most of the western nation-states. According to John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (1996), "This dichotomy between a non-ethnic 'us' and ethnic 'others' has continued to dog the concepts in the fields of ethnicity and nationalism…We find it also in the English and American (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) tendency to reserve the term 'nation' for themselves and 'ethnic' for immigrant peoples, as in the frequently used term 'ethnic minorities'." (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:4-5) Just like the ancient Greeks, most of the modern western world started defining their immigrants and minority groups as 'ethnic'. While this historical tracing of the origin of the word itself and the transformation of its meaning through different contexts is a helpful exercise in understanding the current usage, it is also equally important to seek the content of ethnicity itself.

Varying views on Ethnicity:

Ethnicity, as discussed and debated in social sciences, is not an unequivocal subject, which brings all the scholars together in consensus. It is just like most of the other areas of study in sociology that grew out of diverse scholarly contributions. The difference in perspectives, as to how to define an ethnic group or what constitutes

ethnicity, broadened the scope of this field of ethnic studies. Hutchinson and Smith (1996) classify various existing approaches o 'ethnicity' into two broad camps and a number of alternative approaches. The two major camps according to them are 'primordialists' and 'instrumentalists'; while the other alternative approaches include, 'transactionalist', 'social psychological', and 'ethno-symbolic'.

Primordialist camp holds that the primordial ties such as religion, blood, race, language, and custom play a huge role in connecting individual to the group. Clifford Geertz is one of the prominent scholars associated with this camp of primordialist view of ethnicity. Primordial ties are almost a prerequisite for ethnic bond to exist and in Geertz's own words:

> By a primordial attachment is meant one that stem from the 'givens'-or, more precisely, as culture is involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens'-of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, *ipso facto*; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself. The general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. But for virtually for every person, in every society, at all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural - some would say spiritual - affinity than from social interaction. (Geertz, 1963:10)

As seen here in Geertz's idea of primordiality, the element of ethnicity through primordial bonds precedes the individual. These ties and bonds are not something consciously developed by social interaction but they are reason for such an interaction as

they stem from 'congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on'. Thus ethnicity from a primordialist standpoint stays external to the individual and exerts a coercive power over him or her by bestowing ethnic identity.

On the other hand 'instrumentalists' view ethnicity as socially constructed. Ethnicity, for them, emerges in structures of social action. Thus there is a vast scope for manipulation, transformation, and redefining of cultural symbols to fit their needs. Stuart Hall (1992) and Homi Bhabha (1990) are some of the well known scholars in the instrumentalist camp among others. Instrumentalists like Abner Cohen define, "ethnicity is the result of intensive interaction between ethnic groupings and not the result of complete separatism." (Cohen, 1969:198) Another reference to instrumentalist thought can be seen in Paul R. Brass's (1991) work as he views ethnicity to be providing a scope for the individuals and the community involved to pick and choose from different options. According to him, "The process of creating communities from ethnic groups involves the selection of particular dialects or styles of dress or historical symbols from a variety of available alternatives." (Brass, 1991:25) A similar theme resonates in what Michael Hechter says, "the members of any ethnic group will engage in collective action only when they estimate that by doing so they will receive a net individual benefit." (Hechter, 1986:270) Thus, for instrumentalists, ethnicity is the product of social interaction unlike the way primordialists view it. The primacy here lies in the actor and his or her social interactions in shaping the ethnic content and character rather than ascriptive elements such as blood, language, religion, custom, etc.

Among the alternative approaches to ethnicity, Fredrik Barth (1969) stands out as a 'transactionalist'. According to him ethnic group lasts because of the durability of the

ethnic boundary. The cultural markers such as language, dress, food, etc. act as a boundary. The unique feature of this transactionalist approach is that instead of a rigid or a closed boundary, it is the permeability of the boundary that makes the boundary more durable. Thus, transactions across the boundary serve in perpetuating the boundary. (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:9)

The 'social psychological' approach of Horowitz (1985) focuses on differential estimations of group worth, and on their collective stereotypes. While still assuming ethnic affiliation based on primordial ties, he evaluates their group honor as being relative to other groups as drawn from their own kinship myths. The 'ethno-symbolic' approach of Armstrong (1982) and A.D. Smith (1986) looks at the persistence, change, and resurgence of ethnic groups, while drawing heavily from their ethnic past. Both scholars emphasize on myths and symbols from the past history of these groups and that helps n the resurgence of ethnicity in the modern world. (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:10)

All these different perspectives contribute to our understanding of ethnicity. For this study on Asian Indians as an ethnic group, it is important to draw from all the above approaches to ethnicity in comprehending what constitutes ethnicity. Especially through field work and closer contact with the Asian Indian immigrants living in the United States, this study attempts to capture the fleeting dynamics of ethnic rituals.

Components of Ethnicity:

While the above discussed approaches help us understand what defines ethnicity or ethnic groups, the content of ethnicity is itself very important. Along with providing a definition, the above identified approaches guide us in identifying different elements of ethnicity. For instance, the primordialists provide us insights as to what binds people

together, such as, blood ties in terms of kinship, religion, language, region, customs through shared ancestry etc.; instrumentalists acknowledge most of these elements while giving primacy to the actors in constructing the existing identities. It's essential to highlight elements or components such as these so that they can serve as markers that are easily identifiable.

Different scholars suggested different ways in which one can analyze as to what certain central features of an ethnic group constitute. Hutchinson and Smith (1996) draw upon Don Hendelman's ideas of an ethnic community and how, for it to emerge as one, has to go through various levels of incorporating resources well enough to develop so. According to them these levels of incorporation are:

> *ethnic category*, the loosest level of incorporation, where there is simply a perceived cultural difference between the group and outsiders, and a sense of the boundary between them. In the next stage, that of *ethnic network*, there is regular interaction between ethnic members such that the network can distribute resources among its members. In the *ethnic association* the members develop common interests and political organizations to express these at a collective, corporate level. Finally, we have the *ethnic community*, which possesses a permanent, physical bounded territory, over and above its political organizations; an example would be an *ethnie* in command of a national state. (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:6)

Therefore, by the time a population sets on a path to realize their identity from an *ethnic category* to an *ethnic community*, it is ready to be called a nation. These different levels outlined above helps us in evaluating an ethnic group in terms of its proximity to becoming an *ethnic community* or if it still is in an early or intermediary stage.

This journey of an *ethnie* in ultimately emerging into a nation-state is undertaken collectively, while gathering a shared sense of history and heritage on their path. This

very process, nonetheless, does not always qualify it to be a homogenous entity. Hutchinson and Smith (1996) acknowledge this possibility of diversity within an ethnic community, which sometimes might pose threat in evaluating communities' collective ethnic identity and ethnic origin. According to them, "'ethnic identity' and 'ethnic origin' refer to the individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity, the sense on the part of the individual that he or she belongs to a particular cultural community. 'Ethnic origin' like wise refers to a sense of ancestry and nativity on the part of the individual through his or her parents and grandparents; although the concept may also have an even more problematic collective dimension, referring to the (usually diverse) cultural groups and migration origins of *ethnies*." (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:5) This 'problematic collective dimension' referred here is visible among Asian Indians as they are a diverse society. This aspect of diversity is as truer here in the host society of United States of America as it is back in their homeland - India.

Diversity, in terms of region different people hail from, different languages they speak, different religions they follow, and differences in culture such as food practices, clothing style, festivals celebrated, etc., marks the uniqueness of Asian Indian population. Therefore, while evaluating this particular Asian Indian community in terms of cultural markers, one has to be aware of the diversity within this ethnic community itself. These cultural and other markers that signify an ethnic group have been outlined by different sociologists as well as anthropologists. Most often these markers are the ones that define an ethnic group and ethnic identity, which is evident when we observe various definitions of ethnicity itself. According to Richard Shermerhorn (1970), ethnicity is defined as, "a collectivity in a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a

shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as epitome of their people-hood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group." (Schermerhorn, 1970:12)

Manning Nash (1989), just like the above mentioned definition of Shermerhorn, tries to identify 'the core elements of ethnicity'. He outlines three important features of ethic group, which are so important that they are called 'trinity of boundary markers'. Besides this trinity Nash also refers to the surface pointers, which features visibly in social interaction of their members. According to Nash, this trinity of boundary markers as well as surface pointers includes:

> *Kinship*, that is, the presumed biological and descent unity of the group implying a stuff or substance continuity each group member has and outsider do not; *commensality*, the propriety of eating together indicating a kind of equality, peership, and the promise of future kinship links stemming from the intimate acts of dining together, only one step removed from the intimacy of bedding together; and a *common cult*, implicating a value system beyond time and empirical circumstance, scared symbols and attachments coming from *illo tempore*…. (while) The frequent surface pointers include dress, language, and (culturally denoted) physical features. (Nash, 1989:11-12)

While the trinity boundary markers (blood ties, status characteristics, and value systems) are intangible and invisible, the secondary trinity boundary marker (dress, language, and physical features) serves the purpose in clear identification of ethnic differences and thus solidifying the group's own identity.

Mostly based on Schermerhorn's definition and partly from the elements of ethnicity proposed by Nash as outlined above, Hutchinson and Smith (1996) narrows the definition of *ethnie* and Smith (1986) further elaborate six of its main features. According to them the definition of the term *ethnie* is, "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members." (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996:6) Based on this definition, A. D. Smith (1986) frames six main features of an ethnic group as follows:

1. a common *proper name*, to identify and express the 'essence' of the community;

2. a myth of *common ancestry*, a myth rather than a fact, a myth that includes the idea of a common origin in time and place and that gives an *ethnie* a sense of fictive kinship, what Horowitz terms a 'super-family' (Horowitz, 1985:ch. 2)

3. shared *historical memories*, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration;

4. one or more *elements of common culture*, which need not be specified but normally include religion, customs, or language;

5. a *link* with a *homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation by the *ethnie*, only its symbolic attachment to its ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples;

6. a *sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie's* population (A. D. Smith, 1986:ch 2)

All these features can be noticed in every ethnic group and nation across the world. They provide this study with a basic framework with which one can understand Asian Indians as a diasporic community within the United States of America. While this discussion on

the notion of ethnicity itself provides a general framework in understanding ethnic groups, it is important to look more closely at the literature related to Asian Indian immigrants to comprehend them as an ethnic group. Like many ethnic groups in this country, which have their own unique history and culture, Asian Indians have their own niche. Thus, one can look at the cultural markers that are specific to Asian Indian immigrants and study how they maintain their group boundary, if at all they do, and their ethnic identity. Specific studies focusing on Asian Indian ethnicity are further explored and issues, in the interests of this research, within the Asian Indian immigrants are outlined here briefly.

Issues pertaining to Asian Indian immigrants in the United States:

Asian immigrants, among many other immigrant groups, have posed a threat to the social fabric of this nation. The physical and cultural differences with the mainstream population have made them stand out as a group that is incapable of assimilation. This very perception that these people are inassimilable has given a whole different dynamic to the way ethnic and race relationships developed in this country. Further study of United States' immigration policies towards the Asian immigrants reveals discrimination and suspicion towards these groups. An attempt to understanding their culture in terms of ethnic identity, as well as characteristics and necessities of ethnic enclaves (especially Chinese) are few of the aspects that draw attention to the unique position of these groups in this nation. This distinctive ethnic character has generated a lot of research interest in understanding these ethnic groups. The questions regarding possibility of assimilation have been asked over and over again in the context of newer generations and how the identity is maintained, renewed, negotiated, or transformed over a period of time. More

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specifically, studies have came out regarding the demographics of the ethnic groups, family structure and values, gender relationships, cultural and religious practices, elderly and aging, inter-generational studies, educational achievement and economic profile, and political participation etc.

Most of the research on Asian immigrants focused on the Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino communities in the United States. The studies on Asian Indian immigrants are not widely represented in the academic realm among the Asian studies. One of the reasons that could be cited for the absence of academic interest in the Asian Indian immigrants is their sparse numbers until 1965. Also we should notice that umbrella terms such as 'Asian', 'South Asian', and 'Southeast Asian' overshadowed the distinct groups that make up those labels. Also in everyday vernacular the term 'oriental' is used in reference to the entire alien looking people from Asia; a term that doesn't distinguish or acknowledge the diversity among different ethnic groups of this mammoth continent.[7] This is one example where the label 'Asian American' marginalizes certain groups within, as well as reveals a lack of awareness of what constitutes a vast diversity of cultures. Not only in the everyday race relations, but similar trend of marginalization of certain ethnic groups can be seen in academic research with the use of umbrella terms or all encompassing labels such as 'Asian American' or 'Southeast Asian' or 'South Asian'. This argument is presented in the book, "A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America" edited by Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth (1998), where

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[7] According to the Webster's New World College Dictionary (Fourth Edition) some of the meanings of the word 'oriental' is, "of the Far East or its people or culture; Eastern.", "designating or of the biogeographic realm that includes SE Asia south of the Himalayas, the Philippines, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and other associated islands.", "a person born in the Far East or a member of a people of that region As applied to persons, now often regarded as a term of disparagement." (Agnes, 1999)

Asian American curriculum is dominated by East and Southeast Asian focus while ignoring the South Asian. Rajiv Shankar articulates this theme of the book accordingly:

> Although Asians *in Asia* have been molded by similar historic currents and perhaps share some distinctive traits that set them apart from people from other continents (For instance, the vast majority of Asians are adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam, whereas the vast majority of the rest of the world's population are not.), Asians *in America* are quite differentiated from one another, largely as a result of differing relationships between their home countries and the United States. Specifically, the two broad and rather separate groups that are well represented in the United States…are those who originated from East/Southeast Asia – which includes China, Taiwan, the Koreas, Japan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Philippines - and South Asia, which includes India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives.
>
> Aside from geography, why is this categorization relevant? East/Southeast Asians dominate the Asian American platform, in terms of their sheer number in this country, because of their shared sense of trauma with America, and their (by now) highly developed and motivated social and political structures within the American establishment. This is true to the extent that, to the average non-Asian American mind, they are nearly synonymous with (all of) Asian America. South Asians, on the other hand, are a significant and fast growing branch within the Asian family, and are by themselves highly successful and self-conscious participants in the American idiom. They want their unique attributes to be recognized and their particular issues discussed; and some of them want this to occur, initially at least, within the Asian American paradigm, for they think that they must surely belong there. Yet, they find themselves so unnoticed as an entity that they feel as if they are merely a crypto-group, often included but easily marginalized within the house of Asian America. They often believe that their voices are not being heard or that their unique perspective and potential for leadership roles are being overlooked. Ultimately South Asians ask why are they a part, yet apart, admitted, but not acknowledged? (Shankar and Srikanth, 1998:ix)

Although this argument is made for the changes in curriculum and as an appeal for the academics to be more inclusive of the South Asian ethnic groups, this can also be further extended particularly to research on the Asian Indian community in the United States.

Research on Asian Indians in America is very scant. This is the case with Asian American research in general, and more so when it comes to ethnic groups that are in the

midst of neglect as mentioned above by Rajiv Shankar. Aminah Mohammad-Arif (2002), while lamenting the lack of research on South Asian Muslims in the United States, observes the limited publications on Asian Indian immigrants as well. In her own words, "Little has so far been published on South Asian Muslims. Five major books have been published on Indian diaspora to the United States: Maxine Fisher, *The Indians of New York City;* Parmatma Saran (ed.), *The New Ethnics;* Joan Jensen, *Passage from India;* Arthur and Usha Helweg, *An Immigrant Success Story;* Jean Bacon, *Life Lines.* These five works, all very interesting, deal in the main with Hindu immigrants to the United States." (Mohammad-Arif, 2002:10) Though few more scholarly publications have come since her observation, the literature on Asian Indian immigrants in America still is very slim. The lack of Asian Indian immigrants' story in bulk can be attributed to recent history of theirs spanning only last four decades during which most of it happened.[8] Most of the available literature on Asian Indian immigration to America allots a considerable space to their history of arrival and survival, issues of assimilation and ethnic identity,

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[8] Though Asian Indian presence in the United States can be traced back to 1820, majority of them made their way into America after 1965 laxation of immigration laws.

ASIAN INDIAN POPULATION IN U.S. 1950-2000

1950 – 2,398 -----------
                              ]   McCarren-Walter Act (1952)*
1960 – 8,746 -----------

1970 – 13,149 -----------
                              ] Hart-Celler Act (1965); 1976 &1978 Amendments*
1980 – 387, 223 ---------

1990 – 815,477

2000 – 1,899,599

(Source: Leonard, 1997; Helweg, 2004)
* These U.S. immigration policies have been discussed earlier along with the history of Asian Indian immigration.

and immigration laws and policies regarding the incoming population. Here is an effort to provide a compendium of themes that are prominent and recurring in this literature.

History of Asian Indian immigration and a general demographic profile of this population is one such recurring theme. Brent Melendy (1977), in his book *Asians in America: Filipinos, Koreans, and East Indians,* provided us with the statistics of early Asian Indian immigration, their economic struggles to sustain themselves in the midst of local population as well as new immigrants, and how they survived and countered the racial prejudice and hatred of their time by forming and involving in various ethnic organizations and associations. His work does not exclusively attend to Asian Indian immigration; equal importance is given to the immigrants from Korea and Philippines in this book. This is one of the earlier works on Asian Indian immigrants and we can see it in the title where the author still addresses this group as 'East Indians', a label popular in those times.

Five years after the publication of Melendy's book, Sripati Chandrasekhar (1982) came up with an edited work, *From India to America: A Brief History of Immigration; Problems of Discrimination; Admission and Assimilation.* These groups of scholars start advocating the term 'Asian Indian' for this ethnic group as opposed to the previously used labels such as 'East Indian' and 'East India Indian' (Dutta, 1982). Some of the themes that are covered by them are immigration laws regarding Asian Indians in the United States (Chandrasekhar, 1982a), demographic profile (Chandrasekhar, 1982b) and bibliography pertaining Asian Indian immigrants (Chandrasekhar, 982c). Gary R. Hess (1982) as well as Bruce La Brack (1982) focuses on the history of Asian Indian immigration. Very interesting observations on the possible relation between the freedom

struggle in India (particularly political activities of Ghadr Party) and its impact on immigration policy of U.S. have been made by Emily C. Brown (1982). With a similar line of thought, Juergensmeyer (1982) studied the Ghadr Party activities in the United States and how that promoted a nationalist pride and ethnic identity among the Sikh population in particular. Karen Leonard's research on marriage and family among the early Asian Indian immigrants in California, and the dynamics of their nuptial interaction with Mexicans is a condensed preview of her later work that was published in 1997 (Leonard, 1982); Dutta (1982) acknowledges economic profile of the Asian Indians - a prevalent notion about them as professional and skilled labor. At the same time, he also cautions us about how this road to being a model minority is filled with discrimination. This is a commendable research that was put together in understanding the Asian Indian immigrants at the height of their inflow into America. Along with the issues of discrimination these scholars also gave attention to the questions that the race and ethnic studies have been grappling with ever since their field of study had been established.

The more recent and updated work on Asian Indian immigration can be seen in Arthur Helweg's (2004) *Strangers in a Not-So-Strange Land: Indian American Immigrants in the Global Age.* While his previous publication on Asian Indian immigrants focused on the state of Michigan (Helweg, 2002), this work gives a broader picture by outlining the history of Asian Indian immigration at a global level and specifically in the United States. He elaborates on the cultural attributes of Asian Indians (especially Sikh's) and discusses the difficulties in assimilation while keeping the former intact.

More specific studies addressing the degree of assimilation among the Asian Indian immigrants are Michael Angelo's (1997) *The Sikh Diaspora: Tradition and Change in an Immigrant Community,* and Karen Leonard's (1997) *The South Asian Americans.* These studies focus on thick ethnic pockets on east as well as on west coast of the United States.[9] Angelo views the social life of Sikh Community in northeastern United States in upstate New York, where as Leonard gives her attention to the west coast community, especially in California. Angelo evaluates the rate and extent of acculturation in a Sikh community by looking at their cultural elements viz. dating and marriage, family and kinship obligations, social and dietary habits, women's roles, religious participation, communal and social relations, and the celebration of holidays and festivals. Leonard, on the other hand, looks at the ethnic identity of not just Sikhs (though there is quite an emphasis on this group) but other religious groups such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians. Also, as the title of her book suggests, she doesn't limit herself to Asian Indians (though again majority of the 'South Asians' seem to be Asian Indians in her research) but rather all immigrant groups of South Asian descent.[10]

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[9] Asian Indian immigrants are usually located densely in selected states. This trend is true for most of the immigrants in general. According to Bruce La Brack (1982), "Alien address reports show a clear clustering, less than a dozen states having large resident alien populations. As of 1975 immigrants of *all* origins chose California over all other states (1,129,706) followed by New York (794,508), Florida (371,114), and Texas (327,668). A large number of Asian Indians presently chose (as do many immigrants) to live either in California or the East Coast."
Concentration of Asian Indians in the coastal states of New York and California (1980-2000)

	1980	**1990**	**2000**
California	57,989	159,973	314,819
New York	60,511	140,985	251,724

(Source: Chandrasekhar, 1982b & Helweg, 2004).
[10] According to Karen Leonard South Asia includes contemporary countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Just like these two aforementioned works on ethnic identity, which consider religion as one of the central constituents among the elements of ethnicity, Aminah Mohammad-Arif's (2002) *Salaam America: South Asian Muslims in New York* focuses exclusively on Islam and its role in providing ethnic identity among South Asian Muslims. This book came out in an appropriate context of post 9-11 America while Muslims are being subjected to suspicion and hatred. Aminah gives us extensive information on Islam - the schisms and diversity within the religion, its history both in South Asia as well as in America, and its central role in ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity is also the subject matter in the works of Arthur Helweg (2002), Jean Bacon (1996), and Sunaina Maira (2002). In his book *Asian Indians in Michigan*, Helweg provides us the history of Asian Indian immigration both into the United States as well as specifically into the state of Michigan. He elaborates on the issues of ethnic identity in terms of how important it is for an Asian Indian immigrant, whether it is easy to maintain this ethnic identity at present when compared to the immigrants of past, and what constitutes this ethnic identity. Jean Bacon in her book *Life Lines: Community, Family, and Assimilation Among Asian Indian Immigrants,* delves into the Asian Indian community in the city of Chicago. She does a tremendous job of how the 'intergenerational dynamic' is articulated within the Asian Indian families as well as in the organizations that make up the community. She provides case studies of different families and how they grapple with the intergenerational issues confronted in the face of ethnic identity. Sunaina Maira focuses entirely on the younger generation in New York City and provides us an ethnographer's view of youth culture from inside. Her book, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City*, reveals the effort,

or to a certain extent the ease, with which the Asian Indian youth constructs, negotiates and asserts their ethnic identity. She explores the field of pop culture, especially the club scene, where ethnic identity walks a thin line between 'authenticity' and 'hybridity'.

Other than these scholarly themes on Asian Indian immigrants one can also witness the growing Asian Indian presence just by browsing through their literary fiction. Some of the works that made a mark in this literary field are – Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*(1999), *Namesake* (2003), Ameena Meer's *Bombay Talkie* (1994), Chitra Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* (1995), *Mistress of Spices* (1997), *The Vine of Desire* (2002) and *The Conch Bearer* (2003), Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines* (1993) and *Manhattan Music* (1997), Indran Amirthanayagam's *The Elephants of Reckoning* (1993), Ginu Kamani's *Junglee Girl* (1995), Bharathi Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* (1993), Kirin Narayan's *Love, Stars, and All That* (1994), Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat* (1993), Abraham Verghese's *My Own Country* (1994), Amitava Kumar's *Bombay-London-New York* (2002), and Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* (1999).[11] As one can notice most of these works are by Indian American writers in an effort to provide a glimpse into Asian Indian immigrant lives. This is could also be an indication that the readership base is on the raise for such themes of multicultural America over the last decade.

LOCATING FOCUS WITHIN THIS LARGER PICTURE

The available literature that was condensed above, however scant it is, unequivocally emanates the notion that Asian Indian immigrants usually conduct themselves as a community. Therefore, this research attempts to comprehend such

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[11] This is not a comprehensive list of fictional literature pertaining to Asian Indians in America. I am very sure there are more.

dynamics within this particular community. As the immigration history informs us, Asian immigrants were considered outsiders and a problem for assimilation. The identifiable reasons were their physical features such as skin color, hair type, color of the eyes etc. as well as distinct cultural traits they brought from those distant lands. It is both the external factor of being treated as outsiders as well as an internal urge to sustain and encourage their distinct culture and identity that molded the Asian Indian immigrants into a closely knit community. The visibility of the Asian Indian Community as an embedded group varies based on the quantity as well as density of the settlement. In highly dense communities, which also coincide with a longer and more stable history of the immigration, the visibility is marked by the formal organizations and social structures that celebrate the identity more openly. Whereas in a not so dense community, the visibility is lesser in degree.

Ethnicity and rituals:

Once there is a shared idea of being or belonging to a unique group, the individuals involve in various ritual activities that proclaim and signify the ethnic and cultural identity. These cultural markers that are manifest through the ritual activities of the Asian Indian community illustrate the social structures in action. One of the aspects that need attention is to view and understand Asian Indian immigrants as an embedded group. The significance of certain cultural practices and the way they indulge in them in a ritual fashion is central to the group identity. These ritual activities symbolize the group itself and signify the group solidarity. Michael Angelo (1997), in his study evaluating the level/degree of assimilation of Sikh community into American culture, outlines seven basic cultural traits to be used to measure the assimilation process. These include

practices such as, "dating and marriage, family and kinship obligations, social and dietary habits, women's roles, religious participation, communal and social relations, and the celebration of holidays and festivals." (Angelo, 1997). Similarly Leonard (1997) too, though the focus is not on the issue of assimilation, outlines the cultural traditions and the way they are articulated over generations in order to define and redefine their identities. According to her, music, dance, poetry, food, fashion, yoga, fine arts, entertainment, literature, as well as family arrangements play a crucial role in the formation of an ethnic or even a biethnic community (Leonard, 1997).

Sunaina Maira (2002), in her study of Indian American youth culture in New York City, talks about the ethnic identity of the second-generation Asian Indian youth. The Indian American youth of this second-generation long for nostalgia that would bring them closer to the ethnic authenticity that they never witnessed first hand. This longing is fulfilled through enacting certain rituals and thus providing them with ethnic identity. According to Maira, "Indian American youth in New York City use the rituals of popular culture to negotiate their racialized, gendered, and classed positioning in the wider social context, and sometimes to reshuffle their parents' expectations of racial identification, but the discourse of purity runs deep." (Maira, 2002:56). This is a reference to the clubbing scene and the remixed dance floors of New York city, where Indian American Youth participate in a culture that is alien to their parents and yet long for the 'purity' of authentic ethnicity. In this whole process while the youth exuberate their presence with dancing and being 'cool' the element of nostalgia is still retained.

These rituals are not just limited to the 'rituals of popular culture', few of the people that Maira interviewed have revealed that the ritual of "going back" (journey to

the point of origin i.e. to India) has helped them discover their roots. This rite of going back not only provides them with the cultural authenticity but also a sense of cutting the bridge short and unifying their fragmented lives. Drawing from an interview with one of the young Indian woman, Maira observes that, "Visits to Indian and transnational family relationships, while catalytic, can both support and challenge second-generation Indian Americans' sense of ethnic identification; they can bolster the ideology of ethnic authenticity and simultaneously lead to an awareness that "true" Indianness is contingent on the place where it is enacted." (Maira, 2002:116) Maira delves deep into the analysis of these rituals and how they provide a platform to negotiate their ethnic identity.

These references to rituals, both directly and indirectly, by different scholars in evaluating and understanding the ethnic identity of Asian Indians provides us a fertile ground to further explore it. It is also assumed that the manifestation of these ritual activities imply a presence of a considerable organizational structure good enough to support and encourage such activities. Very few studies focused on the available organizational structures for these rituals to be enacted regularly, while some did make passing comments on the importance of having such resources. Maira, talking especially about the second-generation Indian American youth, points out how significant the ethnic organizations are in promoting their identity. Drawing from her research she says, "Many students viewed ethnic organizations as providing a way to learn about or maintain a cultural identity as Indian or South Asian. The underlying belief seemed to be that culture could be practiced through programs that involved symbolic displays of ethnicity, such as celebration of Indian – generally Hindu – festivals, performances of classical or folk dances, and opportunities to wear traditional clothing." (Maira, 2002:128)

Jean Bacon (1999) also acknowledges the importance of not only the cultural content of the ethnicity but also the organizational structures available in the community. In her article, *Constructing Collective Ethnic Identities*, she identifies two questions that are prominently dealt with in the literature, "First, what do these identities look like? This includes considerations of both the ethnic label that emerges, and the basis or content of that ethnicity - shared heredity, language, food, religion, etc. Second, through what social processes are these identities constructed? In response to this question we may discuss the social circumstances that foster the coalescence of ethnic organizations and movements (the reasons can range from seeking economic and political incentives, to a search for meaning brought on by the alienating tendencies of modernity)." (Bacon, 1999) Thus the role of ethnic organizations inside immigrant community and their contribution to the strengthening of ethnic identity through promotion of rituals and ritualized symbolic practices is a dynamic interplay that needs to be studied further.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Notion of community:

The sociological project emerged equally as a product of modernity as it is obsessed with analyzing the latter. It is interesting to observe the way classical thinkers of the discipline were concerned with the evolution of 'gemeinschaft' into 'gesselschaft' – community into a society. In comparative interests as well as to assess the implications of what the traditional communes can teach us, sociologists as well as anthropologists embarked on an extensive research on primitive tribes and communities. Currently, in a different time and context, it is equally interesting that social scientists are paying attention to communities or lack thereof in the face of a postmodern turn. (Putnam, 2000; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, and Tipton, 1992; Rouer, 1991) The focus here would be on this sense of belonging that is persistent in ethnic communities in the United States. Communities, in a classic sense, refer to 'old small communities' that had denser interactional ties. With the fast changing world the definitions of this term altered too. The development of large nation-states still sustained the sense of nationalism across its vast geographical expanse with what Benedict Anderson (1993) calls 'imagined communities'.

The onset of globalization can very well utilize this conception of imagined communities, especially regarding the populations that are no longer in their local domain of origin. As Avtar Brah (1996) articulates it, "Diasporic Identities are at once local and global. They are networks of transnational identifications encompassing 'imagined' and

'encountered' communities." (Brah, 1996:196) Thus closeness to 'home' or 'homeland' comes from the imaginings of the Asian Indians in America though they are separated by geographic space. As we have noticed in the work of Sunaina Maira (2002), this is expressed in the nostalgia for pure ethnic culture.

In understanding ethnic communities that are distantly located from their ethnic origin, Katherine Platt (1991) provides us with her anthropological analysis of Muslims in Kerkennah Islands of Tunisia. She resorts to a similar notion such as imagined communities by calling it 'symbolic geography' rooted in the 'soil of social memory'. According to her, "A community once unified by common residence in a geographical location is dispersed by the centrifuge of labor migration. Community still exists, but it is no longer defined by residence. And place is no longer just a location, a common dwelling; place becomes both a portable and necessary symbol of identity for those who leave and a valuable form of symbolic capital for those who stay." (Platt, 1991:106) In the context of analyzing their religion she also notes the importance of rituals for identity purposes, "The definition of community is dynamic in the sense that it recognizes varying degrees of attachment and attraction to the place of origin… On the continuum of commitment, by which people identify themselves as members of the community, the minimum yet a sufficient criterion is mutual participation in life cycle and annual Islamic rituals. This involves people in a vast network of delayed reciprocity, a system of mutual social and moral evaluation, and a commitment to at least one intersecting set of norms, all of which are symbolized by the place of origin." (Platt, 1991:107) Participation in rituals here is deemed to be of 'minimum yet a sufficient criterion' to be a part of the community.

Though Platt's analysis revolves around religion and the issue of place of origin, we can also see communities similarly defining themselves away from home and yet retaining it not only in terms of religion but also other cultural attributes that we have discussed earlier regarding Asian Indian immigrants in particular. The Muslim community in Kerkennah Islands of Tunisia, from Platt's description, seems less complex than the study of Asian Indian community in general. One of the first descriptors that come to our mind in visualizing the nation of India is 'diversity'. This very aspect makes it special that the notion of community and a collective ethnic identity can be exhibited amidst such cultural variation. This feature regarding Indian society has been acknowledged by Jean Bacon (1999), in her paper *Constructing Collective Ethnic Identities*:

> In the case of Asian Indians a peculiar twist in the construction of collective ethnic identities arises from some special characteristics of the Indian community. They are an unusually diverse group. India is home to fourteen major languages and hundreds of dialects. There are six major religions. Hinduism practiced by 80% of the population, is highly syncretic-a loose package of local traditions and Sanskritic texts and rituals. Social divisions exist between north and south Indians, and among castes and classes. Each so-called "community" (defined by the intersection of particular language, religious, caste and class characteristics) has its own culture-its own styles of worship, dress, diet, custom.
>
> Indian immigrants reflect much of this diversity. There is deep loyalty to these traditions. Thus, when the immigrant generation constructs a collective life here, the traditional elements of ethnicity do not become the central features of the collective ethnic identity that emerges. Instead some rather subtle aspects of Indian society, based in national history and the deep structure of social relations are what stand out as the defining features of collective immigrant ethnicity. Granted, the numerous local traditions are important in the activities of particular organizations, but for the community as a whole more subtle philosophical preoccupations and commonalities are paramount. (Bacon, 1999:150)

Thus the 'collective ethnic identity' that defines the Asian Indian community avoids narrow constructions of itself while at the same time keeping the local traditions intact. This is one of the reasons most of the places that harbor Asian Indian settlements find ethnic organizations that cater to these local traditions viz., Muslim associations, Gujarati associations, Hindu temples, Sikh Gurdwara's (place of worship for Sikhs') etc. along with pan Indian organizations representing 'India' or 'Indianness' as well. This dynamic of ethnicity operates at many levels – regional, local-religious, personal, as well as collective; and ethnic organizations as such play a vital role in providing a platform for the emergence of collective identity. To quote Jean Bacon (1999) on collective ethnic identity, "In the public realm, groups of people come together, (either purposively, as in the case of formal organizations, or serendipitously, as in the case if people participating together in a particular social space, say attending a parade, reading a newspaper, or entering an internet chat room) and in the process produce a collective ethnic identity. A collective ethnic identity is an identity of a different order, more than a mere collection of individual ethnic selves. It is the result of social interaction among a group of people, and resides in the public arena. It is supra-individual." (Bacon, 1999:141-142)

In the case of Asian Indian immigrants, as mentioned earlier, previous studies outlined certain cultural traits that are also practiced in a ritual fashion and these behaviors and activities provides a niche for this group. These rituals are manifested in the realms of religion (celebrating festivals, conducting *pooja)*, marriage and family (dating, match making for arranged marriages), dress and food practices, and culture and arts (music, dance and other entertainment programs) most prominently. Other than food practices (other than on festive occasions and a cook out or pot luck parties), all the other

areas of participation mentioned above are rituals involving organizations either formal or informal. Thus organizations sustain the interests of the embedded community by facilitating the ritualized symbolic practices.

Ethnic Organizations:

The *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Vol 31, No.5, 2005) allotted an entire issue to focus on the immigrant organizations, which provides us with a comprehensive outlook towards these organizations. Nonetheless, there is no reference to the associations formed by Asian Indian immigrants in the American context of race relations. Jose C. Moya (2005), in his article titled, *Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective*, outlines different types of organizations that immigrants tend to form and participate. Also, he tries to explore the impetus for these immigrant newcomers in having disposition to be a part of such a structural arrangement. Other authors addressing the same issue have explained the rise of immigrant associations by invoking pre-migratory cultural affinity as well as post-migratory political opportunities. The pre-migratory background such as ethnic and kinship affinities, sharing similar cultural values, as well as the primordial bonds they long for in the new land is a prime reason for the building of such organizational setup. On the other hand, post-migratory rationale was also provided citing the nature of the host society, especially United States and its democratic apparatus, which allows these immigrant groups to participate in civic institutions. Though Moya (2005) acknowledges the strength of both these explanations he states that the process of migration itself (neither 'pre' nor 'post' migratory elements) offers a good explanation. In his own words, "The principal stimulus for associational activity thus derived not from the cultural

backgrounds of the emigrants or the civic habits of their hosts but from a more universal source: the migration process itself. This process tends to intensify and sharpen collective identities based on national, ethnic or quasi-ethnic constructs. … Because host societies rarely received immigrants from only one source, the collective identities of arrivals were heightened not only by contrast to those of the native population but also by contrast to those of other newcomers. In so far as voluntary associations, by definition, depend on and articulate collective identities or interests, it is hardly surprising that migration stimulated their formation." (Moya, 2005:839)

Moya (2005) lists specific organizations that the immigrants develop and participate in viz. secret societies, rotating credit associations, mutual aid societies, religious associations, hometown associations, and political groups. He cites a lot of examples for these different associations, which are mostly made of European immigrants to North and South Americas. There are very few or almost no references to Indian American associations or immigrants within American context. Neither does Moya (2005) cover all the possible voluntary organizations that the immigrants can be part of. Though Indian American immigrants can be found participating in some of the types of associations that are mentioned above, there are studies that refer them being part of professional associations (which was not explicitly mentioned by Moya). Nonetheless, Moya does suggest that the type of organizations can also be influenced by factors such as "the size, the demographic and socio-economic complexity of the immigrant community.", and these are the factors that remain prominent in identifying professional associations. Pawan Dhingra (2003), whose work precedes Moya's, is one such researcher who studied the professional associations. In his study of Indian and

Korean American organizations in the Dallas area, Dhingra acknowledges that the demographic and socio-economic composition of the immigrant community along with the nature of the host society has a say in the type of organizations that they involve in.

In the study *The Second Generation in "BIG D": Korean American and Indian American Organizations in Dallas, Texas*, Dhingra (2003), examines the ethnic organizations developed by second generation Korean and Indian Americans in the Dallas / Fort Worth area, Texas. The focus is on ethnic organizations such as Korean American Professionals (KAP), Indian American Networking Association (IANA), and Korean American English Ministry Churches (EMs). KAP and IANA are secular organizations that have exclusive second generation participation; where as only 4 EMs are chosen for the study out of more than 130 EMs within Dallas alone. These 4 EMs are picked since they serve young professionals and are mostly headed by second generation Korean Americans. Another characteristic that is exclusive to the population involved in those ethnic organizations is their socio-economic status of belonging to upper middle class and upholding the 'model-minority' label that is popular among certain Asian American groups. Both these characteristics of belonging to second generation as well as upper middle class sets the tone for the way these organizations carry themselves as ethnic organizations with a professional composure.

Dhingra (2003) explains that, belonging to second generation integrates them more into American culture in terms of proficiency in English language, food habits, clothing style, knowledge of popular culture etc., yet they are seen as 'foreigners' in America. This feeling that they don't 'fit in' is what drives them towards associating with their co-ethnics. At the same time they want their organization to reflect the upper middle

class status. These ethnic organizations are used more as a platform for socializing and maintaining networks rather than displaying their ethnic culture (indulgence in ethnic culture is limited to very few formal ethnic celebrations). Thus this study is an interesting look at the ethnic organizations that are shaped by the class and professional priorities of the group rather than a cultural agenda.

Jean Bacon (1999) too, few years before Dhingra's study, has her research focused on the second generation immigrants from India. She talks about three different kind of organization structures available for the Asian Indian Community in Chicago and notices that the second generation Asian Indians are participating mostly through these organizations. In her words,

> The primary site for the construction of the collective ethnic identity of second generation Asian Indians are voluntary organizations and their electronic surrogates. Although most members of the second generation are not involved in formal organizations, my research in the Chicago community, and more recent contacts with second generation Asian Indians in college and in work force, suggest that most are drawn vicariously into the orbit of formal organizational life through their informal social networks. … Few members of the second generation remain so isolated that they are unaware of the collective, generational sense of ethnicity based in second generation formal organizations. (Bacon, 1999)

In her research Bacon's primary interest is in understanding the collective ethnic identity of second generation Asian Indians and therefore restricts the study to organizations that pertain to them. The three types of organizations that she came across in her fieldwork include, student associations on college campuses by Asian Indians (which are mostly secular but some time religious too), youth branches that were part of first generation organizations but later turned independent and pursued their own leadership and identity, and finally organizations that sprung up without any affiliations to first generation or any

other religious groups but solely for socializing purposes (and finding suitable marriage partners). These three second generation organizations are compared to the first generation organizations in terms of how they differ in the construction of ethnic identity. According to Bacon, the identity or the display of it, at least, is more or less the same and it is the definitions of being "Indian" that vary. For example, while the first generation immigrants upheld the value of cultural differences within Asian Indians through the idea of 'unity in diversity'; the second generation denounced that very aspect and projected themselves as pan-Indian (unity through transcending those distinctive barriers). Despite the intergenerational differences, this study provides us a valuable discussion about the role that organizations can play in the construction of ethnic identity, especially in the public realm.

In my current research I would like to broaden the scope by expanding the focus not only on formal organizations but informal ones too. The availability of both formal and informal organizational networks within an ethnic community can be crucial in the enactment of almost all the rituals that are present. For instance, in terms of religion, there are temples available as places of formal worship where every one can go to worship and on the other hand the religious activities can also be performed at home with the selected few family friends or an informal and familiar network group. The same can be said about marriages too; the spouses could be sought through a formal organization that maintains a database for prospective brides and grooms and, on the other hand, the same can be done through the informal networks by putting in a word with all their friends. In this sense organizations, both formal and informal, play the role of facilitators

of ritualized symbolic practices. The role these organizations play and the way they execute themselves could be one of the important sources to understand the rituals.

Rituals of ethnic significance and Structural Ritualization Theory:

Rituals make up the most essential and inherent part of social experiences in our day-to-day life. Any human society contains rituals and ritualized practices which are present in every walk of life. These practices are usually so deeply rooted in us that we most often oversee their significance; so much that they are ubiquitous yet invisible. Though the word ritual carries an immediate and literal meaning referring to ceremonial, religious, and sacred behaviors it encompasses a broader sense when employed by sociologists. Emile Durkheim is one of the earliest sociologists to employ this concept in understanding *the elementary forms of the religious life*. He claimed that the ritual practices demarcating 'sacred' from the 'profane' are not just instances that acknowledge the supernatural, but rather they denote the homage that society pays towards its own social structures. That is the power of rituals where they let someone transcend beyond their individual selves and helps them connect with a shared sense of belonging. This extraordinary quality of rituals, where the sense of belonging can be experienced collectively, can also be found in the ethnic groups when they enact their rituals of ethnic significance.

Following the same line of thought set by Durkheim, David Kertzer defines "ritual as symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive." (Kertzer, 1988:9) Similarly in outlining Structural Ritualization Theory, Knottnerus (1997) refers to ritual in the sense of "activities such as routinized interaction sequences and social behaviors that occur in all kinds of contexts including secular settings." (p. 259) Thus by

delineating the religious connotations attached to rituals these sociologists paved a way that is broad enough to include rituals that are of social significance.

Structural Ritualization Theory (Knottnerus 1997) provides a helpful framework to understand the dynamics of groups that are embedded in a larger society. The strong structures of integration those are present in these embedded groups leads to the behavior and activities that the members of these groups emulate and participate on a regular basis. These embedded groups due to the inner group dynamics as well as external social environment develop and maintain a ritual character that can be observed by looking at the 'ritualized symbolic practices' that their members involve in. 'Ritualized Symbolic Practice' is one of the key concepts in Structural Ritualization Theory. It is abstractly referred to be consisting 'action repertoire that is schema driven.' To elaborate on this concept, according to Knottnerus (1997), ritualized symbolic practice

> [R]efers to that ubiquitous form of social behavior in which people engage in regularized and repetitious actions which are grounded in actors' cognitive maps or, to use another phrase, symbolic frameworks. These practices are found throughout social life and can include routinized styles of interaction within offices or organizational milieus, prevalent types of relationships within subcultures, secret societies, or informal groups, typical behavior patterns within civic, religious, or political settings (both ceremonial and nonceremonial), and even stylized bodily movements such as dance repertoires. (Knottnerus, 1997:260-261)

The study of these ritualized practices through Structural Ritualization Theory is based on certain assumptions, which are outlined elsewhere by Knottnerus (2002a) in his

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study of 'deritualization'. Though the study focuses on the disruption of ritualized symbolic practices among the people that were coerced into concentration camps, internment camps, and prisoner-of-war camps, the basic premises of the Structural Ritualization Theory have been clearly outlined as follows:

a. human beings or agents need to engage in ritualized symbolic practices;

b. these standardized practices, grounded in actors' cognitive structures, express symbolic meanings or themes

c. ritualized activities play a vital role in providing a meaningful focus, order, stability, and sense of security to social behavior;

d. daily life is typically characterized by a structure or pattern of social and personal/private ritualized activities and relations;

e. ritualization and the organizing of social life through ritual enactments is universal;

f. deritualization and, more precisely, coercive disruptions of ritualized practices in the form of institutional deritualization have adverse consequences for people, and

g. the effects of these disruptions can be mitigated, if not eliminated, through the creation of new or reconstruction of old ritualized activities, i.e., rituals which buffer humans from and enable them to cope with and survive such events. (Knottnerus, 2002a)

Though the last two premises refer to the role of deritualization and its impact on the individuals who are experiencing such a breakdown of their social arrangements, broadly

speaking, all these premises do emphasize the normative role that these ritualized symbolic practices play in our everyday lives.

According to Structural Ritualization Theory these rituals are influenced by four factors: *salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources*. These four factors play a crucial role in the ritualization processes that generate actions, relations, and structures within the embedded group that are similar to those occurring in the larger milieu. According to the formal theory, *salience* refers to the extent to which a ritualized symbolic practice is considered central to an action sequence or ritual acts within a domain of interaction. *Repetitiveness* is in regards to the frequency with which a ritualized practice is carried on within a social setting. *Homologousness* refers to the degree of perceived similarity (in meaning and form) within a myriad of ritualized symbolic practices that they engage in. *Resources* are the materials needed to perform ritualized practice in a domain of interaction. One of the key arguments of the theory is that - the greater the salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and availability of resources, the greater the rank of relative standing of those ritualized practices. (Knottnerus, 2002a)

Structural Ritualization Theory has been fruitfully utilized in many studies such as slave society on a plantation (Knottnerus, 1999), informal student groups in a school (Knottnerus and Frederique Van de Poel-Knottnerus, 1999), problem-solving task groups within a formal organization (Sell, Jane, J. David Knottnerus, Christopher Ellison, and Heather Mundt, 2000), Spartan youth in an institutionalized training system (Knottnerus and Phyllis E. Berry, 2002), and elite class golfers of late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Varner and J. David Knottnerus, 2002). Being more specific to the arena of race

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and ethnicity we can find this kind of an embedded group character among different ethnic communities, especially Asian immigrants, who carry a very different cultural baggage as well as the undeniable physical semblance. In fact, Structural Ritualization Theory has been successfully utilized in studying issues of race and ethnicity. (Knottnerus 1999a, 1999b; Guan & Knottnerus 1999; Guan & Knottnerus 2003; LoConto & Knottnerus 2003; Knottnerus, Van Delinder, and Wolynetz 2002)

Structural Ritualization Theory helps in explaining various social processes and it has been productively utilized in many sociological studies as mentioned above. Here we will briefly look at and elaborate the contributions of this theory. In the paper *Spartan Society: Structural Ritualization in an Ancient Social System*, authors David J. knottnerus and Phyllis E. Berry (2002) examines the young males in Spartan society from 600 to 371 B.C. The militaristic needs of the Spartan society demanded a very strong and committed manpower to safeguard its political interests. For this reason they put forth a great effort into turning each and every young male citizen into a well-trained soldier. The state of Sparta developed a "rearing program" or a "training program" to socialize and produce adult warriors. This aspect of military, especially the group dynamics of young males that are undergoing the program is analyzed by using Structural Ritualization Theory. These young males are made to undergo certain ritualized practices involving not only military rigor but also those that imbibe them with elite qualities. These ritualized practices are viewed in terms of their salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources. The standardized program that was designed for the Spartan youth resulted in structurally isomorphic social relations among the peers. Thus these ritualized practices help develop and retain a cohesive element within the group.

Structural Ritualization Theory not only has the potential to revisit the ancient society of Sparta but also can look at the structures of hierarchy present in the slave plantation system of the antebellum south (Knottnerus 1999b). In this article, Structural Ritualization Theory has been utilized successfully to discuss the way social inequalities and status distinctions were perpetuated within a slave society. As an embedded group, slaves are highly stratified reflecting the structures of hierarchy that are present in all encompassing society that they live in. Status of one slave varied from another based on position they occupy within this embedded group. In some instances this hierarchy was clearly defined into six social levels ranging from different types of house servants and artisans to agricultural workers and finally common field slaves. These status positions are not only defined by the kind of work they do but also by the wealth of the owner, success of the owner, tenure of the slave (newly arrived slaves have lower status than the ones that have been working for a while) etc. These distinct statuses called for and are marked by distinct ritualized practices. These ritualized hierarchical status distinctions in turn affected their interaction behavior among themselves. Sometimes to an extent that even marriages were encouraged among the people from the same status range.

Another distinction that is obvious in this plantation system is the one between the master and the slave. The hierarchy is marked by power that the owner has over the slave and manifests at different levels viz. the commands that one has to obey, spatial distinctions (seating in the church, houses being apart etc.), selective participation in social events etc. The author, Knottnerus, argues that these structures of social inequalities reflect the similar structures that exist outside the slave society. The kind of distinctions maintained among the whites in terms of status categories such as slave

owners, non-slave owners, and differences based on wealth and prestige are reproduced in the slave society too. The identification of ritualized hierarchical status distinctions as well as practices that affirm those statuses, in terms of their salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources provides us an insight into the structural arrangement of this system, especially in understanding the social stratification of that slave society.

The theme of social stratification and the focus on social distinctions is once again studied employing Structural Ritualization Theory in a different context, this time in the study by Monica Varner and J. David Knottnerus regarding the game of golf (Varner and Knottnerus 2002). Their study looks at how civility is introduced into American golf during late 19th and early 20th centuries to define and mold it as an elite pastime. This study builds upon Norbert Elias's concept of "civilizing processes" by using Structural Ritualization Theory. Thus this study explores the rituals of civility that paved way for social and class distinctions. The research utilized secondary analysis of archival data referring to etiquettes, manners, rules, politeness, courtesy, etc. The rituals of civility were accounted for in terms of their 'repetitiveness' and 'homologousness'. The rituals of civility include both positive as well as negative restrictions, which serve as a guide to the elite golfers in terms of how to control or restrain themselves and their behavior. The underlying statement of these rituals of civility is to make the game less aggressive and thus demarcating it from lower class popular sports of the day. The replacement of etiquette and subtlety for aggressive, impulsive, brute force through these rituals of civility is the defining aspect of this sport as noble. The code of civility adopted by this sport is the same that is followed by the wealthy upper class people, thus making this sport an exclusive elite one.

From the distinctions of social classes established in the game of golf, Structural Ritualization Theory can also analyze ethnic boundaries and how they are maintained through certain ritual enactments (Knottnerus and Loconto 2003). The authors look at the use of power and strategic practices to create and uphold social rituals aimed at achieving certain desired ends within an ethnic community in Southeastern Oklahoma as discussed in their paper titled *Strategic Ritualization and Ethnicity: A Typology and Analysis of Ritual Enactments in an Italian American Community*. In this paper, Structural Ritualization Theory is used to elaborate different aspects of 'strategic ritualization' viz., ritual legitimators, ritual entrepreneurs, ritual sponsors, and ritual enforcers (of which only the first three were picked for the analysis). The first three types were recognized to be present in the community that has been studied. Over a period of time different actors who occupied these positions of legitimators, entrepreneurs, and sponsors shaped the ethnic community by upholding certain strategic ritualized symbolic practices.

One of the direct contributions this work offers to my research is the categorization of certain ritualized symbolic practices that are present in the Italian-American community. These categories include, "foods to eat, preparation of foods, dining/eating practices, games, sports, dances, traditional festival activities, interactional styles, beverages, greeting styles, religion, formal names and nick names, and work style for both men and women." These categories that are already identified here provide me with a list that I can use in identifying the ritualized symbolic practices in the Asian Indian community.

Another benefit that I draw from this research is their study of ethnic organization and the unique perspective that Structural Ritualization Theory has to offer in such

analysis. Since the authors look at the social power in ethnic community, their focus confined to prominent individuals who acted as legitimators, entrepreneurs, and sponsors within this community. On the other hand my focus tends to be broader as it includes members of the community that are part of ethnic organizations and not just the prominent ones.

In their paper *Rituals and Power: A Cross-Cultural Case Study of Nazi Germany, The Orange Order, and Native Americans,* authors David J. Knottnerus, Jean Van Delinder, and Jennifer Wolynetz (2002) look at the connections between social decision-making, power, and symbolic meanings within groups that have organizational capacity. Emphasis is placed on the rituals within such organizations and how they are utilized to achieve their goals. Cases from three different cultural settings are examined to illustrate the point. As suggested by the title these groups are Nazi Party in Germany, Orange Order in Northern Ireland, and Native Americans. While (Loconto & Knottnerus 2003) discussed three elements of 'strategic ritualization' (as mentioned above), this paper elaborates the fourth one which is, 'ritual enforcers'. Ritual enforcers are the "actors who utilize social power and/or a position of domination to determine the ritualized symbolic practices that are associated with a particular social unit." Another concept that is of importance developed in this paper is 'program of ritualized symbolic practices'. This program is "a collection of ritualized symbolic practices strategically used by a group or individuals (i.e., leaders) within the group to achieve certain objective(s)." this program is present and can be seen in the mass rallies of the Nazi Germany, Parade of the Orange Order, and Powwows of Native Americans. Though these three social groups differ in

their goals, organizational structure, and social, cultural, and historical background; all of them employed ritual program of their own to forward their agenda.

Within the contemporary context of United States, the issues of acculturation and marginalization are discussed among an ethnic group in a paper titled *A Structural Ritualization Analysis of the Process of Acculturation and Marginalization of Chinese Americans*. The authors (Guan and Knottnerus 1999) of this paper look at the intergenerational Chinese-Americans in terms of their acculturation and marginalization. The older Chinatown generation tends to display a 'unified ethnic character', where as the newer generation reveals a 'bi-ritual ethnic character'. These differences are more pronounced when the focus is directed to the ritual practices of these two generations. While the older generation sticks to their life in Chinatown where they interact and speak mostly in Chinese, follow traditional family roles, involve in family business etc., the newer generation because of their American education, proficiency in English, social mobility, and decentralized residential patterns are exposed and tend to reproduce the isomorphic as well as bi-ethnic cultural characteristics. Some of the factors authors suggest that were crucial in encouraging both acculturation as well as marginalization are ethnic prejudices, occupational choices, and the larger global system.

This very notion of 'bi-ritual' character discussed above has been extended further more in a study with regards to a similar Chinese-American community but in a different context. The same authors (Guan and Knottnerus 2003) in their paper *Spatial Threats to Philadelphia's Chinatown: Ritualization and Community Protest*, discuss how the 'bi-ritual' character of this particular ethnic community seem to be the facilitating factor in executing strategic ritualization. In this case of Chinese-Americans and their

resistance to a sports stadium that was proposed by the city of Philadelphia, halted the stadium project. Such a shift in the decision of town officials favoring the Chinese community is due to the strong front that they built against the city of Philadelphia. The protests manifested the solidarity of that community and the group dynamics among various organized groups as well as influential individuals within and outside the community. This is one of the works where structural ritualization theory explains and acknowledges the role of ethnic organizations and how they utilize ritualized symbolic practices to accomplish the task at hand. The authors further discuss how the ritualized practices have been borrowed from both Chinese as well as American realms in protesting the stadium. While the Chinese community provided cultural symbols, the Chinese with bi-ritual character (ABCs – American-Born Chinese) brought some American political notions of protest to the table. The way different Chinese organizations came together to put forth a strong united consensus and represent their community and grievances is a good example of ethnic organizations and their role in the promotion and protection of their niche. It is in this regard that this work opens avenues for future research among other ethnic minorities. Therefore, in my venture to look at the Asian Indian community, the ground work provided by this paper will be a definite encouragement in looking at the ethnic organizations. Of course, the context as well as the questions asked would be specific to the Asian Indian community being studied.

Research Statement:

Various aspects that have been reviewed so far across the literature present the spotlight on issues of ethnicity viz. ethnic community, ethnic organization and ethnic rituals (these rituals of ethnic significance are dealt in more detail in the next chapter).

Dealing with a highly complex phenomenon such as ethnicity, yet finding only these few elements standing out is a conscious choice of this study. The intention is to look at the social dynamics operating within this conjunction involving, ethnic community, ethnic organizations and ethnic rituals. We have looked at Asian Indian immigrants operating as a community, according to different studies. While such an embedded group is held intact maintaining its collective ethnic identity through engaging in ritualized symbolic practices, a certain disposition of these ethnic groups to form organizational structures (both formal and informal) promote and provide a base for reiterating such an identity. Thus the goal of this study is to look at the social dynamics of invoking, engaging, and even transforming any of these rituals of ethnic significance within an organizational setting. The literature has suggested the crucial role played by these ethnic organizations in coalescing the collective identity of the group and this study would look at the rituals that are promoted by the ethnic organizations and the meanings that the participating actors would attribute to the rituals of ethnic significance.

The literature review of Structural Ritualization Theory reveals how useful this theory is in studying groups that are embedded in an encompassing society across different social and historical contexts. Its potential is evident especially in understanding the ritual dynamics of ethnic communities. Among other things it contributes vocabulary that helps us articulate the research concerns of this study in terms of 'embedded groups', 'ritualized symbolic practices', their degrees of 'salience', 'repetitiveness', 'homologousness', and the available 'resources'. These concepts would be utilized directly while conducting the field work in terms of identifying various rituals and evaluating them in terms of the centrality they hold in reinforcing the Asian Indian ethnic

identity. Thus the stock of knowledge we gained from literature review would be employed in developing content categories, i.e. identifying the rituals of ethnic significance (detailed in next chapter). These content categories would be sought after in the site of study, i.e. in the organizational setting where people participate in the celebrations, as well as in understanding the meanings attached to these rituals by the actors.

Aforementioned interest in Asian Indian immigrants, community, ethnic identity and Structural Ritualization Theory culminate into a set of specific research questions and topics that this study would undertake. To outline more vividly, the key research questions are:

- What are the rituals of ethnic significance and the symbolic themes express by the Asian Indian community that contribute to their ethnic identity? (This leads to the question of their pivotal role in molding the ethnic identity.)

- What is the importance or rank of these ritualized symbolic practices? (i.e., what is the rank of these practices as determined by some or all of the 4 factors influencing rank such as repetitiveness, salience, homologousness, and resources?)

- What are the formal and/or informal organizations involving members of the community through which rituals of ethnic significance are facilitated? (In exploring this aspect important social features of these organizations will be discussed in terms of their nature, composition, influence within the community, etc.)

These research concerns, as outlined above, sprout from the existing literature and in turn are intended to contribute to it. This study is motivated as much by the existing literature on Asian Indian immigrants as there is lack so of it. There have been not more than couple of existing studies on Asian Indian community and their involvement in ethnic organizations. Most of the other studies on Asian Indian community did acknowledge the pivotal role that these organizations play in strengthening their collective identity, but only in passing references. This study not only tries to fill the void that is left by the lack of studies on ethnic organizations, especially of Asian Indian immigrants, but also tries to fan further academic interest in this area.

Just like this current study attempts to look at a small Asian Indian community in a large metropolitan area of South Central United States (as against the studies that usually limit their focus on coastal pockets as well as other thickly populated ones viz., New York, California, Chicago, Detroit, etc.), future research can broaden its scope by being inclusive of all the communities that are of varying size and composition. There could also be a comparative study between one of those densely situated communities and the ones that are not. Keeping the organizational focus in mind, future studies can be designed to assess the role of these ethnic organizations in the globalized era as to how they interact with and affect not only the host society but also the home society. The conclusion and findings of this very research would hopefully generate more specific questions for the future academic researchers.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The discussion on ethnic issues in previous chapters concerning Asian Indian immigrants includes abstract theoretical mappings, well-grounded studies, and historical detail, all of which might seem overwhelming or even hazy to an extent. It is the logistics of methodology, I believe, that rescues us from getting entangled within the several issues that crop up in our effort to understand the research problem. In this chapter, methodological issues pertaining to this research would be discussed as well as the details of how it will be executed.

Some of the rituals and cultural celebrations that Asian Indians practice are deeply rooted in the culture and heritage of India itself. The notion of ethnicity and sense of ethnic identity is largely sustained by the value or belief system as well as equally unique philosophical world view of these Asian Indian immigrants. (Helweg, 2004) Such 'schema-driven action repertoires', or what I call 'rituals of ethnic significance', are drawn from this traditional ideational realm and are enacted to reaffirm their roots. This complex structural arrangement of ideational as well as organizational ethnic elements is played out in their normal and sublime everyday life. It is these individuals, in the midst of this cultural web, who are constantly motivated by the structures while at the same time are negotiating with them and transforming them as they go.

Ethnography:

My methodology seeks to reveal these individuals' stories. The perceptions of their ethnic authenticity and how they are transformed into rituals in myriad settings (mostly organizational) is of primary interest. Above all a researchers' curiosity or to a

certain extent the wish to encounter and understand the unknown in the field is also a motivational factor for the choice of this methodology, which would be an ethnographic study. The methodological compatibility of ethnography to ethnic studies goes far beyond their superficially similar nomenclature; rather it denotes a shared interest in the "other" (ethnos). As David M. Fetterman (1998) describes ethnography in very simple terms:

> "Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture. The description may be of a small tribal group in an exotic island or a classroom in middle-class suburbia. The task is much like the one taken on by an investigative reporter, who interviews relevant people, reviews records, weighs the credibility of one person's opinion against another's, looks for ties to special interests and organizations, and writes the story for a concerned public and for professional colleagues. A key difference between the investigative reporter and the ethnographer, however, is that whereas the journalist seeks out the unusual-the murder, the plane crash, or the bank robbery-the ethnographer writes about the routine, daily lives of people. The more predictable patterns of human thought and behavior are the focus of inquiry." (Fetterman, 1998:1)

It is the importance given to the narratives of the people and their culture that is under scrutiny, which makes this methodological approach more appropriate.

The sociological commitment to hermeneutics encourages understanding the meanings that are inherent in our everyday social relationships and interactions. Ethnography as a research methodology is of great value, especially when we are looking for construction and sustenance of identity in social life. In her paper about construction of identity among *Asatru* (practitioners of an earth-centered religion), Jenny Blain explains that, "The goal of research within interpretive and hermeneutic perspectives…..has been not simply explanation but also understanding of meanings and how those form part of an individual's apparatus of perception of the social world. Recently, followers of social constructionist and narrative approaches, drawing on

discourse theory, have begun to speak of competing discourses to understand not only individuals' construction of meaning but also the social nature of self-perception and self-construction and how these in turn form part of the constitution of social relations within today's multicultural, multiethnic, and multifaith societies." (Blain, 1998:224) This aspect of interpretive research gives us a promise of better understanding when it comes to the issues of identity. It also has the potential to be a very good tool in studying marginal and smaller groups in a multicultural and multiethnic society like United States.

The social-psychological aspect of Structural Ritualization Theory provides us with explanations regarding such constructions of identity. According to the theory, individuals in their everyday life involve in 'action repertoires that are schema driven' and it is the meanings they attach to these ritualized symbolic practices that reflect and perpetuate the social reality around them. These ritualized symbolic practices are grounded in cognitive structures which are specific to domains of interaction. It is in such domains of interaction that the self as well as collective identities are developed through shared cognitive structures. In a domain of interaction such as an Asian Indian community, the cognitive structures are drawn from a value system that provides a certain cultural framework. Thus this study is a glimpse into a domain where there is an ongoing effort to construct and reconstruct meanings to define and mark their ethnic identity.

This hermeneutic emphasis through documentation of such stories from the field does not discredit this methodology to be lacking a social scientific perspective. I briefly would like to address issues such as these, pertaining to ethnography as a methodology, not only to justify employing this method to further this research but also to evaluate its

felicity. The methodological issue of whether qualitative research, such as ethnography, is scientific or not has long been one of the troubling aspects within social science discourse. Though it is not argued anymore with as much rigor as it once used to, it is partly due to the eventual acceptance of such emic approaches to be a valid way of conducting reputable research. But this 'qualitative-quantitative divide', as Martyn Hammersley (1992) points out, tends to put both of them on the far ends of the methodological spectrum and he argues that it is a trap to follow up on such faulty placements. The gap between this divide is evident in the dichotomies that these terms invoke viz., one being the investigation of natural setting where as the other being that of artificial; one being an inductive versus other a deductive approach; one focus on meaning versus other focus on behavior; one identifying cultural patterns versus other seeking scientific laws; and one indulging in idealism versus other hands full with realism. (Hammersley, 1992:159-173) Rather than placing these two methodological paradigms far apart in separate boxes, Hammersley asks us to view them as answers to the decisions a researcher has to make on his / her journey of making sense of social reality. Metaphorically speaking about the 'divide', Hammersley says, "What all this implies is that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches does not capture the full range of options that we face; and it misrepresents the basis on which decisions should be made. What is involved is not a cross-roads where we have to go left or right. A better analogy is a complex maze where we are repeatedly faced with decisions, and where paths wind back on one another. The prevalence of the distinction between qualitative and quantitative method tends to obscure the complexity of the

problems that face us and threaten to render our decisions less effective than they might otherwise be." (Hammersley, 1992:172)

Ethnography involves the right blend of representations from the field and the objective analysis of the researcher. According to Fetterman (1998), "The ethnographer's task is not only to collect information from emic or insider's perspective but also to make sense of all the data from an etic or external social scientific perspective." (Fetterman, 1998:11) For a researcher who is living and working in another culture provides him / her an opportunity to objectify the behaviors and beliefs not only of the foreign land but also, interestingly, helps objectify ones own group. In my research, the researcher being an Asian Indian himself, the American culture is objectively evaluated and easily recognized as different from that of the Asian Indian culture. On the other hand, though there is an effortless empathy towards the Asian Indian community that is being studied, the encompassing context in which they are located in (United States society) objectifies the subject thus providing a buffer between the researcher and the community. Instead of being apologetic about sharing the same cultural background as the subject that is being observed, I believe the very aspect provides an advantage to this study. Since our intentions are to understand the ritual dynamics within ethnic organizations in terms of the identity it provides to the community, a researcher who is already familiar with the cultural syntax (which is distinct from the encompassing mainstream society) would bridge the gap in getting closer to the 'meaning'. This is not to state that this unique opportunity elevates the researcher to a know-it-all status; rather it just helps the research by conserving time and effort that one would have had to utilize due to the lack of such cultural acquaintance.

When we look at the very topic of this research, studying Asian Indian ethnicity, one can notice how subjective the topic itself is. Of all the ethnic groups why would I choose Asian Indians? If I were just interested in the dynamics of ethnic organizations and ritualized symbolic practices, there are ethnic communities other than Asian Indian that I could have chosen to investigate. But it is this subjective experience of the researcher, his / her own choice among many other research options, a certain experience of dislocation (in my case, moving from India to the United States), a certain intrigue regarding the people who feel similarly displaced (or do they!), a certain sociological impetus, certain conversations with colleagues and academicians which culminates into a very personal story behind the social science research.

Defining the field and sample:

Although this methodology leans towards studying groups that are close knit such as kinship ties, village caste system, networks that connect elites together, etc., it also helps us in applying the ethnographic method to the study of ethnic groups. The scope of ethnography as a method can be seen in the myriad themes that can be studied by using it. Fetterman (1998) spells out few of those for us; he says, "A typical ethnography describes the history of the group, the geography of the location, kinship patterns, symbols, politics, economic systems, educational or socialization systems, and the degree of contact between the target culture and the mainstream culture" (Fetterman, 1998:12). Most of the aspects outlined here by Fetterman will be brought to the lime light in this research. Especially since this research is about an ethnic group and its organization within a certain geographical area, an effort will be made to understand the history of this group and its organizations, geography of the location, symbols being used, economics

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and educational systems pertaining to this community. Also the aspects of 'contact between the target culture and the mainstream culture' will be addressed. Though the focus is not on the 'degree of contact', it sure does try to look at the ritual dynamics of an ethnic group that is embedded in a host society and the possible transmission of cultural values or symbols from one to another.

The subject being pursued is a certain Asian Indian community in a large metropolitan area in the south central United States. This city is not renowned for harboring a huge Asian population in general or Asian Indian population in particular, unlike many other metropolitan areas in the United States. Based on the 2005 American Community Survey, this city hosts a total population of 515,751. Among these Asians account for 22,122 (4.3%) and Asian Indians are as few as 2,918 (0.565%). These meager numbers in the city are also consistent with the Asian Indian population of that particular state in which the city is located. The Asian Indian population of the state makes up only 0.246% of the total population, which is 8,502 out of a total population of 3,450,654. (www.census.gov)[12] To put these numbers in a perspective, the total Asian Indian population of the state (8,502) is almost three times less than the total Asian Indian population of just the City of Los Angeles (24,739). With such a sparse habitation, the city doesn't share any of the typical characteristics that other cities (of heavy ethnic populations) bear such as having ethnic enclaves or even an ethnic business district. Rather the households and businesses are rather randomly dispersed across the city. These numbers, however low they might seem when compared to the heavily populated ethnic cities, still seem to be compelling enough to have an organizational structure and

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[12] Refer to Appendix for more demographic information on this City.

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celebrate their ethnicity. There are quite a few organizations in this area that cater to the members of Asian Indian community.

Within this urban area, one ethnic organization has been identified which has a considerable membership. It is a pan-Indian secular organization, mostly catering to the cultural needs of the community. Two more organizations are not pan-Indian but affiliated with a particular Indian state or religion. Though sometimes these organizations work together, none of three acts as an umbrella organization. The study is not confined to these three organizations. More organizations and their members may join the list of potential subjects that I would contact as a part of snowball process of data collection. Before talking about the method of data collection I would like to establish that the subjects include the members or actors who are involved in these organizations and are familiar with its activities. This, of course, leaves out a lot of Asian Indians who are not part of any organization, but since our focus is on the ritual dynamics in the realm of ethnic organizations that is where we need to draw our field boundary in terms of choosing subjects.

The sample of people that would be chosen to talk to is decided by a random snow ball method. Since the information will be gathered from the members of these ethnic organizations, respondents will be contacted from the information available through organizational directories. One of the organizations mentioned earlier publishes a directory of members with their names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses when available. Though this directory provides me with a list of people who could be interviewed (we will discuss techniques of data collection in the next section), the chances of further meeting more members of this organization as well as of other

organizations is based on the snow ball method. Respondents are sought from different sources viz., at a cultural event sponsored by an organization, or based on a reference provided by my earlier interviewee or a member of the organization. Thus approaching a subject or gaining an interview is fluid in this ethnographic study and depends on their consent to be interviewed, clash of time schedules, or unavailability of appropriate appointments etc. Proper approval to contact these members of the organization will be sought from the office bearers or through writing letters or emails or making phone calls whenever I find them through the snowball process. Any data that is collected could be overwhelming in terms of time spent; therefore a limit is set for 20 to 25 interviews as a requirement to be able to discuss and analyze the results of my observation. These lower and upper limits are flexible since my prime goal is to obtain as much description and information possible to make logical conclusions.

Techniques of data collection:

The field work would involve participant observation along with interviewing people who are part of the community that is being studied. Field notes are another important way to collect data. These are the observations that are documented by the researcher on the field. According to Agar (1980), "Field notes are the record of an ethnographer's observations, conversations, interpretations, and suggestions for future information to be gathered. They are so central traditionally that often anthropologists refer to analysis and publication as "writing up your notes" " (Agar, 1980:112). It is a researcher's burden to jot down as much information as he can from the setting he is observing. There can never be a complete way of documenting everything, especially in fleeting situations such as cultural events. There are two components to field work,

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explains Agar, "First, some ideas from observation to follow up with the interviews, or some observations,/questions to follow up that came from interviews; second, some thing you've noticed that you want to be sure to get to eventually. Field notes, then, are *working* notes." (Agar, 1980:113) This way field notes provide the researcher with feed back that he / she can incorporate into the interview questions if deemed relevant or serves as a reminder to focus on something that the researcher has been missing all along.

Participant observation, in this case, would be selective and would be scheduled according to the events that are being organized in the community. The data in this research study qualifies to be all the rituals of ethnic significance as they are observed and will consist of the oral history, experiences, accounts, and information about the events that display those rituals as well as organizations that encourage and even sponsor them. The sources for data primarily are the actors who will be interviewed as well as the researcher who make notes and describe those events. Thus the researchers' role is more of an observer documenting the setting, while the primary information will be provided by the members who are involved in these organizations. This should not undermine the descriptors documented by the researcher since the cultural milieus in which these rituals of ethnic significance are enacted are pivotal to understanding the role of rituals. There could be an object or a symbol that exudes a certain meaning that has a great significance and meaning for the ethnic identity. Therefore, the primary techniques of data collection that will be used are interviews as well as taking field notes through participant observation.

On a secondary level but equally important could be audio-visual documentation if and when necessary. The video documentation (especially photographs) will be

collected whenever there is an event that demands the use of such documentation. Other than the interviews that are being tape-recorded, audio taping of any events that need to be documented that way will be procured as well. Also data collection techniques such as retrieving archival data will be employed. For example, any literary sources like pamphlets or mission statements (if at all they exist) that provides this study with historical or additional useful data would be collected.

Interviews are 'the core of ethnographic fieldwork', according to Michael H. Agar (1980). He elaborates that "most ethnographers use a blend of interview and observation, and many would agree with…..but others would emphasize the data of direct observation as an end in itself." (Agar, 1980:110-111) The questions for the interviews are developed based on the categories of ethnic significance we came across from the literature review. Also questions related to organizational involvement/participation, attachment, ethnic relevance, and history will be asked (we will discuss the development of categories for interview questions in the following sections). The interviews will be in-depth and the questions are in semi-structured format leaving ample space to probe for further queries and details. Here is the list of questions that will be asked as a part of interview:

1. Name (Optional):
2. Sex:
3. Age:
4. Marital status:
5. Religion:
6. Region:
7. Mother tongue:
8. Language spoken at home:
9. Occupation:
10. Duration of stay in USA:
11. How often do you visit India?
12. Who does your social circle consists of mostly? (Indians or Americans)
13. How often do you hang out / socialize with other fellow Indians? Or attend / hold social gatherings with compatriots?

14. What organization are you involved with? (Could be more than one)
15. How long have you been a part of that organization(s)?
16. How often do you attend organizational meetings or functions or events?
17. What are certain practices that make you identify as Indian? (trying to generate content categories from the field)
18. What does your everyday diet mostly consists of? (Probe for vegetarian, non-veg, Indian, American etc.)
19. How important is ethnic food to your diet?
20. How often do you eat ethnic food?
21. What kind of food do the organizational events provide? (Probe for the importance of ethnic food)
22. What kind of clothing do you wear? (Probe for casual clothing, formal clothing, to work, clothing preference if it is different from what they wear, level of comfort with ethnic clothing while outdoors)
23. How often do you wear ethnic clothing?
24. What kind of sports / games do you like? (American or Indian e.g. Cricket instead of basketball, football etc.)
25. Are there any avenues to play Indian games? If so, how often?
26. What kind of movies do you watch? (Hollywood or Bollywood)
27. Are any Indian movies screened for the community (by the organization, if provided any)?
28. What kind of music do you listen to? (Indian or American or both)
29. What are the sources for popular culture? (viz. organizations, stores, internet etc.)
30. How often do you participate in public events related to popular culture? (viz. concerts, movie screenings, talent nights etc.)
31. How important are the festivals to you? Do you celebrate?
32. How important is your religious identity?
33. What are some avenues for religious / spiritual participation?
34. How often do you go to a public place of worship?
35. How important is your regional identity to you? How much does the organization represent this local / regional identity?
36. For you, what does being an Indian mean? What constitutes Indianness?
37. How would you evaluate the organization and its contributions to the Asian Indian community?

Developing Content Categories for interviews and fieldwork:

The field work notes from participant observation will provide us with details that are intrinsic to the cultural setting. Since our focus is narrowed down to observing the rituals of ethnic significance within the ethnic organizational context, the field notes would help capture the symbols that display the ethnic identity of the community. In our

search for these symbols/themes amidst the content of the cultural setting, it is useful to identify certain markers or categories that signify the ethnic character of a ritual or symbols that are part of such rituals. For, it is these symbolic themes or meanings that are expressed through rituals of ethnic significance which create and perpetuate the ethnic identity. Employing such categories not only serves as a blueprint that provides us with a clear vision as to what and where to look for but they also allow us to relate this research to the existing literature on Asian Indian ethnicity and ethnic identity in general.

It is essential to ground our research, or any other research for that matter, in the existing literature so we can build upon preexisting ideas. In this current research, we would like to develop and identify the content categories of ethnic significance based on certain studies that we have already discussed earlier. Regarding ethnicity in general, especially Italian-American in this instance, Knottnerus and LoConto (2003) identify certain categories that tend to manifest in a certain Italian-American community. These categories include, "foods to eat, preparation of foods, dining/eating practices, games, sports, dances, traditional festival activities, interactional styles, beverages, greeting styles, religion, formal names and nick names, and work style for both men and women." In the context of Asian Indians' ethnic identity, Michael Angelo (1997) identifies seven cultural elements to evaluate the rate and extent of acculturation in a Sikh community in New York. According to him, these cultural elements include, "dating and marriage, family and kinship obligations, social and dietary habits, women's roles, religious participation, communal and social relations, and the celebration of holidays and festivals." Similarly Karen Isaksen Leonard (1997) too, though the focus is not on the issue of assimilation, outlines the cultural traditions and the way they are articulated over

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generations in order to define and redefine their identities. According to her, music, dance, poetry, food, fashion, yoga, fine arts, entertainment, literature, as well as family arrangements play a crucial role in the formation of an ethnic or even a biethnic community.

There are certain cultural elements that recur in different studies (viz. food preferences, marriage and family arrangements, popular culture etc.), which reiterate the importance of those rituals in maintaining the ethnic identity of the community. Sunaina Maira (2002) also talks specifically about "rituals of popular culture". Though she is referring to the Indian American youth culture in New York City, where the second generation youth participate in the clubbing scene and the remixed dance floors, we can also infer that there are other popular cultural items that are part of the Asian Indian community (especially the movies, music, and dance, which takes up the limelight in organizational programs and celebrations). Maira (2002) also refers to the "ritual of going back", which hasn't been mentioned anywhere else so lucidly. The ritual of going back is the journey that some second generation Asian Indians take to their homeland, i.e. to India, to help them discover their roots. According to her this rite of going back not only provides them with cultural authenticity but also a sense of cutting the bridge short and unifying their fragmented lives.

All these categories/markers of ethnicity helps this research stay focused on gaining a better understanding of the ethnic identity of the community being studied. The above mentioned list of items based on different studies provides us with the content categories that would be put to use through different methodological techniques (which includes interviews, participant observation, audio-visual documentation, and archival

data). Though these content categories are drawn from the existing literature this research does not intend to limit itself to those categories. The scope for observation is left flexible since one of the purposes of this ethnographic method is to discover the unknown or to reveal certain elements that have been ignored previously. The resultant experiences and ideas would be analyzed thoroughly in terms of relevant theoretical frameworks. This study proceeds by incorporating ideas that were provided by the literature review; but it is also a continuing process where the issues unfold as they are articulated by the community members. Thus we hope to throw new light on the issues as they come up in this research and further add to the existing research on Asian Indian community in the United States. While this study draws upon the existing stock of literature, we hope to generate knowledge and questions that would serve as building blocks for future research.

Evaluating the Credibility of this Research:

Sociological research, be it qualitative or quantitative, should undergo scrutiny in order to maintain and prove its good standing. There are certain criteria that the academic community employs to judge the standard of research. There are varying scholarly opinions about what kind of criteria to be used, if at all it is necessary, to evaluate qualitative and quantitative research. As Hammersley (1992) provides us with a gist of these opinions, firstly there are scholars who argue for judging both qualitative and quantitative research based on the same criteria; secondly there are majority of researchers from the interpretive tradition that would hold qualitative research to be an alternative paradigm and needs to be evaluated with criteria befitting its nature; and

finally there are few that view qualitative paradigm by its very nature incompatible with the process of evaluation.

The first group of scholars, mentioned above, advocates a common/universal criteria based on the positivist agenda where all social science research, whether it is qualitative or quantitative, ought to be treated as scientific study. On the other hand there are a group of scholars that reject all criteria in evaluating qualitative studies. They hold the notion that such an exercise is positivistic by nature and only promotes and validates one "truth", where as qualitative research involves description and interpretation of 'multiple realities'. For this current study, the evaluative criteria suggested by the second group of scholars would be employed. Therefore criteria that are unique for the evaluation of interpretive tradition and the ones that are developed by scholars subscribing to this paradigm will be discussed here. (Hammersley, 1992:57-67)

Before we delve into the evaluation criteria for qualitative research let us visit the quantitative camp to understand their requirements and see why they are not appropriate to appraise the former. According to Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (1994), "Conventional positivist social science applies four criteria to disciplined inquiry: *internal validity,* the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question; *external validity*, the degree to which findings can be generalized to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred; *reliability*, the extent to which findings can be replicated, or reproduced, by another inquirer; and *objectivity*, the extent to which findings are free from bias" (p.100). While the positivist tradition holds these criteria as a benchmark the interpretive paradigm questions each one of these in their ability to evaluate the knowledge generated. All the four criteria mentioned above are contested by

Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln (1994) as they expose the quicksand on which the positivist assumptions lie. According to them, "isomorphism of findings with reality can have no meaning, strict generalizability to a parent population is impossible, stability cannot be assessed for inquiry into a phenomenon if the phenomenon itself can change, and objectivity cannot be achieved because there is nothing from which one can be "distant" (p.114). Thus, the knowledge generated by the positivist tradition passes to be credible in the face of these incongruities listed above. Within the quantitative research, sometimes it is the acceptable margin of error (levels of confidence) in terms of statistical flexibility that comes to the rescue of this paradigm in spite of its turning a blind eye to the oddities in their study.

In lieu of the quantitative criteria Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggests an alternative sets of criteria that would compensate for the inadequacies of the positivist paradigm. According to them, "Two sets of criteria have been proposed: the *trustworthiness* criteria of credibility (paralleling internal validity), transferability (paralleling external validity), dependability (paralleling reliability), and confirmability (paralleling objectivity); and the *authenticity* criteria of fairness, ontological authenticity (enlarges personal constructions), educative authenticity (leads to improved understanding of constructions of others), catalytic authenticity (stimulates to action), and tactical authenticity (empowers action)" (p.114). Through these criteria the interpretive paradigm not only covers the evaluation concerns that the positivist paradigm had but also developed additional ones to account to the personal involvement of the researcher in the field.

These criteria for qualitative paradigm have also been further codified by Martyn Hammersley (1992) in his definitive book, *What's Wrong With Ethnography?* He

outlines three different contributions to the list of criteria for evaluating qualitative research. He condenses the ideas from all those three groups of scholars and provides us a broad list based on which the research should be judged. These criteria include:

1. the degree to which generic/formal theory is produced;

2. the degree of development of the theory;

3. the novelty of the claims made;

4. the consistency of the claims with empirical observations, and the inclusion of representative examples of the latter in the report;

5. the credibility of the account to readers and/or to those studied;

6. the extent to which the findings are transferable to other settings;

7. the reflexivity of the account: the degree to which the effects of the findings of the researcher and of the research strategies employed are assessed and/or the amount of information about the research process that is provided to readers. (Hammersley, 1992:64)

Examining this current study in the light of these criteria would help us in self-evaluation. The first three criteria can be used to assess the research groundwork even before entering the fieldwork.

The criteria of evaluation such as 'the degree to which generic/formal theory is produced', 'the degree of development of the theory', and 'the novelty of the claims made', can be used to test how much of the current study is grounded in theory and how much of it is contributing something new to the discipline. This study follows the tradition of race and ethnic studies. Generally speaking, this research about the Asian Indian immigrants, their organizational and ritual dynamics has evolved out of the

already existing research. The themes that were compelling as well as the ones that were downplayed or even neglected provide us with the driving questions behind this study. The increasing number of Asian Indians among the American population is inversely proportional to the academic output from the sociologists that are studying the same theme. While the few existing studies document and discuss the immigrant life of the Asian Indians, the attempt here is to make up for the dimensions that were lacking in those previous studies. While the existing literature on Asian Indians focus on the densely populated communities such as New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles, Detroit, etc., this study picks up a community that is smaller than those. This would provide an opportunity to look at the way a smaller community would conduct itself in terms of available organizational structures. Looking specifically at the ethnic organizations is another aspect that is 'novel' to this study, especially while zooming in on the rituals of ethnic significance.

Other than the general theories from the field of race and ethnic studies, the current research employs the formal theory – Structural Ritualization Theory. The concepts from Structural Ritualization Theory help us articulate with ease the complexities of social reality that are being studied. The notions such as 'embedded group', 'ritualized symbolic practices', and the four components in determining the centrality of the rituals (viz. Salience, Repetitiveness, homologousness, and Resources) directly contribute to understanding this community and in accomplishing the research goals.

The rest of the criteria on the list (numbers 4 – 7) need to be evaluated once the data collection and final analysis of the research are concluded. Though complete

evaluation of the study based on these criteria cannot be made without the necessary information, these criteria are still crucial in providing a strong theoretical and methodological foundation. In the conception stages of the research itself, if we keep these criteria in mind it would help a lot in terms of drawing the exact boundaries of sample population, in drafting relevant questions and themes to be sought once we enter the field, and in trying to foresee the problems that might come up while executing the study.

The credibility of the research does not just lie in the epistemological and ontological rigor of the topic, there is a certain baggage brought in by the researcher himself/herself. As mentioned earlier in these chapters there are certain biases that are inherent to the study. The very topic on Asian Indian immigrants in the United States came from the researchers' interest in that particular ethnic group. Not only sharing a similar ethnic background with the subject of study but also similar experience of being displaced is one of the motivational factors among many. Arriving in America from India and witnessing a certain extra intensity in celebrating ones ethnicity is as trivial as anything else that a student of sociology can find interesting. It is that training in the sociological imagination (Mills, 1967) along with the proximity and exposure to the Asian Indian community which culminated in the conception of this research project. Such a cultural affinity would definitely bring biases especially while dealing with the people in terms of pre-judging their values based on their religion, region, caste, gender, etc. These are the challenges that any social science researcher has to face while dealing with the human subjects; and in an ethnographic research as this, it is a fine line that the researcher has to tread while battling one's own biases from behind the shield of

methodology and at the same time bare oneself to connect with the community. Thus it is with the sociological accoutrement and a certain cultural capital that this research would convert all its biases into an added advantage.

Use of Pseudonyms in this Research:

Before I continue with my discussions on the 'field of study' (chapter V) and my 'research findings' (chapter VI), I would like to explain the way pseudonyms have been employed in those upcoming chapters. Pseudonyms have been used to mask the original names of the people participated in this study, their geographical locales (street names, towns, metropolitan areas, and states), ethnic organizations that are local to these geographical locales, and institutions (educational, business, etc.) that the subjects can be associated with.

Respondents are usually referred to by a number (e.g. 'Respondent1', 'Respondent2', etc.) followed by the details of their gender (male or female) and their age. Geographical locales pertaining to the subjects as well as those that came up in our conversations are masked using pseudonyms. For instance, the city in which the study is being conducted is referred to as 'Springfield', which is a name that can be found in many states of United States. Similarly, any other reference to towns and cities mentioned by the respondents are given pseudonyms such as 'Detroit', 'Nashville', 'Seattle', etc., which are randomly drawn from across the United States. More specific references to the street names in Springfield are masked with generic pseudonyms such as 'Main Street' and names such as 'Bombay Road' or 'Paradise Road' drawn from the Indian context.

The state names are also concealed with pseudonyms. The state in which this study is being done (where 'our' Springfield is located) is referred to as 'South State' and one more passing reference to a neighboring state is labeled as 'East State.' To maintain the anonymity of ethnic organizations, each organization is referred to using three uppercase alphabets, with the first two letters being standard (AA) and the third letter carries on the alphabetic order. Example, AAA, AAB, AAC, AAD, AAE, so on and so forth. Other institutions in and around Springfield, such as educational and business institutions, are provided with pseudonyms using three uppercase alphabets starting with 'S' followed by two random alphabets after that (viz., SCA, SDF, SPG, etc.)

Understanding these pseudonyms will help readers navigate through references involving various ethnic organizations, institutions, towns, and even states.

CHAPTER V

GLIMPSE OF THE FIELD

The city of Springfield is predominantly a white town, in terms of its racial profile.[13] Asian Indians are almost an invisible ethnic group in a vast city as this.[14] Such meager numbers along with their dispersed residential pattern makes them appear even more microscopic. In such a context, it is interesting to note that it is various ethnic organizational and institutional structures that keep this Asian Indian community in limelight. While looking at the ethnic organizations and trying to contextualize them in a city such as Springfield, one cannot escape from realizing the ubiquity of modernity. In a city where Asian Indians are mostly invisible at a personal level, where rarely some one would encounter one such person, it is only through organizational structures that they come alive and are represented as a group. No doubt, it is a hallmark of modernity where people are more active and socially visible through organizational structures.

These organizational structures includes temple, mosque, gurudwara and church (that are specific to particular groups within Indian community), Indian grocery stores, Indian restaurants, beauty salons, jewelry and clothing stores, yoga and meditation centers, school for classical Indian dance and music, movie theatres where Indian movies

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[13] The city is predominantly white by the looks, as most of the people you encounter are Caucasian; and it is not just the looks but the statistics substantiates this fact since 66.9% of the population of this city constitutes whites.

[14] Whites (66.9%) are followed by Blacks or African Americans (14.7%) and then Hispanics or Latinos (12.9%) as next two largest ethnic groups in the city; where as Asians in general make up 4.3% of the total population and Asian Indians in particular accounts to approximately 0.60%

are screened, and more specifically the ethnic organizations that promote and sponsor most of the cultural events in the community. All the above mentioned institutions provide a public space for Asian Indians not only to participate and indulge in their own ethnic necessities but they also serve as a window for others in showcasing their culture. Almost all the available institutional structures mentioned above enjoy patronage from both Asian Indian as well as other ethnic groups (though most of the patrons are Asian Indians, there are also Americans and other ethnic groups participating in these avenues). As an ethnographer, while participating and observing various cultural and social events, I realized the presence of Caucasians and Chinese Americans in few of those events though their presence is very small in number. For instance, during the Diwali celebrations there were a few Caucasian as well as Chinese Americans present. I have also noticed Caucasians at the Hindu temple and another time at an Indian classical dance performance. Other than at the events promoted and sponsored by ethnic organizations, a considerable number of various ethnic and racial groups can be seen often in Indian restaurants, grocery and other stores. Thus, ethnic organizations provide a channel for promoting an awareness of their own culture to the locals. This notion has been reiterated by some of the respondents in their interviews as they have pointed out that ethnic organizations build bridges across communities and cultures.

Search for Asian Indian Community:

My journey as a researcher into the community has been a relatively easy one. Most of my initial visits to Springfield were in order to grasp the general geography of

the locale and specifically to assess the breadth of the Asian Indian community. It took me more that a couple of trips to get a sense of the city, its Asians Indian population, and to realize that there is a lack of such community in geographical terms. There is no ethnic enclave or a business district area as such that would give a more pronounced sense of a visible community. Nonetheless the ethnic businesses are quite vibrant, even though they are spread out unlike a business district. I have noticed that Indian grocery stores and restaurants are always busy, at least whenever I visited them. Also, these places of Asian Indian business (either restaurants or grocery stores) do more than just business; they provide a place to advertise for local ethnic organizations and other ethnic businesses as well. It is on one such trip to Springfield, I made a stop at an Indian restaurant to talk to the owners of the business, if they would have any idea of local Asian Indian ethnic organizations. Manager of this Indian restaurant, Respondent3 (male, 65yrs) (whom I had the pleasure of interviewing later as a part of this research), heard my research ideas and pointed me to the advertisement board. There is a flyer on that bulletin board talking about Diwali celebrations being organized by AAA Association. This is how I first became aware of an Asian Indian ethnic organization from an advertisement board. I made it a point to attend that event, as advertised, and that was my first experience being part of an event organized by an ethnic organization in the city of Springfield. Observing the event and the members involved that night (both audiences as well as performers) help me further develop this project. The air of excitement, celebration, colorful dresses, aroma of the food, decorations of the venue, socializing before and after the event,

audiences being drawn into the performances, and celebrating ones own ethnicity has provided an entirely unique atmosphere that I would be witnessing few more times acutely while being an ethnographer.[15] Since the day I got acquainted with my first ethnic organization, I have learnt that there are nine such Asian Indian ethnic organizations in this area (these nine ethnic organizations does not include ethnic businesses, ethnic art schools - AAJ, etc. which are equally important as institutional structures and ethnic resources for this community), which cater to cultural, religious, social, and professional needs of the community (details of these organizations are discussed in the next section of this chapter).[16] Whatever information and knowledge I acquired about ethnic organizations in this area, I owe it to the people who were willing to talk to me and be interviewed. I would like this research to present their story on ethnic organizations, ethnicity, and the rituals that help them keep it alive.

The presence of these organizational structures prompts us to question need for such organizations. It is interesting to know the reasons behind setting up ethnic organizations in the first place and how the goals and purposes of these organizations

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[15] This first event that I talk about here, I attended just as an observer. I neither officially started my research yet nor got the IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval. But this first hand, first time experience with an ethnic organization and the cultural event certainly helped me bring focus to my research ideas.

[16] The nine ethnic organizations are:

      AAA – an organization that is socially and culturally oriented (pan-Indian)

      AAB – an organization that is socially and culturally oriented (regional and linguistically based)

      AAC – an organization that is socially and culturally oriented (regional and linguistically based)

      AAD – an organization that is socially and culturally oriented (regional and linguistically based)

      AAE – an organization that is religiously and culturally oriented

      AAF – an organization that is religiously and culturally oriented

      AAG – an organization that is religiously and culturally oriented

      AAH – an organization that is religiously and culturally oriented

      AAI – an organization that is socially and professionally oriented

change over a period of time. One of the respondents who has been in the United States for almost four decades explained how he had noticed the way in which ethnic organizations came into being initially and how they developed more into regional identity based ethnic organizations. According to Respondent3 (male, 65yrs):

> (At) that time (in late 1960s, early 1970s) only attraction for an Indian association was, there was no difference between a Tamilian, or a Telugu or anybody. They are all around...there is one Punjabi here, one Tamil, one you know. All these were there, once in a while we meet when we go out shopping, then we shake hands and then they'll say, 'what are you doing this weekend, why don't you come to my house?' So this is how we had friends that day. Then some guy, a good friend of mine, he knows somebody in India he would try to bring some Indian movies ok. The thing is Indian movies are all reels those days, not cassettes or tapes. So he had to import from there and then Diwali or something would come, University of California would give us a little room or something. So everybody is all excited to go watch this movie. That's all, so that day you know we'll eat food and all that. Just the identity you know, you are able to speak a language that you are familiar with, and you are not bashful of opening up, and its one of those things you know you become less self conscious, start talking to people and then they identify your family, and (their) children would call (me) uncle and all that. Children also know, hey we are more than some (just few) people you know, we are not interested in our own brother or sister (immediate family) there is another Indian person. This is how children grew up. The associations then started like this and then as years came about instead of being ethnocentric it became linguo-centric. Which is of course natural, it tends that birds of same color flock together you know that. You want to speak your own languages…So every time you seek out for somebody who speaks Tamil. There is always somebody who stands there and stands out and then we get together and we formed Tamil Association ok.

Respondent3 (male, 65yrs), here, was talking about his initial days in California and how he got acquainted with fellow Indians, which eventually culminated into the process of building social networks and ethnic organizations eventually. Dynamics involved in the evolution of these organizational structures brings forth the core issues surrounding the purpose of such ethnic organizations and their agendas. Initially, what Respondent3 (male, 65yrs) was referring to here, it all started out as getting acquainted with other Indians in the same geography. Once there are enough people that congregate regularly and display a considerable social network, they look forward to engaging in some activity or another. These informal gatherings provide a venue to celebrate, sometimes occasion-based festivities (such as festivals, birthdays, graduation ceremonies, etc.) and yet sometimes socializing becomes an occasion which does not require a strong reason to assemble.

When people get together, especially based on their affiliation to common ethnicity, the activities they engage in reflect those commonly shared interests and culture. Even at a small informal social gathering, the members present should share a common stock of knowledge in order to socially engage with one another. This can be seen in the language, religion, clothing style, dietary practices, movies, songs, dances, sports/games, which they commonly employ in their social interaction. As the social network broadens, the magnitude of the events being celebrated increases in proportion. Along with which the efforts in arranging social gatherings or even cultural events become more organized. In the case of Respondent3 (male, 65yrs) explaining how his

friend who knows how to import some Indian movies for an occasion such as Diwali, is a good example of such effort. It is with such appropriate leadership and initiative that concrete organizational structures develop.

Emergence of ethnic organizational structures requires a certain precedence of ethnic networks in that area. Earlier in chapter 2, I have discussed as to how Hutchinson and Smith (1996) view an ethnic group evolves from an 'ethnic network' to an 'ethnic association'. According to them, while *ethnic network* is marked by a regular interaction between ethnic members in such a way that the network can distribute resources among its members; *ethnic association* retains common interests and further exhibits political organizations to express these at a collective and corporate level. We can tracing such dynamics as to how ethnic organizations emerged within the Asian Indian community when we look at the anecdote that Respondent3 (male, 65yrs) has told. In his reminiscence of the evolution of organizational structures in California in those early days, it can be noticed that featuring an Indian movie for Diwali enhanced the magnitude of the occasion itself. Once it is arranged and promoted to be a huge event like that, other cultural aspects follow too - such as ethnic food, lavish decorations, etc. The magnanimity of an event is based on the economics and logistics of organizing such a thing and when someone goes through the painstaking process of importing the movie from India, it becomes all the more worthwhile to be there and participate.

Even in the organizational events that I have attended and observed in Springfield area, magnanimity of the event is associated with the demand-supply economics and the

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logistics of the production itself. This is true in most cases even outside the ethnic organizations. For example, when there is a concert or a cultural program that involves an artiste of a great reputation, it automatically translates into higher budget in presenting him/her to the public. With the Asian Indian community in Springfield being small, it is not feasible to bring big names in the entertainment industry very often.[17] Whenever there is a big event featuring star performers the organizations advertise and promote the event more rigorously; and make sure that the stage decoration and production of the show itself is more lavish.

To compare two different events organized by AAA – one of the event is a karaoke concert by local musicians (referred to as *musical night)* and the other one is a star performance by a well known singer from India.[18] The musical night is a low budget, low-profile show, promoted and organized as "a member's only extravaganza", where members get to enjoy the show and dinner for free while they charged $20 for non-members and $12 for non-member children. On the other hand the big event is open to all and is priced at $80 and $40 for non-members and a discounted price of $70 and $35 for

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[17] Pop culture entertainers from India such as musicians, singers, dance troupes, etc. performing overseas for the Asian Indian diaspora has become a popular trend. These shows are highly successful with sell out crowds. Some of the prominent entertainers lately include, A. R. Rahman, Himesh Reshmiyya, Sonu Nigam, Shankar Mahadevan, Hariharan, etc. It is not only Bollywood stars as mentioned above, but also classical artistes of music and dance have been very popular in the United States.

[18] I have attended four events as a part of my participant observation, which include Diwali celebration (AAA & AAE), musical night (AAA & AAC), Kuchupudi classical dance ballet (AAB), and classical music concert (AAF). The high budget concert that I am referring to here was also an event that I attended and took field notes from; but this was done as a part of my initial research trips to Springfield before the formal research has begun. So, this will not be considered as a fifth event in my participant observation, but am drawing upon my experience in the field to demonstrate the dimensions of two differently planned and intended events.

members. Besides the ticket prices the choice of venues, food selection, and the stage décor depends on the magnitude of these events as well. The venue chosen for the low budget event was one of the office buildings of AAC Association since it has its own office space in Springfield area. The building has a conference room big enough to arrange this event and they managed to do the karaoke concert as well as the dinner in that big conference room. The venue of the live concert was chosen to be an auditorium at one of the colleges near by. The conference room that was chosen for the musical night has minimal decorations, or I can almost say no decorations at all, with few paper ribbons hanging around the stage. The stage itself was just a wooden plank elevated quarter of a foot with the help of concrete blocks. With just that much of decoration, only other things in the room were karaoke equipment, microphones, sound boxes, flashing lights to create dancing atmosphere, chairs for people to sit and tables at the very back for the attendees to help themselves with dinner. The live concert is hosted in the auditorium, which is big enough to accommodate around 700-800 people. The stage adorns with a banner of AAA Association, which is imprinted on a tri-color Indian flag. There is an elevated platform built on the auditorium stage, which is covered with linens and frills hanging down the platform and covering up the elevation. The food menu at this event provided more variety than the other event. Programs at such a grand scale are not held very often in this Asian Indian community of Springfield. It is the size of this community as well as the economic and institutional resources available for them that play a crucial role in organizing and presenting different cultural and social events. Though the size of this

community impedes organizational efforts in promoting programs of ethnic significance, it is the members of the organization who comes to its rescue as patrons and donors funding of such events. All major events seek sponsorship from both the business members and family members of the association. Thus the organizations and its members act in unison keeping in mind their own limitations in terms of size and resources, and let them not hamper their spirit of celebration and participation. While asked about the Asian Indian popular cultural events held in the Springfield area and his attendance to such events Respondent1 (male, 53yrs) responded, "I support everything (ethnic events), whether I make it or not it depends on my schedule situation ...... and I think state of South has enough crowd now that AAA or other (organizations) they sponsor good artistes and I always like to be part of it."

Though organizations vary in terms of how many events they plan and promote each year, on an average there can be 8 or more events.[19] Some of these events are held in collaboration with two or more organizations, while some are specific to members of a particular organizations conducted by themselves. The members involved in these organizations are also very well aware of the size of their community and a need for collaboration. As Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) refers to one of the classical dance programs organized by AAB and the difficulty in inviting the whole dance troupe from India he says, "you see this is smaller community in Springfield area it is kind of hard to fund and finance these (events).... they come from India, it is big troupe, it needs a lot of

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[19] This does not include the *poojas* and festivals organized by the temple, which is almost every week or at least twice a month.

money…. so that is why we can't raise that much of funds here. Some times there are lot of generous people, they do donate a lot of money to bring such troupes, we do try to bring them yes." Promotion and sponsoring of events solely by one organization or in collaboration with other organizations, especially in this Asian Indian community of Springfield, has to do with the size of the community itself and the need to pool resources together. It would be an interesting study to observe and compare ethnic organizations in a large, well-established Asian Indian community and a small one like this in Springfield.

Ethnic Organizations in Springfield:

For a small Asian Indian community such as this in the city of Springfield, the institutional structures do provide a vibrant life for their own ethnic group and others as well. Most of the ethnic organizations and the ethnic businesses have been in existence for a while and have been slowly developing. There are at least nine Asian Indian ethnic organizations in Springfield. Almost all the ethnic organizations have been there for at least a decade, and the oldest of all AAA Association has been there since 1976. AAA Association defines itself as a secular body that caters to the cultural and social needs of the community. One of their brochures explains purpose of their organization as follows:

> The purpose of AAA is to provide platform for the social network, maintain our culture and traditions so that we feel this city as a home away from home and promote social well being for all Americans and Asian community living in this continent as well as abroad. The AAA by and large covers everybody, it is not a religious group, it is a cultural and secular social organization. (From the brochure by AAA)

While this organization is inclusive of all Asian Indians irrespective of language or religion or state from which a person hails from, there are organizations such as AAB, AAC, and AAD, which were formed on the basis of the state and the language they speak. Though the titles of these associations reflect their regional and linguistic affiliations, they do claim to be open to members outside their own community. There are organizations AAE, AAF, and AAG which are more religious in nature, though culture seems to be inseparable from religion in most of these organizations (will discuss in detail latter). While AAE caters to the Muslims from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (majority of its members are from India), AAF serves Hindus, AAG serves Sikhs, and AAH serves Asian Indian Christians (especially Malayalee Christians). Finally AAI is an ethnic organization that provides a platform for physicians and medical professionals of Indian origin. AAI is a national organization with a chapter in this state of South. Most of the members belonging to all these organizations are also members of AAA and most of them are willing to work and sponsor events in collaboration with AAA. Thus AAA seems to be comfortable in working with other organizations and vice versa.[20] Existence of these organizations side by side and working hand in hand towards promoting ethnic identity is a feature that is necessary for an Asian Indian community of such a small size.

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[20] There are four events that I know where AAA has collaborated with two other organizations. A concert was sponsored and organized by AAA in collaboration with AAC. AAA has collaborated with AAE three times, once in organizing a concert, again on organizing a fair promoting Asian Indian culture, and one more time in celebrating the festivals of Diwali and Eid-ul-Fitr together.

While the Asian Indian population of the city of Springfield is almost 3000, the largest membership that any organization has is approximately 246 members.[21] AAA Association being the organization with largest membership, it includes 222 family/individual members and 24 business members. Those 222 listings of family/individual members include members' spouse and children. The memberships in different organizations overlap as the individuals are part of more than one organization. All the respondents I have interviewed are at least part of two or more Asian Indian ethnic organizations. Another interesting feature of the members of these organizations is their socio-economic status. Most of the members are physicians and professionals related to medical field, professionals such as software or financial consultants, engineers, professors, scientists, and business owners. Of the 21 respondents, 6 of them are physicians, 3 scientists, 3 engineers, 2 professors, 2 businessmen, 1 geologist, 1 real estate associate, 1 retired city official, and 2 house wives.

There are also lot of Asian Indian students within the city limits of Springfield area, especially because of various colleges and universities present here. The Asian Indian student community has their own ethnic organizations that limit themselves to the students of their own respective institutions. The current study does not include student ethnic organizations due to their recent immigration history and different organizational needs (it would be an interesting study in itself to look at the student ethnic organizations and the way differ from other ethnic organizations). Though the dynamics of student

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[21] Refer to Appendix B for the demographic information of Asian Indian population for the city of Springfield.

ethnic organizations provide a different and interesting aspect to be studied, the current study limits its boundaries to the immigrant Indians that operate in their own ethnic settings. Most of the members that I had interviewed had been here in the United States for at least 10 years while the person with most years to his history of stay here is 40 years. There is only one person among my respondents who has been in this country for only 5 years, though he has been an immigrant Indian in other countries such as Australia for almost 15 years.

Asia Indian ethnic organizations in the city of Springfield are all registered bodies with a set constitution that defines their mission, functions, guidelines for conduct, and procedures to elect its office bearers. Some of these organizations have emblems/logos designed to represent their organization, which can be seen on their membership directory, flyers advertising various events, and even on their web pages.[22] These organizations ensure communication among the members and with others as well through newsletters, advertising through flyers, and through their websites.

These organizations, depending on their nature, cater to the social, cultural, religious, and professional needs of their members. In an interview with Respondent5 (male, 67yrs), he very aptly mentioned the needs of the Asian Indian community and how different ethnic organizations in the Springfield area serve towards fulfilling those purposes. According to him, "people who are coming from India, they leave behind those three or four things that create void and these voids are - spiritual void, cultural void, and

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[22] At least five organizations have an internet website to promote and raise awareness of their organization and organizational events.

social void. For spiritual void we have here gurudwara, we have temple, we have mosque, two mosques actually and then for Christian community they have churches you know and all over town there are like two or three Malayalee churches……so for that spiritual part is taken care of. If you go onto cultural part, how we can keep our culture….you know…..for that AAA is prime". Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) then goes on to elaborate on cultural events such as dance and music programs that are organized by AAA and how some other ethnic art organizations such as AAI provide patronage for such traditional Indian art forms here in Springfield. Though Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) does not go into the details of the 'social void' felt by Asian Indians and what organizations cater to that need and how, we will discuss in the next few paragraphs how these ethnic organizations serve such a social purpose as well. There is also an organization in the South State that caters to the professional needs of the Physicians of Indian Origin.

The ethnic organizations in the city of Springfield cater to those different needs and to different groups of people both within and outside the Asian Indian community. I would like to highlight few instances in which different ethnic organizations promoted different social, religious, and cultural practices. This will demonstrate diversity both within the Asian Indian population as well as among the existing ethnic organizations. In terms of cultural events almost all ethnic organizations (except the professional organization AAI) promote and participate in them. Though organizations such as AAE, AAF, AAG, and AAH are religious organizations catering to the spiritual needs of the

Asian Indian community, AAF especially does organize and promote few cultural events. Thus mostly, ethnic organizations such as AAA, AAB, AAC, and AAD (along with AAF) provide a platform to represent and enact culture from back home.

They organize events to promote culture both within their members as well as to the outsiders. These cultural events include celebration of festivals such as Diwali in a social gathering, display of culture through setting up food, clothing, and jewelry stalls representing different communities within India, bringing renowned artistes and performers for concerts, etc. These cultural events, though are always welcoming of people other than their own ethnicity, strive to present their culture that is unique and representative of their ethnicity or even sub-ethnicity. For instance, there is an ethnic fair organized by AAA that encouraged display of diversity within Indians by setting up stalls that represent cultures from different regions within a huge nation such as India. A pan-Indian display of that sorts was made possible with other ethnic organizations joining hands with AAA and encouraging their members and businesses to participate in it.

On the other hand there are also cultural events that are directed towards ones own ethnic group, especially with diverse ethnic organizations representing different sub-ethnics from India, based on language, region, and religion (viz. AAB, AAC, AAD). One such event I had attended was a classical dance ballet organized by AAB. This particular dance form was native to the state and culture that is represented by AAB. Despite such display of a localized culture, there are few Caucasian, East Asian, and Asian Indian attendees who are not part of the sub-ethnie of AAB. Such attendance by non-ethnic

groups (non-ethnic purely in relation to the sponsoring/organizing ethnic group, in this case non-AAB) though is very minimal; it does suggest participation beyond boundaries. At the classical dance ballet presented by AAB, I have noticed Respondent3 (male, 65yrs) being there (he does not belong to AAB or that particular sub-ethnic group) and later when I brought that up in my interview with him, he mentioned that having many Telugu friends is his reason for attending that event. Therefore reasons for non-ethnic participation can be myriad, ranging from invitations from friends to curiosity or even genuine interest in that culture. In both the above mentioned instances, whether the events are localized Indian or pan-Indian, attendance is open to all. Thus these ethnic organizations, even if they are regionally affiliated, do not tend to draw group boundaries by excluding 'outsiders'. Rather it is the support and interdependence on one another that benefits these organizations.

The religious organizations such as AAE, AAF, AAG, and AAH cater to the spiritual needs of different Asian Indian religious groups. Religious diversity of India can also be seen in the city of Springfield. Though I have not come across any Jain's or Buddhists among other major religions of India, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians are served by these organizations. AAE provides Muslims from Indian subcontinent with institutional structures for both religious and cultural participation. Though it has members from countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, majority of the membership is of Asian Indian Muslims. In an interview with Respondent7 (male, 54yrs), current president and a long time member of this organization, he suggests that the binding

element of the organization with member from different countries is more culture than religion. According to him, "I'm a Muslim from India and a Muslim from India would relate to a Muslim from India or Pakistan better than a Muslim from Middle East or somewhere else because culturally they are closer. So culture is more vital than religion in social relationship." Though membership in an organization such as AAE seems to be based primarily in religion, it is the common culture shared across different nations that helps them relate to one another. This aspect is more pronounced when we observe AAF, which serves Hindus in and around the city of Springfield. In spite of the regional and linguistic differences among Hindus, AAF draws all of them together in celebrating various festivals, rituals, and spiritual activities. The Hindu Temple affiliated with AAF serves as a public place of worship for Hindu devotees. AAG is a Sikh Gurudwara that meets once every two weeks for prayers.[23] AAH is a church among the Malayalee Christians in Springfield.

Very rarely is there an occasion when Asian Indians gather for purposes other than cultural or religious. Nonetheless, these ethnic organizations also provide an opportunity to reach out to the host society and be part of their institutional structures. One such social event was promoted by AAA, which included a meeting with the governor of the state. The purpose of the meeting was to raise funds for the Governor and show their support to him on behalf of the Asian Indian community. One of the members

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[23] Information about AAG was collected from the interviews and talks with different Asian Indians from the City of Springfield. This is one organization, which is not represented in my study as none of its members were interviewed, due to lack of access.

of AAA hosted the event at their house while inviting other members for participation. The event was marked by the presence of the state Governor, the first lady of the state, and an opportunity for every participant to meet and greet them both.

All these ethnic organizations in general can be seen to be providing a social base for the Asian Indians in the area of Springfield by providing them scope and resources to participate in various cultural, religious, and professional activities. More specifically, the events sponsored and promoted by these organizations, the places of worship, the office spaces of these various organizations, provide a place to meet and socialize on different occasions. The social networks that are formed, new acquaintances and friendships through these social gatherings and interactions stay long after these events and meetings come to a halt. Thus the purpose of socializing and developing social bonds among the compatriots within the community is fulfilled through these organizations.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Organizational structure, available for the Asian Indian community, representing their ethnic needs, is impressive considering the size of this community in the city of Springfield. The previous chapter outlines these organizational resources, such as ethnic businesses, religious places of worship, and socio-cultural milieus. The current chapter focuses on symbolic practices and rituals of ethnic significance that are expressed within this community.

The review of literature helped this research in identifying 'content categories' that need to be observed in the field. At the same time techniques of field work, both participant observation and interviews, elaborated and expanded the scope of these content categories. In chapter IV, content categories such as food, dress, language, religion, popular culture, and sports and games are identified as markers of rituals of ethnic significance. The content of these categories reflect the ethnic content, which helps operationalize this research and provides a direction for what is being sought in the field.

These content categories not only provide a direction for the research in terms of what to look for in the field but also each category draws a boundary and thus limiting our focus to that particular category. While most of the content categories are self explanatory and limited in terms of their scope as to what constitutes these categories, there are instances where some categories were broadened. For example, the content

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category of 'popular culture', was originally developed to look at movies, music, and cultural events such as concerts, festival celebrations, etc. that are available for the Asian Indian community and the way they are expressed in organizational context. As the research progressed other sources of popular culture were identified such as Indian television channels. In this instance, the content category of 'popular culture' itself holds good for our research purposes with an added flexibility to accommodate newly encountered elements in the field. Thus, the content categories that have been identified to guide this research remain mostly the same while their scope was elaborated as new findings from fieldwork surfaced.

Since this research also limits itself to the organizational context of Asian Indian ethnic community, these content categories are evaluated as they are manifested and expressed in the organizational settings. Therefore, the language spoken, food eaten, dresses adorned, etc. within the organizational context is the prime focus. At the same time one has to acknowledge that most of the everyday life lies beyond the organizational milieu. The very content categories that are important for this research within organizational setting can also be found, more so, in their day to day lives. While the priority of this study is still to look at the ritual dynamics in ethnic organizations, one has to make sure that such a limited focus does not necessarily resort to de-contextualizing.

Engaging in rituals of ethnic significance in a private setting and a public place evokes differences owing to the context of the locale. Though the difference is not attached to the meaning of the ritual itself, definitely the grandeur of the event and the

collective-orientation of the group are magnified in a public organizational setting. These two settings, one a very personal and another a very public, though are mutually exclusive and separate in terms of physical geography, they provide individuals with meanings and guidelines to act in that specific setting wherever they are. Just like the distinction maintained between public and private places in our everyday lives and the distinct set of norms that prescribe and proscribe our behaviors validating the locale, the organizational setting and the home setting for Asian Indian community carry similar connotations.

Though these public and private realms exist exclusive of one another they rely mutually to define and distinguish their social landscapes. The etiquette of public place is thus defined not only by that particular setting but also as to how it is not a private/intimate setting. So a cultural event promoted and organized by an ethnic organization does not evoke behavior that is typical of home and vice versa. For instance, when people dress up in their ethnic best they usually do it for a cultural event or public gathering rather when they are at home. Conversely, ethnic food is featured in public events, which happen only eight to ten times annually, where as it is a part of their daily diet in most of the families. While the frequency or repetitiveness of engaging in a certain ritual of ethnic significance is more so in an organizational setting and less in a private setting, it could be conversely true for another ritual (viz. more ethnic food and less ethnic clothing in private setting; and more ethnic clothing and less ethnic food in organizational setting – in terms of frequency). The issue at hand is not to weigh the

predominance of ethnic display between these private or public realms but rather is to notice how such exclusive fields are compatible to carry out certain rituals.

While the focus still is on rituals of ethnic significance in organizations, this study also includes ethnic fields outside the realm of organizations. The members of organizations engage in the same ethnic rituals outside them as well. Thus, taking note of ethnic rituals outside organizations will complement this research by throwing further light on the importance of organizations in terms of ethnic identity. For instance, by looking at the social networks of the members of these organizations we can understand the density of social interaction outside organizational events. Similarly we can assess the importance of ethnic practices such as consumption of ethnic food, wearing ethnic dresses, participation in religious activities, etc. outside ethnic organizations. Consideration given to such ethnic practices outside organizational setting will provide a holistic picture as to how important ethnic identity is for members both inside and outside organizations. Though ethnic practices outside the organizational setting seem to be predominant, one has to realize that these organizational gatherings demonstrate a communal expression of ethnicity.

Rituals of Ethnic Significance and Structural Ritualization Theory

Based on the four organizational events I have attended over a period of six months, one can identify the ubiquity and conspicuousness of their celebration of ethnicity. Through participant observation I have noticed all the rituals of ethnic significance that have been identified earlier, based on the review of literature. Upon

entering the venue where these events and celebrations were taking place one can see people dressed in ethnic clothing, hear Indian languages spoken, sense aroma of Indian food being served, and experience decorations of the entire place that signify their ethnicity. Once the event starts one can also witness popular culture from back home being enacted in terms of song and dance performances. Thus we limit our content categories to dress, language, food, popular culture, religion, and sports and games. These rituals of ethnic significance will be discussed in this section in the light of Structural Ritualization Theory.

The focus will be on specific content categories based on participant observation in the field as well as from the information revealed in interviews by members of these organizations. Since all the content categories (language, dress, food, popular, culture, religion, and sports/games) are observed to be present in the field even before the formal research has begun, they are all well documented as a part of participant observation as well as interviews.[24] Though most of these content categories hold central place in organizational events, some are featured more often and are given more importance than others. Structural Ritualization Theory helps us look at the centrality of these rituals of ethnic significance in terms of their salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources. In the following section, each ritual of ethnic significance will be discussed as they are engaged both in organizational context as well as outside of it. With the help of

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[24] The initial trips made to the metro area of Springfield in search of Asian Indian community and attending some of the organizational events to understand both the organizations and the nature of their celebratory events helped me in affirming these cultural categories.

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analytical tools provided by structural ritualization theory, each ritual of ethnic significance will be assessed in terms of its salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources.

Ethnic Food

Presence of Indian food is a common aspect among most of the organizational events. Sometimes, availability of ethnic food is advertised as a part of promotion of the event itself though this might not always be the case. In my participant observation, all the four events that I have attended served Indian food in one way or another. Diwali night celebration, which was a collaborative initiative by both AAA and AAE, featured ethnic food for sale at the venue and in this instance purchase of food was in addition to the expense of entry ticket. Whereas on the other occasions such as Kuchipudi Dance organized by AAB and a musical night sponsored by both AAA and AAC, ethnic food was served at an expense that was included in the price of the event itself. The event at the Hindu temple organized by AAF also provided ethnic food but with no charge; the event itself was free of cost and was open to all.

Though the way ethnic food was made available to the member participants varied from event to event as well as the magnitude in terms of range and variety of food being served, ethnic food was always present nonetheless. Some of these events presented a huge variety of options within Indian ethnic food, whereas some others were very simple. Such differences were based on price of event, size of the audience, and nature of the event itself. Events such as Diwali celebration and musical night both

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featured buffet with quite a few options on the table just like in some of the Indian restaurants. Even the event of Kuchipudi Dance provided buffet but restricted themselves to only vegetarian food unlike Diwali celebration or musical night. Such preference to serve vegetarian has to do with the nature of the event, which was a religious theme being performed that night. This can be noticed especially at the event hosted by the Hindu Temple as the food served there has certain restrictions; the food at this event was vegetarian as well and was more limited in choices. Thus the type of food, either vegetarian or non-vegetarian, in these instances has to do with the religious sentiments of those events themselves. Speaking of the kind of food usually served at Temple and food restrictions associated with it, Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) says,

> You know mostly …it used to be more a potluck type…whenever there is a big festival. There are always the Indian festivals like shivrathri, we just had, or Indian anything, especially when it comes on the weekend and all you know because when all the devotees come we want them to have some food before they leave. All these rituals take long time so that is the reason we want people to have some food before they leave. Now a days there is no pot luck anymore, we try to order from some restaurant or something but the food that we serve inside has some restrictions like it can not be….it can not have garlic, onion, and certain things. So that is against our normal practice, so that is what is being serve in temples in India, that's what we follow here too. Now the priests and all that's what they eat.

As Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) also pointed out, food at these organizational events are mostly catered to by the local Indian restaurants of Springfield. Local ethnic businesses, restaurants among many others, take such opportunities not only to do business but also to promote themselves within the community. Most of the restaurants in Springfield area

register themselves as business members of different ethnic organizations and advertise themselves in organizational newsletters and directories.

Salience of Ethnic Food

According to the structural Ritualization Theory, salience refers to the centrality of a ritualized symbolic practice to an action sequence within a domain of interaction. Considering the presence of various content categories in the field of research and according to the views expressed by respondents in their interviews one can definitely identify certain rituals of ethnic significance to be more predominant than others. Presence of ethnic food at these organizational events seems to be a common aspect in all the four events that I have attended. Not only the presence of ethnic food in the organizational setting but also interview responses from the members suggest that ethnic food holds a central place in organizational events.

Even outside the organizational milieu ethnic food seems to be very predominant in terms of its presence in their everyday lives. In my interview, out of 21 respondents 17 (81%) of them said that Indian food is a major part of their diet. While 3 (14%) of them said their diet was predominantly Indian though they also ate American food quite often, the remaining one respondent mentioned that his diet was an equal mix of both Indian as well as American cuisines. As to the question how important ethnic food is to them, except one respondent everyone else agreed that ethnic food is very important in their everyday lives. In my interview with Respondent14 (male, 45yrs), who has also lived in Australia before moving to United States, he jokingly observes that, "I've noticed

overseas that while lot of people are open to trying different sorts of foods, Indians generally tend to stick to Indian foods. They (Indians) will experiment, they will have pizza, they'll have pasta and other things, they might try Thai food once in a while, but given a choice they just go back to Indian food. That's the grain of choice…. I say to my wife, well….when you got the best why should you try something inferior?" Respondent14's (male, 45yrs) wife hails from Philippines and she has learnt Indian cooking from him as well as from his mother. When asked Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) as to how important ethnic food is to him he replies, "It is very important. It is…we are so used to it, I just can not….if I go out because of business or whatever, 2-3 days maybe I can leave, but after that you know….that's the food you are born with and from childhood onwards you are used to that food. There are lot of people they just switch….they don't care….but for me I just have to have spice and rice and chapatti and all that."[25] Similarly Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) also feels that ethnic food is very important to him, so much so that he would even drive three or four hours just to get to a good restaurant. Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) says that, "It sure does because food is what we do live for. Love to have some good Biryani, my wife makes some pretty good, so…… If I didn't have it I'll miss so it's important. We do prepare and sometimes we want to go to Detroit all the way just to eat some good ethnic food."[26]

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[25] Chapatti is one of the many varieties of Indian bread.
[26] Biryani is a spicy rice, usually cooked with either chicken, lamb, beef, or shrimp. Hyderabad, where Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) comes from is famous for its Biryani cuisine.

While ethnic food is important in their everyday lives it also has equally important and even more a celebratory role in organizational events. When asked Respondent12 (male, 45yrs) as to what the significance of ethnic food is in the organizational events he recollects that, "I started that actually in 94 (when he was the president of AAA) it was me who done that. We knew that to get a right crowd of at least *desi* people we have to have food and music, and between the two of them I'll have food.[27] If you have food then they come but if you want them to come just for social gatherings then we all better go for a private gathering you know with few people and so to have that right kind of critical mass in the association in terms of attendance it is a very important incentive to have the right food involved." Thus, Respondent12 (male, 45yrs) is one of the many respondents that view ethnic food to be a good incentive to attend these organizational gatherings. According to Respondent14 (male, 45yrs),

> First of all the events are at a time when we have to eat…otherwise they have to be very short events. All those very awkward hours…no body would come and everybody seems to have not just come for the evening but coming to socializing, gathering, like you are going to a shaadi (wedding), wedding feast….so all of it is mixed together. So you cannot not have food and expect people to show up. I mean the practicalities are impossible, you have to have food and generally it is always Indian food. So it's a chance to eat good Indian food and not have to cook and clean, that's always welcome.

Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) views the inevitability of the presence of Indian food at these organizational meetings because of their timing of those events. So both the timing of

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[27] Desi is slang for India, sometimes also used to refer Pakistanis and Bangladeshis as well.

these events as well as the opportunity it provides to escape from the routine of cooking and cleaning sounds plausible reasons as to why ethnic food is central to organizational events. Observations of Respondent14 (male, 45yrs), regarding timing of these events, are very true based on my attendance to such events. All the events that I had attended scheduled the main program in such a way that dinner can be served either before or after the event.

Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) views that it is the commonly shared taste among all the Indians that makes serving of Indian food at these events a primary choice. According to Respondent9 (male, 59yrs),

> [N]aturally, you know, because majority of people who are attending are originally from India and they all like…and it is common also. Again if you want to go do something else like American food or something, then it's ……. so many things are there, we don't know who likes what. When it comes to Indian diet, its kind of almost same thing, there may be some variations like north, south, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, but you know almost its kind of same. You know chapatti, dal, little meat and all that you know…spices are all mostly the same thing. So that is one of the reasons and of course you enjoy it.

Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) articulates why ethnic food is so central to organizational events as well as informal gatherings, "I think it's especially for Indians that is the thing. Food is everything in our culture, everything turns around food. The way to celebrate is food, a way to do picnic is food, a way to do an outing is food, if you visit a friends its food you know so……for some reason you know we are not as much into physical activity you know, if I hang out with my American friends the focus is skiing or hiking or

doing an activity. Hanging out with Indian friends is food you know. Capital focal point of any activity."

Thus ethic food does hold a central place in both organizational as well as in everyday lives of Asian Indians in the Springfield area.

Repetitiveness:

Ethnic food in organizational events has been noticed throughout all of my field work observations to an extent that celebration of any ethnic occasion involves Indian food. Consumption of ethnic food, as a ritual of ethnic significance, eclipses other rituals of ethnic significance in terms of its repetitiveness. As it will be noticed in the following sections that not all members of these ethnic organizations wear ethnic clothing, not all of them speak the same language, most of them do not subscribe their allegiance to Indian sports like cricket, not all of them have time to engage in rituals of pop culture, and not all of them are religious enough to participate in religious rituals frequently. Ethnic food, on the other hand, is most often repeated act both in organizational and personal context.

In the organizational events ethnic food is present 100% of the time as I had noticed it in all the four events that I attended. In their personal lives, out of 21 respondents 14 (67%) of them claim that they eat Indian food at least once a day. Four other respondents (19%) said that they eat at least three or more times a week and those who can not eat more often than that is either due to their work schedule or being away from home. Only 2 (9%) of them answered that they eat only twice a month and one of those two mentioned she would eat more often if she could as she was living away from

home. When asked Respondent16 (female, 28yrs) as to how often she eats Indian food, she replied "I used to have more Indian food when I used to live with my parents, now I am living by myself and working, it is mostly eating out and mostly American food…..now once a fortnight at Indian restaurants."

Only one person (5%) said that he eats Indian food once a month on an average and cites health reasons for doing so. When asked about his food preferences Respondent1 (male, 53yrs) said, "(I eat) Any vegetarian….because of health reason, aging reason, and other wise, I am very bland diet person. I don't like spice and stuff as much. I'm a diabetic, she (wife) is hypertensive, so there are restrictions of what we can or we can not eat because of medication. So and plus we eat very bland food we do not eat that spice curry stuff." Thus most of the respondents, almost three quarters of them, seem to eat Indian food on a daily basis.

Homologousness:

Homologousness refers to the degree of perceived similarity within a myriad of ritualized symbolic practices that they engage in. Ethnic food in organizational events has a celebratory element to it, which reflects the mood the event itself. Other than display and indulgence in ethnic cuisine, food preferences in certain instances reflect the religious sentiments of the participant members. According to Respondent14 (male, 45yrs),

> I made a strict choice later, after moving overseas. Basically we grew up as vegetarians, but in college and when I was working out I was bit more liberal than that in all forms of diet solid, liquid, and gaseous….and over

time I have become much more orthodox let us say in my diet and behavior….but I do see it as a strong cultural marker too. In the evolution of my thinking I need to have personal control and all of that. The other thing about my religion is about the sanctity of life and killing and blood and all of that and for those reasons…and those I see not just as Hindu religious belief but more secular too, because lot of people who are not Hindus also share that…..I mean you see those bumper stickers that meat is murder so….that is a secular belief…and also the cultural marker that this is the part of my identity and I want to identify myself.

For Respondent14 (male, 45yrs), his preference of vegetarian diet has to do with his family background, religious beliefs, and his religious as well as ethnic identity itself. He views his food preference as a cultural marker, thus making it a conjuncture of ethnic food, culture, and religion. Impact of religion on ethnic food can also be noticed in events promoted by Hindu Temple where a highly restricted vegetarian diet is maintained.

Some of the respondents, while talking about Indian food, have evoked images of India and what ethnic food represents to them. For some it represents diversity of cultures in India and for some others this 'food-centered culture' is viewed as a way of life. Respondent7 (male, 54yrs), in his interview, articulates that,

You have to remember that you come from countries that have food-centered culture. By that what I mean is….for example…..I don't know you are lot younger than me, but when we were growing up in India, the middle class, the lower middle class, the main reason for earning money was to meet the nutritional requirements. It was not for luxury, it was not for house. So food was absolutely important. I don't know if that's what we carry here or what but when I came to this country first thing I noted was food was the cheapest thing here compared to the other expenses, unlike what it was in India 25-30 years ago. Maybe that's why it is food-centered cultural activities, food is an integral part.

Such a notion of food-centered culture is also expressed by Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) who says that, "even in India if you look into that……when a child is born, food is there……ceremony of remembrance 6th day or 12th day after a person dies on that day they have some food…….so this how our culture…". Thus for both Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) and Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) such association with practices from back home are reflected in the organizational events as well as informal gatherings of Asian Indians in United States.

Food is also associated with the cultural diversity of the nation. Different varieties of food within India that are specific to particular regions are usually featured in Indian restaurants, which cater almost the same menu at the organizational events as well. There are respondents who take pride in cultural diversity of their nation and how sometimes indulging in all these diverse ethnic foods is taking part in such cultural diversity. In an interview with Respondent12 (male, 45yrs) he says, "In food preference the distinctions come in desserts. Really true because you know….*rasgollas* and all the milk based desserts there are many of them right….so you have a difference there. If you are Hyderabadi guy you like double roti *mitai* all that stuff which is more dry, if you are from Bangalore you like *mysore pak* and all, and if you are from UP you like *pedas*, if you are Punjabi you like *jilebi* and all. It makes a difference. Ethnicity is also there but India is such a vast multi ethnic miasma of people and I have been to all the different regions."

So it is not just consumption of ethnic food, the meanings that individuals associate with food sometimes goes beyond the act of eating itself. Some Indians, as we

have noted here, see an ethnic connection with religion, culture, and images of their homeland through ethnic food that they eat.

Resources:

According to the Structural Ritualization Theory, *resources* are the materials needed to perform ritualized practice in a domain of interaction. In this instance, ethnic organizations, local Indian restaurants, and local ethnic businesses, especially grocery stores can be seen as prominent resources for the Asian Indian community. Ethnic organizations play a major role in initiating and promoting the events. Indian restaurants in Springfield serve not just the Asian Indian community but also everyone irrespective of their nationality. They are the prime source of ethnic food in the city for Asian Indians outside their homes and organizational events. These restaurants cater not only to ethnic organizational events but also to the private gatherings and personal occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays etc.

Grocery stores also serve as an important resource in terms of ethnic food. They cater more to the individual and domestic needs rather than to the organizational celebrations. There are four grocery stores in Springfield area that I had noticed. They carry Indian spices, frozen foods, snacks and beverages, non-food related items such as DVDs of Indian movies, Indian music CDs, and miscellaneous items. These grocery stores, just like the Indian restaurants in Springfield, seem to attract customers beyond Springfield area. There are quite a few Asian Indian customers from the towns

surrounding Springfield that visit especially the grocery stores to shop for their ethnic needs.

Ethnic Clothing and Dress

Ethnic clothing is one of the visible markers of ethnic identity. Men, women, and children are all dressed in their ethnic best at these organizational events. Sometimes even the non-Indian guests (e.g., Caucasians) too dress up in Indian ethnic dresses just to be a part of such celebration. While most of the attendees wear ethnic clothing, there are also few who dress formally in western style.[28] It is relatively women and children who wear ethnic clothing more so when compared to men. Women usually wear sari's, churidar, ghagra-choli, lehnga-choli, salwar-kameez, sharara, etc., men's ethnic clothing includes, dhoti, khurta-pajama, lungi, sherwani, and so on.[29] While most of the Asian Indians (especially men) do not wear ethnic clothing in their everyday lives, these organizational events certainly provide them with an occasion to do so. In my interview with Respondent8 (female, 39yrs), one of the teachers of Indian classical music at the Temple when I pointed out my observation that women dress more so in ethnic dresses when compared to men at these organizational events, she agrees by responding, "I think that's right and I am not sure why. I do know many men who have traditional Indian clothes like khurta and pajama. But my husband is a good example, he doesn't like to wear and I know many of my friends have seem to say same thing. I don't know, maybe

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[28] Western style being - European and/or American style of dress viz., pants, shirts, khakis, shorts, suits, tuxedos, etc.
[29] Refer to Appendix C for glossary of Indian clothing.

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it's the custom that you expect women to wear ethnic clothes. I don't know why but it's a good point."

Respondent1 (male, 53yrs) identifies himself with his profession and hence wants his appearance to be very professional. Therefore, it is only specific occasions which demand ethnic clothing that gives him a reason to dress in ethnic wear. He views his identity to be wrapped in many layers around him other than just being an Indian and his religion; he also acknowledges the host society and culture. According to Respondent1 (male, 53yrs), "I am Southie (belonging to the state of South) by choice; I am Indian-Hindu-American-Southie. So my clothes, everything is Southie. So, unless any special Indian religious ceremony, which we had, Satyanarayana pooja at our house that is the only time or Navaratri, only time I wear Indian dress. But other wise, in Rome you dress like Roman."

Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) has a different explanation for restricting himself to wearing ethnic dresses only for certain special occasions and religious ceremonies. According to him, "for Indians, for men there are not too many selections, we have only khurta and khurta is also very uneasy. Some people wear khurta with the pants, but khurta and pajama if you wear them you'll feel comfortable and then climate is so cold you cannot. The second thing is that we don't want to become an eye sore you know. If you just wear that (khurta-pajama) go to the store the people they will immediately say ok this is….and then it is hard, you could be a target you know." For Respondent7 (male, 54yrs), it is a matter of practicality and comfort not to wear ethnic clothing except on

occasions, "For men it is not really that much of a difference. But even my wife, we wear mostly western clothes. Its more practical comfortable but when we go to ethnic gatherings even sometimes non-ethnic gatherings we try to (dress ethnic)……" Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) who teaches Indian classical music at the Hindu temple, she dresses in ethnic clothes to be a role model for her students. When asked how often she wears ethnic dress, "I would say at least once a month and when we come to the temple which is almost every week because I teach music here I wear Indian clothes. We have made it a point to make sure the kids also wear something Indian. I mean when you learn an Indian style of dancing and music its nice if you wear….and so we also like to wear that and especially when the kids are wearing you have to wear it too to be a role model."

Ethnic clothing is not only prominently visible among the participant members but even more so among the performers of the event. Almost every person featured on the stage – presenters/anchors of the program, office bearers of the organizations, and performers of both song and dance wear ethnic clothing. Presenters/anchors are featured on the stage through out the program since they introduce the item to be performed. They are usually dressed in their ethnic best as they act as a voice for the whole event. While the office bearers such as the president, cultural secretary, and others take up the podium to welcome, thank, promote, and update news and information of their own organization, they are usually dressed in ethnic dresses as well. Of all the four events I have attended, it was only on one occasion that a president of AAB was dressed in formal western style with his suit on. The performers themselves, whether they are performing song or dance

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routines or show casing their music, they are all dressed in their ethnic clothing. Classical Indian dances such as Kuchipudi, Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Kathakali, etc., all make use of special costumes which are very ethnic; representing that particular style of dance form and their place of origin. Thus ethnic dress in the organizational events is almost inevitable in certain instances of performance.

Salience of Ethnic Clothing

As we have noted, ethnic clothing is one of the most visible elements within an organizational setting; to an extent that the importance of the occasion itself can be seen in the kind of dresses the members wear. Contrary to what appears in the colorful venues, such significance of ethnic clothing remains strong only within the organizational context. Just as 95% of the respondents held ethnic food to be very important the same percentage (20 out of 21 respondents) said that they very rarely dress in ethnic clothes. This percentage represents the dressing preferences of the respondents in their everyday lives, outside the organizational milieu. Except 2 respondents (9%), who claim to have never wore ethnic clothing, rest of them (91%) claim they wear ethnic clothing for occasions such as organizational events and social gatherings involving fellow Indians.

Respondent10 (female, 55yrs) is one of many respondents who have to say, "On a daily basis I don't wear Indian, I wear western clothes. But when I go to Indian functions, temple, I wear Indian….yeah it's a social thing. Of course if I go to some work related gatherings I wear western clothing." Thus, importance of ethnic wear seems to be confined only to the organizational and social gatherings rather than to their everyday

lives. I have noticed this trend from participant observation as the venues of these organizational events display colorfulness mostly because of the ethnic dresses of the participants. The salience of ethnic clothing limits itself to the organizational milieu and is not as salient as ethnic food. Lack of such centrality for ethnic clothing when compared to ethnic food owes to the Indian men and their unwillingness to be in their ethnic best as much as women and children.

As Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) has suggested earlier, it has to do with limited clothing choices for men when compared to women and children. Responding to the same observation as to why men are less likely to dress ethnic, Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) says, "I mean from observation perspective men mostly wear kurta and pajama if at all they are wearing and very few will come with a dhoti. What other Indian dress is there…and even in India that would be the case. For women and children it is an option but for men there are no options. They are still doing what they would have done back in India. You don't go to any formal event in India wearing (ethnic dress)….the men don't go wearing kurta-pajama unless you are a politician.[30] So in the same way what I feel is they are just reproducing practices from back home. It's not unusual or different either for the men or women to dress in that way. You go to any Indian gathering in India and you would find people dress that way. The other thing for women is that they won't be wearing skirts or pants generally; when they do they do it depending on the formality of the occasion. On some gatherings people wear casual, on some everybody will pullout

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[30] This statement refers to the stereotypical image of Indian politician in traditional khurta-pajama, both in real life and in pop cultural depictions.

their best silks." Thus for Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) the dressing options for men and women are extension of the choices they had back home in India as well.

Repetitiveness:

Adorning of ethnic dresses for only organizational events and ceremonies makes it a repetitive ritual of ethnic significance but not as much as the content category of ethnic food. As we have noticed from various interviews mentioned above most of the people do not prefer ethnic clothing outside the organizational setting and even to those events not everyone dresses in ethnic. Only one person that was interviewed said she wears Indian clothing (Sari) everyday; 2 (9%) of them, both men, said that they have never wore ethnic clothing; 4 (19%) of them said that they wear it once a month when they go to temple; and 14 (67%) of them said that they wear ethnic clothes only on special occasions such as organizational events or social gatherings involving fellow Indians.[31] Though not every one wears ethnic clothing, at least 91% of them prefer wearing them for special events.

Homologousness:

Ethnic clothing for some of the respondents represents the ethnic identity and a connection with their roots. Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) acknowledges that he wears ethnic clothing for "religious functions only", but he views that it is important to dress ethnic not only for identity sake but also because that is the appropriate dress code for

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[31] On an average, respondents said that they attend 3-4 cultural events in a year. Though the total number of events organized by all different organizations in a year could range from 8-10 approximately, most of the people are part of only a couple of organizations and they might be selective as well in choosing events to attend and to skip.

such venues. In his own words, "I think its identity also you know, I think its heritage, its roots, you want to feel connected you know. That's how you feel and it's considered proper and that's the other side of it because when you go to pooja you don't go (dressed) in something with which people will not identify that occasion." It can be inferred from Respondent2's (male, 41yrs) statement that ethnic dress can help one to fit in a group as it conforms to the 'proper' dress code. While there is no penalty for not wearing ethnic clothing it is also a matter of connection with the ethnic roots.

There is also an affiliation of ethnic dresses with religion as most of the respondents admit that they usually wear ethnic clothes while going to the temple. For someone like Respondent6 (female, 56yrs) it is a matter of convenience as she says, "If we go for some social functions, then its not necessary to wear Indian clothing, depends on what kind of function…..its not like I have to wear Indian clothing….especially when we go to the temple or any religious place we try to wear Indian clothing and we have to cover your head, so that's the easiest to wear Indian clothes and cover your head." Just as Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) has mentioned, ethnic dresses can be seen as 'proper'. Especially in a context such as attending Hindu temple that Respondent6 (female, 56yrs) was describing. Ethnic dresses are also featured on stage during the performance of popular cultural and religious art forms. Most of the song and dance routines, especially the classical arts, demand ethnic dresses on part of performers. Especially classical Kuchipudi dance ballet organized by AAB features traditional theatrical dresses worn especially for the performance of that particular art form. Most of the religious themes

and mythical characters are portrayed wearing those special costumes. Thus, ethnic dresses are in congruence with popular cultural aspects such as dance and music as well as religion.

Resources:

In terms of ethnic clothing, organizations prove to be a great resource for the members as it is the only platform where most of the Asian Indians prefer to showcase their ethnic dresses. Though only 5% of the total respondents wear ethnic clothes everyday 91% of them prefer to wear them for organizational events and social gatherings. There was at least one store in the city of Springfield that markets ethnic clothes and jewelry; though there is no data to suggest how many of the Asian Indians actually prefer to buy their clothes at that store or any other store in Springfield.

Language

Salience of Language:

Language is one of the central features among Asian Indians in general, which extends to organizations as well. It is also most interesting since India as a nation has 22 different officially recognized languages.[32] With such lingual diversity one wonders if language(s) is a binding element or divisive element. As we have outlined different Asian Indian ethnic organizations in Springfield area, there are quite a few organizations that cater to specific linguistic groups. There are at least five such ethnic organizations that

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[32] http://india.gov.in

are language or region based. Since different states in India are divided on linguistic basis, regional identity and language go hand in hand. Therefore, a person belonging to the state of Tamilnadu is associated with his or her Tamil language, one from Karnataka with Kannada, one from Gujarat with Gujarati, and so on.

While there are five ethnic organizations that cater to the regional interests within Asian Indians, there are also pan-Indian organizations that cut across language and regional sentiments. In one of the interviews, Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) notes that it is natural to have such regional affiliations though; at the same time it is important to rise above such divisions. In his own words,

> You associate with your people because of the language that is the only reason some times you get closer because of the language, because it ensures little affinity. It's the same thing with anybody in the whole world. Whenever you can talk the same language because you can communicate better you can tell jokes and that's where when you meet lot of these Americans in social parties you get lost because you can not understand that much of jokes what they say….and you can not come up with those jokes also at the same time. But when you meet your own people sometimes the jokes come automatically and you enjoy yourself. That's where you are so safe, but when it comes to organization, leaders, you look at what is good for the organization, not who is in the organization. That's very important.

Such a need for coexistence of regional organizations and pan-Indian organizations reflects the size and the composition of this community as we have discussed earlier. Though these regional ethnic organizations harbor the interests of their own community within all Asian Indians, they also rise to the occasion and collaborate with other regional or pan-Indian organizations in arranging and facilitating various cultural events. Thus,

one can see a synergistic relationship between different Asian Indian ethnic organizations in the area of Springfield.

With such a panorama of diversity in terms of language, being bilingual is a common attribute to almost all the Asian Indians in United States in general and in Springfield in particular. All the members of these ethnic organizations that I have interviewed were bilingual and some of them were even multilingual. From the interviews I have done I gathered that all of them are bilingual (100%), while 15 out of 21 people I have interviewed are multilingual, i.e. approximately 71%. Those who are bilingual are familiar with English as a language other than their own mother tongue. On the other hand most of the multilinguals are familiar with English, their own mother tongue, as well as other Indian languages that are closer to their own regions. Thus most of the multilingual North Indians are familiar with Hindi or Urdu other than their own mother tongues and in some cases Hindi and/or Urdu is their mother tongue. On the other hand South Indian multilinguals are familiar with Tamil other than their own mother tongue.

Having a language of their own and belonging to a region that shares the same language is a trait that marks these ethnic organizations with regional interests. At the same time being bilingual or even multilingual helps them communicate and interact beyond their own group. In the organizational events conducted by pan-Indian associations, even before curtain is lifted upon the main event of the evening the venue can be seen as a place of socializing. Everyone at the event form their own cliques or

move around trying to greet and chit chat with one another. It is very rarely that I heard any conversation in English at these venues. Usually people communicate in their own mother tongue or a language they share and understand in common; and of course English comes to rescue when every other language fails to serve its purpose. Whereas in the events organized by regional ethnic organizations, most of the conversations and socializing happens in their own language, with a few exceptions. One of the events organized by AAB that I have attended is a classical dance form of their state called Kuchipudi. It was a dance ballet based on Hindu mythology performed by a troupe of artists who came from India. As the event itself was regional in nature and is performed in Telugu language, most of the participating audience were Telugu speaking and are members of that association. So, naturally most of the conversations and socializing before and after the event were in Telugu. There were few Caucasian as well as non-Telugu speaking Asian Indian guests among the audience that night, which called for the use of English as a language of communication.

In the above mentioned event organized by AAB, content of the cultural program itself was presented in Telugu language. Though this language is limited to people hailing from the state of Andhra Pradesh and has limited audience, the organizers were sensitive to the fact that there will be non-Telugu speaking members in the audience. A brochure was handed to everyone, which introduces history and significance of the art of Kuchipudi dance, as well as the story of ballet that is being presented that night. Thus in this case, though the ethnic event is centered on language and a local art form it does not

limit itself to that specific regional group. Just like in India, the way these local art forms, especially classical ones like Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Odissi, Bharatanatyam, etc., enjoyed patronage across states transcending the language barrier, ethnic organizations and events here in Springfield have the same effect by welcoming audiences beyond their own ethnic groups.

One has to acknowledge the fact, especially while talking about Indian languages, that India is a diverse country and though many a times even people coming from different regions might find a commonly shared language to communicate but it not always is the case. It is a very plausible scenario here in Springfield as it can be in India or any other place where Asian Indians congregate. In an interview with Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) he shares his experience as a Muslim in India where he was expecting to find Muslims from a neighboring state speaking Urdu but in futility.[33] According to Respondent7 (male, 54yrs),

> The binding thing is English, the language because every body understands even if you come from India you come from different parts……I did my thesis in place called Thiruchi in southern India in oil & gas and I……it's a small village outside of Thiruchi…..I was lost I couldn't find anybody who spoke English or Telugu or Hindi. So in my own country I have to really……then I saw sign which read Haji Muhammad Hussain so I thought this guy is a Muslim I can speak Urdu…..I mean I was naïve I was 19-20 year old. I go there and he couldn't speak a word of English….I mean neither English nor little bit Urdu but he was not able to communicate. That's when I realize that the binding thing even when we were in India was English.

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[33] Most of the Muslims in Indian subcontinent speak Urdu as a language irrespective of what state or region they are in. This need not be the case always, since Urdu as a language could have become dormant in regions where there are very few Muslims or in cases where they have lost some of their traits to the process of assimilation.

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There are instances such as these where diversity can be constricting in communicating. Yet for Respondent7 (male, 54yrs), English seems to serve the purpose of reaching out beyond borders whether it is in India or in America. Thus, English still holds its importance in terms of communication when all the other local languages fail to do so. This is true both in regionally affiliated ethnic organizations as well as pan-Indian organizations.

Repetitiveness:

Indian languages are heard very often in the organizational events. Though sometimes English is used as a medium of communication to explain the event for a larger audience, Indian languages like Hindu/Urdu, Telugu, and Tamil are employed as well. While regional ethnic organizations usually conduct programs that represent their local culture, pan-Indian organizations try to be more inclusive of different cultures and groups within Asian Indians. For instance, when AAA organizes Diwali night it includes dance and song items from different regions and languages. Usually the languages show cased in such a pan-Indian organizational event reflects the language and regional groups that are most represented and involved in that organization. Thus it is mostly Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu languages that are featured with an occasional Gujarati and Punjabi cultural item. Even though the popular cultural items performed on the stage are in local languages the way the whole event is conducted and explained is in English. The anchors / announcers of the show that moderate the event spoke in English for most part in terms

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of introducing events and artistes to the audience. This use of English is again to transcend boundaries of different languages and reach out to all members of the audience. These anchors, a male and a female, who were dressed in ethnic clothing, would give a brief introduction to the cultural item to be performed by invoking the history behind that particular art form and its place of origin. Such a description helps audience in providing a context to different cultural forms from different regions.

While most of the description and explanation is done in English, the anchors switch to either Hindi or Urdu to recite poetry, narrate jokes, and bring in a little humor into the venue. The usage of English language and other Indian languages appear to serve different purposes here in this context. While English is employed to make a point at hand and be informative about the events, languages such as Hindi and Urdu are used to bring in audience participation and group involvement. When the anchors recite *Shayari* (poetry) from a famous poet or a popular literary source, it not only arouses sweetness of literature from back home but also commands an audience feedback as is the tradition with poetry reading.[34] Thus, local languages are used to present jokes, quips, and poetry with a sense of humor as well as style. So in a way, local languages are used to evoke affective sentiments among the members of audience. Such representation of regional identities in these organizational events and the centrality of language in such representation is a prime indication for the role language plays in signifying the ethnic identity.

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[34] Poetry recitals, especially in Hindi and Urdu, evoke a response from audience saying *wah wah*, which is an expletive of appreciation and applause.

Homologousness:

Indian languages, other than in the everyday conversations, are featured mostly in the organizational events. Most of the popular cultural items that are performed in the stage are in one Indian language or the other. Especially pan-Indian organizations such as AAA are inclusive of languages that represent bulk of its membership. Diwali celebration by AAA featured 6 different languages in both song and dance routines. Most of the classical dance and music performances are done in Telugu and Tamil languages; most of the Bollywood-based dance and song routines were done in Hindi; poetry and *ghazals* are rendered in Urdu and Hindi; and dance styles from Gujarat and Punjab were featured as well.[35] In the AAA and AAC sponsored musical night event, all the songs that were presented were in Hindi and most of the introduction and presentation to that event was done in Hindi as well. In the Kuchipudi dance ballet presented by AAB, featured presentation was entirely done in Telugu with introduction and timely explanations in English.

Other than popular culture, Indian language is featured mostly in religion. Kuchipudi dance can be cited as an example of regional language being employed to convey religious themes. Use of language for religious purposes is even more clearly evident in Hindu Temple as the religious chants are usually done in Sanskrit. Some times it is the priest who recites the chants while performing a ritual where as at times it also involves group chant as a part of worship. One of the events I attended that was featured

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[35] Ghazal is a musical tradition where poetry is set to melodic tune.

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at the Temple was *carnatic* classical music, which featured songs with religious themes as well.[36]

Resources:

Teaching language to the children seems to be one of the prime concerns of almost all the parents. They usually look towards various ethnic organizations in educating their kids with native language(s) as well as culture. For all the respondents that have been interviewed language is an important aspect outside the organizational realm as well. Speaking in native tongue is given primacy in family setting. While most of the Asian Indians came here right after they got married or got married right after they came here, their children are more or less born and brought up here in the United States. This seems to be a concern for the parents as the kids are growing away from their own culture. While spouses talk in their local language most of the time they have to use English to converse with their children. Almost everyone that has been interviewed mentioned that their children are not very fluent in their native language but they can understand well enough to carry a conversation. Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) shares her own experience regarding her family and children when asked what language is spoken at home, "mostly English, well I should say both English and Tamil because with kids we deal mostly in English. So it's both languages. I talk to them (in Tamil) they just won't respond. They understand Tamil, so….they can but just a few words here and there you

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[36] Carnatic music is one of two popular classical music traditions in India; the other one being Hindustani. Carnatic music is more popular in South India and Hindustani in the North.

know…I think its more like they are conscious of speaking in a different language, I think that's the whole deal."

Most of the parents have noted that even though they try to initiate a conversation in their own language their children usually respond in English. For instance, Respondent2's (male, 41yrs) mother tongue is Punjabi while his wife's is Marathi but they both share Hindi as a common language. So at home just between themselves they use both Hindi and English in their everyday conversations. With their kids, Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) notes that he speaks mostly in English as they prefer English to Hindi even when they are spoken to Hindi. According to him, "With her (his wife) half Hindi half English, with my kids probably 75% English you know even if you speak in Hindi they'll answer back in English…..they are leaning towards English." Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) also admits that his children are trying to learn Hindi as they have to communicate with their grandparents who can not converse in English.

Similar instances pertaining to language can be found in almost all the families that I have interviewed. Respondent3 (male, 65yrs), who speaks Tamil with his wife, says that he does not talk to his kids in Tamil as it seems very "unnatural" for them to switch between English and Tamil as they are more comfortable with English language. In his own words, "My wife and I speak Tamil. My children understand Tamil but they will reply some times but they don't talk in Tamil within themselves. In fact they don't communicate with me in Tamil nor do I, because it becomes very unnatural for us to go back and forth and they both are very fluent in……..they don't really speak Tamil but

they say few things….." Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) also shares the same issue regarding his kids and he views that it helps for them to be grounded in their language when they visit India more often. When asked about how much of his own language he speaks with his family his reply was, "With the kids its 75% English and 25% Indian language and with my wife its basically 50-50"; and when asked how well his children know their language, "pretty well but not like I do. They understand and they speak that with an accent. They speak English without any accent but our language….but it does help when we go to India……" Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) too shares the same sentiment with Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) by saying that going to India and staying there for a little while help develop language in his children. Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) also opines that having so many languages as a disadvantage for Indians as it not only curtails the scope of communication between different regional groups but also it calls for an extra effort from children to master their language. According to Respondent9 (male, 59yrs),

> We used to speak in Telugu when they (children) were younger and now it's more English. One of the disadvantages here with Indians especially is we don't have one common language. In a way I can see it as a disadvantage. Even when we meet out friends, some of them in temple and all, medium of instruction becomes English and you yourself is so used to English, so that's why unless you will make it a point to talk in Telugu….so when they were growing up when we used to go to India very often and my wife used to stay there for 3-4 months and that way they really picked up a lot of language and we really wanted them to learn their language, more than one language. Of course they do learn….love Hindi also because they see movies and all that. So….but I wish it's just one language for Indians that way when we all meet its like you speak one language and children, its easy for them also to pick up their language because among the children themselves, you know they can converse in the same language.

Though Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) views having too many languages as a disadvantage to Indians in general, he also considers being multilingual as positive aspect. In the same vein he holds ethnic organizations in high regard for facilitating learning of different languages and providing children with a scope and opportunity to mingle with other children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which helps them to be multilingual. He shows his support for such organizations by saying, "culturally it is very important that we do have these organizations and also especially for the children when they are younger, try to get them involved spend more time and its good to have different cultures imbibed in them and language its so important and its nice to…its good to know…even it is (scientifically) proven I guess, its good to be multi-lingual. So that is what we always encourage." Here Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) is referring to AAF, a cultural and religious organization that promotes Indian languages among children with the aid of voluntary teachers. Similar trend can also be found in other religious organizations such as AAE and AAH, who teach Urdu and Malayalam respectively for the children involved in these organizations.

Other than the religious organizations, one of the ethnic organizations as well - AAB that represents Telugu speaking population teaches their kids the native language. It even uses its online webpage on the internet to emphasize importance of their language. This website not only highlights songs and poetry that glorify and acknowledges their regional culture but they also have Telugu alphabet and information regarding their

classes to teach Telugu language. Thus, these different ethnic organizations are using

various resources to promote and sustain their language, especially among their children.

Respondent6 (female, 56yrs), who has been in the United States for 30 years now, notices

how much these ethnic organizations have developed in the Springfield area over these

years in terms of teaching children their language and providing them an educational

experience among many other things. According to her,

> I can see the difference the children are growing up now than our children
> when we moved here there were very limited number of Indians living
> here. So our children did not get that much of exposure of that Indian
> culture. But the younger kids now because it is a big community we have
> temple, we have AAA, we have AAC so these children are getting lot
> more exposed, they are speaking the language…..these small kids. Our
> children never learned language because all they are exposed to is at home
> and then school teacher is telling no don't speak to your child in English
> because otherwise they'll get confused and because they know how
> to…….that really was a disadvantage. Now these kids they speak fluent
> Hindi, English, Gujarati, Punjabi, whatever. So definitely these
> organizations and social things help

Such services being provided, in this instance promotion of local languages, are more so

visible in the present day ethnic organizations and are clearly a reflection of parental

concern as well as Asian Indian community's in general.

Sports and Games

There are various sports that are played and enjoyed in India, like any other

nation. It is cricket nonetheless, that commands immense popularity across the nation.

Other popular sports include field hockey, soccer, followed by not so popular ones such

as polo, kabaddi, tennis, badminton, billiards, chess, volleyball, etc.[37] As far as sports in Springfield area are concerned Cricket seems to be more familiar one among the respondents than any other Indian sport.[38] In fact one of the organizations (AAC) supports a Cricket club in Springfield area.

Salience of Cricket:

Indian sport such as cricket or field hockey does not carry as much frenzy in Springfield as they do back in India. It can be seen as the least salient content category among all the rituals of ethnic significance. Cricket as a sport has got organizational support in Springfield area but is not popular among the Indian community other than those who are closely associated with it. One of the reasons for such a lackluster participation in the cricket club affiliated with AAC is because it is an association representing a regional ethnic group and that serves as a limitation for people from other organizations to be part of that cricket club. According to Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) there are such organizational barriers as he says, "you see…..because we don't have here field hockey and cricket…….some Gujaratis they had their club but then again you know that's not that open you know….there are some people from Amherst some people from State of South, they just figure out ……. But it's not really a common thing."

Among 21 respondents only 2 (9%) were interested in the game to an extent that they keep themselves updated about the latest happenings in the world of cricket. Of the

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[37] Kabaddi is a local sport.
[38] Indian sport does not necessarily mean sports originated in India, rather it is to imply the most popular ones in India. In fact both modern Cricket and modern Field Hockey originated in England.

21 respondents 6 (29%) of them admitted that they once had interest in cricket but not anymore since their immigration to United States. It just was too hard for them to keep track and they eventually shifted their allegiance to viewing American sports. When asked about her interest in sports and opportunities to participate in Indian sports, Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) said, "I used to follow….I mean I was a big cricket fan when I was in India and then it stayed with me for the first few years. Probably after that you really don't get a chance to watch and so. I mean I am still interested, it's just like I don't watch it….the student community at SOU created a ground to play cricket and they have a cricket team and…..but I just don't go and watch, maybe because I am not in that community, I am out of that. Again I think its part of the lack of opportunities and then if you really don't keep up you just tend to loose interest." There are also some respondents who are completely interested in American sports such as football, basketball, and local college teams; and they make up 33% of the total respondents. Another 6 (29%) of them are not interested in any kind of sports at all, either Indian or American.

Repetitiveness & Homologousness:

With such a dull response to the sport and to the Cricket club among my respondents, there is not much repetitiveness that can be seen in terms of local sports such as Cricket. Of all the respondents only 3 (14%) of them used to play Cricket but not anymore. There are different reasons for people to stop playing the game over a period of time. According to Respondent7 (male, 54yrs), "There is a (cricket) team here in Springfield. When I didn't had kids, when I had more time I used to play." Since none of

the respondents currently play any Cricket repetitiveness of this content category is nil. Similarly, it is also hard to determine the homologousness of Cricket as a sport to other content categories with no sufficient data.

Resources:

Cricket has organizational support from AAC, thus ethnic organization is the prime resource in sustaining a cricket Club in Springfield area. Though not many of my respondents are active in this Cricket Club they are aware of its existence and the kind of resources it has. One of my respondents, Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) observes that the Club has been in existence for at least 25 years and that they have a van to carry all their sporting goods when they go out of state to play league matches with other teams else where. Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) mentions in the passing that she is aware that they have a cricket ground for them to play.

In spite of all these resources some of the respondents feel that lack of its popularity owes to the organization being a regional one and more inclusive of its own community. Respondent3 (male, 65yrs), responding to the question if he is aware of any venues for Indian sports like Cricket, says "In Oklahoma City the Gujaratis have, particularly Gujaratis who came from Africa, second generation African Gujaratis, they have in the AAC they have lot of these cricket tournaments and they have……but so far it has always been between the AAC people. But others can go and join them once in a while during summer time." Such a regional atmosphere could be a potential reason for the lack of popularity among other Asian Indians. Therefore, it is not just the availability

of resources but the level of access to such resources is an important aspect to be engaging in such rituals of ethnic significance.

Rituals of Popular Culture

Popular culture is usually what most of the organizational events are centered around. Though there is presence of ethnic food, ethnic clothing, regional languages, and symbols representing India at the venue, main event itself is usually a display of popular culture. Events sponsored by these ethnic organizations showcase cultures from back home with pop cultural elements such as movies, music, dance, etc., which also include religious themes. Programs such as Diwali celebration and musical night, sponsored by AAA in collaboration with AAE and AAC respectively, are both mostly contemporary pop culture oriented programs. Whereas the Kuchipudi dance ballet organized by AAB and the concert hosted by AAF are classical in form and carried religious themes. Though, within the discourse of cultural sociology the distinction is maintained between 'high culture' and 'pop culture' the content category of popular culture in this study is defined to be inclusive of both classical and contemporary art forms. [39] Thus, rituals of

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[39] The category of "popular culture" in this study doesn't consider the distinctions such as 'high culture' and 'popular culture' as does the field of 'Sociology of culture' (Crane, 1994). Within the discourse of cultural sociology this distinction is based on aspects such as production and consumption of these art forms, medium through which art is transmitted, nature of the audiences, etc. Classical music and classical dance forms such as Kuchipudi will be considered high culture where as the Bollywood-based song and dance routines are considered popular culture. Even a sport like Cricket is considered popular culture from the stand point of cultural sociology, but again in this study it is rather considered a distinct content category and not part of popular culture. The intention of this study in refraining from concepts of cultural sociology is to keep the focus on rituals of ethnic significance and not to delve into a rigorous cultural analysis. Having said that, it would be a fascinating study to look at the distinctions of 'high art' and 'popular culture' within the Asian Indian ethnic organizations in terms of available art forms, kind of patronage being received, difference in patrons if at all there is, etc.

ethnic significance within the popular culture category include classical and contemporary Indian music, classical and contemporary Indian dances, *Shayari* (poetry recitals), and Indian movies.

Salience of Popular Culture:

Events that are organized by ethnic organizations primarily feature cultural programs that involve Indian music and dance. Of all the four events that have been observed, there was only one item from one of those events that was not drawn from the Indian pop culture; and that gives an idea as to how important pop culture is in these organizational gatherings.[40] The items featured in these events are not just a passive display from the artistes and performers but there were moments which stirred active involvement of the participants too. The musical night organized by AAA in collaboration with AAC was one such event where people from the audience went up closer to the stage and started dancing to the songs sung by the artists. Though that night started very slow it took some time for audience to eventually warm up to the music and in no time people were responding to both slow romantic ballads as well as fast paced, foot-tapping dance music by getting to the dance floor. There were also moments in Diwali celebration where audiences would respond with a thunderous applause or join the

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[40] In the Diwali celebration sponsored by AAA most of the items that were presented on stage were songs from Indian movies, dances choreographed for those film songs, songs and dances representing other genres such as Ghazals, Bhangra, Garba, Classical, and instrumental renditions of classical ragas. Other than all the pop cultural items mentioned above, there was only one act featured that was not drawn from Indian pop culture and it was a stand up comedy by a young girl. She delivered her jokes in English language and though her humor did touch upon certain issues relating to Indian immigrants, it was not an item drawn from Indian culture. This item mostly resembles the Stand-Up comedy routines that are popular in American pop culture.

performers in singing along with them. In this Diwali celebration, especially the first item that was performed got a great response from the audience. It was a patriotic song sung and enacted by children in their ethnic dresses. Since it was a very popular song from an old Hindi Movie the crowd joined immediately clapping to the rhythm of the song. The grand finale of the song ended with all children walking across the stage in colors that signify Indian flag and at this point every one stood up applauding. The kind of reaction and excitement generated by songs and dances from back home demonstrates the strength of such rituals of popular culture in terms of connecting them with their ethnic roots.

Such a connection to the music and movies from back home can also be seen in their personal preferences as to what they listen and watch outside the organizational space. In terms of watching Indian movies or going to theatre, now, with the increased distribution of Indian movies overseas there emerged a considerable audience in countries like United States, England, Australia, Malaysia, UAE, and other countries. Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) is one such fan of Bollywood movies who has a small movie library of his own and he claims that his favorite movies tend to be old classics and the ones that he last fell in love with before departing India.[41] According to Respondent14 (male, 45yrs), "Well I mostly like to watch light romantic comedies. I am still stuck in the 70s and 80s. Since I have moved out of India, my reference point is stuck there. It takes a lot for me to see a new (movie)….but whenever my sister comes (from India) she brings a small library selection….things what I like, but I don't go out to the video store

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[41] Bollywood is a name given to Bombay movie industry.

or rent movies. One time I got a whole suitcase full of videos, movies, so I have a library of about 150 movies. I go buy old classics from 50s 60s and ….but mainly I limit myself to what I can watch with kids."

Its not just the old classics and movies on DVDs / VHS that are available but also the new releases can be seen now a days. While speaking to different respondents I found out that Springfield area screens Indian movies in theatres for both Indian and American audiences. Though these screenings are not associated or sponsored by any of the ethnic organizations they still seem to be well advertised through organizations and gained popularity with the crowd. One of the respondents, Respondent6 (female, 56yrs) was surprised to find an Indian movie in a regular theatre as well as at the huge crowd that came to watch it. In my interview with her, while talking about cultural events organized by Asian Indian organizations, Respondent6 (female, 56yrs) suddenly recollected her experience of watching an Indian movie recently. According to her, "….we are getting some Indian movies also lately…in the movie theatre. There was one last weekend. You know, I didn't even know, I was just looking for some movie to go that afternoon. I was bored…..like it was 5 o' clock and I was clicking on these movie theatres and all of a sudden I see there is a……tinsel town has that salaam-e-ishq (a newly released Hindi movie at that time). I told my husband I'm going there are you coming with me? But you won't believe there were four to five hundred people. I was kind of surprised." While Respondent6 (female, 56yrs) is surprisingly satisfied with her movie going experience in Springfield, Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) travels all the way to Detroit, which is a few

hours away, to watch an Indian movie. According to him, "we go to Detroit to watch movies because there they have at least 2 or 3 theatres that screen regular movies, Indian movies including Telugu movies, first time premier release Telugu movies. So it's…..recently Bollywood is making more money…..distributing movies in US…."

But not every one has time for a lengthy Indian movie, when I asked Respondent1 (male, 53yrs) if he watches Indian movies he responds, "I haven't gone to theatre too much to watch Indian movies, I don't have time, my time is very essence to me, so I usually go to my own home computer or other wise….that's what I do and now I think with my age I am little more on religious stuff, so I am watching Vishnupurana (a made for TV Hindu religious series) right now…it's a set of 29 DVDs I am watching, very well done by Chopra Brothers….." Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) is bothered by the length of Indian movies as well and hence claims he does not usually watch them unless the movie is well recommended. When asked if he prefers to watch Hollywood or Bollywood movies, he said, "I'd like to see the best of both. I watch Hollywood movies and……I'm not…..I don't want too many Bollywood. If there are good ones I do watch. The big difference is the Bollywood movies are double the length. If it's not a good one then it's a waste of lot of your time. So if it is well-recommended we do watch them." Out of all the 21 respondents 15 (72%) of them said that they predominantly watch Indian movies and a few Hollywood movies now and then; 4 (19%) of them said that they mostly watch Hollywood movies and pick few Indian movies based on recommendations from their friends; and 2 (9%) of them said that they watch a good mix of both Hollywood and

Indian movies. Interest in watching Indian movies can be seen in some of their excitement as well as in the percentages noted here.

In terms of Indian music, there are quite a few of my respondents who are loyal to ethnic music. Indian music has a lot of different genres and is also very particular to the region where the music originates. Most of the Indian music is film-based music leaving other genres in periphery such as classical, folk, ghazal, qawwali, etc. There are a variety of choices in terms of what music one listens to. Respondent3 (male, 65yrs), for instance, likes classical music from Southern India as well as western music. He admits that, "When it comes to music, to me I like both music……Carnatic and western. Particularly in India, in Tamilnadu and all that when you are born music becomes part of you……most of Indians too….they are musically inclined because……. we have fundamentals of music……like Carnatic music….so it becomes part of my culture and I can sing Tamil music, I can sing Tamil songs, I can sing English songs, which I always enjoy……"

Just like some of the respondents who would watch Indian movies upon a friends recommendation, Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) would wait for suggestions, especially regarding movie-based music. Her natural preference would be Indian classical as she teaches classical music for children who attend Balvikas affiliated with AAF. According to her, "I listen both to classical and film music. Film music I just said because I am not in touch with movies and I may not know that much unless some one recommends something but we still listen to old film music because that's when I was in India, I used

to go to a lot of movies but other than that mostly classical music, Indian classical music." Just the way Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) likes movies that were popular at the point of his departure from India Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) likes her music from the same point of reference in her own life. In terms of how significant Indian music is to the respondents, 77% of them predominantly listen to Indian music while also enjoying western music;14% of the respondents predominantly listen to western music with little Indian music; and 9% of them are not interested in music at all.

In the process of interviewing I came to know that most of the respondents were subscribing to Indian television channels that I was not aware of earlier. Indian television channels cater to different linguistic groups within Asian Indian community. Television channels such as ETV, Gemini TV, Sun TV, Asianet, Zee TV, Sony, etc. that are available in India are also now accessible. Indian television is significant in providing access to pop culture outside the organizational realm since this puts respondent in a more direct contact with current pop cultural elements such as music, movies, and dance.

In fact some of the respondents mentioned that Indian television makes them feel closer to home. Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) says that, "The good point about this (having TV) is I don't feel home sick. Just like as I was craving to go to India…..visit India…..when we see that…..it's like we are in India….you know when my father came 5 years back, there was nothing. He got bored in 3 weeks because he was missing the news…….he just couldn't live here. Now I was wondering you know if he was around he would not be bored." Respondent6 (female, 56yrs) agrees that Indian television keeps

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one away from being bored, when compared to American television, as she says, "It's a satellite dish network I think. It's really entertaining. Especially over the weekends, day times American channels don't have much, either they have football game or just boring programs. Indian channels have cook shows, talk shows like that, it's more entertaining."

Repetitiveness:

Access to Indian television ensures the repetitive watching of different pop cultural aspects directly from India. Owning different DVDs or CDs is one more source for repetitive participation in rituals of popular culture in ones personal life. Within the organizational context, pop cultural performances are scheduled 5-6 times a year, at the most, by any ethnic organization; and between nine different ethnic organizations in the area of Springfield there can be anywhere between 10-15 events held annually.[42] In terms of frequency of participation in the events of popular culture, almost all of the respondents said that they attend as many events as they can; given the pressures of work and convenience of the event schedule.

Homologousness:

Despite the cultural differences across the nation, back in India, pop cultural performances enacted in these organizational events are enjoyed by most of the members. The same has been already noted in the case of ethnic food, which is savored by most of the participants regardless of their regional background. Ethnic dress is another aspect that is most featured in the performances. While some of these dresses are tailored

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[42] Not all organizations arrange 5-6 events annually. This number varies from year to year and among different organizations.

especially for the event, all events and performers displayed ethnic clothing for their stage presence. Use of native language is another similarity across different pop cultural performances. The songs and dances reflect the regional diversity as well as the language of that region. Religion is portrayed very often in these organizational events. While two of the four events that I have attended were completely religious i.e., Kuchipudi classical dance ballet and the classical music concert, one of the other event Diwali celebration had at least three performances that had religious themes. Thus the content category of popular culture shares characteristics with other rituals such as ethnic food, ethnic clothing, language, and religion.

Resources:

Organizational structures for Asian Indians provide primary resource to make these pop cultural events possible. It is these organizations that plan and co-ordinate such events by taking initiative in finding artists that are available to perform on certain occasions and then promoting the event across their community. Since not all the events feature renowned artists, most of the time the members of the organization themselves are a prime resource in terms of showcasing their talent. While all the three events viz., musical night, Kuchipudi dance, and Carnatic music are performed by artists from outside Springfield; Diwali celebration featured cultural items performed by members of the organizations that are involved in that event.

Outside the organizational milieu, as it was noted earlier, having Indian television is a good source for Indian music and Indian film. The media components that provide

these rituals of pop culture such as DVDs and CDs are available through grocery stores as well as on the internet. Thus both grocery stores as well as internet serve as a resource for procuring the cultural material. Out of 21 respondents 3 (14%) of them use grocery shops alone to get hold of pop cultural items such as DVDs and CDs; 6 (29%) of them get them exclusively on the internet; 9 (43%) of them use both internet as well as local grocery stores; and the remaining 3 (14%) wait for a trip to India or get them through someone who is making such trip.

Religious Rituals

Religion in general is usually prescribed with rituals. Like most of the content categories discussed here, religion also harbors the aspect of diversity. India is a birth place of four major religions and hundreds of different sects within those.[43] Of all the nine ethnic organizations present in Springfield four of them are religion based. These organizations not only reflect the centrality of religion for an Indian immigrant but also provide a regular religious and cultural venue. At a spiritual level, these organizations provide a place of worship for members of their faith. Asian Indians in Springfield conduct themselves in terms of going to temple, mosque, or a church, frequently celebrating festivals, and observing certain religious rituals and restrictions just as they used to do it back home in India.

Salience of Religious Rituals:

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[43] Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism are the four religions that originated from India. There is a presence of more religions than jut these four. Muslims, Christians, and Parsis are some of the minority religious groups as well.

While 12 (59%) out of 21 respondents said their religious identity is very important, 6 (29%) of them claim they are moderate in their religious outlook though they acknowledge the importance of religion in providing them with core values; and it is only 3 (14%) of them who claim that religion is not a central part of their lives. Among the respondents who shared a strong religious identity, one can hear their personal convictions about their religion. Respondent1 (male, 53yrs) states that, "Religious identity is the foundation of every human being……that is what I am standing on." Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) expands on her pride of being a Hindu and also adds a theme of universal relevance of religion, now matter what religion it is. In her own words, "I definitely am proud to be a Hindu. I think it has so many things…..you know you learn from it. But I am not sure …… I wouldn't say that this is the only religion and we all have to follow that. I mean I am a Hindu and I am proud of that. I think I'll go…..I think all the religions basically, I mean they teach some human morals and values and…..but I do appreciate the Hindu epics, the festivals, and there is some meaning to it you know, you may not understand and follow every one of them but I am sure there is some meaning in whatever you do."

There are quite a few respondents who viewed religion, especially Hinduism, as a way of life rather than religion. Thus themes that are articulated by these set of respondents view Hinduism not just as a set of rigid principles or doctrine but 'as a way of life' and 'philosophical outlook.' Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) and Respondent6

(female, 56yrs) both talk about Hinduism while resonating its characteristic of pan-Indianness. When asked how important their religious identity is,

> Respondent5 (male, 67yrs): I will not …… like it doesn't matter. Because you know, I am not like a staunch Hindu, I am just like a liberal type, very open minded. Like I go to …… you see my wife is a Sikh…..I go to gurudwara. I go to church, I got to mosque, and because I personally believe that God is one. Most of us are like that.
> Respondent6 (female, 56yrs): Yeah same thing with me……I think the Hindu religion is that way. It's not a religion, it's like a philosophy and you know all the religions are teaching you the same thing – be good, take care of other people.
> Respondent5 (male, 67yrs): Some become like fundamentalists. If you don't follow this religion it means you have to go to hell you know…….
> Respondent6 (female, 56yrs): Some religions have……but Hindu religion is not, Hindu religion is very open and I feel very blessed to be a Hindu because we can……..we do not have any dos and don'ts you know……to be Hindu. So that's the best religion to be.

Between Respondent5 (male, 67yrs) and Respondent6 (female, 56yrs), the ideas unravel very interestingly since Hinduism, in their rhetoric, is both seen as a religion that is embracing of other religions as well as the fact that it is better than the other ones, especially better than those that have rigid dogma and rules of prescription and proscription. The latter reference is a possible hint of criticism against Christianity or even Islam to draw comparisons with Hinduism, though no obvious references were made. The point that definitely comes across in conversations with both these respondents is the salience of their religion.

Even Respondent3 (male, 65yrs), who was born a Christian, notices the importance of Hinduism growing up in India. According to Respondent3 (male, 65yrs),

"I mean every Indian who is born is a Hindu no matter what religion they grow. That is…..your culture, your sight and everything…..because Hinduism is not a religion it is a way of life, that's the way we were born. There is nothing there we can say that I am not a Hindu, because I believe in that philosophy of life. That's the way of life that I am leading…..even though I have followed Christianity or my parents made me a Christian man. So fundamentally we all have the Indian way of life." Thus it is the religious philosophy that holds importance to an extent that it could transcend diversity and provide a common way of life.

Celebration of festivals is another aspect in which religion is reflected. While organizations, both secular and religious, provide support for events featuring religious themes; these events are usually organized commemorating an Indian festival or a holiday. Of the four events that I had attended three of them were organized commemorating religious festivals where as the other one was a night of pure entertainment devoid of religious themes.[44] In terms of their importance, 17 (81%) respondents claimed that festivals are very important to them, where as 2 (9%) of them said that they are not important for spiritual reasons but are important only for social

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[44] Of these three events that commemorate religious festivals only two of them had religious themes presented in their entirety of that program and the other one had mostly pop cultural items and just few religious items presented. Diwali program, which was organized jointly by both AAA and AAE, is an event commemorating the Hindu festival of Diwali as well as Muslim festival of Eid-Ul-Fitr. Kuchipudi dance ballet that was organized by AAB is commemorating the festivals of both Dasara and Deepavali. The "classical music recital" organized by AAF is also commemorating a Hindu festival 'maha shivratri.' The only other program that had no religious overtones to it is the "musical night", which was held to celebrate the Valentines Day.

reasons.[45] This idea of how religious festivals and venues serve as a social platform will be explored further while addressing the theme of *homologousness*.

Repetitiveness:

Display of religion in the organizational venues is where most of these religious rituals of ethnicity are visible. However the events that are sponsored by organizations are usually major festivals and are celebrated only twice or thrice annually. Such designation of few festivals or occasions as important and to commemorate them in a public venue provides not only a face to Indian ethnicity but it also serves as a platform for most of the Indians and their families to socialize. Though these religious functions are not organized often their grandeur and density testifies to the importance of religion and ethnic identity. Also in terms of logistics and practicality, organizing events with such magnanimity is not possible very often, owing to the community's limited resources.

Even outside the organizational milieu, respondents have mentioned that they do gather for privately held religious ceremonies by inviting friends and acquaintances. But it is religious organizations such as AAE, AAF, and AAG that witness more volume in terms of frequent religious gatherings as they maintain a mosque, temple, and a church respectively for their own members. It is these places of worship that most record the repetitiveness of involvement in religion. The frequency of attending temple varies for

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[45] The data is not available from the other 2 (9%) respondents on the importance of festivals. As a part of the flow of interview, I have skipped the question accidentally in one instance and in another instance the respondent answered "not sure" in the reply via mail.

different people and it need not necessarily be associated with a spiritual orientation. For instance, Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) attends temple two to three times a week, mostly because he is one of the members on the AAF board of trustees. Respondent9 (male, 59yrs) also reveals that his presence at the temple is more so because he is a volunteer than being a trustee to the organization. According to him, "I am a volunteer, whether I have a position or not…. its almost like 15 years now so I do come to the temple very often and there are lot of things going on you know, maintenance and this and that, so I just come whenever I have to come. So I am here at least once in every three days." Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) and Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) are some of the respondents who attend temple almost every week due to their commitments, either to their community or to their family. Respondent8 (female, 39yrs) teaches classical music at the temple and hence she attends temple every week; where as Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) has to drive his daughter to temple to attend those classes of classical music and dance. When asked Respondent14 (male, 45yrs) - 'how often do you go to public place of worship' - his response was, "My daughter attends a dance class at the temple so when I have to drive her there I'll go there. I'll do my pooja, when I am waiting there I'll try socializing with other parents or I will pull out books from the temple library and just sit down and read…..its weekly, sometimes I drive her sometimes my wife drives her. Then when my mother comes she likes to go to the temple more frequently so we have more frequent visits." Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) and Respondent13 (male, 34yrs) are two other respondents who said that they attend public places of worship every week.

Respondent7 (male, 54yrs) attends prayers at mosque every Friday and Respondent13 (male, 34yrs) his Syrian Orthodox Church every Sunday. The remaining of the respondents could not give an exact number of times that they attend their public places of worship but they have given an estimate on their frequency of visit, which is once or twice a month.

Homologousness:

As we have observed in other content categories religion is featured in almost every other content category except the category of sports and games. Thus religion holds its homologousness with all the other rituals of ethnic significance such as ethnic clothing, food, language, and popular culture. Religion and religious themes are featured very often in organizational events including those organizations that are secular in nature. This just reflects the blurry line between religion and culture among Indians. Such permeation of religion into every sphere of their life denotes its significance as well as its homologousness and congruence.

There are instances where ones religious identity and their religious philosophy hold a central place but at the same time there is also introspection into how crucial can this identity be. When asked how important his religious identity is, Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) explains,

> You know I think it is very important…..I think as Hindu philosophy also teaches you kind of out grow it. You start seeing the secularism, you start seeing that pretty much everything leads you to the same path. Very soon you identify that and…….than trying to put a religious name makes it a sort of a deliberated effort. I don't try to….you know……I'm proud that I

learnt my philosophy through Hinduism but I have almost absolutely equal respect for other religious in that regard and I very clearly see that they all lead to the same thing. So I can go to a church or a mosque and do the same prayers and not feel any different. I think any more emphasis on Hinduism will lead it to fanaticism which is usually the problem...yeah and so that's the philosophy of Hinduism too that we don't really want to segregate and identify. I don't have any problems with identifying myself as a Hindu but I don't like to emphasize it too much.

This is an interesting articulation of how religious-philosophical rhetoric is employed to caution religious extremities. It is further more interesting to observe that this statement is coming from Respondent2 (male, 41yrs) who happens to be the President of AAA, which is a secular pan-Indian organization that is inclusive of Asian Indians as well as South East Asians often times.

Similar argument regarding this overlap of religion and culture can be seen clearly and elaborately articulated by Respondent4 (male, 37yrs), especially making connections to rituals of ethnic significance such as clothing, dance and song routines. Respondent4 (male, 37yrs) is a self-proclaimed atheist and yet he attends temple. It is in this context; Respondent4 (male, 37yrs) asserted the significance of religion and its ability to transcend the scriptural boundaries. When asked 'how often do you attend a public place of worship?' the following is his reaction when pressed for an elaborate response:

"[Y]ou know I'm an atheist…..so….I don't know if it will impact your research……my father is an atheist and I ended up being pretty much raised as an atheist so…you know I value the cultural aspect of that but not the religious aspect of that…..you see what I mean…..because even the religion there is culture in it in my opinion. So it is kind of you know……you can't distinguish each one but there is culture in religion also. So I value that part of it but I don't value the theological part of it….see….theology…..religion is all about god but unfortunately it is

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perceived with a cultural view like…..in theology there is god and there are human beings and human beings hope that they were created by the god. That would be just a simple theology but you know….in religion, religion is very closely inter-twined with culture. But in Hinduism it comes from Indian people and Hindu culture. So in that religion you got lot of gods and gods are all in Indian clothing and gods are all made by the human beings to fit their own needs pretty much. So that's where I see culture. So I go to the temple, I go there you know because, when I go there I seek my own culture in it but I don't go there to get any benefit from the god, which would be a traditional approach. Traditional approach, when you go to the temple you really go to see god, but I don't go to the temple to see god. I see culture there because they sing songs and the songs are all very Indian based. Since it is Indian based it is all Indian culture.

This presence of religion has been noticed in the other ethnic content categories that have been discussed earlier. Such *homologousness* owes to the centrality of Hindu religion and its philosophy in the lives of its followers or even to every Indian in general.

Resources:

Ethnic organizations, both religious and secular, play the central role in brining religion to its members. It is the places of worship they provide as well as various ceremonies and events that they organize that provide a great source of religion. So, similar to most of the ethnic rituals that have been discussed so far, even in the case of religion it is the ethnic organizations that provide support and vibrancy to the community. These places of worship not only serve to fulfill religious and spiritual needs but they also provide a milieu for social gathering and staying connected to ones own ethnic community. This theme resonates in Respondent6's (female, 56yrs) words as temple is seen as a place to stay socially connected. According to her, "Only time I go to the

temple is not particularly to go to the temple because in my mind it's not important for me to go to the temple. I can be sitting home and I can meditate, I do whatever…….only time I go……I mean honest truth……when I am missing people I haven't seen them for a long time…..then I know ok if I go to this *Shiv Rathri* function I am going to meet lot of people….just to see other people…..because we are pretty close it is a small community and we can't invite people in our home….like 100 people so if I am missing somebody I know that if I go to the temple on certain festivals I'll meet them."

Availability of popular cultural items such as devotional movies and music either through internet or grocery stores is another outlet to get involved in religious rituals. The local ethnic stores can cater only to few religious needs as there is no store in Springfield that specializes in selling religious items. Usually, most of the respondents have their own *pooja* room at their homes, which are furnished with religious icons and settings of gods and goddesses. Most of these religious accoutrements are usually procured on their visits to their homeland. Some of the respondents even mentioned about all the trouble they went through to get figurines of different gods and goddess to help them celebrate certain festivals. Respondent4 (male, 37yrs) speaks of huge amounts of money he had spent on buying a lot of figurines of Hindu deities to decorate for *kolu*, which he brought from India.[46] According to Respondent4 (male, 37yrs), "we have a really big (platform)…..like nine steps and each step…..we just bought one and half Lakhs worth of

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[46] *Kolu*, also know as *golu* or *bommai kolu*, is a Hindu festival celebrated in the state of Tamilnadu. One of the features of this festival is arranging figurines of various Hindu deities on a tiered platform with different rungs of steps. This platform of tiers should be in odd number, either 7, 9, or 11 steps. Therefore, the more steps one would have the more figurines one would need to fill up the platform.

dolls from Indian and we paid customs $400."[47] There are such inconveniences of having

to wait to go back to India due to the lack of expansive resources within the community.

Despite the meager resources, religious rituals of ethnic significance are enacted both in

the organizational setting as well as at the warmth of their homes.

OVERVIEW OF RITUALS OF ETHNIC SIGNIFICANCE

Based on the literature on Asian Indian immigrants and from the preliminary

observations from the field, six content categories have been identified. All these content

categories – food, dress, language, religion, popular culture, and sports and games – were

observed as they unfolded in the milieu of ethnic organizational settings. Personal

experiences as well as what exactly these rituals of ethnic significance meant to the

participants was also espoused from interviews with the members of this community,

especially those who are involved with these ethnic organizations. Organizational events

usually center on the themes of religion or entertainment and sometimes with a good mix

of both these aspects. Thus popular culture is the content category that can be seen ranked

higher than others in terms of the display of rituals of ethnic significance. Even in its

homologousness with the other ethnic rituals, one can find religion, ethnic dress, ethnic

language, and ethnic food featured in these events of popular culture. While all the events

that I have attended and observed had popular cultural aspects represented (all four

events), religious themes were present in three out of those four events. Nonetheless,

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[47] In Indian currency, One Lakh is 100,000 Rupees - approximately, $ 2,500. Customs duty is a tax or tariff
paid on the import or export of goods.

popular culture and religion can be seen as two prominent content categories around which organizational events and community participation is facilitated.

The categories of 'popular culture' and 'religion' are followed by food, language, and dress that are consistently present in both popular cultural as well as religious events. Ethnic food is featured 100% in all the four events that I have attended. Most of the respondents strongly associate the presence of ethnic food with Indian culture ("food-centered" culture) as well as the diversity of the Asian Indian community that it reflects. Language can be seen as a content category that follows ethnic food, not because it lacks the salience but it is usually featured along with English language in most of the events. Though all the respondents that I have interviewed are bilingual (100%), the use of ethnic language in organizational events shares its place along with English. To give this category its due respect, I should clarify that the use of English in these events is used to facilitate the program and to make announcements and to introduce various events, but the events themselves are always (almost 100%) performed in an ethnic language.[48] Though ethnic clothing is mostly featured in organizational settings, it still is placed below ethnic language in terms of its presence as a ritual of ethnic significance. This reflects in the statements of my respondents as 91% of them see themselves wearing ethnic clothing only on certain occasions, but not necessarily for all the organizational events. This can be substantiated from my field observations as it is mostly women and

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[48] All the events that I have attended featured items of performance in ethnic languages with an exception of a little girl doing stand up comedy in English at the Diwali event organized by AAA and AAE. Therefore all the events are always in ethnic language "almost 100%" of the time.

children who are often dressed in ethnic clothing when compared to men. Finally, there was no enough data to analyze or make substantive statements about the content category of sports and games. Only 9% of all my respondents are still interested in Indian sports but they do not participate in any of those here in Springfield. Though some of them hinted at a meager presence of a cricket team, none of them knew enough about the opportunities to pursue these native sports.

All the above discussed rituals of ethnic significance are evaluated and analyzed employing Structural Ritualization Theory, especially in terms of their salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources. The field work in this study demonstrates that all these ethnic content categories are present, to varying degrees, in the community of our interest. However, it seems to be the zeal of these Asian Indian immigrant parents to keep their culture alive and pass it over to their next generation that makes these ethnic organizations so vibrant. This primordial theme resonates in most of the interviews and the activities of various organizations, which is crucial in articulating Asian Indian ethnic identity.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Contributions of the Research and Final Thoughts

Rituals of ethnic significance have been explored, especially as enacted in the organizational milieu, within this small yet vibrant community of Asian Indian immigrants in the town of Springfield, South State. Resonating with the existing literature on Asian Indian immigrant communities and families in the United States, as well as established by this research project, there are certain rituals of ethnic significance that are highly visible and recur consistently in events celebrating one's ethnicity. While the existing literature serves as a launching pad for this research, this study also seeks to address the lack of literature on Asian Indian immigrants in general and about their ethnic organizational structures in particular. Some of the early studies as well as few recent ones have identified and outlined certain cultural practices prevalent among Asian Indian immigrants. (Melendy, 1977; Angelo, 1997; Leonard, 1997; Helweg, 2002; Helweg, 2004) Most of these studies are located in the densely populated pockets of Asian Indian immigrants such as California, New York, Detroit, and Chicago; with an emphasis on ethnic identity in the context of assimilation. There are also very few studies that address the interface between ethnic organizations and elements of ethnicity. (Maira, 2002; Bacon, 1999; Bacon, 1996; Dhingra, 2003) Drawing from this stock of literature, my dissertation research forays into new directions viz., showcasing a relatively smaller

community when compared to the ones that have been extensively studied, and the dynamic interplay between rituals of ethnic significance as they are articulated in local ethnic organizations. With a research agenda that attempts to contribute to the field of ethnic studies, this research delves into exploring the field of race and ethnic relations in order to provide up-close ethnic profile of this particular Asian Indian immigrant community.

The complexity of issues pertaining to race and ethnicity are reflected in the discipline of sociology and its theoretical compendium. Such complexity can be seen in the academic input provided by various theoretical perspectives on race and ethnicity, which have helped shape the contours of this dissertation. However, it is the analytical potential of Structural Ritualization Theory that served as a tool to evaluate these rituals of ethnic significance in terms of their salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources. Structural Ritualization Theory provides a unique perspective on issues pertaining to race and ethnicity as its analytical potential had been employed in understanding other ethnic communities such as Italian Americans and Chinese Americans. (Knottnerus and Loconto, 2003; Guan and Knottnerus, 1999; Guan and Knottnerus, 2003) Substantial contributions can be noticed in these studies to the academic field of race and ethnicity, especially with the way these ethnic communities organize themselves through 'strategic ritualized practices' and the way ritualized symbolic practices are used for political mobilization.

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Just as these studies employed Structural Ritualization Theory to examine an ethnic community in an urban area, my dissertation is built up along the same lines with an emphasis on Asian Indian immigrant community. As noticed in these two studies of Italian and Chinese Americans, this dissertation as well contributes to the understanding of how ethnic communities organize and mobilize themselves in order to preserve and sustain their identity. For the first time this research provides a focused and systematic attention to the role organizations play in promoting and facilitating ritual practices in an ethnic community.

Given the dense pedagogical input, one of the conscious efforts was to give primacy to the voices from the field, so that they are not buried under the much needed ontologies and epistemologies of this work. Therefore, my interest in understanding complexities of ethnicity starts by giving importance to these immigrant voices and maintaining the veracity and authenticity of their experiences. From the very beginning my research endeavor in taking up this project was to get an up-close and personal look at the Asian Indian community and its ethnic organizations. Various phases of my field work - whether scouting the field, making acquaintances, participating in celebrations and events, or being welcomed into their homes to share their immigrant ethnic experiences - reflects my attempts to better understand the social context as well as develop empathy for the immigrant life. Such familiarity with the actors in the field is made possible by the ethnographic approach of this dissertation.

The ritualized symbolic practices are evaluated and ranked based on the four factors outlined by the Structural Ritualization Theory - salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources. In this dissertation, these four factors are applied to the rituals of ethnic significance in order to ascertain their centrality in providing a strong sense of ethnic identity. As outlined in the Structural Ritualization Theory, *salience* refers to the centrality of a ritualized symbolic practice or ritual acts within a domain of interaction. *Repetitiveness* evaluates the frequency with which a ritualized practice is engaged in within a social setting. *Homologousness* refers to the degree of perceived similarity (in meaning and form) within a myriad of ritualized symbolic practices that are evoked in this domain of interaction. *Resources* are the materials needed to perform ritualized practice in a domain of interaction. One of the key arguments of the theory is that the greater the salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and availability of resources, the greater the rank of relative standing of ritualized practices in a larger milieu. When these four factors are applied to the rituals of ethnic significance, which are being examined in this study, we notice certain rituals stand out among others to be more central, more often repeated, having more resonance with the other ritual enactments, and the availability as well as an absolute need for related resources.

Ethnic food, ethnic clothing, language, religion, popular culture, and sports and games, have been identified as the rituals of ethnic significance and most of them have been observed in the organizational settings (with the exception of sports & games). Of all these six categories of ethnic significance, popular culture and religion are the themes

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that make these organizational events possible. They are followed by the rest of the categories viz., ethnic food, ethnic languages, and ethnic clothing. Thus popular culture is the content category that can be seen ranked higher than all others in terms of the display of rituals of ethnic significance. All the events that I have attended had items of pop culture incorporated into their programs in displaying ethnic identity (100%); where as three out of those four events had religious items presented (75%). The categories of 'popular culture' and 'religion' are followed by food, language, and dress that are consistently present in both popular cultural as well as religious events.

Though ethnic food has been featured in all the four events that I have attended, it is not the central theme around which the whole event is planned. Most of the events are both religious in nature or entertainment oriented; and ethnic food in these events is featured for various reasons. These reasons include broad attributions to Indian culture (viz., 'it is an Indian thing to do', or 'ours is a food-centered culture'), concern for the participants' appetite due to the long hours these events could last, and with a practical intent of serving food as an incentive to attract more members. Ethnic languages are featured in all these events, not exclusively but usually are featured along with English. The use of English in these events is usually to facilitate the program and to make announcements and to introduce various events, but the events themselves are always in an ethnic language. Ethnic clothing, with all its dazzling color and ethnic fashion, illuminates the venue of organizational events but it still is placed below ethnic language in terms of its presence as a ritual of ethnic significance. Though most of the respondents

(91%) said that they would like to dress in their ethnic best for the occasions, from my field observations it is mostly women and children who are often dressed in ethnic clothing when compared to men. Thus, among the subsidiary rituals of ethnic significance, ethnic clothing takes the last place when compared to ethnic food and ethnic languages. Finally, there was not enough data to analyze or make substantive statements about the content category of sports and games.

Besides the participation and engagement in the rituals of ethnic significance, the very presence of these organizational structures in this community can be seen as a strong resource in help maintaining the ethnic identity. The organization by itself could never stand strong without the commitment and zeal of the members who are involved. Even long after I exited the field as a researcher, I still am updated of most of the events and programs through their email listserv; and it definitely attests to the widening reach of these organizations.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

One of the limitations of this research is limiting my focus to rituals of ethnic significance only within the ethnic organizational milieu. Though this limitation has been acknowledged in my earlier chapters, there is a need to reiterate that almost all the rituals of ethnic significance can also be seen in places other than organizations. When we consider the frequency of these organizational events and the participation of their members in these events, it is much less compared to everyday involvement in these rituals of ethnic significance. There were respondents in this study who claimed that

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everyday they eat ethnic Indian food, wear ethnic Indian clothing, watch Indian television channels, worship their Gods, and speak in their native tongues. All these rituals of ethnic significance may not be evoked with the same intensity on a daily basis, but nonetheless the repetitiveness is far more considerable when compared to that of their engagement in a temporary organizational setting. Though the visibility, the vibrancy, and the grandeur of these rituals are definitely magnified in ethnic organizational events, it would be interesting as well as complementary to see studies of these rituals of ethnic significance in more private and homely settings.

Another conscious decision made for this study is to limit the field of study as well as the potential respondents to the metropolitan area of Springfield. This limitation owes to issues of logistics based on available resources, such as finances and time. Though most of the members of various ethnic organizations reside within the metropolitan area of Springfield, there are quite a few members in various organizations who reside in towns outside this metropolitan area. If the field had been widened and more areas as well as respondents were to be included in this study, it would have provided an opportunity to analyze the importance of various organizational resources (viz., ethnic businesses, ethnic places of worship, venues of organizational events, etc.). Especially, in terms of the availability of organizational resources in proximity and how that impacts one's participation in community events. Drawing from the Structural Ritualization Theory, the availability of resources and the role they play in encouraging rituals of ethnic significance is an important dimension being evaluated in this study.

Hence, it would have been invaluable to notice varying degrees of participation among members who reside in metropolitan area versus those who live farther away.

Also, citing logistical reasons and lack of resources mentioned above, this study could not provide comparative analysis in terms of how the Asian Indian immigrant community here in Springfield is different from a more densely populated ones on either of the coasts (viz., New York or California). Though it was not the intent of this study to provide a comparative perspective, a future study along these lines will shed new light on this subject.

Another limitation lies in the broader theoretical perspectives that are at work in this dissertation. The focus on rituals of ethnic significance, as they play a cultural-integrative role in shaping and solidifying the ethnic identity of Asian Indian immigrants, is structural-functionalist as well as symbolic interactionist in its outlook. By the very virtue of subscribing to these theoretical frameworks, this study favors certain explanations and thus might have marginalized other possible explanations. For instance, the 'in-group' ethnic affinity among Asian Indian immigrants in this study owes to internal factors such as their own religion, language, food, clothing, and culture; while the existing organizational structures in the community are the only external feature contributing to their ethnic identity. On the other hand, it would be interesting to see if there are any external forces at play that could be contributing to such a cohesive existence. Thus, different set of questions could be posed and addressed, such as - given the fact that Asian Indian immigrants structure their everyday lives in the midst of host

population and alien culture, does this marginalize and drive them towards being an embedded community? Is there hostility or even perception of hostility from the dominant group, either in terms of discrimination, racism, or hate crimes that could be shaping their group solidarity?

Most of the limitations addressed here emerge owing to the logistical and theoretical parameters of this study. However, instead of viewing them as limitations, it is my intent that this study should serve as a launching pad for the future research.

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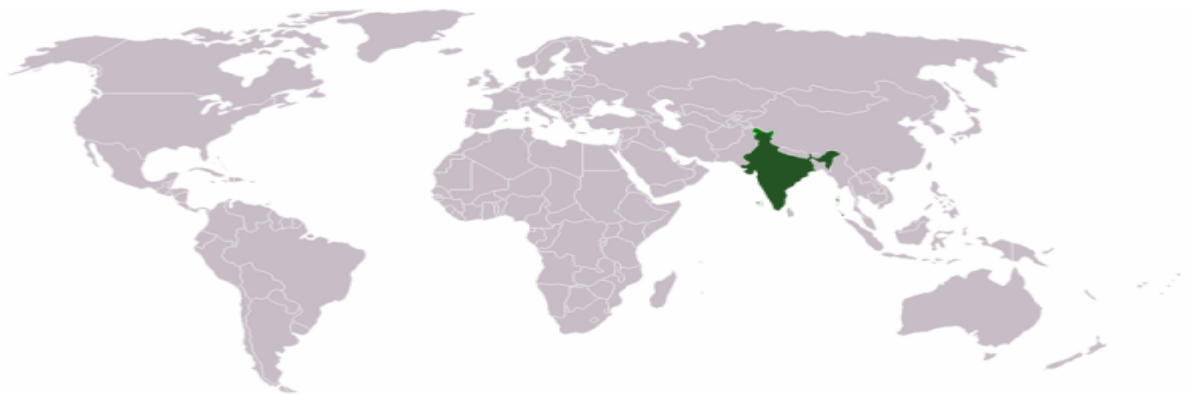
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www.census.gov

APPENDIX A

INDIA

India, officially referred to as Republic of India, is also known by many other names such as Bharat, Hindustan, and Jambudweep. This country located in Asian continent ranks seventh in terms of geographical area and second in terms of the size of population in the entire world. Its past goes back to The Indus Valley civilization, one of the oldest in the world that dates back to approximately 5,000 years. Though the decline of this civilization is highly contentious topic among historians Aryan tribes from the northwest were next to inhabit this sub-continent about 1500 B.C. While the northern India flourished with Aryan culture the south mainly remained Dravidian. Dravidians are

considered to be the original inhabitants of this land who were pushed south with the Aryan infiltration. The tradition and culture of this land owes to the culmination of Aryan, Dravidian, Persian, Arabic, and many other influences over a period of time. Early 16th century opened the doors of this land to the European traders and colonizers. British East India Company dominated the trade and by 19th century Britain had assumed political control of virtually all Indian lands. It was under the legendary leadership of Mahatma Gandhi along with the struggles and sacrifices of many other leaders that India gained its independence on August 15th, 1947. Since then it has been the world's largest democracy.

India has a federal form of government with a bicameral parliament. The political administrative units include 28 states and 7 union territories. It hosts a multi party system and elections are conducted every 5 years. Just like its vast political apparatus, its economy too is diverse, including traditional village farming, modern agriculture, handicrafts, modern industries, and a growing service sector. Initial boost in the economy as well as in the fields of science and technology owe to the five year plans and the mixed economy (including both capitalist and socialist values). Starting 90s the nation has slowly opened its economy to the foreign markets and investments. In 2005 the government liberalized investment in the civil aviation, telecom, and construction sectors. Privatization of government-owned industries essentially came to a halt in 2005, and continues to generate political debate.

India is a land of diversity, both in its physical features and the people who dwell with in. Physically speaking it is crowned by the mountain ranges of Himalayas to the north and bound by ocean on the other three sides. It includes mountains, plateaus, plains, rivers, forest, pasture land, deserts, and waterfronts within its territory. Northern, central and eastern India is marked by the fertile Indo-Gangetic plain, where as the southern Indian Peninsula is mostly made of the Deccan plateau. This Deccan plateau to the south is flanked by two hilly coastal ranges, the Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats on the either side. The Thar Desert, also known as 'the great Indian desert', is located in the west spilling into the neighboring nation of Pakistan. India is also home to several major rivers, including the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Yamuna, Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, and

Krishna. India has three archipelagos – Lakshadweep off the southwest coast, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the southeast, and the Sunderbans in the Gangetic delta in the West.

People of India are even more diverse than these landmarks that have been mentioned. India is the second-most populous country in the world with an estimated 1.1 billion people in 2006, only next to China (1.3 billion). These 1.1 billion people are part of 4,700 communities that belong to four distinct racial groups. Its linguistic diversity is broad since the Indian constitution recognizes 22 official languages and there are as many as 1,652 different dialects. This country is also an abode to at least 7 different religions. While Asian continent boasts as a home to most of the major religions in the world (including the bulkiest of all – Christianity), India alone has been a cradle for faiths such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism. Among other things it is the cultural diversity that marks the uniqueness of this subcontinent. People across the country vary in terms of their local traditions such as styles of dressing, food and cuisine, festivals and celebrations, etc.

(Sources: Singh, K. S., 2002; Kolanad, Gitanjali, 1999; https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/in.html)

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

Demographic information of the City of Springfield:

Note: The 2005 American Community Survey universe is limited to the household population and excludes the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters.

2005 American Community Survey
Data Profile Highlights:

General Characteristics	Estimate	Percent	U.S.	Margin of Error
Total population	515,751			+/-10,411
Male	252,725	49.0	49.0%	+/-6,448
Female	263,026	51.0	51.0%	+/-5,863
Median age (years)	35.0	(X)	36.4	+/-0.7
Under 5 years	40,925	7.9	7.0%	+/-3,455
18 years and over	387,525	75.1	74.6%	+/-6,385
65 years and over	55,417	10.7	12.1%	+/-2,307
One race	486,628	94.4	98.1%	+/-9,781
White	345,217	66.9	74.7%	+/-9,236
Black or African American	75,983	14.7	12.1%	+/-5,031
American Indian and Alaska Native	16,489	3.2	0.8%	+/-2,366
Asian	22,122	4.3	4.3%	+/-2,183
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,108	0.2	0.1%	+/-1,393
Some other race	25,709	5.0	6.0%	+/-3,761
Two or more races	29,123	5.6	1.9%	+/-4,129
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	66,393	12.9	14.5%	+/-3,785

Demographic information of the City of Springfield for Asian Indian population:

Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights:
Selected Population Group: Asian Indian alone

General Characteristics	Selected Population Group	Total Population
Total population	2,918	506,132
Male	1,560	247,313
Female	1,358	258,819
Median age (years)	29	34
Under 5 years	204	37,194
18 years and over	2,194	376,858
65 years and over	93	58,098
Household population	2,909	492,999
Group quarters population	9	13,133
Average household size	3	2
Average family size	4	3
Occupied housing units	982	204,434
Owner-occupied housing units	463	121,528
Renter-occupied housing units	519	82,906

Social Characteristics	Selected Population Group	Total Population
Population 25 years and over	2,044	323,219
High school graduate or higher	1,775	262,938
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,187	77,502
Civilian veterans (civilian population 18 years and over)	23	52,359
Disability status (population 5 years and over)	474	98,509
Foreign born	2,502	42,885
Male, Now married, except separated (population 15 years and over)	890	102,661
Female, Now married, except separated (pop. 15 years and over)	915	101,381
Speak a language other than	2,587	62,938

Economic Characteristics	Selected Population Group	Total Population
In labor force (population 16 years and over)	1,682	251,906
Mean travel time to work in minutes (workers 16 yrs and over)	20	21
Median household income in 1999 (dollars)	48,654	34,947
Median family income in 1999 (dollars)	57,786	42,689
Per capita income in 1999 (dollars)	22,383	19,098
Families below poverty level	77	16,084
Individuals below poverty level	421	79,084

Housing Characteristics	Selected Population Group	Total Population
Single-family owner-occupied homes	498	108,660
Median value (dollars)	119,800	80,300
Median of selected monthly owner costs	(X)	(X)
With a mortgage (dollars)	1,219	856
Not mortgaged (dollars)	379	259

(X) Not applicable.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 2 (SF 2) and Summary File 4 (SF 4)

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS

- ➢ Andhra Pradesh = A Southern State

- ➢ Bharatanatyam/Bharathanatyam = a classical dance for from south India

- ➢ Bisakhi = a Sikh religious festival

- ➢ Bollywood = the movie industry in India, especially Hindi movies. The name is spun off Hollywood

- ➢ Bommalakoluvu/Bommakoluva = a setting of deity figurines arranged on nine steps for Navrathri

- ➢ Carnatic music = classical Indian music from south India

- ➢ Chapatti = Indian bread

- ➢ Choli = Traditional Indian blouse, worn with saree or ghagara. Very short and closely fitted, it usually ties at the back with single ties or a criss-cross shoe-lace style drawstring, or it ties into a knot at the front in the middle of the chest.

- ➢ Chunri/ Chunni/ Dupatta = A long scarf worn as an accessory to several Indian outfits such as, Kurta, Kurti, Ghagara, Sharara etc.

- ➢ Churidar/ Chooridar = Baggy drawstring trousers (similar to Pyjama) that bunch up tightly along the lower calf. Worn traditionally with Kurta/ Kurti, it's name comes from the word Choori meaning bangles. The bunched folds along the bottom half of the calf gives the effect of several bangles worn together.

- ➢ Dal = Lentil soup

- ➢ Dasarah/Daserah/Dasara = a Hindu festival

- Delhi = one of the biggest cities in India; also the national capital

- Dhoti = A sarong made of white (usually cotton) material. It is traditionally worn wound round the legs by Indian men.

- Diwali = a Hindu festival, usually referred to as festival of lights; also known as Deepavali in South

- Eid-ul-Fitr = an Islamic festival

- Ganesh Chathurthi = a Hindu festival

- Ghagra = A gathered skirt, usually very flared. Can be worn with a Blouse and a Chunnri. Usually heavily embellished, it is traditionally worn by women of Rajasthan.

- Gujarat = A western state

- Gujarati = a person from the state of Gujarat

- Gurudwara = a place of worship for Sikhs

- Hindustani music = classical Indian music from north India

- Holi = a Hindu festival; festival of colors

- Hyderabad = a state capital and a city in the state of Andhra Pradesh

- Idly/idli = a breakfast item

- Kameez = shirt; part of Salwar-kameez

- Karnataka = a south-western state

- Kathakali = a classical dance form south India

- Kurta/Khurta = A loose jacket worn traditionally with loose trousers (Pyjama) and scarf (Chunnri) by women of Punjab. Can also be worn with loose trousers fitted

in bunches along lower calf (Churidar). Also worn in contemporary fashion with straight trousers.

- ➢ Kurti = A shorter version of the Kurta worn with straight pants. Made popular in the 1960's and 1970's, having been glamorized by Bollywood film stars of that era, it has now made a come-back into contemporary fashion

- ➢ Kuchipudi = a classical dance form from south India

- ➢ Lehnga/ Lehenga = Drawstring skirt, usually worn with Choli and Odhni.

- ➢ Lodi = a Sikh festival

- ➢ Lungi = A sarong (usually made of cotton or Mul) worn traditionally by men in India.

- ➢ Maharastra = a west-central state

- ➢ Maharastrian = a person belonging to Maharastra

- ➢ Marati/Marathi = language spoken by people in the state of Maharastra; some times also refers to the people of the state.

- ➢ Mumbai = one of the biggest cities in India; also formerly known as Bombay

- ➢ Navrathri/Navarathri = a Hindu festival

- ➢ Pajama/ Pyjama = Baggy drawstring trousers worn traditionally with a Kurta/ Kurti. Usually Khurta-Pajama go together.

- ➢ Pongal = a Hindu festival

- ➢ Pooja = worship

- ➢ Prashad /prasadam = food offering for god, which is distributed among devotees

- ➢ Punjab = a north-western state

- ➢ Punjabi = a person from the state of Punjab

- Ramnavami/Ramanavami = a Hindu festival
- Salwar = Baggy drawstring trousers gathered at the ankle. Usually worn with Kameez
- Sari/ Saree = A length of cloth with a decorated end panel draped around the body, traditionally worn by Indian women. Usually 5.5m to 9m in length and worn over a short/ long blouse and matching long flared skirt.
- Sankranthi = a Hindu festival
- Sarong = A strip of cloth worn around the body, especially in Malaya. Worn around the waist or body in contemporary fashion, especially as part of beach/ holiday apparel.
- Satyanarayana pooja = a Hindu worship ritual on a specific occasion
- Sherwani = Formal knee-length coat/jacket style kurta for men.
- Sikh = a person who follows Sikhism
- Sikhism = a religion followed by Sikhs, predominantly in the State of Punjab
- Tamil = Language spoken in the state of Tamilnadu
- Tamilian = a person from the state of Tamilnadu
- Tamilnadu = A Southern State
- Telugu = language spoken in the state of Andhra Pradesh, also sometimes referred to a person from the state of Andhra Pradesh
- Ugadi = a Telugu festival (Telugu new year)
- Vada = a breakfast item

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Wednesday, November 29, 2006
IRB Application No	AS06133
Proposal Title:	Ethnic Organizations and Ritual Dynamics: Exploration of an Asian Indian Community
Reviewed and Processed as:	Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 11/28/2007

Principal
Investigator(s

Adam Dasari   David Knottnerus
006 Classroom Bldg.   003 CLB
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☑ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS AS APPROVED BY IRB

CONSENT FORM

OSU
Institutional Review Board
Approved 11/29/06
Expires 11/28/07
Initials d
AS06133

Instructions and Notification of Voluntary Participation and Anonymity

Title of Research: *Ethnic Organizations and Ritual Dynamics: Exploration of An Asian Indian Community*

Investigator: Adam Dasari, M.A.

This study is being done in partial fulfillment for a Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation at Oklahoma State University. This research will explore the ethnic identity among the Asian Indian Community in this particular metropolitan area. Our efforts are to gain more knowledge about the ethnic organizations and the members who are involved in them. This study would like to capture the ethnic practices that are prevalent within the community. Also the focus will be on the way ethnic identity is enacted within these ethnic organizations. The research is based on previous studies pertaining to Asian Indian communities here in the United States and hopes that this current research would further contribute to the academic knowledge base. This study intends to grasp perceptions and views of participants like you, which would help us in understanding the community as a whole.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to answer few open ended questions about your ethnicity, ethnic and cultural practices, and ethnic organizations. Please note that participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to be part of this study at your own will. Your responses will be audio taped and will be later transcribed to document the information. Interviews could extend for duration of between 45 minutes to an hour or sometimes even more depending on the amount of information you divulge. Your views and opinions expressed in the interview may be quoted from the transcripts in the dissertation and possible academic publications.

Please note that the questions the researcher asks pertain to your ethnicity, ethnic organization(s) you are involved with, and your views on various ethnic / cultural practices. As a part of the interview, at any point, because of the nature of the topic, or any question being sensitive you are more than welcome to not answer any question the researcher asks. There are no benefits that will come to you by your participation in this project. This study is for educational purposes only.

The research is and will remain anonymous and confidential. The audio tape will be destroyed once it is transcribed. Important to note is the fact that no identifying information will be placed on the transcription. Names, if given, will be given pseudonyms. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office and he will be the only one with access to the key to the file cabinet. The data will be kept until it is no longer needed (i.e. the dissertation is complete and approved). Because some exact quotes will be used in the final analysis, there is a possibility that somebody could identify you by the remarks that you make. However, the researcher will do all that

he can to protect your identity. The OSU IRB has the authority to inspect consent records and data files to assure compliance with approved procedures.

Enclosed you will find a pre-stamped envelope. Please use this for the return of the consent form. Because the researcher will need your contact information to set up an interview time, please note below how you wish to be contacted.

Your participation is strictly voluntary and anonymous. As a research subject, you can discontinue research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty. There are no risks to withdrawal from the research. **DO NOT COMPLETE THE CONSENT FORM IF YOU ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 18.** There are no penalties or rewards for your participation.

If you should have any questions about the consent form or research project, please feel free to call Adam Dasari at (405) 762-9167. For information on subjects' rights, contact Dr. Sue Jacobs, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, (405) 744-1676.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

By signing, you are agreeing to participate and to be contacted by the researcher.

PLEASE STATE BELOW HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE CONTACTED BY THE RESEARCHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____

VITA

Adam Stephen Dasari

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS AND RITUAL DYNAMICS:

EXPLORATIONOF AN ASIAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Education: graduated from B. Z. High School, Chittoor, A.P., India in May 1991; received Bachelor of Arts degree in History, Political Science, and English Literature from Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada, A.P., India in May 1996; received Master of Arts degree in Sociology from University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, A.P., India in 1998; received Master of Philosophy degree in Sociology from University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, A.P., India in 2000. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma July, 2008.

Experience: four years as a Teaching Assistant at Oklahoma State University (2001-2005); Computer Lab Assistant at Oklahoma State University (2006-2007)

Professional Memberships: American Sociological Association; Mid South Sociological Association; Alpha Kappa Delta (Vice-President, 2006).

Name: Adam Stephen Dasari   Date of Degree: July, 2008

Institution: Oklahoma State University   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS AND RITUAL DYNAMICS:
                EXPLORATION OF AN ASIAN INDIAN COMMUNITY

Pages in Study: 197   Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Sociology

Scope and Method of Study:

    This dissertation explores the ethnic identity among the Asian Indian Community

in the city of Springfield, a large metropolitan area in south central United States. This

research tries to understand the ritual dynamics of that group and how their ethnic

identity is displayed, maintained and even celebrated through different ethnic

organizations and social networks.

Findings and Conclusions:

    This study identifies 9 ethnic organizations in the city of Springfield and

interviewed 21 respondents from 8 of those organizations. 'Rituals of Ethnic

Significance', are identified to be present in these organizations viz., 'popular culture',

'religion', 'ethnic food', 'ethnic language', 'ethnic clothing', and 'ethnic sports and

games' to varying degrees. There is a longing for their cultural values and traditions that

is reflected in the ethnic organizations and every event they sponsor and organize. They

play a unique role by building a bridge to both their native culture/traditions as well as

with the local community.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. J. David Knottnerus