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UGANDA ASIAN REFUGEES AND EXPELLEES IN LOS ANGELES,  
THE AMERICAN EL DORADO

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Sham M. Chitnavis

Dissertation Committee:

Floyd Matson, Chairperson  
William Chapman  
Dennis Ogawa  
Katharine Tehranian  
Jagdish Sharma

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## ABSTRACT

In American Studies this is probably the first work that deals with Asian Indians who are *not* directly from the Indian subcontinent.

Using eight disciplines this dissertation endeavors to prove that: **1)** these erstwhile subjects have successfully acculturated to the Southern California lifestyle, **2)** that they have taken roots in the physical landscape, **3)** that the combination of the two processes has resulted in the creation of their regional identity as Angelenos. Again, in American Studies this is probably the first work that combines the three said themes in reference to an immigrant group.

Since the past shapes the present that in turn shapes the future their historical background (mainly the British colonial connection that brought their forefathers to East Africa) has been detailed. The causes of their expulsion/flight have also been explained.

Since the creation of a regional identity is also shaped by national, state, and local factors the mythological appeal of the United States, California, and Los Angeles has been explained and their attributes detailed. A separate chapter on the flip side (*El Diablo*) of Los Angeles has been included not only to balance (what may appear to be) the hyperbolic aspects of Los Angeles but also to prove, despite the very real negative attributes, the fact that *El Dorado* is actually much bigger than *El Diablo*. Using a wide range of indicators, written answers and selected interviews, the acculturation and acquisition of a sense of place of these subjects has been shown.

In the last chapter the subjects assess their success and prospects. The summary ends with an appeal to the reader not to lump varied groups with some dominant group within their wider subculture and to recognize diversity within diversity. Old-fashioned assimilationists have also been urged not to view the United States in Euro-American terms anymore as the nature of immigration has drastically changed since 1965. The rise of Los Angeles as the ultimate expression of the extraordinary diversity that has thus arisen has been emphasized.

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## PREFACE

### Forced Emigration:

This is not a new phenomenon in human existence. Indeed, throughout recorded history one finds many examples of minorities being made scapegoats, persecuted, expelled, and even massacred due to various causes. The French Huguenots fled religious persecution in France in the 1680s. Like the Huguenots, the Iberian Jews also fled as they were faced with a life-threatening danger because of their religion.<sup>1</sup> The French Revolution produced 129,000 political refugees. The American Revolution triggered an equivalent movement.<sup>2</sup> A well-known example of savage racism is that of Czar Nicholas (and his infamous Pogroms) against Russian Jews. This example pales in brutality when compared with the extent and intensity of hatred displayed by Hitler and his Nazi thugs against European Jews and the consequent genocide of the same. In addition some one and a half million Gypsies paid a price for their ethnicity, and many homosexuals for their disagreeable lifestyle.

During the last century refugee outflow from numerous African countries arose due to tribal conflicts (accentuated by colonial policies). These countries were: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, French Guinea, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, and Zaire. Southern Africa formed a regional system dominated by the

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<sup>1</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke, and Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 5, 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

Republic of South Africa whose racist policies worsened the refugee problem there. (43)

The most vivid example since World War II of an ethnic minority being made a scapegoat, violation of its civil rights, consequent dispossession of its citizenship and/or property, and forced exit based on race took place in 1972 when Idi Amin, the then self-appointed President and military dictator of the Republic of Uganda, East Africa, expelled non-citizen Asians (mostly British subjects) and terrorized most citizen Asians into fleeing the country. Some of these expellees and refugees made their way to Southern California. This dissertation shows how they have developed a regional identity as Southern Californians by not only acculturating to the regional lifestyle but also identifying with the physical landscape and developing a Sense of Place.

**Reasons why this topic was selected:**

There is a need in our Immigration literature to redress the following deficiencies:

1) Whatever little literature there is about Asian Indian immigration to the United States pertains to *direct* migrants from the Indian subcontinent.<sup>1</sup> There is no literature at all about Asian Indian migration from *outside* of the Indian subcontinent e.g. (mainly) the African continent, Canada, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Philippines, Singapore, United Kingdom, and the West Indies.

2) Refugees form an important segment of immigration to the United States. However, it is the European refugees (usually from the former Communist block) who are prominently mentioned. Asian refugees have been dealt with since

the Vietnam debacle but these are entirely the Cambodians, Hmong, Laotians, and Vietnamese (including ethnic Chinese); there is no mention at all of Asian Indian refugees from Vietnam or elsewhere! There have been populations of Indians (and their descendents) in most of the African countries mentioned earlier. It would be naïve to assume that all of them were expatriates and hastily returned to the motherland when major trouble broke out.

This dissertation was initially planned as a prelude to a book about our subjects. If this student succeeds in publishing a book it will definitely fill a gap in the history of Asian Indian immigration. If not, it is hoped that this work will serve as a foundation for somebody else's book about the same or similar subject.

3) Many East African Asians call themselves "Indian", "Pakistani" and (in rare instances) "Bangladeshi" who arrived here as *bicultural* immigrants or refugees and who, nevertheless, find it very irksome when Americans categorize them as direct migrants from the Indian subcontinent with the accompanying stereotypes of the beggar, Maharaja (and lately), computer programmer, and engineer. This dissertation is being written partly to assure those East African Asians (interested in scholarly studies) that they *do* have an identity apart from the direct migrants of the Indian subcontinent, that their identity as *bicultural* immigrants *prior* to arrival in the United States, and *tri-cultural* Southern Californians *after* settlement is being recognized at the scholarly level.

#### **The order of chapters:**

Keeping in mind that the past shapes the present and the present shapes the future chapter 1 details the *Historical background* of our subjects. Herein the



British colonial connection is highlighted because it was mainly responsible for the emigration of our subjects from the Indian subcontinent to East Africa. Chapter 2 imparts an in-depth look at the *Causes of expulsion/flight* of our subjects. The main points highlighted here are: The perception of economic dominance by Asians, their political powerlessness, the ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and strained race relations between Africans and Asians.

It must be asserted at the very outset that for a community to take roots there have to be certain prerequisites without which neither acculturation nor the development of a sense of place would be possible. These would consist of a philosophical foundation, political principles, constitutional guarantees, and a reasonable opportunity for economic, social, and spiritual sustenance. Hence, chapter 3 details the said attributes of *United States: The Distinctive Civilization*. Also explained in this chapter are four key concepts underlying this dissertation. They are: *Myth, ritual, symbol, and rhythm*.

The focus is then narrowed to California in chapter 4. There would be no Los Angeles without *California: The Distinctive Region*. Hence, the mythology and distinctiveness of California are detailed. The focus is further narrowed to *Los Angeles, the American El Dorado* itself in chapter 5. Herein is a detailed look at the attributes that make the region so distinctive.

Chapter 6 briefly deals with certain *aesthetics, attitudes, and values* and prepares us for the actual theme of *acculturation* (one half of their regional identity) into the L.A. lifestyle in chapter 7. The negative aspects, *El Diablo*, of L.A. are detailed in chapter 8. Initially this chapter may seem to be out of place

but it really is not because the theme underlying this contradistinction is *El Dorado is bigger than El Diablo*.

Chapter 9 details the *sense of place* (the other half of regional identity) of our subjects. The last chapter (10) details how our subjects view their *success and prospects*.

Note that Uganda Asians were part of a minority collectively known as “East African Asians”. Hence, a great deal of the cultural, historical and psychological heritage of the former was no different from that of the Asians in Kenya and Tanzania. Note that even though they are called “Asians” or “Indians” the reference is to a group who were *bicultural* Afro-Indians when they landed in the United States. Also note that the reference *includes* people who trace their ancestry not only to India but also to Bangladesh and Pakistan. This is because a great deal of the migration from the Indian subcontinent took place *before* the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and Bangladesh achieved its independence from Pakistan only in 1971.

### **Methodology:**

1) Conventional scholarship (i.e. information gathered from books, journals, magazines, and newspapers) constitutes the foundation of this dissertation.

2) Information gathered from a multipart, comprehensive questionnaire and 8 in-depth interviews (in two sessions) supplement the conventional scholarship and theoretical aspects of this work.

3) In keeping with the spirit of American Studies a multidisciplinary approach has been used to write this dissertation. The following disciplines have been utilized: cultural anthropology (myth/ritual/symbol), cultural geography (sense of place), economics (property), history (background), political science (Idi Amin and political aspects of Asians), sociology (lifestyle), statistics (the questionnaire), and urban studies (Los Angeles). When a respondent is quoted for the first time he/she has been identified as male or female with the prefix Mr., miss, or Mrs. To show the physical distance traveled from Uganda to Southern California his or her last city/town of *substantial domicile* in Uganda has been mentioned. The respondent's ethnic/religious identity (e.g. Gujrati Lohana) and profession (e.g. businessman, sales clerk, engineer) will also be mentioned. This is followed by the mention of the city/town where the respondent currently resides in Southern California. For example: "Mr. Hasu Popat, Gujrati Lohana, Hindu, auto parts manager, formerly of Kampala, currently of Diamond Bar states that..." Any consequent mention of a respondent contains only the name.

## **CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction:**

The past simply does not go away. It shapes the present, which in turn shapes the future. In other words, in order to understand how and why our subjects have become Southern Californians one must understand how they came to be Uganda Asians. Kessner and Caroli in their marvelous study of immigrants in New York convincingly state that the immigrant story begins not on the road but at home.<sup>3</sup> However, this dissertation plans to go deeper than that. It will place our subjects in a broader historical perspective by showing not only the events in Uganda but also why their forefathers migrated from the Indian subcontinent to British East Africa. Note the special emphasis placed on the role played by the Colonial British regime that was instrumental in determining the fate of our subjects:

It is sometimes thought that Indian immigration into East Africa stemmed entirely from the building of the Kenya-Uganda railway at the turn of the century. In fact, small number of Indians had lived in the coastal regions for centuries, arriving long before the days of European settlement.<sup>4</sup> Chanan Singh (formerly the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister of Kenya and a Judge of the Kenyan Supreme Court) in his fine article “The Historical Background” points

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Kessner & Betty Boyd Caroli, *Today's Immigrants, Their stories: A New Look at the Newest Immigrants* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), 29.

<sup>4</sup> George Delf, *Asians in East Africa* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, Institute of Race Relations, 1963), 1.

out that for over two thousand years Indians were at the heart of the economic activity that brought the influences of a wider world to the east coast of Africa.<sup>5</sup>

From the earliest times the east coast of Africa has been involved in the network of Indian Ocean trade; and merchant seamen from India, Persia, and Arabia have a long history of commercial intercourse with the East African coast.<sup>6</sup> One of the earliest recorded navigational accounts, *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, circa A.D. 80*, mentions Indian as well as Arab ships trading along the coast. A Chinese geographical work, dating from about the thirteenth century, mentions Gujrati settlements in the same area.<sup>7</sup> Professor R. Coupland has drawn attention to the long-standing Indian facility for trading: “Much of the ocean-shipping”, he writes, “was Indian-owned and Indian-manned, and since Arabs in general seem never to have shown much aptitude for the technique of business, it is probable that the Indians were from the earliest days the masters of finance, the bankers and money-changers and money-lenders.”<sup>8</sup> Marco Polo wrote of Indian ships “which visit the island of Madeigascar and that other of Zanghibar”.<sup>9</sup> Indian merchants were the principal suppliers of cotton cloth, beads, and sundry manufactured articles and as importers of ivory, gold, iron, gum copal, ambergris, and incense.<sup>10</sup> The excavations of Indian-made glass beads along the coast and at Zimbabwe and Ingombe Ilede, the use of the Indian system of weights and

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<sup>5</sup> Dharam P. Ghai, ed., *Portrait of a Minority: Asians in East Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), 2.

<sup>6</sup> J. S. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa c. 1886 to 1945* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Delf, *Asians*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Sir R. Coupland, *East Africa and Its Invaders* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938): 27, quoted in George Delf, *Asians in East Africa* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Marco Polo, *Travels*, Book III (London: Longmans, 1818): chapter 26, quoted in George Delf, *Asians in East Africa* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Mangat, *History of Asians*, 1.

measures and of the Indian cowries as currency, the Indian origins of certain African plants--notably the coconut palms--and similar other information provide further evidence of early Indian contacts with East Africa.<sup>11</sup> Portuguese records also speak of the important role of Indian traders in the flourishing Afro-Asian settlements all along the east coast of Africa, and of the western Indian city of Cambay as the chief entreport of the ivory trade during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Freeman-Granville explains: "The contribution of India to the civilization of the Swahili cannot easily be measured; but its presence is certain."<sup>12</sup>

Other examples of Afro-Indian connections may be mentioned briefly. An Indian sailor piloted Vasco da Gama across the Indian Ocean in 1498. The Mogul Emperor, Aurungzeb, employed an African admiral in Bombay. The Nizam of Hyderabad, a Muslim ruler in southern India, had an African guard during the same era. Many Bengal princes had African blood in their veins as a by-product of the large numbers of slaves transported across the ocean in earlier years. The Muslim King of Gaur in Bengal (1459-1474) had about 8,000 African slaves.<sup>13</sup> This student's mother tells that Junjira-Murood, a small coastal town near Bombay where she was born and raised, had a *Hubsi* (Negro) ruler of Ethiopian origin by the name of "Sir Siddi Ahammud Khan."<sup>ii</sup>

The Portuguese attack upon the Moslem controlled economic system of the Indian Ocean and the consequent disruption of the East coast trade was the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, *The medieval history of the coast of Tanganyika* (London, 1962): 204, quoted in J.S. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa c. 1886 to 1945* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 2.

first of the great crises faced by the Asians in East Africa. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the prosperity of the whole coast was sapped and as opportunities declined, so did the Indian participation. But the Indian link was not broken. Trading links with India continued to the north of Portuguese settlement, and within the area of Portuguese control Indian activity and influence even developed new forms. For the Portuguese, after all, their East African possessions and tributaries were part of a great oceanic empire of which Goa (on the west coast near Bombay) was the economic, administrative, and cultural center. In a real sense the East African coast became the province of an Indian administration and Indians, especially Goans, were soon actively involved in Portuguese penetration and development. Indian labor was used to construct forts along the coast. Indian traders, adventurers, and junior administrators took part in the chequered process of penetration into the interior. By the nineteenth century Asians were an informal advance guard of Portuguese influence in Central Africa; Asian traders operated every season in the gold areas of Mashonaland; Goan adventurers, of whom Gouveia was the best known, carved out virtual personal empires for themselves on the western borders of the Portuguese colony.<sup>14</sup>

Something of the same pattern can be seen with the coming of German and British imperial rule in East Africa. In the first part of the nineteenth century the coast north of Mozambique experienced a striking revival of economic prosperity under the influence of the Omani Arabs and particularly of Sultan Seyyid Said. Basing himself on Zanzibar, the shrewd merchant prince built up a

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<sup>13</sup> Delf, *Asians*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 2.

commercial empire and his subjects pushed deep into East Africa in the interest of a booming trade in ivory and slaves. European and North African markets were perhaps the key ones in this trade but Indian participation was as vital as ever.<sup>15</sup> Seyyid Said made explicit and successful efforts to involve Indian traders, administrators and financiers in his ventures. In Zanzibar the key post of Customs Master was almost always held by an Indian in this period, its holder acting as banker and financial adviser to the Sultan as well as being collector of customs revenue. Indians were the virtual monopolists of retail trade. Above all, Indians financed and supplied the caravans to the interior. (3)

It was the increase in slave trade under Said, which eventually led to the arrival of the British.<sup>16</sup> Agehananda Bharati in his informative article “A Social Survey”, points out that the coming of the Germans and the British--and of the Free State in the Congo--opened the second installment of Christian-Muslim contest in East Africa. This time the political and economic interests of Islam suffered a massive overthrow. Zanzibar was cut off from its hinterland; the whole far-flung structure of Arab-Swahili trade was shattered; the caravans suppressed; and European political control established after fierce resistance by the old controllers of East Africa had been put down. Once again an economic system in which the Asians had been operating profitably was broken. But once again the Asians survived.<sup>17</sup>

As far as the British were concerned it was even truer of them than it had been of the Portuguese that the East African territories were extensions of an

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> H. S. Morris, *Indians in Uganda* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), 3.



Indian empire. The carry-over of ideas from the Indian administrative system to British East Africa was greater even than the old flow between Goa and Mozambique. The Indians who had been participating in the Zanzibar-Swahili trade system had been, in fact, British subjects, and this had been in itself a factor in British expansion on the mainland.<sup>18</sup> An important feature of the growing role of Indian employees in the Administrations was their general competitiveness-- the fact that they cost relatively little in salaries and benefits, which varied from a minimum of \$40 to a maximum of \$160 per annum in 1912.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the resources of her empire in India gave Britain an initial advantage in Kenya and Uganda such as Germany lacked in Tanganyika.<sup>20</sup>

Chanan Singh informs us that many of the British officers who came to East Africa during the early days had served the Government of India. Burton and Speke were themselves officers of the Indian army and were provided with instruments and equipment by the Government of India. Indian coinage was made official coinage in East Africa; Indian laws were extended there. Indian troops were imported from time to time to keep order. Just as the Portuguese had used Indian labor to build forts, so the British used Indian labor to build the railway systems of British East Africa.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, railways were to the British Empire what roads were to the Romans, the arteries of power. The desire for effective control of the Nile waters and the dangers of German rivalry created the need for a

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<sup>17</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Mangat, *History of Asians*, 76.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>21</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 4.

railway to connect Lake Victoria to the Indian Ocean at Mombasa.<sup>22</sup> The British found African labor unavailable or unreliable.<sup>iii</sup> However, they had some experience with a system of indenture, whereby labor from one part of the empire was shipped to an area for a definite period.<sup>23</sup>

Chanan Singh further tells us that just as the Portuguese penetration of Mozambique had been followed, or sometimes preceded, by Indian and Goan enterprise, so the establishment of British administration and the opening of the line of rail was followed by a large-scale movement of Indian traders into the interior, long before white settlers in any number arrived. It was little wonder that some Englishmen at least thought of East Africa in terms of an economic dependency of India, envisaged it being exploited through the immigration of Indian peasant farmers and generally conceived of an Indian development of the area under British control.<sup>24</sup>

Lugard had largely anticipated the rationale behind the move to encourage the Asians into the interior when he wrote:

From the overcrowded provinces of India especially, colonists might be drawn, and this would effect a relief to congested districts. From them we could draw laborers, both artisans and coolies, while they might also afford a recruiting ground for soldiers and police. The wants, moreover, of these more civilized settlers would...very greatly add to the imports, and the product of their industry to the exports...Moreover, the methods of agriculture...would soon be imitated by the Africans.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Delf, *Asians*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Agehananda Bharati, *The Asians in East Africa: Jayhind and Uhuru* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1972), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> F.D. Lugard, *Rise of Our East African Empire* (London, 1893): 488-489, quoted in J. S. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa c. 1886 to 1945* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 30.

Dent Ocaya-Lakidi, in his scholarly article “Black attitudes to the Brown and White colonizers of East Africa,” tells us that a practical consideration guiding British policy during the formative years was that Uganda had been most reluctantly colonized. Consequently, the colonial government there ‘saw its immediate task as the production of local revenue which would emancipate it from subservience to a parsimonious British treasury. Less urgently...official policy was motivated by the desire to prove that Uganda was an economic asset and not merely a strategic and evangelical acquisition.’<sup>26</sup> In pursuance of this policy, the taxation of Africans either in produce or in labor was found inadequate to meet the protectorate’s financial needs. It became clear that the only solution to the problem lay in ‘the establishment of an exchange economy’.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the introduction of coffee, cotton, and tea as cash crops in Uganda; hence also the encouragement of the immigration of the more ‘civilized’ settlers into the country.

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Throughout the nineteenth century the population in India had grown so fast under the British rule that shortages of land, food, and employment were endemic; large number of people therefore emigrated. In the Bombay Presidency, too (where most of the settlers in East Africa came from), the traditional cottage industry of growing and weaving cotton was unable to compete with the cheap cloth produced in Lancashire, and more and more people had been forced to rely

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<sup>26</sup> C. Ehrlich, ‘The Uganda Economy 1903-1945’, in V. Harlow and E. Chilver, eds., *History of East Africa*, vol. II (Oxford, 1965): 396, quoted in Michael Twaddle, ed., *Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians* (London: Univ. of London, Athlone, published for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1975), 91.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

on farming the already over-crowded land for subsistence. Most of the migrants were in fact as much impelled by a 'push' from India as by a 'pull' to Africa.<sup>28</sup>

It must be emphasized that a majority of the Indian traders who penetrated the interior from 1886 to 1902 were petty traders who helped to create trade, first in a small way and then in a large way, in areas where none had existed previously. With considerable fortitude and perseverance, they pioneered the establishment of *dukas* (shops), of local trading centers and Indian bazaars in different districts; and by introducing the local populations to a variety of imported goods and later the rupee currency; they provided an incentive to greater local production as well as the transition from a barter- to a money-based economy.<sup>29</sup> It should also be noted that the term *dukas* became a term of economic-ecological identification for the Indians in East Africa. To the African and the white, the Asian was the *dukawala*, the shopkeeper who sold goods "up" to the British and other European settlers, and "down" to the Africans.<sup>30</sup>

The then Protectorate of Uganda, situated in East Africa around the northern shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza, is a country politically made by the British. It stretches from Kenya in the east to Lakes Edward and Albert, in the west, where its border runs with Zaire (formerly Congo). To the north lay the Sudan, to the south Rwanda and Tanganyika. The country is land-locked and eight hundred miles from the nearest seaport. Its area is about ninety-four thousand square miles, and though situated on the equator, it has an elevation of three thousand feet or more above sea level and most districts are reasonably cool

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<sup>28</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Mangat, *History of Asians*, 55.

and healthy. Around Lake Victoria the soil is fertile and the rainfall is sufficient to support close peasant agriculture and a dense population.<sup>31</sup> Uganda, set at the heart of Africa, linking arteries of the continent's great river systems, has always been a junction, a crossroads and a place to which came travelers from many distant human societies.<sup>32</sup>

Why was Uganda so important to Britain? Egypt was important to Britain's whole Middle Eastern strategy, and so Egypt had to remain occupied. But Egypt depended much on the Nile, and the Nile passed through the Sudan. So the loose Egyptian suzerainty over the Sudan had to be converted into a strong British sovereignty. But the unity of the Nile Valley was not complete until its very source was controlled by the same power. So Uganda had to be under British control.<sup>33</sup> Also note that Uganda, the source of the Nile, which controlled Egypt, which controlled the Suez Canal, in turn controlled the most direct route to India, the jewel in Britain's imperial crown.<sup>34</sup>

Churchill wrote: "The clusters of colonial possessions which have been acquired on the East and West coasts of Africa, so rapidly and with so little cost or bloodshed, will unquestionably prove an invaluable, if not indeed a necessary feature of the British Empire. From these vast plantations will be drawn the raw materials of many of our most important industries; to them will flow a continuous and broadening train of British products; and in them the peculiar gifts

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<sup>30</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> George Ivan Smith, *Ghosts of Kampala* (New York: St. Martin's, 1980), 26.

<sup>33</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy* (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1975), 103.

<sup>34</sup> Godfrey Lule, foreword to *A State of Blood: The Inside Story of Idi Amin*, by Henry Kyemba (New York: ACE books, Charter Communications, by arrangement with Paddington, 1977), 16.

of administration and high civic virtues of our race may find a healthy and honorable scope.”<sup>35</sup> Churchill referred to Uganda as the “Pearl of Africa”.<sup>36</sup>

By 1910 the scene in East Africa was more or less set. Administrative and agricultural development were thought to be European occupations; trade and craftsmanship were relegated to Indians; and Africans were urged to work in the European agricultural system and to supply cheap labor in the towns that were developing in response to European and Indian activities.<sup>37</sup> Yash P. Ghai emphasizes that this compartmentalization of society in three or so racial groups (one of the most striking features of the colonial rule) was reinforced by economic, social, and political discrimination and segregation. There were separate residential areas for different communities, separate schools, hospitals, maternity homes, clubs; on the political level, the institution of separate electoral communal representation stimulated racial political parties and made racial interests inevitable as political issues; and the nominated majorities in the legislative councils, and so the absence of a genuine parliamentary cabinet system made less imperative forms of racial co-operation among the elected communal members and their political parties. On the economic level, the compartmentalization was reinforced by differential scales of salaries in the public, and imitatively, the private sectors, the exclusion of non-whites from the White (Kenya) Highlands; the African reserves; the lack of equal opportunities in public and private services; the necessity for Africans to have *Kipende*<sup>iv</sup>, etc. The

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<sup>35</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *My African Journey* (1908; reprint, London: Neville Spearman & Holland, 1962), 143.

<sup>36</sup> Kyemba, *State of Blood*, 17.

<sup>37</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 11.

result was to preserve and strengthen the political, economic, and social dominance of Europeans, with Asians occupying the middle, and the Africans the bottom place in this system. The effect of all this was to make the Asians inward looking, and to organize schemes of self-help to supplement deficiencies in government provisions of schools, hospitals, etc. Those schemes were largely, though not exclusively, for the Asians.<sup>38</sup> Note that the picture did not substantially alter in the next forty years.<sup>39</sup>

### **Ethnic variety among Uganda Asians:**

It is a common tendency among people everywhere to stereotype other groups as being monolithic. Ugandans were no exception to this fallacy. Africans and the British perceived the Asians to be one undifferentiated mass. Jessica Kuper, in her article “The Goan community in Kampala,” points out that (although) before their expulsion, the Asians comprised just over one percent of the total population of Uganda, they dominated the urban centers. Their impact on Kampala, the capital, was very striking: nearly all the stores in the center of the city were owned by Asians; there were several suburbs which were almost exclusively Asian residential areas; the architecture of most of the older buildings throughout the city was Asian; and women in saris were an integral part of the local scene. One frequently heard an African comment resentfully that Kampala was becoming “just like Bombay”. Despite this superficial identity and impact, the people classified as Asians were an agglomeration of several different and distinct communities, broadly differentiated on the bases of religion and language,

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<sup>38</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 131-132.

<sup>39</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 11.

with further distinctions according to area of origin in Indian or Pakistan, and caste or sect. The majority of the 80,000 Asians were Hindus, from various castes and mainly of Gujrati origin.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, just as one does not return from Europe and narrate one's experiences with *Europeans* but with Belgians, British, Dutch, French, Germans, Hungarians, etc. one should not talk about a monolithic community called *Indians*. Hence, an appraisal of the Uganda Asian ethnic groups represented among our subjects in the Los Angeles region is imperative.

1) **Gujratis:** Their forefathers came from the state of Gujrat in western India. These Gujrati-speakers not only constituted the majority of the Hindus but roughly 70 per cent of the total Asian population:

A) **Lohana and Patel:** As per Agehananda Bharati's SOCIAL SURVEY the Patels and Lohanas were numerically and economically dominant among the Gujratis.<sup>41</sup> The former were landowning peasants in Gujrat. The word "Patel" is synonymous with *Patidar*, which means precisely this--a landholder or tiller of the soil, which he owns himself.<sup>42</sup> Whatever their rural, land-holding background in western India, their identification in East Africa is that of merchants. The north Indian word for merchant being *baniya*, this term has become a lexical indicator for all Asians in the area.<sup>43</sup> Lohanas were more numerous than the Patels.

B) **Choti Jaat:** According to Bharati the rest of the Gujrati Hindus belonged to these, *literally*, 'small castes', inferior to the others in the indigenous

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<sup>40</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 53.

<sup>41</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



caste ranking, i.e., carpenters (*sutaria*), cobblers (*mochi*), barbers (*nao*), tailors (*darji*), goldsmiths (*soni*), all of which were summarily and incorrectly referred to as the “*fundi*” class, *fundi* being the Swahili word for laborers in general, but carpenters or masons in particular.<sup>44</sup>

**2) Punjabi Sikhs:** They are very close to the Hindus or, for all sociological purposes, identifiable with the Punjabi Hindus in matters of caste ranking and structure, were about 10 percent *Jaat*, i.e. members of the Punjabi indigenous agricultural and petty-landowning caste and 90 percent *Ramgharias*, which caste was ranked close to the bottom of the traditional ranking in the Punjab. They formed the bulk of the actual *fundi*, i.e. the acting masons, carpenters, etc. They were definitely the most successful and excellent artisans in East Africa, a fact admitted both by the indigenous Africans and the European settlers.<sup>45</sup> Sikhs in East Africa do business, regardless of whether they are *Jaat* or *Ramgharias*; but their image as businessmen is less noxious to Africans and whites than that of the Gujrati Hindus.<sup>46</sup> The Sikhs are also the most highly adaptable Indians anywhere.<sup>47</sup> The Sikhs initially migrated to East Africa to work in the railways.

**3) Shi’a Khoja Ismailis (a special case):** According to Bharati this was the largest Gujrati-speaking Muslim group. Followers of H.H. the Aga Khan, they were from any viewpoint the most conspicuously emancipated, and perhaps the most successful group among all sections of the minority, beginning

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<sup>44</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 17-18.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

with their apparel: their women wear western dress due to a *firmaan* (pontifical injunction) of the late Aga Khan. They are the most thoroughly modernized--at least on the outside--but certainly also the most alienated from among the Indian groups, tending to keep aloof from the others. Moreover, they had succeeded in creating a separate identity in the alter-image of all other people in East Africa.<sup>48</sup> Gardner Thompson in his marvelous article "The Ismailis in Uganda," tells us that numbering about 14,000 in 1972 they were not only the largest single Muslim group but also a minority within a minority.<sup>49</sup>

Once their numbers were large enough the forms assumed by Indian communities were deeply influenced by the example of the followers of the Aga Khan, who early and deliberately withdrew from close association with other sections of if the Indian community, and whose success with the administration and in economic life compelled all other Indians to examine and in greater or lesser degree imitate their precedent. In this sense one may refer to the Ismailis as a pace-making group.<sup>50</sup> Thompson adds that moreover, it was at this level that Asians won concessions and achieved most. For example, the Ismailis soon insisted on their right to have exclusive burial grounds and exclusive title to land for their *jamaatkhana*, or mosque. Characteristically, the community was also the first to insist on, and build, separate schools for their children. Indeed, by the mid-1920s the Ismailis had succeeded in winning legal recognition as a separate

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<sup>48</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 30.

<sup>50</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 43.

community, despite the government's preference for dealing with the Asians as a single category.<sup>51</sup>

Partly through choice, partly as a response to colonial policies, Asians diversified over the next three decades into wholesale trade, service industries, small-scale manufacturing, and, as a return on educational investment, into office jobs and indeed the professions. What distinguished the Ismailis in this period are their institutional evolution and the foundation of various self-help projects, most of which were the personal achievement of Aga Khan III.<sup>52</sup> In the 1920s the Aga Khan inaugurated a system of councils in Uganda, founding his community's organization on a written constitution according to the Zanzibar model, which dated from the turn of the century. In 1937 he founded the Jubilee Insurance Company on the occasion of his fifteenth anniversary as the Imam, making a substantial personal investment in a company, which was to provide the whole range of insurance schemes for his community. Ten years later, in celebration of his diamond jubilee, he was weighed in diamonds, the value of which (\$684,000)<sup>53</sup> he then donated to the community for the establishment of an investment trust which might invest in land and businesses and make loans to cooperatives, building societies, and related institutions of sums equal to their capital, while paying dividends to member investors in their trust. In the following decade, he launched a further project whereby all East African Ismailis might own their own homes by 1960. A building society was set up to provide mortgages for

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<sup>51</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 33.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

the better off and to acquire land and build houses in which less prosperous followers might take occupation as tenants but eventually pay back sufficient to become owners.<sup>54</sup>

Thus we may agree that “the progressive, prosperous, and united Ismaili community of present-day East Africa is virtually a creation of the late Imam.”<sup>55</sup> Moreover, these developments represented a significant investment for a Ugandan future and contemporary emphasis on educational advance helped to confirm not only the community’s commitment to Uganda but also their reputation as the most accomplished sector of what was, by the late colonial period, a most conspicuously prosperous Asian minority in East Africa. Indeed, in 1953 out of the hundred Indian schools, thirty-one belonged to the Ismaili community.<sup>56</sup> Largely through the practical guidance of an Imam who could claim divine authority, the Ismailis solved the problem, which has faced all Muslim communities in recent times of how to adapt to change and compromise with modernity.<sup>57</sup>

By means of periodically revised constitutions the council hierarchy was maintained, with provincial and territorial councils working under the East African Supreme Council centered in Kenya.<sup>58</sup> These councils, comprising prominent members of the community nominated from within the hierarchy but

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<sup>53</sup> W. Frischauer, *The Aga Khans* (London, 1970): 158, quoted in Michael Twaddle, ed., *Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Uganda Asians* (London: Univ. of London, Athlone, published for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1975), 34.

<sup>54</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 34.

<sup>55</sup> H. M. Amiji, ‘The Asian Communities’, in J. Kritecek and W. Lewis, eds; *Islam in Africa* (New York, 1969): 148, quoted in Michael Twaddle, ed., *Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians* (London: Univ. of London, Athlone, published for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1975), 34.

<sup>56</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 151.

<sup>57</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 34.

approved by the Aga Khan himself, “directed, supervised and coordinated”<sup>59</sup> the activities of the *jamaats*. Each council had a president and secretary and a number of officers responsible for different departments, for example, health, education, finance, and housing. The constitutions periodically reformed the code of Ismaili personal law, so that the 1962 version, for instance, explicitly forbade the betrothal of boys below the age of 18 and girls below the age of 16, a remarkable contrast to Hindu practice. At the same time, the wife’s rights in divorce cases were laid down, while the explicit prohibition of polygamy pointed to one of the many contrasts between Ismaili and local African Muslim practice.<sup>60</sup> In these respects the community operated its own personal legal system, with its own structure of tribunals, within the host state of Uganda.<sup>61</sup>

The significance of the community’s formal organizational structure was that it worked in a practical way and the community visibly served its members--and, increasingly in the 1950s, non-Ismailis too. To take one example, education was compulsory for all Ismailis. Thus, on the one hand, the continuing emphasis on school building, such as His Highness The Aga Khan Secondary School opened in Kampala in June 1959, soon to become possibly the finest day school in Uganda; on the other hand, school fees were provided for children whose parents were too poor to contribute their own. Furthermore, this school was, from the outset, open to Africans, as were other Ismaili foundations since the early

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Amiji, op. cit; 149.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, op. cit., 24.

<sup>61</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 35.

1950s.<sup>62</sup> Although the community in Uganda could not match Nairobi's Diamond Jubilee Hospital, they did provide a health insurance scheme that entitled subscribers to treatment there, and local dispensaries--again open to Africans. Thus the Kampala Health Center, independent of government financial support, was reported in 1963 to have a 65 percent African clientele (37).

As the leader of a group without a homeland, the late Aga Khan had seen the wisdom of adaptation not only institutionally but also culturally. His advice to his East African followers was to make English their first language and to 'found their family and domestic lives along English lines' (42).

The most convincing sign of Ismaili good faith was the continuing program of investment in Uganda, in which the Aga Khan again took a lead. Private investment could be seen in the building of "The Fairway," a luxury hotel in Kampala opened only months before the expulsion. More significant, however, was the much greater degree of partnership and cooperation with African businesses and government which testified to the Aga Khan's conviction that, whether or not his community had an indefinite future in Uganda, it was wisest both for his followers' welfare and as a concrete gesture to an African government, to be seen to be investing and sharing in the development of the country. He set up IPS (Industrial Promotion Services) and contributed most of the \$1 million capital with which it was launched and ensured that young graduates like him staffed it. Many articles came to be manufactured in Uganda for the first time as a result, from suitcases to socks, fishnets to plastics. Another field was farming where in Fort Portal, for instance, tea, coffee, and Prince Amin,

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. , 37.

the Aga Khan's brother, launched poultry farming schemes after a personal investigation of prospects. A later addition to the IPS network followed in the late 1960s in the shape of Tourist Promotion Services (TPS), at a time when Uganda's enormous tourism potential was becoming fully appreciated. TPS became jointly responsible with the Uganda Development Corporation for the construction of lodges in two national parks and for the operation of air charter services. The themes of these twin concerns, under the close personal supervision of the Aga Khan, were investment, cooperation, and diversification, and the contributions, which the Ismailis were making, won the recognition of the Uganda government (44).

4) Marathi-speaking (Hindu) Maharashtrians, (this student's ethnic group), Gujrati-speaking Zoroastrian Parsis, Bengalis, and South Indians lived in small numbers in some of the large cities.<sup>63</sup> These groups consisted mostly of professionals.

The following groups were also present in reasonable numbers in Uganda but have not been elaborated upon due to lack of space: Gujrati Jains and Vaniyas (baniyas), Punjabi Hindus, Punjabi Muslims, Goans (the only Christian/Catholic group), Bohras and Shi'a Khoja Ishna-Asharis (both Gujrati-speaking Muslim groups).

### **The emergence of a bi-cultural community:**

What Bharati wrote about Kenya Asians is equally true of Uganda Asians: "None of the Indians want to *return* to India or Pakistan, because most of them have never been there and do not regard India or Pakistan as their homes any

more than the Algerian French regarded France as theirs--and those older Indians who were born in South Asia or revisited their ancestral places are simply not ready for the belt-tightening which their 'return' to the subcontinent would require".<sup>64</sup>

The overall improvement during this period in the Indian economic status in East Africa and in Indian education contributed to the social progress of the community. This was essentially a gradual process, and like their economic progress in the territories, it spanned the full extent of the colonial period. But the process of settling down, of adaptation to the East African environment and to British institutions, the extensive urbanization of a community emigrating from Indian villages, the rise of a new generation exposed to the influences of a western education and to better economic standards--all these factors foreshadowed far-reaching changes within the Indian society. In essence, they initiated a process of greater East Africanization of the Indian immigrants, and the gradual decline of their initially strong links with India--this was to be particularly true for the younger generation born and brought up in East Africa. Similarly, the older immigrants, reacting in part to the European criticisms of their lack of any permanent commitment to the country, tended, with the passage of time, to become less temporary visitors, attracted to East Africa by the prospects of employment and economic improvement, and more settlers with an increasing stake in the territories.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 88.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Mangat, *History of Asians*, 141.



The new generation born and brought up in East Africa had developed a greater consciousness of their countries of adoption and in the process had lost much of the sympathy of their parents for the places of their origin in India or Pakistan. Moreover, the younger generation of Asians, exposed to a highly urbanized East African environment, a system of education based on the western pattern, and higher standards of living, developed marked changes in food habits, modes of dress, and language--the last being influenced by their greater fluency in both English and Swahili. The impact of western institutions generally tended, however, to vary among the different Asian communities and was more marked among the Ismaili and Goan communities, whose receptiveness to such change was inspired, in the former, by the late Aga Khan and, in the latter, by its religious affinity.<sup>66</sup>

Some examples of the differences between East African Asians and their cousins on the Indian subcontinent would help. For one (as Bharati points out) the fact that socializing in East Africa is language rather than caste-bound has already been mentioned.<sup>67</sup> The former Indian custom of non-commensality between the castes has also vanished in East Africa. All castes interdine, and a significant proportion of non-commensality may be present only between the linguistically different groups.<sup>68</sup>

East African Hindus have also abandoned the norms of the *naat-jaat* (caste) groups. Once the members of a *naat-jaat* group leave their local area either

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. , 175.

<sup>67</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 18.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. , 21.

to settle in cities or overseas, a basic change takes place altering the nature of caste relations outside its local setting. First of all, as David Pocock has shown, the hierarchy does not emerge in East Africa as the Hindus living there are drawn from widely different areas and do not share a set of consensual ideas about what a hierarchical order should be in East Africa. As a consequence they have failed to develop in East Africa a replica of the graded ranking order. Free from the traditional constraints of a hierarchical order, they have also largely abandoned the values of purity and impurity, which only acquire real meaning within the context of a local area in India.<sup>69</sup>

As Bharati emphasizes what strikes any student of East African Indian society, be he a casual visitor or a skilled observer, is the literally boundless hospitality of one and all toward the guest and the stranger. This goes for all communities with the possible exception of the Goans who, due to their emulative *European* style of living seem to feel that it is not good manners to feed one and everybody who comes by. They try to view guests on western models of modified hospitality: guests come invited only--in crass contradistinction to the Hindu view: the Sanskrit word for 'guest' is *atithi*, literally, "one who comes without an appointment". With all other communities, Hindu, Jain, Muslim, or Sikh, refusal to treat a guest--any guest, not only a member of the community of the prospective host--to food and drink, and if required, to stay, is unthinkable.<sup>70</sup>

Unlike the practice on the Indian subcontinent (where scarcity is a basic rhythm

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<sup>69</sup> D. Pocock, ' "Difference" in East Africa: a study of caste and religion in modern Indian society,' *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* xiii (1957): 289-300, quoted in Michael Twaddle, ed., *Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Uganda Asians* (London: Univ. of London, Athlone, published for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1975), 76.

and boundless hospitality a privilege of the rich) East African Asians do enjoy a higher standard of living than their Indian cousins and a much broader range of cheap, plentiful foods. In addition a collective, subconscious desire of a people in cultural and political limbo to bond even more and feel secure could be a psychological explanation for this ritual.

It should be noted that East African Asians have their own folklore, which incorporate African elements, cuisines that incorporate African ingredients, accents, body language and other cultural features, which are distinct from those on the Indian subcontinent.

**Conclusion:**

There are two facts to be noted here. First, the colonial British regime was instrumental in bringing our subjects to East Africa for its own ends. Second, even though they are variously referred to as Asians, Indians, etc. we are really discussing *bicultural* Afro-Indians here. There is something to be said about this bicultural heritage. In theory at least it makes a person more refined, more sensitive, more perceptive to his/her environment and possibly enables him/her to be more selective and more adaptable upon migration. In other words, it can have important implications for the process of acculturation. Before we find out if this assertion is true let us read about the causes of our subjects' expulsion/flight.



## CHAPTER 2: CAUSES OF EXPULSION/FLIGHT

### Introduction:

Before the main causes of the forced and sudden departure of this group can be detailed it should be pointed out that this is not intended to be merely an exercise in retelling of history. The causes are meant to evoke the following questions in relation to this group's development of regional identity as Southern Californians:

1) In comparison with the United States what were the philosophical principles and constitutional guarantees that Uganda offered them to begin with? Here it should be borne in mind that any such guarantees were largely devised by the Colonial British administration and (as will be shown later) came into direct conflict with ancient tribal beliefs, customs and laws.

2) What did Uganda take away from them that would never be taken away by the United States? Again, the clarification here is that Amin's edict of expulsion was a direct and most severe expression of the conflict between primordial tribal laws and modernity in a country artificially put together.

### **A: Long term causes:**

Note that these causes were cumulative and overlapping. Nevertheless, an attempt should be made to delineate the main components of each one:

1) (*Perception of*) **economic dominance:** Dent Ocaya-Lakidi in his article "Black Attitudes to the Brown and White Colonizers of East Africa" details some of the deep causes, which led to this perception. He emphasizes that black African

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<sup>70</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 52.

attitudes and views of the Asians arose largely out of the economic, political, and social dynamics generated within a 'compound-type' colonial context. In this regard, three sets of factors account for the manner in which Asians came to be regarded more negatively than the Europeans. First, great many of the so-called African attitudes to Asians are in fact European attitudes assimilated and internalized by the Africans. It was often in the interest of white Britons in East Africa's colonial context to have the Asian appear in a certain way to both the natives and Britons at home in England. Various leverages were open to white Britons in this regard and they used them effectively. Secondly, the Asians themselves, being a colonized people and politically weaker than the British, were manipulated to serve the colonizers' economic interests by acting as middlemen between the white colonizers and the black Africans. By becoming the individuals who put colonial exploitative policies into effect, they inevitably came to take the blame for an exploitative colonial system while the real authors of the system, operating often invisibly behind the buffer, remained relatively free from black African hatred. Finally, a factor in generating certain black African attitudes toward the Asians were the Asians themselves in a more direct way, without being manipulated by a third party. Of particular relevance here are certain of their social customs and way of life (82).

There are at least two ways in which the collective image of the Asians suffered in East Africa as a result of the activities of white Britons in various capacities in the colonization of East Africa. First, in so far as the white colonizers were able to ensure a more positive image of themselves with the natives of East

Africa, the Asian collective image dimmed by comparison. Second, it happened more directly by opinions being manipulated against the Asians (83).

Both the British colonizers and the Asian immigrants to East Africa were largely motivated by self-interest in their various activities in East Africa. Nevertheless, there were always some important differences in their postures to the black Africans. The British operated under the guise of a mission to civilize the natives. This made their economic interests and activities less obvious. If they were not there clearly or solely for the salvation of the natives, neither were they there clearly or solely for their own economic gain. Or so it could be made to appear. The possession of a philosophy of civilizing the natives subsequently made white Britons an attractive species in East Africa for, while the philosophy was partially empty in being only part of the reason for British presence in East Africa, it was nevertheless effective or ultimately became effective for it was backed up by an impressive material culture at home in England. Can one absorb a new material culture without at the same time absorbing also some of the philosophical and social values, which go with it? Evidently not, and the British must have been aware of this. For they set about using their technology and material culture to win for themselves a permanent place of honor in the hearts of black Africans and not even African wars of resistance to white rule in some parts of Africa were to stand in the way of the Anglicization of the black man (83).

The Asians came under criticism from the Africans for exploitation under two grounds: as employers and middlemen in commerce. Africans alleged that Asian employers in industries would under employ Ugandans at Shs. 400 per

month while an illiterate Asian artisan or mechanic would draw Shs. 2,000 or more a month. As for the Asian as an exploitative businessman, African complaints and criticisms span the whole of the colonial era as well as the independence period. For a great many Africans, the concern was with the Asian as a middleman in the cotton industry, the cash crop, which, in the greater part of the country was the sole cash-earner for the Africans before the Second World War. Certain sophisticated Africans were not blind to the true source of Asian behavior in this connection but for the majority the Asian was the concrete entity that put the colonial system's exploitative policies into practice. (90)

There are two reasons why Britain is to be condemned for what eventually happened. First, it was Britain that shipped hundreds of Asians into East Africa for the promotion of British, not Asian, economic interests. Second, when Asian economic interests had to be taken into account, this was done at the expense of African interests. Again, the primary aim was British economic interests. By placing them as middlemen between Africans and Europeans, Asians lost African goodwill. By being the middlemen they were the concrete individuals who put into effect colonial policies resented by the Africans. (90)

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As for popular opinion being directly manipulated against the Asians it was Burton who described the Indian traders as the local Jews, and thought that one section of them was "unscrupulous and one-idea'd in pursuit of gain", used false weights and measures, and was receivers of stolen goods. Similarly, Frere described the Indians as mere "birds of passage," that both the Hindus and

Muslims had “as little idea of settling or adopting the country for their own, as a young Englishman in Honking.”<sup>71</sup>

Just as the Indonesians dislike Chinese entrepreneurs, restricted by government actions, and rejected by whites, so are Asian entrepreneurs in East Africa--and the difference is largely one of style, not of degree or intensity. Rejection by the elite where there is a substantial elite (South Africa, Burma, Indonesia), restrictions actual or threatened by the host government, all these are universal features where there is an Asian entrepreneur with a different mother tongue from that of the hosts and the elite.<sup>72</sup>

The Chinese in Indonesia pioneered in the marketing of rice, the East African Asians were the first to import and distribute cereal; they promoted the export of sisal. In both cases their very efficiency has made the host nations suspicious, alleging either conspiratorial designs--which may have been part fact and part fantasy with the Chinese in Indonesia, or draining their locally earned wealth to Britain and other places abroad--which is again part fact and part fantasy--with the Asians in East Africa.<sup>73</sup> The phenomenon of technological dualism is generated by different opportunities facing the export-oriented foreigner and subsistence-level-retaining native population; this situation is extreme in East Africa, as the tribal African and coastal people had been less conscious of marginal needs than say, the Indonesian in his small, overpopulated territory. The tribal areas in East Africa are large and under populated; pastoral economy and subsistence level agriculture are easily pursued. The hunger for

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<sup>71</sup> Mangat, *History of Asians*, 22.

<sup>72</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 96.



unknown goods is stronger in an overpopulated underdeveloped region living on a subsistence economy than it is in an under populated area with the same economy, and that conversely, the efforts of the alien entrepreneur have to be greater to generate tastes and demands in the under populated regions than they have to be in the overpopulated area which experiences more intensive overall economic duress. Consequently, the dualism in East Africa created by the Asians is potentially more explosive than that established by the Chinese in Indonesia or Thailand (97).

The extreme thriftiness of the Indian trader, his willingness to live on a narrow profit margin, and most of all, the complete absence of any desire for leisure or hobby, based to some extent on the anti-hedonistic background of the Gujrati lower urban middle-class Hinduism, made him the ideal merchant in his own image; but as an unfortunate though probably inevitable sequel, he became the object of suspicion and hatred to his African clientele, and of disdain to the whites to whose needs he catered in a demure, tenacious, but socially remote and withdrawn style (103).

Dharam P. Ghai, in his own article "An Economic Survey" informs us that the early Asian settlers were imbued with quasi-Protestant ethics; they were remarkable for their strong commercial sense, capacity to work long hours, low propensity to consume, and passion for accumulation of capital. With the increase in riches, the new generation had relaxed their single-minded pursuit of wealth. Nevertheless, a substantial number of Asian businessmen possessed in abundance many of the qualities that enabled their forefathers to amass large fortunes. The

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

qualities noted above, while vitally important for economic development, are essentially “unheroic” and did not endear their possessors to other communities.<sup>74</sup> Despite setbacks, in pre-war years Indians were responsible for about 90 percent of the total trade in the country, a figure that underlines their crucial importance to Uganda’s development; their role cannot seriously be held to have stunned African progress. It is only in the 1960s that the Indian hold on trade can be criticized legitimately on these grounds, and then only with caution.<sup>75</sup>

The fragile and easily disrupted nature of African trade is shown by the following figures. In 1953 there were 11,600 African traders in Uganda, compared with 4,800 Asians. But the latter held 97.5 percent of the trade in the main city, Kampala, and 80% of all the African traders were making an annual profit of \$50 or less. The tight family cooperation of the Asian trade, supported by a degree of skill and experience which few Africans could match, could easily appear an intolerable barrier to an African struggling to establish himself against the handicaps of a semi-feudal background.<sup>76</sup> There are other parallels. For example, the Chinese in Vietnam controlled virtually all the trade and commerce of the country.<sup>77</sup>

Yash P. Ghai in his article “The Future Prospects” tells us that there was a feeling among Africans that Asian traders had conspired together to hinder the participation of the former in commerce; and that were it not for this conspiracy, the Africans would rapidly and effectively engage in trade. This view overlooks

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<sup>74</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 103.

<sup>75</sup> Delf, *Asians*, 27.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

the skills, experience and hard work that are needed to succeed in the retail trade. African accusation of exploitation by Asian traders were largely unrealistic; Asian *dukawallas* in remote parts of the country lived on pitiful margins of profit; worked enormously long hours, got the whole family to serve in the shop, lived a life of austerity, cut off from many amenities of modern life, and retired after a long life's work with meager savings. However, the image of the exploiting, unscrupulous, wealthy Asian class had become so popularized that the very real sacrifices and contribution of these small, up-country shopkeepers were completely ignored, and were replaced by a long catalogue of sinful practices.<sup>78</sup>

It should be noted that it was not the African traders alone who envied Asian businessmen. Bharati points out that the African 'potential elite' also cast envious glances on Asian commerce. This elite consisted of the African nationalist politicians in office and close to it, and the young Africans who returned from college in America, Europe, and Russia, to step into government and trade, and who, during the next few decades, hoped to replace the Asian and the white businessmen.<sup>79</sup>

The following ancillary causes reinforced the perception of Asian economic dominance:

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<sup>77</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 317.

<sup>78</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 134-135.

<sup>79</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 99-100.

A) The banking business in a wider sense--loans, mortgages, etc., was very largely Asian, their clientele being about three-fourths Asian, one-eighth African, and one-eighth white.<sup>80</sup>

B) The heavy concentration of Indians within the five principal towns was mainly due to administrative rules, which prohibited any non-African, or his agents from setting up shop outside specified centers. This was reinforced by other regulations, which made it impossible (with a few exceptions) for non-Africans to acquire more than a leasehold interest in land anywhere in Uganda. Indian merchants and hawkers were therefore unable to trade easily in African settlements and were confined to bazaars. A successful merchant in this situation was thus restricted in the investment of his profits. A few Indians acquired estates on the relatively small amount of freehold land which had been alienated from African ownership earlier in the century and farmed them as sugar, coffee or tea plantations; but the law did not allow them to be managed as co-parcenary estates belonging to joint families.<sup>81</sup>

Dharam P. Ghai emphasizes that the urbanized pattern of Asian settlement in East Africa is in marked contrast to the pattern established in other countries where Indians have settled in considerable numbers such as British Guiana, West Indies, Fiji Islands and to a lesser extent, South Africa. It is this factor, which was responsible for the "Indian look" of almost all the major towns and cities in East Africa. Furthermore, it facilitated the organization of the Asian community into a number of tight, closely-knit communal groups and hence increased its isolation

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. , 106.

<sup>81</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 134.

from other races. Economically, it reduced the dependence of the community on other races. The fact that many businessmen, lawyers, doctors, accountants and other professional men derived a large proportion of their earnings from the Asian clientele, further reinforced their natural propensity to look to the Asian community for all their needs and aspirations.<sup>82</sup>

C) There were two practices, which had nothing to do with white British manipulation. Here the source of anti-Asian resentment was the Asians themselves:

The imminence of independence in East African countries, accompanied as it was by widespread fears of a breakdown of law and order in Kenya and Uganda, led to a crisis of confidence among the immigrant communities, resulting in a fall of domestic investment and a large outflow of capital abroad. With the attainment of independence and the return of confidence, there was a slight reversal of the above trends, but there were still many individual Europeans and Asians who continued to transfer abroad part of their current income. Dharam P. Ghai defensively argues that this response of the Asian business community to conditions of uncertainty and fear of exchange control has been similar to that of the affluent classes all over the world.<sup>83</sup> However, as Dent Ocaya-Lakidi argues even more forcefully, there is hardly any dispute about the extent to which the Asians indulged in this practice and the fact that it has cost the Asians the goodwill of the East African political leaders. It created the impression that the Asians are “get-rich-immigrants-in transit”, people without the interests of East

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<sup>82</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 93.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* , 105.

Africa at heart. As for the common man's economic view of the Asian, the source of the problem would appear to be 'bargaining', a practice perfected to a fine art by Asians.<sup>84</sup>

Dharam P. Ghai admits: "Many Asian traders have shown themselves more interested in quick profits rather than in steady long-term gains, and have not hesitated to exploit temporary scarcities to make windfall gains. All these malpractices have served only to promote ill will and distrust between the customer and the trader. And yet, none of these practices are peculiar to Asian traders in East Africa; indeed they are the stock in trade of businessmen all over the world, especially in underdeveloped countries. But in East Africa, because of the dominance of Asians in wholesale and retail trade, criticism of such practices is often couched in racial terms."<sup>85</sup>

Dent Ocaya-Lakidi emphasizes (even more forcefully) that naturally where there would ordinarily only be complaints about overcharging there is likely to be resentment instead, especially if the race that sells is generally "above" the buying race which, however, happens to be the predominant "owners" of the country's resources.<sup>86</sup>

**D)** Anirudha Gupta in his article "India and the Asians in East Africa," adds that as for economic integration the pattern on which most Asian business was conducted made it difficult to co-opt Africans as partners in business ventures. Excepting a few prosperous Asian families with large investments in

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<sup>84</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 93-94.

<sup>85</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 104.

<sup>86</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 94.

industrial and commercial undertakings, it was not easy for the Asian *lah* either to employ Africans or to make them shareholders in their family enterprises.<sup>87</sup>

The stereotype of Asians as a race of *dukawallas* was so pervasive and strong that not even the substantial participation of the same in manufacturing, public services, transport and communications, and miscellaneous services made any appreciable difference.<sup>88</sup>

**2) The political aspect:** Why did Uganda Asians refrain from organizing politically to resist Amin's edict of expulsion? One has to go back in time to find the answer to this question. Yash Tandon (formerly a professor of Political Science at Uganda's Makerere University), in his article "A Political Survey" tells us that, indeed, it can be quite categorically stated that the great majority of Asians in East Africa never actively participated in politics, if by participation in politics we mean in the Aristotelian sense, the exercise of rational thinking in a public discussion over controversial political problems. Rather they, both as a community and as individuals, reacted to politics and to political events with the crudest animal instincts of survival and security. This can be witnessed by the alternate waves of optimism and pessimism that betook them whenever a political speech by an African leader seemed to threaten their security or to preserve it. For a large part they were content with the existing peace; their brand of political participation was intermittent and sporadic depending on occasions when their peaceful existence appeared to be challenged.<sup>89</sup> The Chinese in Vietnam also held themselves aloof from political commitment and, in general, from Vietnamese

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. , 131.

<sup>88</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 152-154.

society.<sup>90</sup> The following were the reasons for the relative lack of political participation of Asians till the very end:

i) The first of these reasons are that the Asians were a relatively privileged class in East Africa. They were, of course, denied certain privileges, for example, ownership of land in the Kenya Highlands and attainment of positions of top grade in the civil service, yet they had virtually a free hand in the main occupation that interested the bulk of them--trade and commerce. There was, therefore, no good reason for them to spurn the British rule. (67-68)

ii) The second reason was that even if the Asians were to act the revolutionaries in the political struggle for independence, the prize was certainly not political power. They could never hope to seize power from the hands of the British, the way Indians in British Guiana and Fiji could. This was fully understood by every Asian in East Africa. (68)

As a corollary there was another realization that even if they were to agitate actively for African independence, the result would be only a change of masters--African masters instead of the British--and not any greater share in the politics of the country. (70)

iii) Two other related factors were at least as significant: the fact that they had nothing in particular to shout against, since the prevailing peace and order under the British was good enough for their purposes; and the fact of the silent acceptance of the reality of power in East Africa. (68)

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<sup>89</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 66.

<sup>90</sup> Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake*, 318.



iv) The plain arithmetic of numbers was also against them. The Asians constituted never more than 1.5 to 2 percent of the population and, therefore, could never hope to hold water in any bid for power the way their counterparts in British Guiana and Fiji could, where their numbers constituted about 50 percent of the total population. (68) Indeed they formed so small a minority that nowhere in East Africa was there any clear advantage for them to unite as one political party.<sup>91</sup>

Yash Tandon emphasizes that in politics numbers in themselves do not constitute the full answer to the problem of power, as evidenced by the history of the British (and other colonial powers') rule over populations vastly superior to their own, and as evidenced by the ability of dictators to rule over their countries with nothing more than police methods.<sup>92</sup>

Tandon adds that where the authority to rule is not based on superior numbers, it is based on superior power. Ultimately, it was the authority (and what goes with authority: control of the law, the police and the army), which emanated from London that could sustain the continued rule by the white minorities in these territories over their subject races vastly superior in numbers to their own. The point of this observation is borne out by subsequent history, particularly of Kenya, of the gradual withdrawal of the sanctions apparatus by London and the consequent almost overnight crumbling of the power of the white minorities.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> M. Freedman, "The Growth of a Plural Society in Malaya," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. xxxiii, no. 2 (1960): 167, quoted in H.S. Morris, *The Indians in Uganda* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), 176.

<sup>92</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 68.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.

Sanctions were therefore an important ingredient of the European power in Africa, and an element completely lacking on the Asian side. It may be a controversial point for historians, but it is not too difficult to believe that had the Asians in East Africa a sanctions machinery to back any bid for power, they might have staked their claims as well as the Europeans. (69)

The only type of sanctions that the Asians could apply in support of their political claims was moral and economic sanctions. But these too were very limited in their actual application. Although a usable form of sanctions, in the absence of legal and political apparatus in the background, economic sanctions have severe limitations and can be used sparingly. The economic weapon therefore was never sufficiently powerful for the Asians to stake out large political claims, and this, in an important way, limited the political ambitions of the community. (69)

The other sort of sanctions that the Asians could apply were moral sanctions, again neither very reliable nor too readily applicable. Moral sanctions have meaning only when applied against those who, at least tacitly, accept the validity of the prevailing moral standards. On the Europeans in Kenya and for their political mentors in London, with their standards of political morality doctrinally rooted in colonialism, such arguments, of course would have no effect. (70)

Dent Ocaya-Lakidi adds that whereas the Europeans had powerful England to back them up, for the Asians Europeans either controlled India, or when independent, India was too weak or too unconcerned to back up the Asians.

This is a fundamental point, because political powerlessness itself ultimately meant the Asians lacked a crucial leverage for staking a claim for a better collective image among the Africans.<sup>94</sup> Tandon agrees that the demands of the Asians in East Africa sometimes were buttressed by the moral support of their erstwhile mother country. But the Indian government seldom obliged the Asians with more than moral support.<sup>95</sup> Thus lack of support from India for the political demands of the Asians in East Africa brought a sense of realism among the Asians about the limitations of their political maneuverability.<sup>96</sup>

The cumulative effect of all these factors throughout the British era was to make the individual the focus of Asian politics, brought to limelight either through his own efforts or placed in a position of status by the colonial governments. In addition there was the official ban on the formation of political parties. (71) The few times when the Asians did form parties, like the Uganda Action Group (more of a ginger group than a party), and the Kenya Freedom Party, these were formed *ad hoc*, and basically to challenge the existing Asian leadership on some politically controversial issues. As soon as these issues were resolved, these parties were dissolved. (72)

The more normal vehicles of political expression were not parties as we generally know them, but what may variously be called front organizations, associations or congresses. The function of these organizations was to act as a two-way channel of communication between the Asians and the governments. Although consisting of only a small number of paid-up members these front

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<sup>94</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 88.

<sup>95</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 70.

organizations purported to represent the entire Asian community, and had their public meetings open to all the members of the community. The result, of course, was that these organizations were always starved of finances. The effect of this was not very wholesome on the efficiency of these organizations and therefore on the political health of the community. There was often a lack of communication between the organizations and the public, which they purported to represent; with the result that political education of the Asians was hardly their strong merit. This, in turn, merely accentuated the individualistic nature of Asian politics, and explains why there was no serious and consistent practice of discussing political problems at a rational and public level, except when these organizations sporadically arranged public meetings to discuss problems that had arisen *ad hoc*. (72)

Another effect of weak political organization of the Asians that may be mentioned in passing is the consistently bad press they had both during the British period and after. The Asians were often painted in most unkind terms, for example, as exploiters and collaborators of the British, and although there is some degree of truth in this, as there always is in all forms of political mudslinging, the Asian organizations hardly ever made serious attempts to rebut these allegations, except again, intermittently and on an individual basis. (72-73).

The weakness of the Asian organizations was not only at the level of each territory, but also at the interterritorial level. The daily contacts between Asian businessmen in the three countries were never institutionalized with the result that not only was there no interterritorial support for each others' political demands,

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

but there was also complete lack of a system of mutual advice on each others' problems. (73)

Since there existed no traditional type of political parties among the Asians except for short periods in Kenya and Uganda, and since Asian organizations in the political sphere were very weak, the task of getting elected as members of the Legislative Council or the Executive Council in the British days was very much dependent on the efforts of the individuals who aspired for such public office. (73) This, of course, meant that only the more rich among the Asians could afford to join politics and contest elections, or those who had either good communal support or rich friends to finance electioneering campaigns. (74).

Sir Amar Maini in his illuminating article "Asians and Politics in late Colonial Uganda: Some Personal Recollections" points out that Asian politics in East Africa tended to gravitate to the communal level.<sup>97</sup> Yash Tandon adds that communal voting was at once the inevitable outcome of individualistic politics and the scourge of Asian politics in East Africa. The British government quite effectively used communal differences; whenever they felt that the Asians acting as a group would prove a nuisance, if not a positive obstruction to legislation. This therefore sapped whatever little political strength the Asians had.<sup>98</sup>

In Uganda and Tanganyika where communal divisions were not so pronounced or so much played up by the colonial government, as in Kenya, the Asians resisted being represented in the Legislative Councils on strictly communal basis. This did not, however, prevent voting on communal lines during

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<sup>97</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 119

<sup>98</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 74.

elections. Among other effects of communal voting there are two that are worth mentioning. First, with the exception of a few, the people who were supposed to be representing the Asian opinion in the governing councils of the three territories were elected not necessarily for their policies, but more often for their communal popularity. The second effect, and a corollary of the first, was that although there were always elements within the Asian communities who were much more radical in their political thinking than the rest of their people, they could not gain a voice in the governing bodies for lack of support, either because they belonged to small communal groups, or because their support was scattered over different communal groups without having a full support of one large community to enable them to win elections.<sup>99</sup> Sir Amar Maini points out that the partition of the Indian subcontinent into the successor states of India and Pakistan made things much worse.<sup>100</sup> He adds that there were other internal divisions among the Asian population of a non-communal nature.<sup>101</sup>

This brings us to the matter of Asian response to the emerging nationalism in East Africa. Indonesian private enterprise exhibits an ideological opposition to both Chinese and Europeans; in East Africa, there was no indigenous private enterprise, but the ideological syndrome was created, and had become operative with the East African politician-nationalist who had incipient entrepreneurial traits and who saw a ubiquitous threat in the presence of the Indian entrepreneur whose comfortable, gadgetized, and outward-oriented ways he wanted to emulate, or more exactly, inherit. Like the Indonesians, East Africans began to display

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. , 75.

<sup>100</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 119.

straight xenophobia, and what might have been an objectively negotiable target of economic criticism--the white and the Asian entrepreneur--turned into an ideological enemy. Jomo Kenyatta and Dr Nyerere kept referring to the Asians as “bloodsuckers”, “leeches”, and a number of other unflattering terms. Their initial motivation was political rather than economic--getting the popular vote was aided by invectives against the Asians, and the scapegoat rhetoric had become part of the political parlance of African leadership. It was no longer the egoistic, ruthless monetary self-enrichment and the theft of the land committed by the Asians, but rather their disdain, their feeling of cultural and racial superiority, and their pretentious one-upmanship based on regular features, straight hair, lighter skin color, and written traditions, which were pointed out to the emergent African nationalists.<sup>102</sup>

Yash Tandon reiterates that nationalism for the Asians was not a new phenomenon. Many of them had known it in the 1920s, 1930s and even in the 1940s. In retrospect it would seem that if the Asians in East Africa had shown the same amount of exuberance for freedom (as they did for India and Pakistan), and if they had completely identified with the African aspirations, and still more if they had taken the initiative to start the struggle against colonialism even when the Africans were not ready themselves, then the Asians might have reserved for themselves a position of respect and leadership among the Africans. Why then did the Asians not transplant in the East African soil their spirit of anti-colonialism, which they had experienced much before the Africans? Various explanations can

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 97-98.

be given for this, ranging from the most sinister plots to the most palpable excuses. The truth may lie somewhere in between.<sup>103</sup>

One explanation, with some degree of truth may be that the Asian immigrant in East Africa was a different kind of a person from his brother back in India. The Asians in East Africa were a trading community who came here primarily to improve their economic fortunes. They could, therefore, be pictured in the most sinister terms: a hypocritical people who opposed the British regime in India but favored it in East Africa so they might continue to enjoy economic prosperity.<sup>104</sup>

Put in this way, it seems an ugly truth, if rather simplified. There was, however, an obvious dichotomy between what the bulk of the Asians felt in their hearts about African nationalism, and the public stand that their leaders had taken, both in their actions and their pronouncements. In the latter, Asian leaders in all three territories had, except in a few isolated cases, from the very beginning taken a positive stand in favor of constitutional development towards self-government based on adult universal suffrage and a common roll. In other words, Asian leaders had envisaged independence under African majorities as the ultimate goal to aspire toward. (76) These leaders favored the representation of Africans by the Africans themselves in the Legislative Councils at a time when they were represented by unofficial Europeans; they almost invariably supported the African demand for increased representation in the Councils; and they fought for the principle of equality for the races, including, for instance, the opening of the

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<sup>103</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 76.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*



(Kenyan) White Highlands for the Asians, the Africans as well as for the Europeans, and the ending of racial segregation in public places. (77)

There is no doubt that with the exception of a few individuals, the bulk of the Asians were ambivalent in their attitude towards the rising force of African nationalism. In public, it was necessary for the leaders to accept the inevitability and call it virtue; in private, one could indulge in the sin of thinking at variance with African nationalism. What follows is a possible explanation for this attitude, not a justification for it. (77)

Fear is a natural reaction of human beings against the unknown. This is doubly so for a man with vested interests which might be threatened by unknown events. Two basic sociological facts were at the root of such fears. One was that the Asians were a separate economic class with vested interests; and the second that they constituted a minority immigrant community which could easily be identified as belonging to a different race altogether. It was as if the two revolutions--economic and racial--were springing a surprise at the Asians who happened to be at the other end of the stick. And there hardly existed any mitigating factors: visibly there existed almost no strong African group whose interest could be identified with the Asians. Furthermore, events moved so fast that the Asians--conservatives in their ways in any event--could not adjust themselves quickly so as to identify themselves with African nationalism absolutely. (78)

African nationalism was therefore black African nationalism, even though there were individual Asians who were genuinely in basic sympathy with the

African aspirations. Self-determination was known and seen in racial terms by the Africans and not in purely national terms. (78) Concerned as they were with the problem of security in a future East Africa, the Asians began to look around for electioneering and constitutional safeguards. Communal roll, reserved seats for the Asians in national assemblies, and even at times qualified franchise based on education or property, and the institution of a Bill of Rights in the constitutions became common vocabulary among the Asians during this time. (79)

Both in theory and practice there was no place for the Asian community as a distinct political entity in East African politics, since there was no more representation on racial lines. (84) This student recalls that after Uganda gained its independence in October 1962 there were only a handful of Asians who were elected or appointed to various offices. Mr. Mahendra Mehta (a Gujrati Lohana, and one of the two richest Asians in East Africa) was *appointed* Member of Parliament. Another Gujrati Lohana male was elected the mayor of Kampala. Mr. Narendra Patel was elected the Speaker of Uganda Parliament; an Ismaili (later killed by Amin) was appointed the head of CID.

The fear factor among Asians was enhanced after independence when in May 1966 the then Prime Minister Obote ordered the arrest of the Kabaka of Buganda (the President). Incidentally, Amin was in charge of the military action during which the Kabaka escaped and one hundred of his people killed.<sup>105</sup>

In December of 1969 as he was leaving a UPC conference, which had adopted a resolution demanding Uganda should become a one-party state, that President Obote was shot. After the assassination attempt, the army behaved

harshly towards civilians and many people (presumably Baganda) were killed. Twenty-six people--twenty-one of them Baganda--were arrested including Members of Parliament and a former vice-President. Opposition parties were banned and Uganda became a *de facto* one-party state.<sup>106</sup> If Asians did not have the guts to voice their opposition to Obote's usurpation of power then obviously they were cowed into total silence following Amin's military *coup* in January 1971 and the massive bloodletting that followed.

**3) Of ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and race relations:** What Bharati wrote about Kenya Asians in 1972 is equally true of Uganda Asians: In most areas of immigration and settlement the Indians encountered hosts who had a codified tradition of learning and communication, who had built edifices of stone, of thought, and of worship. There was no such encounter in East Africa. Though the Asians did not tell the Africans, "we had books, temples and philosophy and you had nothing of the sort," intra-Asian parlance upholds that the Asians came into a cultural vacuum and that the Africans are not grateful for the gifts the Asians brought: refined tastes--sartorial, gastronomical, and ecological--and a more expansive look at the world. The Africans are viscerally aware of these attitudes, and the neglect and impoliteness, as well as the mercatorial exploitation the Asians wrought upon them, are clustered up in this latent disrespect toward the autochthonous population. Candid Asians tend to admit that there has been exploitation or, as they would put it, that the Asians came to make money, with little altruistic motivation. But the less perspicacious Asian rationalizes and would

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<sup>105</sup> David Martin, *General Amin* (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), 118-119.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

like to believe that the benefits accruing to the African population were so great that they far outweighed the obnoxiousness of the original motivation of the Asians.<sup>107</sup> The Asian regards himself as superior due to the ancestral culture on which he draws for his life cycle ritual, his spiritual solace, and his literary edification. The African leadership is aware of it, and it impugns the Asians' claim that Africa is their real home.<sup>108</sup>

The indigenous Africans have fine folk art, second to none in this genre. Asians know about Masai and other African woodcarvings but there are few if any Asians who see beauty in this craft. African drums and folk music are ignored. In line with non-linguists all over the world, Asians seem to think that *Swahili* is not a complete language (150-151)

All this is known and resented by the Africans, and the resentment is universal. The Asians in turn are aware of the resentment, and their reaction follows several intricate patterns. The mere statement that pressure of any sort causes counter pressure is truistic and trivial. There was mutual resentment long before *uhuru* (independence), when no political pressure obtained between the indigenous Africans and the Asian settlers. The strain previous to *uhuru* was purely economic with hardly any political overtones. The political ideology was directed toward the British rulers, by both the Africans and Asians, partly in a cooperative strain, but much more frequently, of course, in a mutually antagonistic fashion. Asian leaders in East Africa claim--and there may be a good amount of truth in their claim--that *their* political ideology and their zest, inspired

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<sup>107</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 114-115.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

by the nationalist movement in India, informed the African leaders in their turn.

(152-153)

The African story is a different one, as would be expected. In the first place, African leaders deny that the Asians had given them new tastes and aspirations. It is pointed out that no Asian precedence had been available in Western Africa, which was economically and ideologically more emancipated than East Africa. Had Asians not been there, and had Africans had the same chances to study and travel, things would have been about the same as in West Africa. No doubt, African leaders admit, Asians gave a lot of money to African leaders. But these were bribes, the Africans aver, and meant to create a safe and secure niche for the Asians after *uhuru*. What the Africans cannot forget is the disdain in which the average Asian had been holding Africans since the Asians came and settled, and the rude manner in which the *duka*-owner treated his African clientele, trying to squeeze every penny out of them as well. Also, they know that the Asians detest their darker color and physiognomy. The Asian talks of integration, but will he integrate? Of course, he will not! Asian males had African concubines, but can an African approach an Asian woman? If the Asians were serious about integration, they would not object to inter-marriage. They did not come and stay with any humanitarian motives, and whatever the salutary by-effects of Asian domicile in East Africa might have been, their intentions were purely commercial and egoistic. In India, so the "India-returned" African students say, the Patels and Lohanas are poor wretches, as hungry as the people around them, in East Africa they have made millions at the expense of the naïve, trusting

African villager and tribesman and the poor African domestic servant. The fact that Asians gave only menial jobs to Africans, and that most of the domestic servants in Asian houses have been Africans, irks the African urban dweller. Suggestions by African leaders that Asians should take Africans into partnership go unheeded. (153-154)

As for the Asians many of their leaders feel that there is an element of ineradicable and almost systematic antagonism in all African minds, even where there are assertions of good will and good hope held out to the Asians. Their fear is that becoming Kenyan, Tanzania, or Ugandan citizens will not help in the long run; there is a process of "blackenization," an ugly term used by Asians and whites. There is some objective basis to this notion. Indigenous Africans are given some preference in governmental jobs when competing with better-qualified Asians. (155-156)

Few Asians trust the East African economic future. Most people who save money deposit it in British banks and invest abroad in the sterling area. African leaders point this out as one of the reasons why Asians cannot be trusted, and that the latter's professed African nationalism is spurious. (156) Many Asians in turn, were convinced (and this student can attest to it) that Africans, being "*junglees*" were incapable of governing themselves. A spate of military coups during the 1960s in Africa reinforced this conviction. Amin's coup, the consequent bloodbath and mismanagement of Uganda made it a gospel truth.

The interracial friction has, however, deeper roots than political and even economic mistrust. If we regard culture in purely anthropological terms no harm

could be done. But to the Asian “culture” is a value-term; it is the Asians’ notion of having settled in a cultural vacuum, which frustrates incipient efforts at a genuine improvement of interracial relations. (156)<sup>v</sup> In this student’s experience the prejudicial notion that Africans are savages or that African cultures are crude at best was widespread among Asians.

Some well-meaning Hindus believe that African culture came from India “many thousand years ago”; this notion of India being the primeval center of cultural diffusion is quite pervasive among Indians. In East Africa, this is expressed in the claim that the tall, strong, handsome tribesmen like the Masai and the Chaga “came from the North”--which may be true, if their origin was Nilotic--and that before that, their ancestors had come from India. (156)

The white settlers were not representative of the best of European culture. The only useful thing they brought was an advanced technology. The literary and ideological background of the white was too poor and too disparate from the Indian tradition to generate any sort of cultural comparison or competition. The only level of socializing, first between Asians and whites, then between Africans, Asians and whites was the “sundowner”, and even that was limited due to the racial strictures set up by the whites, in hotels, restaurants, conveyances, etc. (156) Anirudha Gupta points out that social intermixing by Asians was dubbed as an excuse to meet Africans on a “cocktail party” basis.<sup>109</sup>

What bothers and aggravates the Asians considerably is the African and white indifference to the cultural heritage which the Asians believe to have brought with them. Though there were no Sanskrit or other traditional scholars

and artists among the Asian settlers, almost all of them had a cherished set of possible references to a rich cultural milieu: the ideology and philosophy of Hinduism and Islam, the rich heritage of literature, music, dance, etc., and organized ritual based on “Great-Tradition” texts of a hoary age. More than the British settlers, the Hindu as well as the Indian Muslim participates in a highly sophisticated, socio-centric ritual; kinship is defined and variable according to bulky, erudite, written and oral traditions--and although few of the Asian settlers, or none except their *pundits*, were familiar with these, there was a profound consciousness of their presence. Ritualistic purity extends over food and drinking habits, and although many Asians took to drinking on European lines, most of their food taboos remained intact until quite recently. The African and the whites they encountered had no food taboos, hence no ritualistic purity. Starting from this negative image of both the Africans and the Europeans, the Asian in East Africa began to live in a world of his own, a chip-on-the-shoulder world of concealed conceit nurtured by the facts of his thrift and his consequent economic independence.<sup>110</sup>

It should be emphasized that *all* (italics mine) people of Asian origin in East Africa, including even the Catholic Goans, share the matrix of “spiritual” condescension. True, such Asian Muslim groups as the numerically insignificant Punjabi Ahmeddiyas or Mirzais find it much easier to mingle with the Africans, to live among them as their own kind, but with the prospect of proselytizing. Yet, in

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<sup>109</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 131.

<sup>110</sup> Bharti, *Asians in East Africa*, 156-157.



matters of religious lore and of ideology, all Asians have been taking a one-upmanship attitude both toward the whites and the Africans.<sup>111</sup>

African and Indo-Pakistani leaders have suggested to the settlers that they should strive for “full integration” if they want to be accepted. Some said it quite openly, as Mr. Appa Punt, former High Commissioner of India in Kenya--Asians must make Africans their business partners, and they ought to intermarry with the Africans. African leaders have spoken on the same lines. To the first part of this suggestion for a remedy, the reaction has been negative: Africans, in Asian eyes, are incurable spendthrifts, they do not know how to handle money and goods, and if they lose they do not care and they return to eating *posho* and bananas; make an African a business partner, and your own business is bound to go to pot. To the second part, that of conjugal integration, the reaction has been one of anger, disgust and dismay: Asians do not even intermarry with each other today, and although the progressives believe and preach inter-caste marriage, that is utopia at best. (159-160) Asian women find the idea of being attracted to an African male reprehensible and repulsive. (164)

Anirudha Gupta points out that ethnocentrism of the Asians have made their position vulnerable in yet another respect. With the possible exception of a few Muslim sects, they have come to acquire a “dependency-complex” toward India. This is evident from the way they crave help and advice from Indian officials and visitors even on such petty issues as obtaining a license, or sending their wards abroad for higher education, or simply in getting their in-group

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. , 157

rivalries settled. The net result of this attitude of dependence has been an erosion of an independent Asian will and initiative in Africa.<sup>112</sup>

The early Bhatia and other western Indian pioneers came to Africa without their wives and lived with local women; their offspring in the first, second, and third generations (estimated to be about 5,000) are ascriptively African, simply by default: Asians do not accept children of mixed parentage as their own; hence these people identified with their mothers' kin in all matters. Resentment against the Asians on their side is frequent. The present-day "*jotawa*" ('*chotara*' in Uganda), a slightly derogatory Gujrati term for Afro-Asians (the word compares, in lexical force, somewhat with the medieval British use of "bastard," or the more recent use of "mongrel")--are for the most part the fourth and fifth (and now the sixth) generation descendents of those early liaisons.<sup>113</sup> Even today there are small traders in the bush who live in temporary liaisons with African women.<sup>114vi</sup>

Afro-Asian males mix easily with African women; the latter probably do not regard them as Asian at all. But it is quite impossible for the Afro-Asian male to court an Asian woman. The general Asian feeling seems to be that whatever happened in the past decades between Asian males and African women is a thing that should not be discussed; but new liaisons, giving rise to new mixed offspring, should not be encouraged. (163)

However, what is at the core of the most traumatic fear syndrome among Asians, young and old, is the fear that their women in the long run be exposed to

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<sup>112</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 126.

<sup>113</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 160-161.

various degrees of African courtship or sexual attention. It is here that feelings of racial superiority are most bluntly expressed. The Indians in India identify physiognomic beauty and attractiveness with the lack of pigment. As in medieval English, “fair” and “handsome” or “good looking” are semantic synonyms in Indian speech. Indians in India and elsewhere, even after having been exposed to different patterns of aesthetic judgment, not only do not recognize the possibility of dark-complexioned attractiveness but they feel embarrassed at occasions when someone suggests or implies it--as when the conversation is steered toward people of mixed African-Indian origin. Praising dark beauty is felt to be almost obscene, and this in diachronic perspective stems from the classical and popular notion in India that dark women are of low caste origin and hence tend to have loose morals and to excel in sexual dalliance. The grudging admission that many Asians in former days did live with African women and begot offspring with them concatenates with that notion: men who did it were lustful creatures whose judgment was of no relevance and should not be emulated by good, that is, people who are not lustful. This is the ultimate charge of the Asians against the African autochthonous value orientation: that their morals are loose, that they live with many women and do not feel guilty or ashamed about it. (165)

Africans know about these Indian attitudes; cognitively, they not only do not care, but such attitudes make the Asians all the more unwelcome. On the level where these matters can be discussed, i.e., among scholars and literati, the problems disappear. But this sort of high-level discourse hardly exists as yet in

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

East Africa. The African and the residual Asian leadership are too absorbed in political and economic problems to attend to psycho cultural matters. (165-166)

Ethnocentrism is hardly the occidental anthropologist's verdict about the ways of untutored westerners alone. The emergent nations not only share it, but it appears that *not* being ethnocentric is felt to be wrong and unpatriotic. Indians today may see beauty and value where they can use indigenous standards; in spite of the elite's admiration of the western, particularly British, ways of life, aesthetic judgment about other people derives from Indian models. Some Africans are handsome, Asian settlers would say--because they are tall, light-skinned, "Nilotic," as the Hindu leader said; but "Nilotic," to him meant that their ancestors had originally come from India. An angry aged Gujrati businessman, when asked how his father had come from India to settle in Tanganyika, claimed "we had the shops and sold goods to the Africans when they had nothing; they ran about naked and dyed their faces--whatever valuable things they learnt, they learnt from us." He did not answer Bharati's question at all but burst into invectives against the Africans, because their way of life was not the Indian way of life, *hence* wrong. Indian saints and sectarians also put on a lot of dye, but that way was evidently another matter. No doubt the Africans had no shops of the *duka* kind, but they certainly had their own well-functioning systems. Such considerations, however, tend to throw some Asians into a rage. (167-168)

The few Asian politicians in power identify with the Africans in general and political parlance. Mrs. Mustafa, the Ahmeddiya Asian member of the Tanzanian parliament, genuinely resented that there was so little real integration

in spite of much Asian talk about it; that Asians were becoming more parochial as the years went by, that they knew little or nothing about the Africans, nor wanted to know anything about them. (169)

Dent Ocaya-Lakidi points out that in Uganda very few Asians made friends with black Africans sufficiently close for social visits at home. Attention has also been focused on the fact that very few Asian-African marriages had taken place, whereas there had been many African marriages with Europeans. If only the Asians were more open, more integrated with the rest, if only they intermarried more, all might have been well.<sup>115</sup>

In support of Ocaya-Lakidi Delf points out that social contact between Asians and Africans was not common, but in Kampala a small number of Asian Muslims and Goans were married to African women, a fact which has much to do with economic pressures. Africans had more in the way of land rights and Asians had a higher income. In a study of Kampala society published in 1957 the authors mention that poorer Asians came into close contact with their African servants, and lived on a similar economic level, but they add, "Nevertheless this has not so far led to any great feelings of solidarity between them."<sup>116</sup>

What we have considered so far are largely views of Asians such as may have been held by the middle-class and educated Africans in Uganda, those who no doubt were bent upon improving their own economic standing in the country but who also were capable of forming a comprehensive view of the place of Asians in East Africa. But to the ordinary man in the street and in the countryside

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<sup>115</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 95.

to talk of Asians was to talk of brown town-dwelling shopkeepers. And these are people they have never admired. The ordinary African had probably never thought Asians could or would leave his country, just as he never thought the white man would. And he probably had no ambition to replace the Asian shopkeeper. Nevertheless, he had certain definite views of the Asians.<sup>117</sup>

First of all, he shared with his more sophisticated countrymen the view that Asians were cheats. The case of the Asian as an artful bargainer has already been referred to. But the African's resentment of the Asian was all the more pronounced because the Asians appeared to him a lazy lot, earning money "for doing nothing". To the African in East Africa *work* has a special meaning. It excludes activities where one wears nice clean clothes and stays away from the burning heat of the sun. To work is to sweat. Yet was it not the African "boy" who was doing all the sweaty jobs in Asian shops? Paradoxically, however, Africans have identified with precisely the kind of European who wears a clean shirt, a colorful tie and jacket, and sits around in an office apparently doing nothing. This must surely show the extent to which the Africans were prejudiced against Asians in Uganda right from the beginning. The second African attitude, which might be mentioned, is the belief that Asians are a prolific race. The fact that they and they alone appear to occupy the towns, through which they lazily roam in large numbers during the weekends especially, only strengthens this conviction. From this arose in turn the fear that unless something was done, Asians were bound also to "take over" the country one day through their sheer

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<sup>116</sup> A. Southall & P.C.W. Gutkind, *East African Studies* (Kampala, 1957): 26, quoted in George Delf, *Asians in East Africa* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), 59.

numerical strength. A related opinion has linked Asian numbers and their concentration in the towns with dirt and unhealthy living. To add to this, the average Asian is seen as a weakling, suffering from the metabolic consequences of his “hot” diet. His habit of constantly coughing and spitting, often in the street, is perhaps the most obvious distinguishing mark of the Asian to the ordinary African--and it further confirms Asian weakness and incapability to work. Asians are also seen as rich, showy people: riding their long new cars recklessly and twirling dust in the eyes of African pedestrians. Finally, the Asians have been criticized for their arrogance. The African manual laborer, for example, has resented the manner in which the Asian looked down upon him, calling him “boy” and “stupid”. In sum, the ordinary African perceives the Asian as a low sort of human being who, though rich, lives in congested quarters, and is dirty and weak.<sup>118</sup> (94-95)

A related factor might have derived from the tensions of rural-urban dichotomies. The great majority of Asians of Uganda were urban people. Those Asians who opened up shop in isolated rural areas often signified an urban presence in the countryside. Much of the resentment of the Asians was racial and economic, but there also might have been a residual symbolic factor signifying rural-urban tensions. These tensions focused on this alien group partly because it could be hated without the complications of crosscutting kinship ties.<sup>119</sup> Amin’s attitude to the Asians of Uganda was a feeling widely shared among ordinary people in the country. By the time Amin (whose upbringing was rural) came into

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<sup>117</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 94.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

power, Indophobia, or negative response to the people of Indian origin, had become a gut response among peasants in the country.<sup>120</sup>

As for racial intermarriage Dent Ocaya-Lakidi shows us the stereotypical notions of Africans against Uganda Asians. Most black Africans had such a low opinion of Asians that they would not have wanted to associate too closely with them. This fact is graphically illustrated in the manner in which black African males, especially, look at any “loose” black girl who goes with an Asian. That the woman is already “loose”, a prostitute, ought to mean that she is already written off as far as being a proper member of the African community is concerned. Yet should such a girl go with an Asian, she can still create considerable revulsion among black African males. By going with an Asian she is seen to be sinking even lower than the lowest African can go. It follows that for a “clean” or good African girl to want to marry an Asian is just unimaginable. As for the black males themselves, no doubt the idea of “tasting” a “brown skin” is attractive but none would stoop to marry an Asian.<sup>121</sup>

African views of Asians in Uganda have not been entirely negative. Some Africans have gratefully acknowledged Asian contributions in opening up East Africa for commerce and trade. In Uganda such pioneering Asians as the late Allidina Visram, the late Nanji K. Mehta (for whose son this student’s father worked in two different capacities), and a tycoon like Muljibhai Madhvani have

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<sup>119</sup> Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen*, 47-48.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>121</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 96-97.



been acknowledged as creditable Asians. But on the whole Africans have had and continue to have very negative attitudes towards Asians.<sup>122</sup>

Anirudha Gupta rightly points out that faced with overt antagonism from all sides, the Asians had no alternative but to withdraw into their traditional grooves, accentuate their exclusiveness, and in general abstain from all public affairs. In short, they became even more insular than before. (131)

**4) Of (lack of) integration:** This brings us to the most controversial issue of the pre-expulsion days in Uganda: that of 'integration'. Thus Gardner Thompson quotes Yash Tandon: 'the very vagueness of the term "integration" is the source of its most explosive potential in verbal dialectics'. (46)

Yash P. Ghai clarifies that clearly integration means a *modus vivendi*, a relationship in which the hostility towards the immigrants diminishes or disappears, the immigrants are able to play a meaningful and purposeful part in the country on a basis of equality, and are accepted as full members of the society. As a minimum, this demands from the immigrants an acceptance of and loyalty to the political and civic institutions of the country; it also demands sympathy for the basic aspirations of the majority group. On the part of the majority group, it calls for tolerance and understanding. What else is essential?<sup>123</sup>

The answer to this question depends on the kind of integration that is sought, and it is here that the need for sharper definitions becomes clear. Students of minority-majority relationships have stated that integration can be achieved by two basic methods--pluralism (sometimes used synonymously with

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. , 97.

<sup>123</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 141.

accommodation) or assimilation. Pluralism means a continuation of the minority as a distinct unit within the larger society, and the minority's community consciousness remains. It implies several areas of life where diversity is tolerated and indeed encouraged, though conformity in some areas is necessary. Areas where diversity is permitted are in personal and family life--religion, marriage, food, etc., and possibly in social institutions, e.g., clubs, societies. A pluralist society is one therefore in which the minority group accepts the political and civic institutions of the majority group and are sympathetic to its basic aspirations; in return the majority group tolerates and accepts some of the distinct cultural traits of the minorities, allows them the establishment and maintenance of cultural and social institutions, and enables them to participate in the apparatus of the state on a basis of equality. A successful state of pluralism implies a process of balancing--the conformities that are essential with the diversities that may be permitted.<sup>124vii</sup>

Assimilation, on the other hand, is a much more radical process. It rules out all diversities; the end product of assimilation is a situation of complete conformity at all levels of life. The resultant conformity is not an amalgam, but assimilation into the culture of the dominant group. It implies the disappearance of minorities as distinct units in the society; it presupposes either one or both of the following factors--a decline in the group loyalty and sentiment of the minority and a willingness to abandon its special characteristics in favor of those of the majority, and, on the part of the majority, a determination not to permit the existence of 'distinct pockets' of population and to exact conformity. Above all, it implies basic homogeneity in the society of the majority group, and a belief in its

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

superiority and in the necessity of assimilation. Its demands are primarily on the minority--it calls for radical adjustments by them, but little by the majority, except to permit assimilation. (141-142)

The Asian bias is for pluralism. (142) It was partly the wish to help create an inclusive national community in which they could live in comfort and safety that led the Aga Khan to urge his followers to set about becoming 'citizens of Uganda' as fully as possible. Most other Indians, by contrast, took the view that the range of commonly held values needed to bind society together did not have to be very wide. Their picture of proper social relationships had departed less than that of the Ismailis from the ideas and beliefs, which they had derived from the caste system and they frequently found themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, they wanted to live quietly in Uganda and for it to prosper: they were not unwilling to be citizens. On the other hand, ideas of national unity and the place of separate communities within the country were often formulated in terms of mixed marriages and the removal of cultural differences--notions still repugnant to most Indians. At home within the caste system, they were accustomed to segregation from other castes in dwelling, eating, drinking and marriage, and knew that this fact did not impair the political, legal and economic unity needed to hold their own local caste system together. Those who were familiar with the wider social scene of the traditional large-scale states in India also knew that it was possible to live in such a system without relinquishing their ideals of proper group relationships. They were uncertain, as also were many of their compatriots in India, what it was in large-scale societies of the modern western type, which

made it impossible for small-scale systems and their associated values to persist undisturbed within the framework of the larger society. Although the Indians had at different times resisted some aspects of segregation in Africa, which they feared might damage their economic position, none of them fundamentally held the same view on social difference, identity and unity as the Europeans and the Africans, whose opinions derived from other traditions. Few Indians found it difficult or improper to think of living in a society *permanently* divided into exclusive communities having restricted relations with one another. Educated Africans, by contrast, hoping to succeed to the government of a unified state, yet knowing that deep internal divisions existed in the African community, were usually unwilling to entertain such views.<sup>125</sup>

Many examples have been cited of Ismaili identification and cooperation with political, economic, and religious life in Uganda. It is remarkable, indeed, that this most distinct and cohesive community, this nation within the nation, with its own constitution within the constitution, was the Asian group which most closely “integrated” in Uganda with the indigenous Africans. But (as Gardner Thompson points out) a look at the nature of this integration resolves the apparent paradox. For what the IPS (Industrial Promotion Services), the EAMWS (East Africa Muslim Welfare Society), and even the Ismaili schools had in common was a degree of integration that was essentially financial and institutional, though even this latter aspect must be qualified by the Ismailis’ continued existence as a distinct institution in themselves. What was absent was a significant degree of social integration at anything below leadership level, and it was in this respect that

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<sup>125</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 171-172.

the Ismailis were most similar to other Asians in their expression of pluralism. For example, in Kampala secondary schools immediately before the expulsion, streaming tended to divide the high-ability Asians from up-country African students who had serious linguistic disabilities to overcome, while casual social intercourse outside the classroom was generally on ethnic, even on tribal, lines. In such conditions, the stereotypes through which each group viewed the other could persist and even harden. On balance the contribution of the Aga Khan schools was to widen further the gap between Ismaili and African attainment.<sup>126</sup>

Whatever the substantive as opposed to the symbolic content of this issue in 1972 and before, the Ismailis' failure at the level of social integration had led them to be associated merely with the general Asian category and can be said to have somewhat undone those other achievements which, on their own, present the Ismailis as at the same time the most distinct yet the most "integrated" of the Asian communities in Uganda. To the extent that they fell short of the African expectation that the balance of their energies could be tipped in favor of outward-looking investment to the benefit of Ugandans as a whole.<sup>127</sup> Ultimately the barriers of race proved more important than religious brotherhood, as the events of 1972 showed when an overly Muslim President, with the support, later explicit, of a strongly Muslim Nubian element, ordered the expulsion of all the Ismaili community along with all Asians of whatever denomination. (45-46)

**5) Of the matter of citizenship:** In the years after 1955 the emergence of open hostility to Indian traders, accompanied sometimes by pillaging and

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<sup>126</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 46-47.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

destruction in the rural districts of Uganda gave reality to many Indian fears. Subsequent developments in all the independent countries of East Africa did little to alter their fears of a bleak future as small traders.<sup>128</sup> Yash Tandon points out that the evidence to confirm their worst fears related to events in one of the sister countries, like the looting of Indian shops during the *Zanzibar coup d'etat* and the Tanganyika army mutiny in 1964.<sup>129</sup> Meanwhile events in the Congo (as Gardner Thompson points out), following the abrupt departure of the Belgians, included the flight of expatriates--among them Asians; while nearer home, indeed in the neighborhood of Kampala itself, a boycott of non-African traders, 'politically inspired' and aimed mainly at the Asian businessman, was accompanied, in 1959 and 1960, by acts of intimidation and physical violence, including murder, and in March the Indian Merchants' Chamber reported that half the rural Asian traders in the province of Buganda had been put out of business.<sup>130</sup> Bharati emphasizes that the strongest apprehension about citizenship was felt by the small *duka* (shop) owners all over East Africa, i.e. by the Gujratis who have given the image of the Indian as a petty, money-grabbing trader, to both Africans and Europeans in East Africa. These *dukas*, owned almost exclusively by Gujrati-speaking Asians, were being crowded out by the African cooperatives and by an increasing boycott from the side of the former African clientele.<sup>131</sup>

Bharati also points out that both in politics and in governmental services Asians were on their way out. The official formulation of the African

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<sup>128</sup> Morris, *Indians in Uganda*, 145.

<sup>129</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 85.

<sup>130</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 38.

<sup>131</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 14.

governmental employment agencies had been that “Kenyan (or Tanzanian, or Ugandan) citizens” would be entitled to apply for government service. This had given rise to much anguished speculation about the advisability of taking out East African citizenship. Deadlines from two to four years were set by individual governments, and government service contracts may not be renewed for people who had not become citizens by then. “Africanization” was the official policy but the term was ambiguous, and the great question before the minds of roughly 10,000 Asian government servants in East Africa, on all levels of administration, was whether “Africanization” really meant East African citizens’ employment and promotion, or whether it would not eventually be “blackenization.” Such latent racial discrimination made the Asians apprehensive.<sup>132</sup>

So far Asians’ concept and anxiety about citizenship has been dealt with. What about the African concept of citizenship? Indeed, it turns out that the latter’s concept of citizenship was the flip side of ‘integration’.

When the British arrived in Uganda, they found a number of societies some of which had state structures. Among the more developed, and certainly one which developed even further under colonial rule, was Buganda. Bunyoro was also a highly structured polity. The concept of citizenship in these societies was inseparable from the concept of kinship. All the Baganda together were deemed to have descended from a single ancestor. The state rested on a principle of political consanguinity, a presumed descent from a shared forefather. The polity was

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<sup>132</sup> Bharati, *Asians in East Africa*, 109.

ethnocratic.<sup>133</sup> New citizens of an African society did not become full citizens until they mixed their blood with the original members of that society or adapted more fully the language and culture of that society. Biological intermingling and cultural assimilation were the most effective ways by which foreigners could enter the mainstream of African citizenship.<sup>134</sup> Citizenship in such indigenous polities was inseparable from kinship. A person could not belong to a social or even ceremonial collectivity if he did not have kinship status. In many an indigenous society both in Africa and elsewhere “there are no non-relatives.” All roles are allocated and activities organized in relation to kinship status broadly defined.<sup>135</sup>

President Amin’s response to the cultural and sexual exclusiveness of the Asians rested in part upon a primordial African conception of true citizenship. The Asians, by being distant culturally and by being reluctant to mingle their blood with black Ugandans, remained alien by this criterion.<sup>136</sup> Amin concluded that they were by that very reluctance unprepared to share nationhood with Ugandans. (71)

Soon after assuming power Amin emerged as someone within the classical tradition of viewing the nation as a family writ large. His adoption of the name *Dada*, patriarch, confirmed his image of the role of the President as being some fundamental sense a father figure. His view of marriage as a device of tribal

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<sup>133</sup> Eugene Victor Walter, *Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence, with Case studies of Some Primitive African Communities* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969): 57-58, quoted in Ali Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy* (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1975), 66.

<sup>134</sup> Walter, “Terror”, 59.

<sup>135</sup> Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen*, 224.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.



intermingling was also in a classical tradition of its own. Inter-marriage becomes part of the foundation of national integration, simply because kinship was part of the foundation of citizenship. The General began to take pride in having one wife drawn from the Lugbara, one from the Basoga, one from the Langi, and later one from the Baganda. From this point of view, in his approach to social integration General Amin was indeed profoundly African from the start although not all his own marriages survived. (77) The General could see himself as a father figure for all black Ugandans. But he had great psychological problems in seeing himself as a father figure for brown or white Ugandans. The racial exclusiveness of the Asians aggravated the General's incapacity to see them in kinship terms. (78) Idi Amin, being a rustic man drawn from the countryside, assumed supreme political power in Uganda with political ideas still deeply conditioned by his peasant and rural origins. The fate of the Asians in Uganda was partly an outcome of Amin's primordial idea of citizenship. He could conceive of different black tribes "intermingling their kinship fields." He was capable of seeing other *black* people as kinsmen in a single society, though even that black empathy was sometimes severely strained. But the demand to take a leap and recognize Gujratis and Punjabis as kinsmen in a shared kinship polity called "Uganda" was in some ways too modern for this rural rustic and rugged President. When he moved to expel "aliens" from Uganda, he originally included among them citizen Asians. The cultural and kinship distance between Indians on the one side and the President's own tribe, the Kakwa, on the other side, was too great for this warrior's

imagination. The result was a speedy equation between nation building and race-building. (225)

**Short term causes:**

**1) The economic aspects:**

A) According to M. A. Tribe a major problem, which immediately arises, is that of separating effects of the expulsion from effects of the many other happenings around the time of the expulsion. These range from government financial problems before the Amin coup, particularly relating to the financing of the Nile Hotel, the International Conference Center, and the Entebbe airport; the confusion surrounding the implementation of (former President Obote's) "Move to the Left", especially the partial nationalization measures embodied in the Nakivubo pronouncements; the concern over what might be regarded as the somewhat mediocre performance of the economy as a whole; the heavy military expenditure both before and after the coup, together with considerable disruption of the public service and the economy as a whole owing to the extensive levels of uncertainty; and events such as expulsion of the Israelis and the "nationalization" of a large number of foreign-owned firms. The net effect of these factors in the financial year 1970-71 was that the budget deficit increased substantially.<sup>137</sup>

B) In many cases Asian traders continued operating much as before at the wholesale level, using African distributors as "fronts". By the beginning of 1972 "the Asian community as a group still dominated, financially, the commercial sector of the economy. Almost no headway had been made in the area of changing the structure of Asian business activity to admit more African

participation in ownership or management. This aspect of economic life probably did intensify the frustration felt by budding African businessmen.”<sup>138</sup>

C) From 1968 onward the prices of food and manufactures had been rising quite sharply, having a large impact on the cost of living. Food prices, particularly for low-income groups, had tended to fluctuate quite considerably, depending on variable weather conditions, but had started to rise from 1968 without showing any signs of falling back to their former level. The rising trend in Kampala food prices was almost certainly due to a combination of the rapid increase in the urban population, structural problems on the supply side, and a “ratchet effect” through irreversible price increases in times of shortage. The price increases for clothing and household goods were substantial for middle- and low-income groups but not for high-income groups. One factor, which could account for part of these price increases, was the introduction of sales tax in the middle of 1968. Thereafter, for the lower- and middle-income groups the price of clothing and food continued to rise quite rapidly. (149)

Clearly the market conditions were such as to make the rising of prices a practical possibility. Clearly also, there was something of a vicious circle in operation so that pressure against the Asian community led to reactions which in turn led to further anti-Asian pressure. (152).

**2) The Nubian factor:** As for the Nubians we learn that they originally came from the northern parts of the Sudan. They were brought south into Uganda as mercenaries in the armies of Captain Lugard, Amin Pasha, and Sir Samuel Baker,

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<sup>137</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 140-141.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-149.

bringing with them the Muslim religion. Long before the 1971 *coup*, among their fellow countrymen they enjoyed an unenviable reputation of having one of the world's highest homicide rates. The Nubians were renowned for their sadistic brutality, lack of formal education, for poisoning enemies and for their refusal to integrate, even in the urban centers.<sup>139</sup>

Dennis Pain in his in-depth article "The Nubians: Their perceived stratification system and its relation to the Asian issue", adds that a major cause of Nubian alienation from the developing patterns of advancement in Uganda was their lack of interest in education. It seems likely that the Nubians found themselves in an ambivalent position with respect to the Asians. Perceiving themselves as co-colonizers with the British, yet finding their only possible advance blocked by Asian traders whom they saw, ironically, as inferior, the Nubians not surprisingly found themselves frustrated. Somewhat restricted in the army and excluded from leadership in an education-oriented society, they became poor images of the Asian trader, who at the same time was seen as a bar to their further advance.<sup>140</sup>

The Nubians were concentrated in the urban periphery and trading centers throughout the country and with low education, found employment as petty traders, laborers, and soldiers. But they were representative of a wider group. Besides the "full" and "marginal" Nubians, there were the "potential" Nubians. Like these, there was a vast body of urban dwellers that, though they might never have attached themselves to the Nubians, nevertheless portrayed the same socio-

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<sup>139</sup> Martin, *General Amin*, 14.

<sup>140</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 179-180.

economic background. The urban population of Uganda grew at about 10% per annum from 1959 to 1969, when it stood at over 600,000.<sup>141</sup>

Many of those who filled the towns and the dense areas of housing springing up in and around them were, at the least, underemployed. With an ever-increasing flow of educated school leavers--Uganda's School Certificate classes had increased at 20% per annum for the decade 1960-1970--the uneducated and primary school leavers found themselves increasingly thwarted in an economy whose growth was not commensurate. Surrounded by affluence, the seeds of discontent were sown in a soil of relative deprivation. It were such persons, especially if led by a more cohesive community with similar qualifications and aspirations, who would support a move such as Amin's expulsion of all Asians, however self-defeating such a policy may be for them in the long-run with consequent unemployment. But the urban malcontent was essentially faced with the apparent problem of the short-run, and the millenarian promises of Utopia and distribution of largesse were a tempting prospect. (191)

**The expulsion:**

On August 4, 1972, Amin ordered non-citizen Asians out of the country. He set the deadline of November 8. He stuck to his deadline with a countdown that proceeded remorselessly day-by-day on the radio. He announced that any Asians remaining after the deadline would be sent to detention camps.<sup>142</sup>

James S. Read emphasizes that the expulsion legislation refers expressly to the racial factor; it is terse, simply amending the Immigration Act of 1969 by

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid. , 191.

<sup>142</sup> Kyemba, *State of Blood*, 56-57.

canceling as from August 9, 1972, every entry permit or certificate of residence issued under the Act “to any person who is of Asian origin, extraction or descent and who is a subject or citizen” of one of the four scheduled countries (United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh). The form of this amendment had the result that other Asians, e.g. those who were the citizens of no country, were not affected. To include such stateless persons a further amendment was introduced on October 25, 1972, which added the cancellation of the entry permit of “any other person who is of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladesh origin, extraction or descent”. In accordance with Uganda government policy as corrected from an earlier announcement, the expulsion did not strictly apply to Asian citizens of Uganda, who were in any event not subject to the Immigration Act, but the process of positive identification of citizenship within a time limit, which the Uganda authorities conducted, particularly disclaiming those with incomplete papers or dual citizenship, reduced the numbers of Asian citizens considerably from earlier estimates.<sup>143</sup>

Read tells us that as a result of the expulsion 28,608 persons (the majority of whom were “British Protected Persons” rather than UK citizens proper) arrived in the United Kingdom.<sup>144</sup> Among this group were most of our expellees.

Tribe points out that under the exchange control regulations non-citizens leaving Uganda permanently had fairly generous capital transfer allowances. These were drastically reduced for the period of the expulsion so that all those expelled were treated alike regardless of citizenship and were essentially

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<sup>143</sup> Twaddle, *Expulsion*, 201.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

expropriated. The Asians were sent out of the country with nothing except a hundred-dollar personal allowance. (141) A hold was placed on their bank accounts.<sup>145</sup>

Yash P. Ghai emphasizes that some of the rights and freedoms that the minorities were able to write in the constitutions of Uganda and Kenya were confined to citizens. However, a few of the more important rights were not so confined. Thus, the protection to property owners against confiscation without good cause and prompt payment of compensation extended to all owners; the freedoms of expression, association and religion, including the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and cultural instruction, were guaranteed to all. Thus in Uganda and Kenya at least, the Asians had security not only against arbitrary deprivation of property, but also an assurance of the right to maintain their distinct cultural institutions.<sup>146</sup>

However (as James S. Read points out), despite constitutional guarantees, Amin and his ruling Nubian clique deprived many Uganda Asians of their citizenship. Many technical pretexts were used to do so. Some prominent Asians were also killed.

The local army unit in the town of Mbale arrested this student's father twice. The reason was a phony complaint by some dishonest employees who were being investigated for financial improprieties. The first time the army commander let him go. Since the latter would not drop the investigation, he was arrested again. However, this time he was ordered to take off his shirt, shoes and socks

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<sup>145</sup> Kyemba, *State of Blood*, 57.

<sup>146</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 138.

and to stand in front of a wall to be shot. Only the timely intervention by an unknown, bearded, old man saved his father's life. Needless to say, after his last release, the latter, along with my mother and brother, fled Mbale and sought refuge with the United Nations in Kampala.

As a result of the flight the majority of Uganda Asian refugees (overwhelmingly Ismailis and Goans) landed in Canada. The late Prince Sadruddin, brother of the Aga Khan and then the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, facilitated their entry. Smaller numbers chose Australia, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden as their destination. However, approximately 2,000 (including this student's family) were sponsored by various organizations and airlifted to the United States by the United Nations from refugee camps in Europe, Malta, and Nepal. It is not known how many of the refugees were stateless *before* fleeing Uganda.

According to the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees agreed upon by the United Nations in 1967, the term *refugee* applies to "any person" (but only that person) "who is outside the country of his nationality...because he has or had well-founded fear of persecution by reason of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and is unable or, because of such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the government of the country of his nationality."<sup>147</sup>



**Conclusion:**

A complex situation cannot be attributed to one cause. True, our subjects contributed to their own plight by consistently displaying a high degree of ethnocentrism, superiority complex, racism and by monopolizing the retail trade. The ethnocentrism, hostility of black Ugandans and the political powerlessness of Asians also played a role in the drama. However, the biggest, unseen culprit was the colonial British regime that must have sensed the weaknesses of Asians from the very beginning and used them to the hilt to divide and rule (by various means) to take the heat off themselves, a tactic that richly paid off throughout the Empire. Our subjects neatly played into the British hands and paid a heavy price for it.

What if our subjects were *not* racists? There still would have been interethnic rivalry for retail (with consequent stereotyping, suspicion, and misunderstanding) trade if not for political power. Let us now see why some 2,000 refugees chose the United States as their destination.

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<sup>147</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *The Refugee in International Law* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983): 5-6, quoted in Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke, and Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 4.

## **CHAPTER 3/ UNITED STATES: THE DISTINCTIVE CIVILIZATION**

### **Introduction:**

As stated before, certain prerequisites have to be in place to attract an immigrant to the United States. This is *not* to state that immigrants have *not* been attracted to other societies. After all, countries like Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, and South Africa have also been magnets for people wanting to better their condition. Herein also the migrants have acculturated, developed a sense of place and created a regional/national identity. What is being stated in this chapter is that the United States provides the *best* political, philosophical, and sociocultural conditions ever to attract and keep an immigrant here. The word *immigrant* is being used *broadly* to include refugees:

The United States is a nation-state subscribing to the fundamental norms of liberal culture. What is *liberal culture*? By liberal culture, we understand the kind of culture that emerged in Western Europe in the post-Renaissance and post-Reformation period and eventually spread to North America and beyond. The most distinctive institutions of liberal culture are individual rights, the rule of law, a republican representative form of government, and a free market economy. Liberal culture is the greatest force in the modern world; it has transformed and continues to transform the moral landscape by improving the material conditions of life and by institutionalizing individual freedom. Classical articulations of liberal culture are to be found in Hobbes, Hume, Locke, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith. These authors, in turn, are major influences on the founding fathers such as

Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, and Jay (the latter three are the authors of the Federalist Papers).<sup>148</sup>

These norms find their most intense mythological grounding (and, therefore, their most intense ritualistic expression) in the United States. Indeed, the *United States* has a mythological appeal, a *religious* power no other culture or society can equal. Here a brief explanation of the triumvirate of *myth, ritual, and symbol* becomes imperative. Add to these the allied concept of rhythm:

**Of anthropology:**

1) **Myth:** A myth is often a vivid story, but sometimes its characters are abstractions. Myths bundle together images and symbols, metaphors and models, and complex ideas. They are, as G. S. Kirk wrote, “a cultural storehouse of adjustive responses for individuals” in a particular society, and they are carriers of social ideals. Myths are “strongly reminiscent of dreams”; they make use of fantasy, they suspend or distort “normal reasoning and normal relationships,” and they produce a “special kind of logic.”<sup>149</sup>

Myths are stories; they are attitudes extracted from stories; they are “the way things are” as people in a particular society believe them to be; and they are the models people refer to when they try to understand their world and its behavior. Myths are the patterns—of behavior, of belief, and of perception—which people have in common.<sup>150</sup> Myths are once and future things: descriptions

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<sup>148</sup> Nicholas Capaldi, ed., *Immigration: Debating the Issues* (New York: Prometheus, 1997), 11.

<sup>149</sup> James Oliver Robertson, *American Myth, American Reality* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 21.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

of the past and imperatives for present and future. The myths of a people carry what uniquely belongs to that people from one generation to the next. (17)

**2) Ritual:** Myths are the mental support of rites; rites the physical enactments of myths.<sup>151</sup> The function of ritual is to give form to human life, not in the way of a mere surface arrangement, but in depth.<sup>152</sup> A ritual is an organization of mythological symbols; and by participating in the drama of the rite one is brought directly in touch with these, not as verbal reports of historic events, either past, present, or to be, but as revelations, here and now, of what is always and forever. (98) In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turns out to be the same world.<sup>153</sup> Because ritual generates strong emotions, it leaves its participants (“actors,” “players,” and “spectators”) with a very strong sense of the reality of its drama. A ritual need not be religious in the customary sense. It must be significant: a visible acting out of our beliefs and ideals that is at the same time real to us.<sup>154</sup>

The characteristic effect of mythic themes and motifs translated into ritual is that they link the individual to transindividual purposes and forces. In all areas of human social intercourse, ritualized procedures depersonalize the protagonists, drop or lift them out of themselves, so that their conduct now is not their own but of the species, the society, the caste, or the profession.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Johnson E. Fairchild, foreword to *Myths to Live By*, by Joseph Campbell (Toronto: Bantam, Viking, 1972), 45.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>153</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, Harper Colophon, 1973), 112.

<sup>154</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 250.

<sup>155</sup> Campbell, *Myths*, 56-57.

**3) Symbol:** A symbol is any act, event, object, quality or relation that serves as a vehicle for a conception—the conception is the symbol’s “meaning”.<sup>156</sup> Sacred symbols function to synthesize a people’s ethos—the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their world view—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. In religions belief and practice a group’s ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life.<sup>157</sup>

Culture patterns, that is, systems or complexes of symbols, have an intrinsic double aspect: they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves. In other words, they are “*models of*” and “*models for*” reality. (93) They create the reality they also represent. This double ness (or the “inter-transposability” as stated by Geertz) is the source of the power of cultural symbols. They create the emotion, motivation, value, and thought that they are also representing.<sup>158</sup>

**4) Rhythm**—the measured flow of motion—is an essential formative aspect of reality and of our experience, and ritual is among the principal cultural

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<sup>156</sup> Geertz, *Interpretation*, 91.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>158</sup> Karen Lystra, “Clifford Geertz and the Concept of Culture,” *PROSPECTS* 8 (1983): 36.

resources by which we grasp and participate in those rhythms and gain some purchase upon them and the energies they embody.<sup>159</sup>

What then are the disparate elements of the liberal culture that together constitute *the Myth of the United States*? Indeed, what is it about American culture that so captures hearts and minds around the world? And why is it so often the same American products that seem to us all but a refutation of true culture? Every week the newspapers bring new examples: hour-long lines outside the Pizza Hut in Moscow, and 300 million Chinese watching the Super Bowl.<sup>160</sup>

### **The appeal of the United States:**

The following aspects in concert constitute the near-universal and *massive* appeal of the United States. By no means can they be fully compartmentalized because they do overlap and are intertwined in an inextricable, symbiotic relationship. Nevertheless, an attempt should be made to delineate the main features of each:

**1A) The land of hope and opportunity:** There are, of course, many practical explanations for this. The American Century has been the technological century, and all the great communicators of the global village—radio, TV and the cinema—came of age at a time when America seemed the strongest and most confident nation in the world. Thus the two powers ascended hand in hand: “Casablanca,” Life magazine and Coca-Cola took the promise of America abroad, and vice versa. In time, the power abetted the culture, till American movies and

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<sup>159</sup> Roland A. Delattre, “The Rituals of Humanity and the Rhythms of Reality,” *PROSPECTS* 5 (1980): 35.

<sup>160</sup> Pico Iyer, “Perspective on Cultural exports: The World’s Taste is All-American,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, 16 December 1990, p. M7.

music were leading the world in slickness and scope. And after a while the trend became self-fulfilling: America was so seen so often on the screen that it became a place of two-dimensional glamour. By now, America is such a byword for everything young and modern and free that everything young and modern and free is deemed to be from America (in the mythic imagination of the world, Mick Jagger is American, and Pizza and Reeboks are, too)...The more closed or oppressed a society, the greater its hunger, so it seems, for things American. And this is not just because nothing excites the appetite like prohibition; it is, rather, because America is still in many respects a symbol, and one with a hopeful ring to it. Michael Jackson in Havana means something different from Michael Jackson in Encino. Watching him in Cuba becomes a way of making contact with a world of possibility, affiliating oneself with a land that seems fresher and more open than older or more established cultures. The people who spend a week's wages to visit the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Tian An Men Square are not there just for the Colonel's secret recipe; they are buying into something more, not unlike the students who erected a Statue of Liberty nearby in 1989. In Thailand, McDonalds' franchises feature floor-to-ceiling windows so that envious friends can see the customers paying three times more for their burgers than they would elsewhere.<sup>161</sup> In Russia, people save months of wages so they can buy used Levi jeans from American tourists.

What is surprising to us, though, is precisely the fact that the appeal of America is, in many ways, the opposite of chic; America is fashionable in part

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

because it represents freedom from history, class and fashion. People look to America for blue jeans, but to Europe for *haute cuisine*. America still has a decidedly democratic air; it is the people's choice, catering to the dreams of Everyman. The most popular American figures in Japan, for example, are the icons of rebellion—Elvis, James Dean and Marilyn; the most popular Hollywood products are *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*. America still has the air of a country without traditions, and, to that extent, without pretensions, able to reinvent itself with each new decade. That is why it feels like Everybody's home, as much a notion as a nation. (M7)

No other country approaches the United States when it comes to the opportunity to make a living in a variety of circumstances. Here people change not only jobs but also careers! Indeed, freedom and opportunity give Americans more chances at vocational happiness than any other people on earth.<sup>162</sup> In many other countries opportunities are so scarce that a job *becomes* one's career. In other words, in such a society either unemployment or underemployment is the order of the day.

**1B) Lifestyle options:** One can live pretty much the way one wants to in America if one does it quietly and legally. One caveat: Small-town America is probably not the place for outdoor transvestites or free-love colonies. Things might get a little dicey. But the big cities and sparsely populated rural areas will tolerate pretty much anything if one uses one's head.<sup>163</sup> Want to live the quiet

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<sup>162</sup> Bill O'Reilly, "An observer of our national scene encourages us to step back and consider----What's Right with America," *Parade Magazine*, 14 January 2001, 6.



life? Burns, Oregon; wants you. Do you like action? Hello, Las Vegas! Are you a fan of nature? Maine is huge and has plenty of room. Whatever lifestyle one embraces, there is an area in the United States perfect for one. Most other places on the planet have a rigid system of lifestyle conformity that cannot be overcome. However, in the United States, if one chooses one's locale wisely, one can live one's life the way one's heart dictates. That is the essence of freedom. (6)

**2) Diversity:** In United States, the flow of information and opinions is extraordinary. Well-stated ideas lead people to think, and that discipline sharpens the mind. In societies such as Japan and Scandinavia, most people are similar in their upbringing and heritage. A free flow of ideas is permitted, but because of cultural sameness, there are not many differences in play. (4)

In America, we are diverse in our thinking patterns and points of view. The Cuban-Americans in Miami differ from the Mormons in Utah who can be light-years away in thinking from the prevailing wisdom in San Francisco. To small minds this can be annoying. But to many Americans, it is tremendously exciting. We live in a country that embraces cultural differences and outlooks. A constant stream of new ideas and opinions makes our lives the richest on the planet. (4)

The United States has always depended on immigrants to invigorate its culture. It is difficult to identify very many indigenous American values not traceable to immigrant influence. Our persistent frontier ethic, rugged individualism, and aggressive materialism have been profoundly affected by the waves of new arrivals over the years. American art, dance, drama, food, music,

and even politics have been greatly enriched and improved by the immigrant experience. And although there have been plenty of clashes between rival groups, few would challenge the notion that the United States is a more exciting, interesting and vibrant place, thanks to its rich mix of nationalities, ethnicities, and religions. Homogeneity, for America, would be death.<sup>164</sup>

President Johnson noted the uncommonness of the United States experiment in making one country out of many peoples, an experiment he judged “almost unique in the history of nations.” Other countries, born out of large homogeneous native populations, simply kept newcomers on the fringes, without offering them much hope that they might easily become part of the country’s fabric. Still today in Japan, non-Japanese, even if they are Asian, are not welcome. Germany’s millions of foreign workers remain “guest workers,” clearly not part of the *volk*. In Sweden, foreigners can be found, but then again they are plainly marked *invandrare*, much as the ancients once rejected foreigners as “barbarians.” Newspaper accounts occasionally document the ease with which unfriendly feelings can turn into violence: a neighborhood brawl in Switzerland leads to death for Italian workers; Turks fight local Germans in the town where the former have lived in a precarious, set-off way for years. London streets reverberate with cries of “Foreigner, go home,” directed at nonwhites who were born there of immigrant parents. Reports from Mandai, India, in the summer of 1980, vividly underscored the point. In a village near Agartala, the capital of Tripura state, adjoining the eastern border with Bangladesh, indigenous tribal

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<sup>164</sup> Sanford J. Ungar, *Fresh Blood: The New American Immigrants* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995),

groups massacred three hundred and fifty people, including men, women, and children. Armed with guns, scythes, spears and swords, they spiked children, crushed the skulls of adults, and littered the scene with randomly severed limbs. The simple reason for the massacre—to be rid of foreigners, of resented outsiders.<sup>165</sup>

The United States never separated out a pure stock whose germ plasma contained us all. America's founding fathers were of varied ethnic strains and their children made America more diverse still. Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur's eighteenth-century *Letters of an American Farmer* tells the story: "I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman and whose four sons have now four wives of different nations."<sup>166</sup>

In contrast, the diversity in Uganda was limited. Africans, Asians, and Europeans (mostly British) lived in segregated neighborhoods and interacted only at work or school. There existed an unspoken state of mild, unofficial apartheid.

**3) Freedom/Liberty:** The *substantive moral truth* that is embodied in liberal culture is the inherent worth and dignity of the free and responsible individual. This is a substantive claim inherent in all of Western civilization. Individuality means: **A)** That human beings possess the rational capacity to recognize the universal moral truth, **B)** that human beings have the internal capacity to be unconstrained in their decision to act in accordance with the

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96-97.

<sup>165</sup> Kessner & Caroli, *Today's Immigrants*, 4.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

universal truth, i.e., *free will*, C) that true freedom and dignity consist in the inner or self-discipline that comes with the exercise of these capacities.<sup>167</sup>

Indeed, the freedom to migrate was inseparable from the pursuit of liberties that made the nineteenth century the most inspiring in human history for the common men of Europe.<sup>168</sup> The United States became the classic country of immigration. Out of this magnificent new bounty, its colonial heritage, and the tens of millions of European newcomers and their progeny, a new United States was created, an experiment in liberty and democracy without precedent in world history.<sup>169</sup>

In its mythic thrust, colonial America anticipated the nation of immigrants, as its covenant theology opened a path to later democracy. The ideology of the American Reformation—pervaded by a sense of religious election and an urge to independence—subsequently fused with that of the enlightenment to generate the prime rhetoric and ethos of the new nation. The crossing of the Atlantic by the first immigrants provided the great baptismal; like the fording of the Red Sea by the ancient Israelites, it was the initial step out of European captivity, an experience to be re-enacted continuously and dramatically by subsequent newcomers to American shores.<sup>170</sup> In 1972, some two thousand Uganda Asians fled Idi Amin's captivity and arrived in the United States as refugees. Most of their brethren landed in Canada as refugees. Some of them, in turn, eventually

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<sup>167</sup> Capaldi, *Immigration*, 12.

<sup>168</sup> Moses Rischin, ed., *Immigration and the American Tradition* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), xx.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, xx-xxi.

<sup>170</sup> Perry Miller, *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967): 6-8, quoted in Moses Rischin, ed., *Immigration and the American Tradition* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), xxiii.

migrated to the United States. Some of the expellees to the United Kingdom also migrated to Los Angeles.

From the very beginning, the image of America as a sanctuary for Europe's oppressed was a critical element in the shaping of the nation's consciousness, inseparable from its vision of itself if it was to be worthy of the "opinions of mankind".<sup>171</sup> On March 30, 1785, George Washington himself said:

At best I have only been an instrument in the hands of Providence, to effect, with the aid of France and many virtuous fellow Citizens of America, a revolution which is interesting to the general liberties of mankind, and to the emancipation of a country which may afford an Asylum, if we are wise enough to pursue the paths wch. lead to virtue and happiness, to the oppressed and needy of the Earth. Our region is extensive, our plains are productive, and if they are cultivated with liberality and good sense, we may be happy ourselves, and diffuse happiness to all who wish to participate.<sup>172</sup>

Liberty acquired strength in the United States from the fact that it did not develop simply within a single sphere of life. Rather, it permeated every aspect of the behavior of the whole society. It will not be understood other than through an awareness of its multiple dimensions.<sup>173</sup>

Among all the other ways in which freedom manifested itself in the United States it is possible to recognize three general forms of particular importance. American freedom possessed a political aspect. It depended upon the development, since the seventeenth century, of traditions of free government on

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<sup>171</sup> Rischin, *Immigration*, xxv.

<sup>172</sup> John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* 27 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938): 253-254, quoted in Moses Rischin, ed., *Immigration and the American Tradition* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), 43-44.

<sup>173</sup> Oscar Handlin & Mary Handlin, *The Dimensions of Liberty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, Belknap, 1961), 5.

every level; and it drew support from systems of ideas and patterns of action through which those traditions operated.<sup>174</sup>

Liberty was also social in character. A significant degree of mobility inhabited the rigid stratification of the population. The looseness of the social order helped to develop a sense of the worth of the individual and gave people of every sort a conviction that they had an important stake in the freedom of the communities in which they lived. (5)

Finally, the evolution of voluntary religious, economic, cultural, and philanthropic organizations offered alternatives to state action in matters in which unanimity did not prevail. The highly diverse elements of which the nation was composed could seek their own ends without fear of interference. Secure in the knowledge that the role of the government did not encompass every aspect of life, Americans created an apparatus of free institutions with which each group of them could seek its own goals without coercion. (5-6)

In her article titled “Why the World comes here” Peggy Noonan aptly quotes Margaret Thatcher (the former Prime Minister of United Kingdom) thus: “Americans and Europeans sometimes forget how unique the United States is. No other nation has been built upon an idea—the idea of liberty. Whether in flight from persecution or poverty, (immigrants) have welcomed American values and

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

opportunities. And America herself has bound them to her with powerful bonds of patriotism and pride.”<sup>175</sup>

**4) Democracy:** The second most important institution in the development of liberal culture has been the concept of republican or representative or limited government. Limited government is a good thing. It is a good thing because it maximizes respect for the inner spiritual domain. One of the great and lasting contributions of Christianity is that it has *de-divinized the state*, that is, it has transformed the locus of the ultimate good from the state to the spiritual domain of the individual. The notion of republican or representative government is that no one person, regime, or group determines the public good. Rather, representatives of all the interests determine or negotiate the public good. In this sense, government is limited by or defined by these other interests.<sup>176</sup> In addition, democracy is characterized by the following:

**A)** Elections, open, free, and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable *sine qua non*. Democracy is one public virtue, not the only one, and the relationship of democracy to other public virtues can only be understood if democracy is clearly distinguished from other characteristics of political systems,

**B)** One could incorporate into a definition of democracy a concept of stability or institutionalization. This typically refers to the degree to which the political system may be expected to remain in existence. Stability is a central dimension in the analyses of any political system,

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<sup>175</sup> Nicolaus Mills, ed., *Arguing Immigration: The Debate Over the Changing Face of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Touchstone, 1994), 180.

<sup>176</sup> Capaldi, *Immigration*, 14.

C) Non-democratic regimes do not have electoral competition and widespread voting participation. Apart from these shared negative characteristics they have little else in common. The category includes absolute monarchies, aristocracies, bureaucratic empires, constitutional regimes with limited suffrage, fascist and communist regimes, military dictatorships, oligarchies, personal despotisms, and other types of governance. Some of these forms were more prevalent in previous eras; some are relatively modern.<sup>177</sup> Democracy also implies the existence of those civil and political freedoms to assemble, organize, publish and speak that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns.<sup>178</sup>

The most obvious feature of a liberal culture is its formal commitment to and practice of tolerance. The most obvious feature of an illiberal culture is the lack of toleration, usually seen as strife between or rejection of what is different. The ethnic strife we saw in Eastern Europe or tribal strife in Africa is an example.<sup>179</sup> The expulsion or flight of our Ugandan subjects was due to both intertribal rivalry and direct prejudice.

Over the years the term democracy has become so fused with the notion of free government and free people that its meaning has been broadened, even as America itself, and has even superseded the word republic, whose meaning, too, has changed over the years and has become almost as general as the term “constitutional state.” Today America possesses not only the oldest government

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<sup>177</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century* (Oklahoma: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1991), 9-12.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



operating as a democracy, but also the oldest major government operating continuously under any one system in the world.<sup>180</sup>

Nations have always been imitative of success; and America could make no more effective contribution toward making the democratic ideology than by making democracy a dynamic success at home. America exerted a far greater pull on the ideology of the world in the nineteenth century, by way of example to other countries, than any other state before or since; and it was the example of America that gave democracy everywhere such a vital and electrical quality in the Democratic century.<sup>181</sup>

These words of Norman Cousins written during World War II drive home the point forcefully: “We are fighting because America is the laboratory which can reveal to the world the richness and the good and the potentialities within people who belong to only one race—the race of the living.” (281) He adds: “We are fighting because long centuries of trial and error have revealed no better way to develop the potentialities within individual and collective man; because the alternatives have meant and still mean national slavery or national suicide or both, trite and weak as the word “slavery” has become through constant use. We are fighting to protect and maintain what millions all through history have fought to obtain, piece by piece. Thousands of years of blood, sweat, and tears went into the making of values now at stake...we are fighting to preserve that inheritance. It is not a perfect inheritance, to be sure, for if it were perfect, we should all be living

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<sup>179</sup> Capaldi, *Immigration*, 15.

<sup>180</sup> Norman Cousins, *The Good Inheritance: The Democratic chance*, with a Reading List by the Council for Democracy (New York: Coward-McCann, 1942), 143.

in Utopia. But it is a good inheritance—an inheritance which has contributed more to the general evolution of humanity and civilization than any other plan or system or blueprint ever applied as a design for living for large numbers of people. This inheritance has its roots not only in the American Revolution but, indeed, in all history—back through England and the Protestant Reformation to Rome and Greece, while others of its roots are to be found in the Scriptures.”

(281-282)

Cousins further states: “Like Athens, America has become the school of the world, attracting to itself active, creative minds looking for an atmosphere congenial and stimulating for expression and development. The significance of all this for America cannot easily be measured. To say it is of the profoundest importance is to dabble in surface observation. But whatever its ultimate meaning, what can be said is that the United States, whether it wants it or not, whether it deserves it or not, has fallen heir to the mantle of world leadership in perpetuating the culture of civilization.” (282-283)

Keep in mind that under the British colonial regime in Uganda there was no representative democracy or rather, there was only a sham of the same. Under the regime of Milton Obote there was a three-party, so-called socialist democracy (with a personality cult and cautious participation) for a little over four years (Oct. 1962-Dec. 1969). After that (till Amin’s *coup* in January 1971), there was “democracy with fear” as Obote tried to usurp power constitutionally and his

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid. , 162-163.

army became ill disciplined. Under Amin the constitution was first suspended, then abrogated.

**5) Equality:** The *Declaration of Independence* in 1776 was more than mere rhetoric to the common man. It was the embodiment of nearly 170 years of American history. As even the most casual student of American politics knows, Jefferson proclaimed to the world those theories and that experience in one succinct paragraph:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness...That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed---That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and A Happiness.<sup>182</sup>

For the common man there could be no more ringing affirmation of the American experience than this document, which spoke truly and eloquently of what he had achieved and what he believed.<sup>183</sup> The Declaration justified the American Revolution not on narrow grounds of legality but on the natural rights of the people to freedom, equality, and self-government. The traditional beliefs in class rule, authoritarian governments, and established churches were repudiated. The power of Jefferson's words inhered in the fact that he both appealed to and expressed American idealism and moral vision. (12)

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<sup>182</sup> Charles Redenius, *The American ideal of Equality: From Jefferson's Declaration to the Burger Court* (Port Washington, New York: National Univ. Publications, Kennikat, 1981), 12.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

As symbol equality meant more than simply that America and Britain were equals. It was also more than an attack on class society. Equality had still another meaning—a universal one. As understanding of the ideal of equality evolved, Jefferson’s statement would be seen as an attack on economic, racial, and sexual inequality. (12)

Tocqueville emphasized how equality suggests to Americans the idea of the indefinite perfectibility of man. He wrote: “Although man has many points of resemblance with the brutes, one trait is peculiar to himself: he improves; they are incapable of improvement. Mankind could not fail to discover this difference from the beginning. The idea of perfectibility is therefore as old as the world; equality did not give birth to it, but has imparted to it a new character.”<sup>184</sup>

The phrases of the Declaration concerning equality and happiness became fundamental to all American thought and mythology. “That...that...that...” raps out the rhythm and signals the important phrases like a tap on a drum. The epithets are sharp and clear: “Self-evident” truths, “inalienable” rights—they are as powerfully evocative for the generations of Americans that followed as those of the King James Bible had been for their forefathers. Self-evident truths did not require argument, they were “revealed.” The bald statement of the equality of all men was not simply a high ideal, it was the reality on which the American nation was, is (in the present, whatever the year), and ought to be based. It is this

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<sup>184</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2 (New York: Vintage, Random House, 1945), 34.

Declaration, which is the imperative for all American writs, and for the American practice, and reality, which followed the establishment of the writ.<sup>185</sup>

Americans are uneasy with the terminology of class, as they are uncomfortable with the vision of structure and boundaries, the fixed levels that social classes imply. “Upper class” means “upper crust”; it means “aristocracy” or “hereditary nobility”; it means snobbishness and “snootiness” and arrogance. It implies unearned preference—something un-American. “Lower class” or “working class,” on the other hand, means a fixed, menial position in society, lacking in hope. Both “upper” and “lower class” imply a failure of equality. “Lower class” denies mobility. All concepts of class, in effect, draw lines between the good guys and the bad guys; they are challenges to Americans, like frontiers. Class lines deny the efficacy of individual effort. American society, as Americans perceive it, does not, or at least *ought* not; admit of the importance or the permanence of class lines. If it did not, it would be denying the fundamental rights and the freedom of all Americans.<sup>186</sup>

As Americans perceive it, the tendency of American history is toward classlessness. In American myth, America *is* a classless society. If it can be shown not to be, then something is wrong and needs to be put right. Classlessness is the ideal *and* the permanent state of American society; anything else is an aberration. Classlessness is one of the most important definitions of democracy. It is the guarantee of equality and freedom. (259)

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<sup>185</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 67.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 258-259.

The “middle” in America is the center—quite possibly of the universe. It is the consensus; it is the silent majority; it is the mainstream. All else is ephemeral, if not un-American. The middle dominates, and *ought* to dominate. Those in it are the inheritors of American tradition, American belief, and American progress. The society of the middle mass is, by its own belief, the present realization (the “cutting edge,” the most highly evolved state) of classlessness and equality in America. It is the American community writ large, a reflection of every real community in America. It is homogeneous and proximate; therefore, in the logic of the myth, classless, democratic, and equal. (260-261).

Some societies have been founded on the principle of inequality and exclusion. However, as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. points out in his article titled “The Disuniting of America”, one powerful reason for the movement from inclusion to exclusion is that the American creed facilitates the appeal from the actual to the ideal. When we talk of the American democratic faith, we must understand it in its true dimensions. It is not an impervious, final, and complacent orthodoxy, intolerant of deviation and dissent, fulfilled in flag salutes, oaths of allegiance, and hands over the heart. It is an ever-evolving philosophy, fulfilling its ideals through debate, protest, self-criticism, disrespect, and irreverence. This is a tradition in which all have rights of heterodoxy and opportunities for self-assertion. The creed has been the means by which Americans have haltingly but persistently narrowed the gap between performance and principle. It is what all Americans should learn, because it is what binds all Americans together.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Capaldi, *Immigration*, 229.

Our subjects, politically speaking, were decidedly unequal in Uganda. Let us now take a look at another key concept that acts as glue binding them to the United States.

**6) Of property, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness:** The value of property is generally stated in different languages—in nearly identical sentences! But consensus extends beyond a mere agreement that property in general is something good. It also extends to specific features of its goodness. For instance, ownership is considered a prerequisite for status. Property is considered conducive to the individual's independence, freedom and happiness. Property is also considered a means for the acquisition of more property and thus connected with progress. Ownership promotes the growth of character, because two important virtues, self-control and liberality, result from it.<sup>188</sup> It appears that once the concept of private ownership takes root, progress begins on an ascending scale, which ascent is marred in those intervals in which private-property concepts are eroded or abandoned.<sup>189</sup>

Indeed, Prof. Charles A. Beard emphasizes that every leading capitalist of the colonial time thoroughly understood the relation of a new constitution to the rise of land values beyond the Alleghenies.<sup>190</sup> The Federal Convention was convened largely because of a belief in the ethics of property. John Adams' opinion that "property is surely a right of mankind as really as liberty ... The moment the idea is admitted into society is not as sacred as the laws of God, and

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<sup>188</sup> Gottfried Dietze, *In defense of Property* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963), 11-13.

<sup>189</sup> Robert LeFevre, *The Philosophy of Ownership* (Larkspur, Colorado: Pine Tree, 1966), 20-21.

that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence,” was shared by many. Thus the Founding Fathers by no means devised the new Constitution only in order to protect their own interests, but mainly because they recognized that property rights were an essential part of freedom and that their protection was basic to public peace and order, conducive to progress, a prerequisite for the individual’s as well as society’s welfare and happiness, and for justice.<sup>191</sup> In the struggle for ratification, the idea that under the Constitution property would enjoy greater protection played a prominent role. The adoption of the Constitution was due in large measure to the desire to have property protected.<sup>192</sup>

Property is intimately related to life and freedom. It is a prerequisite of the freedom to be and to act. It is as old as life and freedom, and also as important. Property rights are thus distinguishable from such rights as freedom of religion, of speech, of the press, of assembly and association, freedom from arbitrary arrest, and so forth. For these rights were not present at the beginning of life. Furthermore, originally they did not enjoy a status equal to that of life and of freedom. (49)

The *Declaration of Independence* is, to a great extent, a document in defense of property. (31) The “pursuit of happiness,” meaning mainly the free acquisition, possession and use of property, is proclaimed as one of the unalienable rights of man at the very beginning of the Declaration, besides those

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<sup>190</sup> Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913; reprint, with new introduction, New York: MacMillan, 1959), 23.

<sup>191</sup> Dietze, *Property*, 34.



of life and liberty. Even if one does not accept the idea that the pursuit of happiness means the protection of property, property rights still appear to be valued as equal to other rights. First, it could be claimed that they are included in that other unalienable right proclaimed at the outset—liberty. Obviously liberty, meaning the individual's general liberty, in the absence of specific exclusions would embrace all the particular liberties of men, including the rights of property. Second, property rights are ranked on a par with other liberal rights in later passages. (59)

The protection of property can be seen also in the articles of the Constitution. Section one of article one, besides providing for the writ of habeas corpus and prohibiting bills of attainder and ex post facto laws, prohibits arbitrary tax laws. The following section is even more outspoken. Keeping the states from passing bills of attainder and ex post facto laws, it prohibits also, due to infringements upon property through state legislation, the passage of laws impairing the obligation of contracts. (61)

Finally, property, like such rights as freedom of religion, speech, and the press and of assembly as well as the right to keep and bear arms and to be free from cruel and unusual punishment, is protected in the amendments of the constitution. Following the pattern set by some of the states, the United States bill of rights grants under the fourth amendment the same degree of protection from search and seizure of property as it does to the person of the individuals. The right of trial by jury is not only guaranteed for criminal prosecutions, but also for suits

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

at common law that involve property. The Fifth Amendment, besides making provision for indictment by grand jury, and guaranteeing protection against double jeopardy and self-incrimination, states that no person shall “be deprived of life, liberty or property, without due process of law.” Later, this “due process clause” was made applicable to other states in the fourteenth amendment. (61)

Classic economists, modern Keynesians, as well as other, more avant-garde socialists agree that the state is absolutely necessary to protect property and property owners and that man must rely upon the state for this service.<sup>193</sup> However, in Uganda, not only did Amin abolish the constitution but he *became* the state. He confiscated the properties of *all* British Asians before expelling them. Amin’s army of murderers also usurped most of the abandoned properties of Uganda citizens who fled in sheer terror.

### **America reaches out to the Third World:**

Immigration is more than simply economics—low wages, low per capita income, poverty, high birthrates or political instability. Knowledge is another important factor. In the nineteenth century railroads, steamship lines, and state bureaus of immigration promoted emigration from Europe to America by providing Europeans with information. In addition, letters from those who had already gone told families and friends in the Old World about the wonders of the New. In the period after World War II information about America has become

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<sup>193</sup> LeFevre, *Ownership*, 7.

plentiful than ever before and has penetrated deeply into the Third World nations.<sup>194</sup>

What Reimers wrote in 1985 about American cultural influence in Asia was also true (to a lesser extent) of Uganda: “In Asia the outreach of American military forces was important but so was the economic and cultural penetration. Asians increasingly saw American companies and goods in their countries, and the printed word and television spread news of the good life in America. Books, magazines, movies, and newspapers told of American events and life, and in the last twenty years television has reached into the poorest areas of the world. Most Asian, and Latin American nations received American-produced programs such as “I Love Lucy” and “Dallas” with their visions of bountiful consumer goods and fancy clothes and cars. Over half of all imported programs in the Philippines originated in the United States, and over 90 percent of those imported in Korea were American manufactured. These displays of the abundance of American life whetted the appetite for American goods and helped stimulate a desire to emigrate to the United States.”<sup>195</sup> It is clear that American Popular Culture not only creates impressions but *shapes expectations*. Let us read how our interviewees perceived the United States *before* their forced migration, stranding, or when they were growing up here:

1) Dr. Navin Adatia, Gujrati Lohana male, 57, Hindu, psychiatrist, formerly of Kampala, currently of Arcadia, stranded in India as a student when

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<sup>194</sup> David M. Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World comes to America* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), 97.

the flight/expulsion took place states: "From what I read about it USA was a land of opportunity. My sister was already here. She loved it and praised it a lot. Everything I had heard about it was pretty good."

2) Mr. Bhupinder Batra, 73, Punjabi Sikh, owner of Arts and Crafts store, formerly a teacher of history and economics in Jinja, currently of Cerritos, refugee, says: "I expected certain things and I did find good economic conditions. There are prejudices but that is true of every country and every place. Still, I find USA to be a better place than the ones I have known."

About his aspirations as a legal immigrant from Canada Mr. Batra states: "When anybody moves to a newer place the first thing is to look forward to a job or business for economic uplift, the second is a place to live. We were lucky to get both. The third thing is education for our kids. This was the primary aim of migration to the United States. My oldest son is handicapped. He was not getting all the required facilities in Canada but he got them here. He even went to high school here."

3) Asha Chitnavis, 74, Maharashtrian female, Hindu, widow, homemaker, refugee, formerly of Lugazi, currently of La Puente, opines: "I perceived the United States as not only the ultimate Land of Opportunity but also the ultimate in freedom and the best in education." Asha emphasizes that in Uganda there was only limited freedom under Obote and none under Amin. There was always the

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<sup>195</sup> Intraagency Task Force on Immigration, *Staff Report*, 232-233, quoted in David M. Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World comes to America* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), 98.

possibility that if one was critical of the government soldiers would arrest the person and there was no guarantee that he or she would return home.

4) Hemant Chitnavis, Asha's younger son, 49, Maharashtrian, Hindu, Property Manager, refugee, states: "My perception of United States was that it is a great country regarding jobs and education. Also, I knew that hard work results in upward mobility and success here."

5) Indooben Dhaba, Gujrati Lohana female, 69, Hindu, widow, homemaker, formerly of Kampala, currently of Laguna Beach, refugee, says: "I have always admired this country! In Uganda I watched American shows on television. We marveled at American suburban homes, cars, and kitchen appliances. I always wished I had a home like that! Then when we watched the Moon Landing in 1969 it confirmed our belief that United States was the greatest nation in the world!"

6) Tina Kotecha, Gujrati Lohana female, 37, Hindu, lawyer, formerly of Kampala, currently of Diamond Bar, refugee, says: "I was only four years old when I arrived in Los Angeles. While growing up here I was like a kid in a big candy jar! I was fascinated mostly by TV entertainment, especially dance."

7) Manilal Padhiar, Gujrati suthar (carpenter) male, 54, furniture manufacturer, formerly of Mbale, currently of Huntington Beach, refugee, states: "Coming from Africa my concept of USA...you know...like the whole country was covered with snow. Because I was so young I did not know that what is in the movies is different from reality. I thought I will be somewhere in the big country and stuck in a house...I think the Moon Landing took place on a Friday. I also

remember that it was *Ramadan* and Ismailis in Mbale were joking that because of the big event they would not be able to see the moon that night!”

**Conclusion:**

The extraordinary attraction, the immense mythical power of the United States cannot be denied even if one were ideologically opposed to it. This is evinced in the fact that diplomats of the former Communist Bloc would carry bag loads of American consumer goods whenever they returned home. This student has read about the North Vietnamese soldier who threw away his weapons when Saigon fell, pretended to be a South Vietnamese and was airlifted to the United States. And it is not just the poor and the illiterate who illegally stay in this country. It is also the educated and the well to do who arrive here as students or tourists and stay on hoping to become legal citizens some day. What about the younger generation in Iran that does not care for the Mullagarky in their country and has great admiration for the United States despite the fact that the latter imposed the late Shah on the previous generation?

Also, note that none of our subjects reported America’s sordid involvement in Vietnam, our support of right-wing dictators, or our long history of racism against certain minorities as a turn off. Such is the power of the Myth of the United States.

## **CHAPTER 4/ CALIFORNIA: THE DISTINCTIVE REGION**

### **Introduction:**

Even though Los Angeles is the focus of this dissertation and happens to have its own distinct mythology one must bear in mind that California is the bigger entity. There would be no Los Angeles without California. One must understand the mother in order to understand the child. As a matter of fact, outside of our shores the word *California* has a mythological power second only to that of the *United States*. It is as if the State is a country unto itself! When this student was in Uganda and India, the word spelled energy, magic, power, and sheer size:

### **The mythology:**

Julian Marias in his article “California as Paradise” succinctly notes that the usual word for California, the one that first rises to the lips, is that it is a paradise. And that is true. Arriving in California from the East, you gain the impression of entering into the land of Paradise.<sup>196</sup>

What is Paradise? It is a garden like the Garden of Eden. Few places in the United States are garden spots. California is truly an oasis—especially Southern California—a colossal oasis nourished by irrigation and the Pacific Ocean, where the hand of man is felt close by. And even in the wildest areas, where nature has taken charge of everything, there is a strange kind of carefulness, a peculiar

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<sup>196</sup> Leonard Michaels, David Reid, and Raquel Scherr, eds., *West of the West: Imagining California* (San Francisco: North Point, 1989), 13.

composition of forms, and a kind of order—*kosmos*—that is reminiscent of a garden.<sup>197</sup>

And what about the cities? They too belong in Paradise. White stucco houses, often capriciously incongruous, that look like toys or, better, like a stage setting. And in some places such as Pasadena, gardens dominate the whole scene. And there is an air of constant fiesta or vacation. Nowhere else in the world is effort less visible, less apparent, less exhibited. Thus Adam cultivated the Garden of Eden—without painful effort, without toiling, without suffering. (14)

Paradise is the absence of limitation, the lack of difficulty. The first condition may be found in many places, in all lands with spaces to spare where history is scarce; the second condition is more improbable. It cannot obtain where nature is rugged, violent, or immoderate, where heat or cold are oppressors, where there is an everyday battle against inclemency; nor can it flourish where man is inferior to his environment, where he is in need of everything or of many things—nor even where he lacks superfluous but vital luxury. (14-15)

For this reason many gentle lands are not Paradise, and for the same reason California is; for that is the place where a well-nigh miraculous technology, an unprecedented amount of wealth, and the perfect structuring of man's cities have together achieved the height of pure implausibility. (15)

The California mystique has been there from the very beginning. Indeed, as Kevin Starr points out, unlike other Americans, Californians had little doubt that their environment seethed with agricultural promise. The state, first of all, was characterized by clear divisions between forests and open rangeland, but

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. , 13-14.



lacked the intermittently wooded areas of the East, so back-breakingly difficult to clear of stumps and stones. As a legacy of its crowded and varied geological past, the soils of California were astonishingly diverse. One ranch might contain side-by-side soil varieties found hundreds of miles apart in the East, thus making possible an equal diversity of crops. California soil ran deep, moreover; so the pioneers found as they sank wells into the earth, delighted that the fertile soil, rich and dark and durable, ran down, down, down before rock was reached. Warmed on its Pacific edge by the Japanese Current, which brought with it the temperature of the Indian Ocean, and protected north and east by great mountain ranges—the Cascades deflecting the polar winds of the north, the Sierra Nevada stabilizing the interior—California boasted a climate unspoiled by either heavy frost or low humidity. It was, moreover, a stable climate, running north and south across distances that in the East would support scores of climate variations. From Shasta to San Diego, a distance equivalent to that between Georgia and New York sat one vast Sunbelt, stabilized by the Pacific on one side and the mighty Sierra Nevada to the east. The traversing ranges of the coast, moreover, acted as windbreakers against whatever cold air did manage to sweep down over the cascades. These traversing formations also created a series of coastal valleys—Alexander, Salinas, Santa Clara, and Santa Inez—where cooling weather played off against inland sunshine.<sup>198</sup>

California has frequently been described as Mediterranean. However, the word has a meaning that goes beyond climate. To quote Wilson McWilliams from

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<sup>198</sup> Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 129.

his article “California: Notes of a Native Son”: “Being *Mediterranean*, California is softer than the skeletal desert states, midway between them and Florida’s vegetable excess. Yet the Mediterranean climate is associated with another image: that of the ancient world. The Mediterranean is a civilized image, not a raw one, ancient and not new. It helps account for the fact that *going to* California is more likely to mean going to *live* there than going for a vacation. The State has a permanence denied the other warm states, a human quality denied the rest of the West.”<sup>199</sup>

### **The Gold Rush:**

If the exceptional climate, rich soils, and luxuriant vegetation constitute the foundation of California Myth then the Gold Rush constitutes its heart. Gold production is the incomparable stimulant to trade, business, and industry, for it involves manifold activities. It is the very best economic pump-primer. But by far the greatest value of gold to California was its value as a symbol.<sup>200</sup>

Overnight California became a world-famous name and, as a name, California meant gold. It was the discovery of gold that catapulted California in the national limelight; that increased its population 2,500 per cent in four years; that gave it statehood within two years after the discovery. A state that gets off to this sort of flying start possesses advantages that do not disappear with time and changed conditions. The tide of migration, which the discovery of gold set in motion, is still running strong. The worldwide publicity, which the discovery gave the State, is still a potent factor in its development. Nothing is more exceptional

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<sup>199</sup> Dennis Hale & Jonathan Eisen, eds., *The California Dream* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 5.

<sup>200</sup> Carey McWilliams, *California: the Great Exception* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1976), 35.

about this exceptional State than the unique combination of factors and conditions produced by the discovery of gold. Nothing quite like it has ever occurred, or is ever likely to occur again, in world history.<sup>201</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the Gold Rush became California's main epic, its central myth.

If asked to name the most important respect in which California differs from other forty seven states, I would say that the difference consists in the fact that California has not grown or evolved so much as it has been hurtled forward, rocket-fashion, by a series of chain-reaction explosions. The rhythm of the State's development is unlike that of the other states, and the basic explanation is to be found in a set of peculiar and highly exceptional dynamics. The existence of these underlying dynamics accounts for the tempo of social change, the foreshortening of economic processes, the speed of development. Europeans have long marveled at the driving force, the "restless energy," of America; but it is only in California that this energy is coeval with statehood. Elsewhere the tempo of development was slow at first, and gradually accelerated as energy accumulated. But in California, the lights went on all at once, in a blaze, and they have never been dimmed. It was, of course, the discovery of gold that got California off to a flying start, and set in motion its chain-reaction, explosive, self-generating pattern of development. Not gold alone, but the magic equation "gold-equals-energy," is the key to California puzzle. (25)

As happened elsewhere in the nation, industrial capitalism fell like a thunderbolt on California. Unexpected new pools of money and labor to manipulate, new technologies to exploit; expanded markets for agriculture, fresh

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

methods for absorbing imperial domains of land and water—to men of a special blend of vision, daring, ingenuity, and rapaciousness, the years that followed the gold-rush were far more challenging than even that first wild scramble for riches had been.<sup>202</sup>

The federal government played a crucial role in the dynamic growth of California. Modern California is in large measure the creation of the federal government. Between 1940 and 1970 Washington poured upward of \$100 billion into the area, more economic stimulation than it provided any other state. Most of that extraordinary sum was used to further programs related to waging one global war, two brush-fire conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, and the Cold War against Russia. The rest has gone into funding highways, housing, educational expansion, agricultural subsidies, and massive social and welfare programs.<sup>203</sup>

So generous a sowing of dollars was bound to produce social changes. Most obvious was California's leap in population—an increase of thirteen million during the same thirty years, 1940-1970. About two-fifths of the increment was born in the state. The rest, as usual, came from all parts of the world. Their desires, fueled by inflated paychecks (California's total *personal* income tripled during the first half of the 1940s alone), created new outlets for manufacturers, merchants, workers in service industries, farmers, entertainers, real-estate salesmen, and bunco artists.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> David Lavender, *California: Land of New Beginnings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 257.

<sup>203</sup> David Lavender, *California: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 183.

**The distinctive populace:**

Californians are not a unique people, but the “population” of California is quite unique. On the face of it, this would seem to be an utterly inconsistent statement; but properly understood, it goes far toward explaining the exceptionalism of California. Populations differ in many significant aspects: in their component elements, in the way these elements are held together and the manner in which these elements are interrelated or juxtaposed. Composition, structure, and arrangement, however, fail to exhaust the list of variables. Populations also differ in both a time and space dimension. For example, is the population new to the area or indigenous? Did the people come from short or long distances? Lastly, all populations are changing or dynamic, but the rate of change often shows marked variations.<sup>205</sup>

In each of these dimensions, the population of California differs from that of the other states. To such a degree is this true, that one can fairly state that the exceptional character of the population is one of the master keys to the contradictions and paradoxes of the state. The general frame of reference for an understanding of California’s exceptional population is to be found in Davis McIntyre’s suggestion that “California has come to represent to the rest of the country what the United States has meant to the world,” namely, a land of exceptional opportunities. Here, in this “great bowl of the West,” the settlement of America has been repeated but with a difference, a special accent, and, above all,

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> McWilliams, *Great Exception*, 63.

with a remarkable foreshortening of the process. California is All-American but uniquely combined, uniquely put together.<sup>206</sup>

**The ultimate in opportunity:**

William L. C. Wheaton in his article “Peril and Promise: The Urbanization of California in the 60’s”, appropriately wrote: “It is clear that California’s glamorous image has been firmly impressed in the national mind. This is the State containing Hollywood, the State of excitement, drama and romance. It is also the headquarters of the space, aeronautic and electronics industries, a technological center for the future. It is a State that boasts a year-round mild climate, the ideal place for amenity, retirement, sports and casual living, and the favored styles of our affluent society. Finally, it is the State whose magnificent mountains, beaches, forests and streams attract millions of visitors a year and are portrayed in countless travel ads, in movies, in books and on television. As more and more people get higher incomes and have the economic freedom to choose an environment, more and more have been attracted by the amenities and opportunities of California. In the American people’s restless search for a better way of life, California continues to be a magnet.”<sup>207</sup> As Msgr. Jaime Soto, while discussing Latino arrivals tells Robert Scheer: “For the immigrants, California is still a new frontier. They are like the gold miners in that they still have that vision that

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid. , 63-64.

<sup>207</sup> Edward G. Brown, introduction to *California the Dynamic State*, by Ansel Adams et al. (Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, 1966), 51.

somehow there is opportunity here and that there is a chance to make something new.”<sup>208</sup>

Indeed, our interviewees echo what Msgr. Soto has to say. Dr. Navin Adatia says: “I wanted to further my education and pursue the profession of General Physician. I knew that the U.S. had much advanced medical equipment, facilities, training and treatment. That was a big plus. Within Southern California Los Angeles area was particularly appealing because of high profile hospitals like UCLA and USC.”

Mr. Bhupinder Batra states: “A close friend here told me that the climate in California was very good and the state is more multicultural. In Vancouver, Canada, there was more rain and it was colder. Here the climate is more tropical. Also it is a big city, there is more opportunity. So I started my business here.”

Hemant Chitnavis states: “We came to California because we had lost our jobs in Chicago. Our search for newer jobs was fruitless. My late father’s brother-in-law urged us to go to Los Angeles where, he said, there was a much bigger job market. In addition, we felt that because California was such a diverse state we would not encounter the problems that we faced in Florida and Chicago.” Asha Chitnavis adds: “In Chicago we could not withstand the cold and the biting wind of winter. Having been raised in the tropics it was very disheartening to see nightfall at 3.00 p.m. Even more debilitating was the fact that we were on welfare.”

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<sup>208</sup> Robert Scheer, “For Immigrants, California is Still a New Frontier,” *Los Angeles Times*, Monday, 9 August 1993, sec. B.

Indooben Dhaba states: "I had heard so many things about California. First, the weather was nice. There was an Indian culture here. When I came here in 1982 for my first visit it was so nice I felt like moving here. Second, Hollywood, the studios, buildings, houses, and the beach are so nice here. We did not have these things in Fort Wayne, Indiana." She adds: "My husband got sick in Indiana. It was snowing and I had to take him to dialyses. We had no choice. Our children were here. They suggested that we move to L.A. So, despite the higher cost of living we moved to Laguna Beach."

Zainul Kanji says he was only thirteen when he landed in Los Angeles as a refugee. He did not have any notion of California before that. He says: "When I was growing up here we identified mostly with the beach in Venice, Santa Monica and things like that." Tina Kotecha was only four years old when she fled Uganda with her family. This is what she felt about California while in her teens: "Growing up I loved it. I loved the hustle bustle, the busy lifestyle, the glamour of being in L.A., and obviously I liked the weather. I liked the fact that people in California have a very free mentality as opposed to, say, the communities in London where they are a little bit more reserved. People are not as reserved here."

Manilal Padhiar says: "My ideas about California were derived from Western movies. All the Clint Eastwood movies and some of the John Wayne movies depicted the desert and the mountains. I grew up believing that is what California was like. So when I came here and saw those six-lane freeways and tall buildings with elevators I suffered from culture shock for a few days." Manilal emphasizes that there was not a single elevator in his hometown of Mbale!



What Wheaton goes on to write applies even today: “To the visitor seeing California for the first time, all is still newer, more attractive and more pleasant than anything that can be found in the older, more densely crowded cities of the East Coast and the Midwest. But more important, many of the newcomers have been attracted during the last decade by the employment opportunities, which have contributed to the continuing prosperity of the older residents. The aircraft industry, the space laboratories, and the atomic energy facilities attract them. They are attracted by high-quality opportunities for education. They are attracted by the opportunities to build businesses to serve an ever-expanding and richer population. Indeed, the older residents are dependent upon their prosperity upon the newcomers. They might indeed have more space without population growth, but be unable to send their children to college. They might indeed preserve the countryside—and be unemployed. So the tidal wave of growth rolls on as it has with increasing magnitude since World War II.”<sup>209</sup>

**The deeper meaning:**

However, the meaning of migration to California is deeper than that. To quote Wilson McWilliams again: “The longitude of California places it in “the West,” and the West as a region occupies a special place in the symbols of America. The West confronts its residents with the choice of becoming expatriates or of accepting defeat and “going back.” We go “down South” (an image that is almost psychoanalytic) or “back East,” but we move “out West,” a

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid. , 52.

phrase which invokes not only the great spaces but also the idea of escape from confinement, the constraint of the old regions.”<sup>210</sup>

Shiva Naipaul, while comparing Los Angeles and San Francisco in his article, “Journey to Nowhere”, is more incisive: “That common legendary root goes even deeper—to America itself, to the New World dream of rebirth and self-realization in a spacious land uncontaminated by memory, tradition and restraint. California became, as it had to, the New World’s New World, its last repository of hope. In California, you come face to face with the Pacific and yourself. There is nowhere else to go. Just as both Los Angeles and San Francisco are, in their separate ways, recognizably Californian, so is California recognizably American. All that California does is magnify what is brought to it, and often, under the strain of magnification, there occurs a sea change. It seems that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first send to California...the impulse to seek regeneration in California has persisted with such strength.”<sup>211</sup>

However, escape from confinement is not the desire of in-migrants only. As Richard Rodriguez wrote in support in 1993: “The century that began with the European invention of passports is ending with international airline fares that even a peasant can manage. FAX machines and television made the isolation of China during the Tian An Men Square demonstrations impossible. Movies and jet airplanes are making California alluring in the tiniest villages of Asia and Latin

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<sup>210</sup> Hale & Eisen, *California Dream*, 4.

<sup>211</sup> Michaels, Reid, & Scherr, *Imagining California*, 282-283.

America.”<sup>212</sup> California has always been a land of acceptance where dreamers could thrive.<sup>213</sup>

The U. S. Census Bureau reports that California’s population growth rate rose again during the year ending July 1, but growth in the rest of the West slowed. California, the nation’s most populated State, grew by 1.5 percent during the 12-month period—its highest rate since 1992 and well above the national rate of 1percent. It also had the largest increase in residents of any state—484,000—creating a total population of about 33 million.<sup>214</sup>

California is blessed with a combination of advantages that exists here and nowhere else. This State has more high-technology entrepreneurs, more venture capitalists, more engineers and scientists than anyplace else in the world. We have the world’s strongest basic research and graduate education, thanks to such premier institutions as Caltech, Stanford, the University of California and the University of Southern California.<sup>215</sup>

Knowledge is to California’s economic infrastructure what water has long been to its physical infrastructure: the vital difference between boom and bust. Research and development are the lifeblood of California’s high-technology industries, among them biotechnology, microelectronics, multimedia, pharmaceuticals, and telecommunications<sup>216</sup> Ventures like the University of California’s Cooperative Research Program involves graduate students in every

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<sup>212</sup> Richard Rodriguez, “Closed Doors. The Immigrant: To Work or Die in California,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, 15 August 1993, sec. M.

<sup>213</sup> Ray Bradbury, “I Love Thee, Queen Califia,” *Westways*, January/February 2001, 14.

<sup>214</sup> Robert L. Jackson & Eric Lichtblau, “State Growth Gains Momentum; Migration, Economy Credited,” *Los Angeles Times*, Thursday, 31 December 1998, California and the West section.

<sup>215</sup> Edward E. Penhoet & Richard C. Atkinson, “Town and Gown join forces to Boost State,” *Los Angeles Times*, Tuesday, 31 December 1996, Commentary section.

aspect of the research it sponsors. Industry thus gets the benefits of some of the world's brightest young minds. Graduate students get the opportunity to learn firsthand about industry's needs. As a result, they have an incentive to stay in California and continue contributing their talents to our economy. There is no more potent form of technology transfer than this kind of one-on-one involvement. (B7)

California happens to have a highly diversified and specialized economy. Research has contributed to this diversity and specialization, just as the nature of the environment finds reflection in the type of research for which the State University is today world-famous.<sup>217</sup> Also note that this highly diversified economy has enabled California to absorb the shock, intensity and longevity of several recessions and minimize both the economic and psychic damage.

**The confident gamblers:**

To understand the spirit of California, one really needs sociology of what is called "good luck." An exceptionally fortunate area comes to believe in its "good luck" and this belief becomes a positive, independent factor in the preservation of its good fortune. Californians have traditionally been reckless and self-confident gamblers; they have never hesitated to make high wagers against heavy odds and, on more than one occasion, have staked the future of the State on a throw of the dice, a turn of the cards. Many of these wagers have paid fantastic dividends and, on the average, most of them have been won. It is not that Californians are by nature inveterate gamblers or that people living in other areas

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> McWilliams, *Great Exception*, 267.

are inhibited by a sense of inherited caution; the Californian gambles because he has confidence and he has confidence because his wagers are generally paid off. Although he is inclined, as all gamblers are inclined, to attribute his success to his “good luck,” he also has an unformed, inarticulate awareness that the exceptional character of California is a sufficient hedge against any wager. He is like one of Bret Harte’s gamblers whose insouciance conceals awareness that the dice are loaded in his favor. Californians have always had this sense of being “lucky.”<sup>218</sup>

It is, therefore, not surprising that Californians are in the forefront of innovation. “California has always been a trendsetter,” says Clarence Garlough, manager of the Auto Club’s Approved Accommodation. “New concepts in cuisine and hospitality often begin here.”<sup>219</sup> The desires of California motorists are noteworthy because the State accounts for about 10 percent of all new cars and trucks sold each year. Automakers—in Detroit, Asia and Europe—take California tastes into account when deciding which features to put into their vehicles and whether to include them as standard offerings or as extra-price options.<sup>220</sup>

Wallace Stegner in his piece “California!” sums it up thus: “More spectacularly endowed than any other of the 50 states, culmination of the American movement westward, neighbor to Asia, raw, young, powerful, yet with oases of extraordinary sophistication and a smattering of every cultivated grace,

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid. , 61-62.

<sup>219</sup> Elizabeth Harryman, “Diamond-Studded,” *Westways*, May/June 2000, 22.

<sup>220</sup> John O’Dell, “Californians Dreamin’ of Luxury, Safety,” *Los Angeles Times*, Thursday, 31 December 1998, Industry section.

California is a place where you can find whatever you came looking for, and right next to it that which you most hoped to avoid.”<sup>221</sup>

**Conclusion:**

While in Uganda, Canada, India, Pakistan, or United Kingdom our subjects may have felt the power of California but not realized its importance till they actually spent some years here. Indeed, from the various interviews this student conducted this turned out to be true. Our subjects are fully aware that they are in the most dynamic and progressive region of United States. They have no desire to move out of California. They are also aware that they have reached Pacific Ocean and there is no turning back.

There is no denying that California has a distinct persona of its own. What is also wonderful about this State is that refugees and expellees who departed in pain from some country can go about *quietly* rebuilding their lives and redeeming themselves, undisturbed, in an exceptionally energetic region. Our tri-cultural, multilingual subjects have found their *natural* home in this first International State.

Let us narrow our focus further and try to understand the place, the region adopted by our subjects as their home.

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<sup>221</sup> Adams et. al., *Dynamic State*, 224.

## **CHAPTER 5/ LOS ANGELES: THE AMERICAN EL DORADO**

### **Introduction:**

One cannot describe and analyze the interaction of its residents without describing the abode itself. The internal and external architecture, the dimension of rooms, color scheme, the type and placement of furniture, the aesthetics and ambiance, shape the behavior and interaction of residents.

Likewise, one cannot understand how and why our subjects are likely to acculturate or develop a sense of place without understanding the region itself. Bearing the above in mind this chapter is designed to render both a broad and an in-depth look at the type of place our subjects have settled in:

#### **A) The physical dimension:**

As the editors point out in their piece “Introduction to Los Angeles: City and Region”, for close to a century now Southern California has been the magnet for enormous population movements both from other parts of the United States and from other parts of the world. In an ever-widening orbit of attraction, a series of migratory waves have given rise to a net population growth averaging close to two million per decade, or over five hundred every day for almost one hundred years. Anchoring this growth has been a process of urban and regional development that has engendered one of the world’s largest metropolitan agglomerations. The regional metropolis of Los Angeles, centered around the original settlement of El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles de

Porciuncula but now stretching outward for sixty miles in almost every direction, encompasses more than 160 separate municipalities in five counties (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura), with a current population of fifteen million. It is the sixth or seventh largest of the world's mega cities.<sup>222</sup>

Joel Garreau calls such urban centers "Edge City". Cities, because they contain all the functions a city ever has, albeit in a spread-out form that few have come to recognize for what it is. Edge, because they are a vigorous world of pioneers and immigrants, rising from the old downtowns, where little save villages or farmland lay only thirty years before. Their landmark structure is the celebrated single-family detached dwelling, the suburban home with grass all around that made America the best-housed civilization the world has ever known.<sup>223</sup>

The future of greater Los Angeles would appear to be radiant. If you were to draw a circle with a sixty-mile radius around Los Angeles, and declare the domain an independent nation, it would be the eleventh richest realm on earth and the third richest country in the western hemisphere, after Canada. It would be the third richest in the Pacific Rim, after China. It would be richer than most of the twelve members of the European Economic Community. It would have the second highest gross national product per person in the world—ahead of Japan, ahead of Europe, ahead of the United States, trailing only the United Arab Emirates. In fact, if the Sixty-Mile Circle were a state of the Union, it would be

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<sup>222</sup> Allen J. Scott & Edward W. Soja, eds., *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the end of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press), 1, 20.

<sup>223</sup> Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1991), 4.



the fourth largest in population and total personal income—behind only Texas, New York, and California itself.<sup>224</sup>

As the great-granddaddy of twentieth-century style urban areas, the Los Angeles Basin sports twenty-six full-blown or rapidly growing Edge Cities in five counties—the largest number of any urban area in the world. If we count only those trips made by workers to their jobs, its transportation network moves the equivalent of the entire population of Massachusetts daily. (283)

The region's jobs, however, belie the image of Tinsel town or La-La Land. Los Angeles is the world capital of nonprint media (e.g. movies, music, television). But it is also one of the most dynamic and diverse manufacturing centers in the world. The Sixty-Mile Circle produces more than 10 percent of the American total of everything from nuts, bolts, rivets, and washers, to pens, games and toys, women's fashions, welding equipment, radio and TV communications equipment, aircraft, space vehicles, and rockets. It rivals Northern California's Silicon Valley in its computer industry. It created 1.5 million jobs in the 1980's alone—double that of the New York area. The world capitals of Pacific Rim import-export and finance are Tokyo, Hong Kong, and the Sixty-Mile Circle. Five major commercial airports serve greater Los Angeles. (283)

At the same time, within the Sixty-Mile Circle one can find a stunning diversity of environments—canyons, deserts, lakes, mountains, ocean surf, rolling hills, and some of the most productive farmland on earth, as well as 139 colleges and universities and so many wealthy museums and lavishly endowed arts centers as to challenge the primacy of those in the East. (283)

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid. , 282-283.

Edward W. Soja, in his contribution “Los Angeles, 1965-1992: From crisis-generated restructuring to restructuring-generated crisis”, is more expressive than Garreau. Soja has added another summative term, “Exopolis,” literally the “city without” in the double sense of the expanding Outer (vs. the Inner) City as well as the city that no longer is, the ex-city. This double meaning signals an explicit attack on our conventional usage of the terms urban, suburban, and nonurban to describe divisions within contemporary metropolitan areas. As geographic restructuring works increasingly to blur these distinctions, we must not only revamp our vocabulary but also reconceptualize the very nature of urban studies, to see urban form as a complex and polycentric regional mosaic of geographically uneven development affecting and affected by local, national, and global forces and influences. Studying Los Angeles (or Tokyo, Sao Paulo, Little Rock) thus becomes a window onto a wider panorama of subject matter than has traditionally been treated in the field of urban studies.<sup>225</sup> One heartily agrees with David Thompson who, in his article “Driving in a Back Projection” states that: “For it is exactly in the absence of classical structure, center, stability, tradition, and integrity that Los Angeles appeals.”<sup>226</sup>

Four major Outer Cities can be identified in the Los Angeles Regional Exopolis. None of the four have conventional urban place-names or identities, and they do not appear clearly in official statistical tabulations, but each has been among the fastest-growing “urban” areas of the country. If identified as distinct cities each would rank among the fifteen largest in the country:

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<sup>225</sup> Scott and Soja, *Urban Theory*, 435-436.

<sup>226</sup> Michaels, Reid, & Scherr, *Imagining California*, 28.

1) The largest and the most paradigmatic of all outer cities is multiply centered in Orange County, an agglomeration of about fifty incorporated municipalities with a total population of more than 2.5 million. Orange County has been an especially significant focus for restructuring research in all its dimensions and has become a model of sorts for comparative urban studies throughout the whole world.

2) Of similar size and even more expansive in recent years is what might be called the "Greater Valley," stretching from Glendale and Burbank through the San Fernando Valley, once the epitomization of American suburbia, to Chatsworth-Canoga Park (administratively part of the City of Los Angeles) and beyond into adjacent Ventura County, with another extension northward into the high desert and canyon country of northern Los Angeles County.

3) A third Outer City has grown along the Pacific shores of Los Angeles County from Malibu to Long Beach, which, with its twin port of San Pedro, has risen to challenge the Randstad and Tokyo-Yokohama as the world's largest port complex. At the center of this Outer City region is Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and the large agglomeration of office buildings, hotels, and high-technology research and manufacturing establishments that surround it. Sometimes called "Aerospace Alley," this region contains what is probably the country's largest concentration of the American military-industrial complex and has been the seedbed of U.S. weapons and warfare research from the development of the DC-3 to Star Wars.

4) The fourth Outer City extends from the eastern edge of Los Angeles County to the most developed parts of San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Called the Inland Empire after its wartime industrial expansion in the 1940s and 1950s, this sub region of Exopolis is the least developed of the four in terms of industrial employment and office growth, having suffered significantly from the deindustrialization process over the past thirty years.<sup>227</sup>

**B) The Economic/Industrial structure:**

For most of the period between 1965 and 1992, job generation was even greater than population growth. The vast majority of these jobs were in nonunionized occupations and most paid much lower wages (with fewer or nonexistent benefits) than those lost through Fordist deindustrialization. But something else was going on as well, a process of post-Fordist industrial development that was rapidly reconstituting the regional economy in at least three different ways. Receiving the most analytical and popular attention was the development of “techno poles” of Southern California, the high technology-based complexes of industrial estates, research and development offices, and supportive business services that propelled the growth of the Outer Cities and clustered around them what is reputed to be the world’s largest urban concentration of engineers, physical scientists, mathematicians, computer technicians, and military weapons specialists. It is no surprise that Los Angeles became one of the “textbook” cases for studying the new pathways of post-Fordist industrialization and regional development. (441)

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<sup>227</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 436-437.

In addition, Soja points out that according to Harvey Molotch (“L.A. as Design Product”), two other forms of flexible specialization have sustained the redevelopment of the Inner City and especially downtown Los Angeles. The first revolves around craft-based production networks and the dense clustering of many small and middle-sized firms highly adaptive to national and global market signals and changes in style and consumer preferences; while the second is built primarily on the provision of specialized financial services and technologically advanced communications and information processing. For each, the inner city of Los Angeles has been particularly receptive. The garment industry more than matched the aerospace industry (another craft-centered rather than mass-production) in the volume of job growth and is now probably the largest in the country, having recently passed New York City. Significantly, the Los Angeles garment industry is highly specialized in sportswear and other clothing that is particularly fad and fashion sensitive and also less susceptible to easy mechanization. Major specialization also exist in furniture, jewelry, printing, industrial design, and the array of services connected to the entertainment industry, where Los Angeles leadership has been established since the 1930s but has grown even more intense since 1965. (441)

Growth in the FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate) sector has fueled the emergence of Los Angeles as a major challenger to the triumvirate of Tokyo, London, and New York atop the global hierarchy of the “capitals of capital.” While extending the region’s global reach this growth has become localized in a dense web of consumer banking, mortgage lending, business accounting, credit

checking, information processing, personnel management, building maintenance, and legal services that pulse through the region's economy in ways that probably have a greater positive impact than the more cocooned and externally oriented financial districts of New York and London. At the heart of the web is the downtown financial district, but, as might be expected, the FIRE stations are broadly dispersed, with major sub centers in Century City (along the Wilshire Corridor) and Newport Beach, in Orange County. (441)

Helping to sustain these flexibly specialized districts is a teeming underground economy and an immigrant-fed pool of low-wage labor that makes the crack house and the sweatshop, the private video store and the swap meet, as well as a vast reservoir of underpaid janitors, gardeners, dishwashers, street vendors, home working chipboard polishers, and household servants as much a part of the post-Fordist Flex cities of Los Angeles as anything else. (441-442)

Central to the transformation of Los Angeles has been an expansive internationalization process that accelerated after the major changes in federal immigration policy that took place in that turning point year of 1965. It has compressed within the region the most culturally heterogeneous population of investors, entrepreneurs, workers, and families any city has ever seen.

Accompanying this immigration has been an equally global and heterogeneous inflow of capital investment, especially from Canada, the East Asian NICs (newly industrialized countries), the European Economic Community, Japan, and the oil-rich states of the Middle East. Together these flows of labor and capital have probably been more responsible than any other restructuring process for continued

economic growth of the region and the radical changes that have taken place in the regional built environment and the character of every day urban life. (442)

Kotkin and Kishimoto portray Southern California's Asia-oriented, entrepreneurial, immigrant-fueled economy as the model for an American economic renaissance. In that way, they see the immigrant influx reinforcing another cutting-edge national trend most apparent in Los Angeles: The organization of the local economy into an extraordinarily dense web of small- and mid-sized companies. Although Los Angeles has large employers in industries such as aerospace, its economic base rests on smaller entrepreneurial companies in everything from high technology to textiles that spin off enormous numbers of new jobs; 95 percent of all Los Angeles businesses have fewer than 50 employees. Put another way, Los Angeles economy now mirrors its physical geography: dispersed and diverse. The centrifugal trends reinforce each other, with the physical sprawl providing plenty of space for these small companies to inexpensively set up shop, notes Richard Weinstein, dean of the UCLA graduate school of architecture and urban planning.<sup>228</sup>

A quick survey reveals that Southland universities and colleges annually generate about \$30 billion in regional economic activity and directly support more than 120,000 full-time jobs. Interestingly tourism, which is widely touted as an economic pillar in the region, also generates about \$30 billion annually, directly supporting more than 250,000 full-time jobs.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, the City of Los Angeles'

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<sup>228</sup> Ronald Brownstein, "L.A. in the mind of America: New Realities are Changing the Old Perceptions," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 15 January 1989, 12.

<sup>229</sup> Steven B. Sample, "Southern California's Hidden Economic Engine," *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, 22 May 1994, sec. M8.

largest employer is a university. Not a defense firm, not a movie studio, but the University of Southern California.<sup>230</sup>

Caltech, UCLA, USC, and UC San Diego, bring in about \$700 million annually in federal funding for basic research and other programs. These four institutions are members of the Assn. Of American Universities, the 56 key institutions that conduct most of the nation's basic research and produce most of the nation's researchers. Southern California's AAU institutions attract tuition dollars from thousands of students from other states and nations. Many of these students stay in Southern California after graduation, the most beneficial form of immigration imaginable. And the Asian business and government leaders trained here will, in coming years, increase the economic and technological ties between Asia and Southern California. While Hollywood, Disneyland and beaches will always be key parts of its image; it will be universities and colleges that will keep Southern California a forward-thinking region. (M8)

**C) The cultural/philosophical dimension:**

As Richard S. Weinstein states in his article "The First American City" Los Angeles is the first consequential American city to separate itself decisively from European models and to reveal the impulse to privatization embedded in the origins of the American revolution. Some have emphasized the operation of economic factors in the development of Los Angeles, but these need to be understood in relation to cultural and ideological forces of singular power and

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.



resilience. While these forces influenced the economic marketplace, they cannot be explained as arising exclusively from its operation.<sup>231</sup>

To understand Los Angeles and the many places like it, certain recurring themes in American culture need to be examined, themes that arise from attitudes toward nature and society and the city as they were affected by the experience of settling a new continent, by transformation of that experience by science and industrial change, and by the optimistic linkage of both to our national destiny, to the conquest of Western space, and to the destruction of native populations. These experiences and their representation in art, literature and thought provide the context of values that guide our choices as a people. The operation of the marketplace is an indicator of these deeper inclinations as they interact with the uncertainties of the modern condition but is itself formative of their ultimately American expressions in the political arrangements we have made, in new sensibilities that alter our perceptions, and in the environment we have built—which is their reflection and which reaches a culmination in the urban pattern of Los Angeles.<sup>232</sup>

Movement is the magic that keeps expectations high in America. From the movement of the first colonists to the New World through the westward movement of Americans to the movement of people into the cities, movement itself has been the continuing proof—to Americans—of social and economic mobility (we call it “progress”) of the individual, the society, and the nation. Movement fuels the belief in unlimited opportunity and ultimate success.

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<sup>231</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 22.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*

Movement—physical, geographical movement—is the symbol of social and economic mobility. It is also the symbol of progress, of independence, and of individual freedom all wrapped up in one. In their movement to the cities, within the cities, from one city to another, from cities to suburbs and back, Americans new and old have tied themselves symbolically to their immigrant past, to their colonial past. They endlessly repeat the ritual pattern of seeking opportunities and freedom through movement.<sup>233</sup>

One of our deeper inclinations is migration. Any decision to pull up stakes (and that image, with its allusions to temporary encampments and voyages as yet uncompleted, is instructive in itself) resonates peculiarly in the minds of Americans. For all that we imagine ourselves a practical people, it would be inconceivable for a European, let alone an Asian, to share our romantic ideas about the moral enhancement that each displacement brings. For Americans, similar decisions have always had the quality of an imperative, a living out of one of the nation's central myths. Every American school child used to learn Horace Greeley's injunction, "Go west, young man," and Abraham Lincoln's father's instruction to his son that "when you see the smoke from your neighbor's chimney, it's time to move on."<sup>234</sup>

This is a powerful myth with vast consequences. A nation as pledged as America has been to this idea of newness is bound to have little imaginative sympathy for the traditional notions of a city, with its boundaries, fixed hierarchies of space and status, and the visible remnants of the past carrying their

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<sup>233</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 242-243.

<sup>234</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 44.

implacable intimations of mortality. To be an American has always meant being able, precisely, to exercise one's right to opt out of the continuum of history, choosing isolation over community, and one's desires over one's obligations. In the grand rhetoric of Emerson, it is to be "a seeker with no past at his back." More prosaically, the notion is embodied in the great American expression "Don't fence me in." Inevitably, this model of utopia depends on solitude and space to spare and is as contemptuous of any particular place as it is of the past. Perhaps this is why Americans have been so oddly complacent about the decay of their older cities. If New York or Philadelphia does not "work" anymore, it must be time to move on.<sup>235</sup>

#### **D) Defining aspects/characteristics of Los Angeles:**

Note that like the attributes of the United States (chapter 3) these aspects cannot really be sharply demarcated because they also overlap in an intricately symbiotic relationship. The essence of each must be grasped if one is to understand Los Angeles:

##### **1) Climate and Space:**

The towering San Bernardino, San Jacinto, and Tehachapi mountain ranges serve to keep out the heat and dust of the desert, but they are high enough to snatch moisture from the ocean winds and to form clouds. The land itself faces west, toward the Pacific, from which the winds blow with great regularity. It is this combination of mountain ranges, ocean breezes, and semi-desert terrain that

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid. , 44-45.

makes the “climate”, and the climate in turn makes the land.<sup>236</sup> As early as 1944 a consultant in Meteorology and Aeronautics wrote in a pamphlet: “The climate is invigorating, not enervating. Unlike weather elsewhere, the necessary business of life may be carried on with the minimum of effort for there is no nervous strain expended in resisting climatic conditions.”<sup>237</sup> Note that many members of the faculty at Cal Tech took pay cuts and came to Pasadena in the 1920’s for precisely the same reason; namely, they liked living in Southern California.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, by their remarkably successful emphasis on basic scientific research, both the University of California and the Californian Institute of Technology have a special relevance to the future of California.<sup>239</sup>

Not only does Los Angeles have better transportation facilities than San Francisco, and a larger market area, but also it has space to burn. Climate has also been an important factor. The important aircraft industry, for example, completely bypassed the fog-ridden Bay Area. But, more important than the relative absence of fog, has been the existence of the vast empty spaces of the nearby Mojave Desert, which, as major testing and experimental laboratories, have been of great importance to the aircraft industry. Southern California is today the nation’s leading center of aerodynamic research. The aircraft industry, also, happens to be one, which has exceptional space requirements, and there is plenty of “space” in Los Angeles. The motion picture industry is another industry in which the

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<sup>236</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1979), 5.

<sup>237</sup> Ford A. Carpenter, “Los Angeles: The Land of the Beckoning Climate,” *Los Angeles: Supervisors of the Los Angeles County*, September 1944.

<sup>238</sup> McWilliams, *Great Exception*, 262.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

climate-and-space factor is important, and with motion pictures has come many subsidiary industries, such as, the manufacture of photographic equipment. (236)

Many federal agencies have their regional headquarters in Los Angeles. In addition to branch plants, local assembly units, and retail outlets, many eastern and Middle Western concerns have also opened regional headquarters in Los Angeles. Here, too, one can note the “pull” of cultural factors. In selecting regional headquarters business concerns are primarily concerned, of course, with basic factors, such as transportation facilities, proximity to the trade, and so forth; but they are also influenced by secondary factors, such as, the pleasantness of the environment. (238) Many international companies have also opened their American headquarters and/or established sizeable plants for assembling, distributing, or manufacturing their products in the region.

## **2) The ultimate in opportunity:**

Indeed, if California is the ultimate in the American Dream then Los Angeles is the ultimate in the California Dream. Rieff appropriately describes it thus: “You found it everywhere, that fierce braggadocio, asserting California’s ascendancy over the rest of the country that, by now, must be the oldest new idea in American life.”<sup>240</sup> Rieff adds: “What an extraordinary city it was, more a religion, really, than a place fixed in time and space...the center of the California Dream, the capital of America’s America...this most laissez faire of cities turned out to be, on closer examination, a society made up almost entirely of true

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<sup>240</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 41.

believers. They had found the future, no matter how much they might disagree about what the future was. They had found the Dream.”<sup>241</sup>

In a valiant effort to find rationality in the seemingly random Brownian motion of Los Angeles, Banham reduced Los Angeles to four “ecologies”: Autopia, Foothills, Plains of Id, and Surfurbia. He would have to expand that list today. But the underlying theme of Banham and other perceptive observers is that the history of Los Angeles suggests that anything is possible here.<sup>242</sup> Ray Bradbury aptly says: “Like it or not, we are the incredible Beach Boy eggheads. Within our Schwarzenegger skulls hide JPL-Moon Landers-Martian spacecraft that guarantee tomorrows. Those blast-furnace roars you hear from the Santa Susanna foothills are rocket test stands in full shout. Their thunder is Queen Califia’s voice sounding the future.”<sup>243</sup>

### 3) Immigration/Diversity:

A combination of climate and unrivalled opportunity has resulted in extraordinary diversity, which, in turn, has become a prime reason for migration to the region. This exceptional diversity is its fascination, rather than any of the Southland’s older imperatives like utopianism, boosterism, or halcyon moments of dreamlike ease.<sup>244</sup>

The Edge Cities of the Los Angeles Basin contain a vibrant ethnic mix. America is going through the greatest wave of immigration since the turn of the century. It is absorbing more *legal* immigrants than the rest of the world

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid. , 41-42.

<sup>242</sup> Editorial, “The Secret to Los Angeles is That Anything Is Possible,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, 17 July 1994, sec. M4.

<sup>243</sup> Bradbury, “Queen Califia,” 14.

combined. Los Angeles is its premier entreport. The Sixty-Mile Circle is the second largest urban economy in the western hemisphere, after the New York area. It is the second largest Mexican city in the world, the second largest Guatemalan city, the second largest Salvadoran city, the second largest Cambodian city, the second largest Laotian city...the list seems endless. It has the largest concentration of Koreans in North America, the most Filipinos, the most Vietnamese, the most Iranians, and the most Thais...<sup>245</sup>

Some years ago a report by the Department of Immigration stated that three out of every ten immigrants to the United States settle in the Los Angeles Basin. According to the 2000 Census Los Angeles County (alone) leads the nation in the number of foreign-born residents—3.4million—while Glendale ranks third among U. S. cities with 54.4 percent of these residents born somewhere else. 36.2 percent of the county's 9.52 million people were born in a country other than the United States.<sup>246</sup> Using the percentage (37 percent) of all immigrants in Los Angeles relative to the state of California as a proxy, it is estimated that the number of *unauthorized* immigrants to Los Angeles are 532,947.<sup>247</sup>

What makes Los Angeles unusual, if not unique, is that it is the primary example of what Charles Jencks calls a heteropolis, a new form of urban agglomeration that thrives on difference. How can we define the heteropolis? The shortest definition might be a global city of more than eight million with a high

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<sup>244</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 171.

<sup>245</sup> Garreau, *Edge City*, 283-284.

<sup>246</sup> Beth Barrett, "County tops for those born away from U.S.," *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, Thursday, 18 December 2003, sec. A8.

<sup>247</sup> Lawrence D. Bobo, Melvin L. Oliver, James H. Johnson Jr., & Abel Valenzuela Jr., eds., *Prismatic Metropolis: Inequality in Los Angeles* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), 15.

concentration of multinational corporations and having a variety of economic sectors, multiplying lifestyles, and a diversifying ethnic population heading toward full minoritization. Most important, it is a place where heterogeneity—of culture and even flora and fauna—is enjoyed. With Latinos, Jews, and WASPS the largest minorities in this minoritized place, it is more fitting to see the area as a set of countries—like Europe—than as a traditional, unified city. An ethnic map alone gives it the crazy-quilt pattern of a simmering Europe before World War I. And ethnic divisions are equaled in potency by lifestyle differences.<sup>248</sup>

This heterogeneity, at all levels, is at once excessive in Los Angeles and typical of the world city. London, Rome, and Tokyo are also hybrid agglomerations that allow their originating village structure to remain an imprint for later diversity. But none, it seems to me, is so characteristically heteroglot.<sup>249</sup> Jonathan Gold appropriately refers to Los Angeles as “an invigorating chaos”.<sup>250</sup>

Indeed, as Edward W. Soja aptly points out, in this ring of ethni-cities is a dazzling constellation of global cultures and simultaneously reaches out to every corner of the world and draws into Los Angeles an amazing array of “foreign” influences. It also provides a rich testing ground for urban multiculturalism and what can be described as the new cultural politics of identity and difference, far removed from the imagic melting pot of Anglofying Americanization.

Reproduced on its streets and neighborhoods are microcosms of Hong Kong and Taiwan, Vietnam and the Philippines, Bombay and Beirut, Sao Paulo and

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<sup>248</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 47, 49.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>250</sup> Jonathan Gold, “An Invigorating Chaos: Seeking Out L.A.’s Ethnic Riches and Reaping the Rewards of the Unexpected,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 23 May 1993, 8.



Medellin. There is a Little Tokyo and a vast Korea town, a huge long-established Mexican barrio and a new barrio filled with a dense mix of Central American migrants representing every faction of the politics of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. An old (from the former Soviet Union) and a new (from Iran, Lebanon, and elsewhere) Armenian community splits its animosities between Turks and Azerbaijanis. Jewish Diaspora settlers from Iran, Russia and New York City debate Middle East politics, while African marketplaces teem with discussions of current events in Cape Town and Addis Ababa and the construction of Afrocentric school curricula. (443)

The list of separate cultural worlds microcosmed in what Charles Jencks has called the “heteropolis” of Los Angeles seems endless, but there is still another dimension to this complex panorama of urban multiculturalism, a growing cultural syncretism that may prove to be the most important new development arising from the contemporary Cosmopolis. Multiculturalism is usually described in two ways, first as the formation of segregated ethnic spaces (barrios, ghettos, Chinatown, Korea town, etc.) and second as a proliferation of conflictful edges and turfs where different cultural worlds frequently collide in struggles to maintain cultural identity and cohesion. But something else is happening in the urban borderlands. Multifunctional “composite” cultures are slowly taking shape and expressing their admixture on the local landscape and daily life: in the creation of new cuisines, designs, clothing, and styles of popular art and music; and in the development of new cultural and political identities. Los Angeles, for example, has been a major center for the assertion of Latino identity

(vs. such imposed categories as Hispanic or Spanish-speaking) as a means of uniting the diverse populations whose homelands stretch from Cape Horn to the Rio Grande. (443-444) In Salvador, you were not a Hispanic, you were a Salvadoran. In Asia, you were not Asian; you were Chinese. And yet in Los Angeles, in the space of three generations or less, the immigrants would move from being part of subgroups within their own countries of origin to becoming American minority groups. Here these deepest of selves were simply subsumed in the broader context of a new, overarching Hispanicity or Asianness.<sup>251</sup>

Soja adds that even greater heterogeneity is being synthesized in the growth of Asian-American identity, with Los Angeles again taking a leading role. Many other forms of cross-cultural fusion and coalition building are taking place in the schools and neighborhoods, in community organizations and housing projects, in local government and cultural festivals, in ways that we are only beginning to recognize and understand.<sup>252</sup>

To many observers, this unprecedented mingling of diverse cultures—not the menu at Spago or the Ferrari double-parked on Rodeo Drive—has become the defining fact of life in the city. Author Ryszard Kapuscinski argues that in Los Angeles, the mold for a new American culture is being set: not the traditional melting pot of assimilating cultures, but a “collage” of co-existing, disparate ones. Kapuscinski sees Los Angeles producing an unpredictable cultural dynamism reminiscent of turn-of-the-century Vienna as Asian, Latino, Anglo and black

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<sup>251</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 239.

<sup>252</sup> Scott and Soja, *Urban Theory*, 444.

influences interact.<sup>253</sup> Even the authors of the “L.A. 2000” report concede that the new immigrants differed somewhat from their predecessors in that the melting pot conception of assimilation no longer worked in an era when the new arrivals were bringing with them “profoundly dissimilar languages, religions, folkways, and arts, and a deeply ingrained pride in maintaining their cultural identity.”<sup>254</sup>

Through 2010, the Southern California Assn. of Governments has projected, the Southland will absorb an average of 110,000 immigrants *annually*; by then, minorities will make up a clear majority of the region’s population.<sup>255</sup> To journalist Fallows, Los Angeles most clearly embodies the creative economic and cultural “disruption”—the challenge to accepted, staid, approaches—that immigration offers the nation.<sup>256</sup>

Bobo et al. call Los Angeles a “prismatic metropolis” because of its many colors, hues, and cultures. Los Angeles now reflects in substantial numbers an enormous range of racial and ethnic groups. As Roger Waldinger succinctly puts it: “Los Angeles is now profoundly, irremediably ethnic. The issue confronting the region is whether this newly polyglot metropolis can work. And that is not a question for the region alone. In Los Angeles, late twentieth century America finds a mirror to itself” (Waldinger 1996a, 447). It is also a social prism, capturing and refracting much of the diversity of the modern American experience.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Brownstein, *New Realities*, 11.

<sup>254</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 135.

<sup>255</sup> Brownstein, *New Realities*, 11.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

#### 4) The suburban ideal:

Suburbs were built to re-create the ideal community life of the small town. They emphasize, as Sam Bass Warner wrote in *Streetcar Suburbs*, “the pleasures of private family life, the security of a small community setting, and the enjoyment of an increased contact with nature.” The city dweller found the proximate, homogeneous ideal rural community symbolized in the suburb by the uniformity of “the latest styles, the freshly painted houses, the neat streets, the well-kept lawns, and the new schools and parks.” The suburbs—and, as the suburbs have grown, the exurbs—have kept the rural community myth alive and in an ambivalent tension with the attraction of the cities: “Main Street” has moved to the suburbs.<sup>258</sup>

As Richard S. Weinstein points out, the distrust of urban civilization, joined with the sense of boundless space, movement and opportunity, was strengthened as industry changed the character of the great urban centers. Pollution, crime, immigration, noise, traffic, and poverty were increasingly seen as a threat to the good life and in fundamental opposition to the Jeffersonian strain in the American character. These sentiments are given a new form by Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, though with a transcendental, romantic coloring. Accelerated by the railroads, the suburbs “express a complex and compelling vision of the modern family freed from the corruption of the city, restored to harmony with nature, endowed with wealth and independence, yet

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<sup>257</sup> Bobo et. al., *Prismatic Metropolis*, 11.

<sup>258</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 226.

protected by a close-knit, stable community. To quote Lewis Mumford : “The suburbs are a collective effort to live a private life.”<sup>259</sup>

There is comfort to be found by Americans in the “omnipresent newness” of suburbs, which encouraged Americans to feel they were participating in the advantages of cities by moving—to the streetcar suburbs of the late nineteenth century, to the Levittowns of the 1940’s, or to the condominium developments of the 1970’s.<sup>260</sup> Suburbs made the myth of the rural community and its life real to many urban Americans. The openness of the suburbs, their variety, and their wide range of prices made it possible for city dwellers, even the poor, to continue to dream of owning a house and a piece of land in a *real* community. Suburbs represented the certainty for city dwellers that if they could but “earn enough money they too could possess the comforts and symbols of success.”<sup>261</sup>

As per Weinstein, to American attitudes toward nature and industrialization, the linkage between the nuclear family and the suburban impulse, and the practical optimism associated with an expanding frontier must be added a changing view of individual fulfillment. Once again it is Emerson who gives concentrated expression to the more general sentiment when he declared that wealth is less a measure of achievement than a means to “the legitimate comforts of (a well-rounded) life.” The significance of this attitude lies in what it tells us about the waning of the agrarian myth and the Protestant ethic. Work is no longer conceived as possessing inherent, if not religiously justified value; rather,

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<sup>259</sup> Lewis Mumford, in introduction to Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic, 1987), quoted in Allen J. Scott & Edward W. Soja, eds., *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the end of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>260</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 247.

it is perceived as standing in relation to a holistic notion of the good life that is centered on individual rather than collective experience. It emphasizes the transcendental and later, the romantic impulse rather than traditional Protestant virtue.<sup>262</sup>

Weinstein adds that the front lawn represents a subjugation of nature to the rule of civilization. It is an abstraction of the presence of nature, like the whiteness of *Moby Dick*; it is nature known and therefore tamed. The democracy of the suburban lawn is simultaneously benign, excessive, and obsessive in the sense that it imposes sameness irrespective of geographic difference and particularity of ecological place. At the same time the lawn is pleasing, ordinary, and democratic and allows each citizen a symbolic share in a domesticated ritual of subjugation and aggrandizement. The lawn is a middle-class embodiment of the American conflict between the value of nature as a principle and its management as a means toward material progress. Walt Whitman's poetry earlier expressed these contradictions, with more explicit expansionist overtones. His was a kind of romantic poetry of the democratic collective that was self-justifying and gave a moral gloss to those who in celebrating themselves, were also identifying with the spirit of patriotic conquest and manifest destiny.<sup>263</sup>

Los Angeles emerges as the dominant expression of these contradictory impulses and values that need to be understood as they interact with other powerful forces: the natural landscape and climate, economic growth, the character of migration, the national impulse toward suburbanization, the railroad,

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 26-27.

and later the automobile. (27) Wherever they sprouted, from Long Island to San Diego County, those suburbs gave people better lives, whatever the price exacted in conformity. In California, this suburban vision came with the additional pleasures of fruit trees, rosebushes, eucalyptus trees and four kinds of palms.<sup>264</sup> Southern California was the first locality where geography, technology, and a sufficient population of well-to-do consumers combined to provide a suburban ideal of the good life on a mass scale.<sup>265</sup>

Weinstein states that the hope the new world inspired in the European mind was premised in part in the dream of Arcadia, but from the beginning the idea of the United States was also bound up with the idea of economic self-sufficiency, improvisation, tinkering, ingenuity, and the empirical and the practical, within the abundant context of a natural bounty. Thus began the American drama of opposing the hope for material progress to the dangerous mystery of nature. In Los Angeles, however debased, however partial in its expression, however compromised has been the sublime principle of desert, mountain, and sea, these great cultural themes have found their most complete expression.<sup>266</sup>

The sprawling, centrifugal form of Los Angeles is a product of the boom-cycle. It is in part cultural, in the sense that so many of the newcomers have been flatlanders addicted to openness, horizontally minded, chronic and eternal villagers who have repeated the village pattern in a metropolitan environment.

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid. , 26.

<sup>264</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 28.

<sup>265</sup> David Brodsky, *L. A. Freeway: An appreciative Essay* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981), 80.

<sup>266</sup> Scott and Soja, *Urban Theory*, 24.

Indeed, the preference for single-family residences, encouraged by the boosters and made possible by a combination of circumstances, has made Los Angeles a collection of suburbs in search of a city.<sup>267</sup>

### **5) Real Estate:**

No one can spend very long in Los Angeles without talking more about real estate than is entirely good for the spirit.<sup>268</sup> Southern California, after all, was, from the start, not so much settled as sold. Indeed, before the rise of the Los Angeles of Otis and the railroad barons, no American city had ever been sold, lock, stock, and barrel, like one immense, hypertrophied subdivision.<sup>269</sup> McWilliams states that in Los Angeles, the word "real" was synonymous with "real estate." And what this meant was, almost exclusively, the single-family house. Even in the period when public transportation functioned in Los Angeles, it was to carry people to and from their houses, not apartments. (65) Indeed, Real Estate is the business of Los Angeles.

### **6) Autopolis:**

Since the period of its most spectacular growth coincided with the rise of the automobile age, Los Angeles has always been a city on wheels, an automobile metropolis. In the ownership and use of the automobile, Los Angeles stands unchallenged among the counties of the nation. Widespread use of the automobile has aborted all efforts to develop other types of transportation and has given an enormous impetus to the tendency of the city to expand along "strips," or highways radiating in all directions. The open character of settlement created

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<sup>267</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 234-235.

<sup>268</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 35



opportunities for parking lots not available in other cities, thereby encouraging the use of automobiles. Furthermore, the “fluctuating employment geography” of non-industrial Los Angeles, as well as the climate, catered to the motoring impulse.<sup>270</sup> Southern California lifestyles would not be possible without the automobile. Bottles aptly refers to Los Angeles as the *autopia*.<sup>271</sup>

In addition, as Martin Wachs points out in his article “The Evolution of Transportation Policy in Los Angeles: Images of Past Policies and Future Prospects”, in contrast to the inefficient public transportation and spurred on by automobile advertising, the private car was counter posed to public transit as the epitome of modernity and stylishness. An automobile provided an individual with freedom of choice, was an object of conspicuous consumption, and could carry four people for the price as one, something public transit surely could never do.<sup>272</sup> Los Angeles, if it has been about anything, has been about rejecting the authority of all tradition, replacing it with what still seems, to many people who live in the city, like the democratic promise of the automobile. Even mired in traffic—and people in Southern California, by some estimates, spent 1.2 billion hours per year idling in their cars and used up 750 million gallons of gasoline doing so—the automobile remained as radical an idea, as, well, the United States of America.<sup>273</sup>

**7) Freeway:** Martin Wachs states that cities are known by their symbols. Just as the Eiffel Tower defines Paris and the Statue of Liberty symbolizes New

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid. , 56-58.

<sup>270</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 236.

<sup>271</sup> Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987), 211.

<sup>272</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 118.

<sup>273</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 50.

York, the freeway is the universal icon by which Los Angeles is described. The freeway network, in addition to being an important transportation system, is considered the world over a symbol of Los Angeles and what a dramatic metaphor it is for life in a modern complex metropolis!<sup>274</sup> The freeway is literally a concrete statement to who we are, and it continues to structure the way we live. Freeways rank with the mountains and the rivers in influencing the organization of a changing city.<sup>275</sup>

The Freeway is so crucial to the California (and especially Southern California lifestyle) that it has invited hyperbole. For example Woody McBride states: "California has more residents, nearly 30 million, than any other state, and it seems each and every one is on the same freeway, headed in the same direction, at the same hour, seven days a week."<sup>276</sup> In an issue of *The Denver Post* columnist Tom Gavin observes, as many writers do, that Californians live and breed on freeways. To paraphrase: "What they learn in California schools is freeway driving, freeway shooting, freeway conference calling, freeway faxing, freeway camping...you know, the West Coast usual."<sup>277</sup>

Indeed the freeways seem to have fixed Los Angeles in canonical and monumental form, much as the great streets of Sixtus V fixed Baroque Rome, or the *Grands Travaux* of Baron Haussmann fixed the Paris of *la belle époque*. Whether you regard them as crowns of thorns or chaplets of laurels, the freeways are what the tutelary deity of the City of Angels should wear upon her head

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<sup>274</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 106.

<sup>275</sup> Brodsky, *L. A. Freeway*, 2.

<sup>276</sup> Woody McBride, "California Then and Now," *Fedco Reporter*, September 1990, 11.

instead of the mural crowns sported by civic goddesses of old.<sup>278</sup> Los Angeles freeway system is indeed one of the greater works of man.<sup>279</sup>

There seem to be two major reasons for their dominance in the city image of Los Angeles and both are aspects of their inescapability; first, they are so vast that you cannot help seeing them, and second, that there appears no alternative means of movement and you cannot help using them. There are other and useful streets, and the major boulevards provide an excellent secondary network in many parts of the city, but psychologically, all are felt to be tributary to the freeway. (214).

### **8) Hollywood:**

Whatever alienation may have erupted during the scandals of the early 1920s, Hollywood had by the same period emerged in the national imagination as one of the most intensely symbolic, emotionally valent landscapes in America. As a town, an industry, a state of mind, a self-actualizing myth, Hollywood had attained this status in seven short years, from 1913 to 1920, because it had used the medium of motion pictures to answer a need for dreams that was basic to America: dreams about mobility, an improved life, romantic love, a better home, a more creative occupation, travel, leisure, excitement of all sorts. From the start a land of dreams, and a tabula rasa upon and through which fantasies and longings expressed themselves, Southern California found its function and identity further fixed by the presence of Hollywood, which by 1920 or so had become its leading

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<sup>277</sup> Jack Smith, "They're not waiting for the big one, they're moving out," *Modern Maturity*, July-August 1994, 24.

<sup>278</sup> Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1971), 35-36.

metaphor. By the mid-1920 myth and reality, dream gesture and landscape had so interpenetrated each other in an actual place—Hollywood and its attendant community of Beverly Hills, plus portions of Santa Monica and Los Angeles—that each aspect of architecture and lifestyle, social psychology and infrastructure bespoke an integrated condition based upon Hollywood myth. This myth, in turn, as a matter of dream wishes and behavior, affected the way Americans in other parts of the country viewed the former and arranged their lives.<sup>280</sup>

Hollywood exists only as a state of mind, not as a geographical entity. One of the most famous place-names in the world, Hollywood is neither a town nor a city; it is an integral part of Los Angeles. Despite its nebulous geographical status, however, Hollywood does exist as a community, but a community that must be defined in industrial rather than geographical terms. The concentration of the motion-picture industry in Los Angeles is what gives Hollywood its real identity. As Jerome Betty once said, Hollywood exists as “a kingless kingdom within a kingdom,” an island within an island.<sup>281</sup> Soja aptly points out that Los Angeles was (and is) more specialized in image production and more prone to be understood through its created imagery than any other urban region.<sup>282</sup> The advertising value of the industry to the region simply cannot be estimated.<sup>283</sup>

### **9) Architecture:**

In the transformation of the environment architecture has a peculiar part to play. This arises not merely because buildings constitute such a large part of

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid. , 88-89.

<sup>280</sup> Starr, *Dream*, 334.

<sup>281</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 330.

<sup>282</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 427.

man's daily surroundings; but because architecture reflects and focuses such a wide variety of social facts: the character and resources of the natural environment; the state of the industrial arts and the empirical tradition and experimental knowledge that go into their application, the processes of social organization and association, and the beliefs and world-outlooks of a whole society. In an age of social disintegration and unrelated specialism, architecture loses most of its essential character: in an age of synthesis and construction, it steps forward once more as the essential commanding art.<sup>284</sup>

And precisely because architectural form crystallizes, becomes visible, is subject to the test of constant use, it endows with special significance the impulses and ideas that shape it: it externalizes the living beliefs, and in doing so, reveals latent relationships. With the help of his orderly accurate plans, the architect brings together a multitude of crafts, skills, and arts, creating in the act of building that species of intelligent co-operation which we seek on a wider scale in society: the very notion of planning owes more to this art than to any other, except perhaps the co-ordinate art of engineer.<sup>285</sup> The following architectural styles most embody the spirit of L.A.:

**9A) Programmatic:** This architecture is deeply embedded in the Myth of Los Angeles as the Land of Possibilities and leisure, as the place where one can experiment with lifestyles without being encumbered by society's conventions. Gebhard points out that California's mildness of climate, with the resulting ability

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<sup>283</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 340.

<sup>284</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The culture of cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938), 403.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

to cheaply and quickly erect structures encouraged a non-serious view of not only architecture, but symbolism and salesmanship as well.<sup>286</sup>

The approach taken to language in these Programmatic buildings is exotic. The building in the form of the product sold—tamale, orange or lemon is as obvious as one could ask.<sup>287</sup> This is also called “Fantastic” architecture or the “architecture of symbolic assemblage”. Herein the building and symbol is one and the same thing.<sup>288</sup> Programmatic architecture was particularly adapted to being seen from the passing car. It embodied the freedom of expression and creative invention represented in more formal architectural styles such as Art Deco, but it was a populist architecture, often designed by non-professional architects. It was a folk art expression of new lifestyles and of architectural freedom typical of the 1920s Los Angeles.<sup>289</sup> This architecture represented convulsions in building styles that follow when traditional cultural and social restraints have been overthrown and replaced by the preference of a mobile, affluent, consumer-oriented society, in which “cultural values” and ancient symbols are handled primarily as methods of claiming or establishing status.<sup>290</sup>

Programmatic buildings responded to two powerful forces that have shaped modern life—the car and visual media. As the automobile became the most popular form of transport, vendors needed to find a quick and vivid way to catch the eye of people speeding along the highway. A roadside stand shaped like

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<sup>286</sup> David Gebhard, introduction to *California Crazy: Roadside Vernacular Architecture*, by Jim Heimann & Rip Georges (San Francisco: Chronicle, 1980), 11.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>288</sup> Banham, *Architecture*, 112.

<sup>289</sup> Paul Gleye in collaboration with the Los Angeles Conservancy, Julius Shulman, & Bruce Boegner, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud, 1981), 134.

<sup>290</sup> Banham, *Architecture*, 124.

a giant pig, say, promised the driver a rib-sticking snack.<sup>291</sup> Though Programmatic architecture lapsed in the decades since World War II, it is staging a comeback as avant-garde architects look back to the 20's for their design clues. The new wave of Programmatic designs include: the Shutter Shack, a film developing stand in Westminster shaped like a camera, the Chiat Day advertising agency on Main Street with a giant pair of binoculars as the entry, the Space Museum in Exposition Park with a real jet fighter hanging on its front wall, and the Burger That Ate L.A. fast-food restaurant (with a façade shaped liked a hamburger, complete with oozing ketchup and painted sesame seeds, set beside a mock-up of L.A.'s City Hall, with a bite missing) on Melrose Avenue.<sup>292</sup>

**9B) The New L.A. Style:** Jencks points out that everyone, except perhaps an Angeleno, can tell “The Style That Really...” has arrived, because it is open, dynamic, and tolerant (at least until one ethnic group, or individual, frustrates another). It is also why many of the architects settled here in the first place.<sup>293</sup> The L.A. style, or en-formality, is complicatedly informal, rough, and ascetic: these qualities do predominate, along with the heavy metal contraptions, but behind them is another mood altogether. The architecture is friendly, outgoing, open, and accepting. Indeed this is the central focus of hetero-architecture: the ability to absorb other voices into a discourse without worrying too much about consistency or overall unity. That such approach should reach consciousness with Frank Gehry and then self-consciousness with subsequent members of the L.A. School

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<sup>291</sup> Leon Whitson, “California Crazy: What you see is what’s being sold,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 July 1989, part V.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Scott and Soja, *Urban Theory*, 53.

shows maturity rare at a time of quick change. The information world usually dissolves these movements of shared sensibility as soon as they are formed, in a blitz of media attention, but here a common attitude has managed to develop, perhaps because of the background culture of Los Angeles. It too mixes a sunshine gregariousness, openness to new experience, with a tough, sadistic streak.<sup>294</sup>

The main point of hetero-architecture is to accept the different voices that create a city, suppress none of them, and make from their interaction some kind of greater dialogue. (72) As an informal mode that articulates difference in a supraethnic way, it is the natural style for Los Angeles: it does not condescend to, or exclude minorities. It is not uptight, intimidating, or associated with any particular group or ruling class. Rather, its relaxed humor and provocative sensuality open out in different directions with an inclusive gesture of transcendence. No wonder Gehry was chosen as the designer of the Disney Hall and to adapt the mode for a building at the heart of the establishment in downtown L.A. The periphery, and style of minoritization, has moved to the center. (73)

**9C) Boldness:** In this land of rapid real-estate turnover and speculative building “stylistic fashions,” as Neutra has observed, have been quickly adapted to appeal to varied backgrounds; to distinguish, for advertising purposes, one subdivision from another, and to mark off the new from the old.”<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid. , 64.

<sup>295</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 232.



For example, speaking of quirky architecture, a Malibu fantasy house, as seen from the parking area, is a high-gloss jet way leading to an enigmatic cyclotron. It's James Bond and Rising Sun overtones could put Angelenos in an upbeat mood to confront the Japanese challenge of the Pacific Rim.<sup>296</sup> Jencks aptly states: "Los Angeles is the last great place in the world where self-expression is allowed. There's freedom from restraint that allows not only Mt. Olympus but also allows good architects to do whatever they wish. Without this, the city would dry up and become architecturally boring."<sup>297</sup>

Not surprisingly, big, bold moves distinguish Southland buildings in Architectural Design competition. In 1994, thirteen Southland buildings, including six dramatic homes, were honored for outstanding architectural design by the Los Angeles chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The winners were selected from 111 entries submitted by architects in the 2,000-member chapter.<sup>298</sup>

### 10) Eccentricity:

No single aspect of Southern California has attracted more attention than its fabled addiction to cults and cultists. Writing in 1921, John Steven McGroarty said, "Los Angeles is the most celebrated of all incubators of new creeds, codes of ethics, philosophies—no day passes without the birth of something of this nature never heard of before. It is a breeding place and a rendezvous of freak religions. But this is because its winters are mild, thus luring the pale people of thought to

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<sup>296</sup> Maureen Sajbel, "Our critic-behind-the-wheel celebrates a few of L.A.'s most eccentric--and amusing--architectural gems," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 7 May 1995, 30.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, 8 January 1995, sec. K.

its sunny gates, within which man can give himself over to meditation without being compelled to interrupt himself in that interesting occupation to put on his overcoat or keep the fire going.”<sup>299</sup>

“This lovely place, cuckoo land,” wrote the editors of *Life*, “is corrupted with an odd community giddiness...nowhere do eccentrics flourish in such close abundance. Nowhere do spiritual or economic panaceas grow so lushly. Nowhere is undisciplined gullibility so widespread.” “Here,” wrote Bruce Bliven in 1935, “is the world’s prize collection of cranks, semi-cranks, placid creatures whose bovine expression shows that each of them is studying, without much hope of success, to be a high-grade moron, angry or ecstatic exponents of food fads, sun-bathing, ancient Greek costumes, diaphragm breathing and imminent second coming of Christ.”<sup>300</sup>

The two important movements, Theosophy and New Thought, constitute the stuff from which most of the latter creeds and cults have evolved. Invalidism and transiency have certainly been important factors stimulating cultism in the region. More than invalidism, however, underlies the widespread belief in faith healing and magic cures. As a result of intensive migration, the growth of medical science has been retarded in Southern California. Much of the early medicine of the region was a combination of folk healing, quackery, and superstition. Chinese herb doctors, faith healers, quacks, and a miscellaneous assortment of practitioners filled the vacuum created in the medical art. (257-258)

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<sup>299</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 249-250.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

Traditional habits do not reach people in this community. How could they have? Los Angeles, if it has been about anything, has been about rejecting the authority of all tradition, replacing it with what still seems, to many people who live in the city, like the democratic promise of the automobile.<sup>301</sup>

However, one should take into account cultural relativity here. Tina Kotecha makes us think when she says: "I suppose the Hare Krishnas would be considered a cult. I used to attend their temple when I was young and participated in their Sunday school program. I suppose as a participant I didn't view them as zany. I don't know that I consider any group in L.A. as zany because they are just expressing their views, their choices."

#### 11) The Los Angeles profile:

Los Angeles is stereotyped as Aerospace City, Internal Combustion City, Smogville, Surfurbia, Systems Land, and Dream-factory of the Western World.<sup>302</sup> Traditionally, Los Angeles has been defined for the outside world primarily by Hollywood and its attendant culture: a city of shallowness, vapid self-absorption and orgiastic materialism. Distilled to its essence in "Annie Hall," this is the Woody Allen vision of Los Angeles, the city that defines culture as the freedom to turn right on red. Since you can now turn right on red in most places, New York's irreverent *Spy* magazine updated the aphorism in its special issue on the city: L.A. is the place people go "to do everything they're too embarrassed to do in Manhattan." Los Angeles; City Without Shame.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 50.

<sup>302</sup> Banham, *Architecture*, 21.

<sup>303</sup> Brownstein, *New Realities*, 7.

However, Harvey Molotch states that to discover the L.A. expressivity (in merchandise), we need to set forth a version of what L.A. as a culture looks like. Molotch's treatment of L.A. runs against intellectuals' frequent portrayal of L.A. as a mindless, narcissistic, and know-nothing wasteland. American reactionaries, in their version, rail against L.A.'s satanic infidelity to traditional values. Bertrand Russell was not nice at all: "Los Angeles represents the ultimate segregation of the unfit". Clever visitors go back quite a way, come back still again, and in their writings amplify certain images that, however unintended, seem to only boost an L.A. appeal.<sup>304</sup>

There are, of course, many L.A.'s to present to the world—variations that, at base, come from the diverse migrations that displaced the indigenous peoples. In a more general account, it was the end of the great heartland migration. Compared to most other receiving zones of large migrations, California in general, and Southern California in particular, really was a *chosen* land. At least for portions of its history, the L.A. region's migrants were affluent compared to those who usually make great treks. The dust bowl desperados notwithstanding, Southern California's prospects for excitement, health, and creativity have played a special role compared to dire necessity in explaining who came.<sup>305</sup>

The cultural bent of L.A.'s immigrants and sojourners—of whatever language, skin color, or demeanor—shapes the economy and culture. Without naively falling in with local mythologies, these streams really did contain, besides an element of voluntarism, a distinctive ethic of experiment and openness.

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<sup>304</sup> Scott and Soja, *Urban Theory*, 231.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-232.

Besides the economic deprivations that “push” people out of one location and the job opportunities that “pull” them to another, there is also a selective migration based on cultural leanings—a factor usually ignored by demographers. Besides being more risk receptive in general, the footloose likely have cultural and personality differences that allocate them to different kinds of destination settlements. Southern California has long held a special appeal to certain subculture types: those seeking health restoratives, including very unconventional ones, religious experiences of unusual sorts, both the spiritual new age (or “new thought” as it was called in an earlier incarnation) and sects of various fundamentalist pioneers (e.g. Aimee Semple McPherson, Billy Graham, and Robert Schuller’s drive-in church and Crystal Cathedral). Southern California offers zones of sexual freedom, including gay liberation. (232)

By East African standards our subjects’ socio-economic status (prior to expulsion/flight) cannot be described as affluent. However, they can aptly be described as risk-takers. And their risk-taking has not been of the brash kind either. It has been calculated and well executed. What do they have to say about their confident, successful adventures?

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “Every step you take is a risk. Buying a house is a risk...I have bought two houses. Starting my own practice is a risk because you never know what is going to happen. You are brand new; you have nothing to start on. I started my own practice, built it up...I am doing pretty well.”

Bhupinder Batra says: “Migrating to the United States was a big risk in itself. While in Canada we did not know what is going to happen in Los Angeles.

We knew it was going to be not just an adventure but also a risky adventure! I arrived in Los Angeles alone. We knew somewhere along the line that it would pay off and it did in this (arts and crafts) business.”

Asha Chitnavis says: “We migrated to Los Angeles with minimal education, no skills, and little money. We did not know what awaited us here but we were confident that somehow the venture would pay off in the long run.” Her son Hemant states: “We took a very big risk by buying a home when we had very little money. It is a very big commitment because we had to make monthly payments when we were not even sure of our jobs!” Indooben Dhaba says: “Because my son and two daughters had an education we decided to take a calculated risk and migrate to Los Angeles. My son established his own business and my daughters found jobs in the service sector. I went into domestic contract work for the garment industry. We were ready to sacrifice for each other if the ventures did not pay off but, fortunately, they did.”

Tina Kotecha, a lawyer, worked for a solo practitioner in the hopes of becoming a partner. As it did not work out, and still not very sure about her future she applied for a position with “O’Melveny and Myers”. She handles the firm’s Fannie Mae and Multihousing division. She has done so well that she keeps receiving job offers. Manilal Padhiar says: “For me the major risk was buying a house because a month after I bought it I lost my job. I had no support. So, to make ends meet I worked two or three jobs to make the monthly payment of \$900 to 1,000...plus food, utilities and all that stuff...it was a tough and very hard gamble that I took but it paid off.”

Selective migration based on cultural and personality differences *within* the broader group of our expelles and refugees can be evinced in the fact that many of them (expelles to the United Kingdom in particular) have refused to migrate to Los Angeles because they do not want to lose the cultural and emotional security offered by the sizeable Uganda Asian community in U.K. Some others have stayed behind because they want to take care of their elders who themselves could not adjust to the sizeable physical distances between themselves and their kin in Los Angeles. It is the more adventurous who have migrated to the Southland.

The distinctiveness of L.A. migrations, combined with the physical ambience and its life patterns, forms a sort of “national character” on which almost all accounts agree. Whether as accolade or complaint, whether from writings of visitors or comments by informers the saying is (and appropriately, it is a song lyric as well) that in Southern California “anything goes.” (232)

Not *anything* goes (the temptation to overstate does go with the territory). There are in L.A., like anywhere else, civil proprieties that must be observed and, perhaps more than most places, a police force with a long list of proscribed behaviors, sometimes brutally enforced among those on the wrong side of class and racial divides. But in ways that help create a distinguishing profile, people are free to invent. This is less through principled questioning of convention as a directness—alternately joyful, thoughtless or contrived—to carry on with less regard for how things are usually done. Rather than being a place without culture, one of the brickbats often tossed, “the apparent cultureless ness of the place, the

endless process of willfully sweeping aside what has gone before, whether in technology, history, or the arts, *is the culture.*”<sup>306</sup> Real things happen as a result. As we look for L.A. in product, the anything goes theme remains a clue, expressed through the somewhat distinctive nature of those who, regardless of their migratory stream, settled in long enough to matter. (233)

Furniture designers and architects find Los Angeles more open than New York to the nontraditional. Los Angeles finds itself being taken seriously—not only for movie and television images, but as a leader in across-the-board design, its traditional open-mindedness and Pacific Rim location increasing assets in a globalized world.<sup>307</sup>

**Conclusion:**

Despite what ignorant and prejudiced people have to say Los Angeles basin has become the foremost American region when it comes to an unrivalled climate, equally unrivalled opportunities, diversity, and expression of the American Dream. It is also true that for experimentation of any kind this is the ultimate place. Add to this the gutsier immigrants who, overtly or quietly (like our subjects) make the region what it is.

What is being stated here is that the history, the ambiance, the socio-economic structure; the dynamics, the values of L.A. are such that the sky is the limit for our quiet, conservative subjects should they choose to be bolder.

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<sup>306</sup>Britisher Bill Moggridge, head of the California design firm IDEO, as cited in Hugh Aldersey-Williams, *Nationalism and Globalism in Design* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 158.

<sup>307</sup>Connie Koennen, “Region’s Sleek New Looks Get Serious Attention,” *Los Angeles Times*, Thursday, 11 March 1999, p. E1.



## **CHAPTER 6: OF AESTHETICS, ATTITUDES, AND VALUES**

### **Introduction:**

When an immigrant brings certain psycho-cultural aspects with him/her they do affect his/her acculturation and sense of place. In this case we get a sense of how our subjects' acculturation will be influenced by the aspects mentioned in the chapter heading. Our interviewees responded thus to a set of related questions:

#### **1) What is your view of social change?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: "Yes, it is good. However, some of them get carried away a little bit too fast, too far...losing one's own heritage is the biggest problem I have...Some people go by the wayside. A person should always keep his own heritage. I am seeing a little reversal of that too. I see younger adults who had changed drastically from one end to the other trying to get back into the Indian community and getting in touch with their own heritage."

Bhupinder Batra opines: "Social change is always good. We should move with the times and that is what, I think, promotes advancement. We have been moving with the times rather cautiously." Asha Chitnavis says: "If we do not change we remain backward. I was born in raised in India where females are not allowed to acquire much education. So women remain backward and as a consequence, the whole society remains backward." Son Hemant says: "Social change is good especially when one intermingles with other ethnic groups and acquires some good, new ideas from them."

Indooben Dhaba replies: "I favor social change as long as it is positive. I do not consider *all* change as good. Since I come from a traditional background I do not approve of gay-Lesbian marriages." Tina Kotecha opines: "It is critical. We need to be fluid and adapt because of competing interests and values which change."

Manilal Padhiar says: "In America it is very difficult to find a compatible life partner because you are coming from a different culture and you are living in a different culture. Life is very tough here. You have to be very flexible, and your wife has to be flexible. If you have a family you have to be flexible. There are certain things that go with marriage. Now it seems like things are changing a little bit. Take my son for example. He is nineteen now. He has made friends with a lot of girls. He has a better environment. His culture is going to be totally different than mine. I am comfortable with that."

**2) In political aspects are you a centrist, left of center, or right of center?**

Al Bhimani is a republican. Dr. Navin Adatia states: "I am interested in substance, I do vote. I vote on issues not for democrats or republicans."

Bhupinder Batra says: "Broadly speaking I am a centrist, somewhat the Democratic type and I believe in the goodness of humanity." Asha Chitnavis is a democrat. Son Hemant describes himself as a liberal democrat but not an extremist. Indooben Dhaba is a democrat near the center. Tina Kotecha is a centrist. Manilal Padhiar says: "I guess I am a centrist. I like to see everything up front, I do not like color bar, prefer less or moderate taxes for businesses. I also

like to get the benefits of a middle class person.” Zainul Kanji stated in the first round of interviews that he is a republican.

**3) Name some major aspects of your ethnic group:**

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “Ours is a family kind of situation, we have functions going on so we come to know each other much better. Unity and preservation of our culture are the main reasons for these functions.” Bhupinder Batra says: “Sikhism believes in the goodness of humanity. We believe in one God. The basic principles of Sikhism teach that we should always be kind to other people, do service not only to our community but also to other communities. We Sikhs follow these principles no matter where we are from.”

Asha Chitnavis states: “We emphasize preservation of Maharashtrian culture, economic advancement through integration into the American mainstream and thereby improve the prospects for our children.” Son Hemant says: “Many of us are trying to improve our fortunes by taking extra classes or learning some trade. Quite a few are trying to get into business with the help of friends and relatives.”

Indooben Dhaba says: “Unlike other minority groups our Lohana Samaj is not worried too much about culture loss because we are really one extended, tightly knit family. Secondly, we do not have sharp intergenerational differences. Also, we avoid extremes.” Tina Kotecha is more incisive: “My community, the Lohanas, are very proud, egotistical and ethnocentric. They feel like chosen people. On the other hand they have empathy for the suffering.” Manilal Padhiar

states: “We get along well. We trust each other. Our relationship goes back two to three generations. We are very helpful to each other at *all* times.”

#### **4) What kind of family is important to you?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “A close knit family is an excellent idea. However, everybody grows up, they need to be more independent, they have to progress in their own fields and do their own thing. They don’t have to be under the same roof do be considered a family member. They don’t have to be nearby either. They can be anywhere in the world. So long as there is contact and a possibility of getting together once in a while physical distance does not matter.” Bhupinder Batra says: “I believe in the Indian style of joint family. Still, I would say it’s better that youngsters, after a certain age move out, be independent but stay within our own circle.”

Asha Chitnavis believes in the nuclear family. Like Mr. Batra she also likes the idea of grown children moving out but staying nearby for emotional and financial security. Son Hemant also believes in a nuclear family so “we stay close to each other and do not feel lonely.” Indooben Dhaba says: “My late husband and I moved to Laguna Beach from Indiana so we can be near our children. As a matter of fact my divorced younger daughter lives with me. My older daughter and younger son live nearby. Even though I travel regularly I have no intention of staying away from my children for too long.”

Tina Kotecha says: “I believe in a family that connects, works out its problems, whose members help each other. Here we feel so alienated. Therefore, it is good to know that one can connect.” Manilal Padhiar says: “I like the

extended family living together. Still, there are certain things you have to accept. Kids should be given the freedom to do whatever they want to do when they are of certain age. They should not be asked about where they have been and what they have been doing. All that old fashioned stuff is not recommended in today's world."

### **5) What role does the extended family play in your life?**

Dr. Navin Adatia states: "It stands by you when you need them. They are there to support each other. They are the ones to keep up the culture." Bhupinder Batra says: "It is quite important for me. I believe that we can help each other more. Meeting each other more often develops love, emotional security, and respect for each other." Asha Chitnavis states: I grew up in one and am quite aware of its advantages. Unfortunately, we do not have an extended family here." Son Hemant also wishes he had an extended family here.

Indooben Dhaba says: "I do not distinguish between extended family and my community. It is there for emotional support. It helps me to preserve my Gujrati culture. We also help each other out if there is financial need." Tina Kotecha says: "As cousins we have common issues. We tend to bond more. It leads to a feeling of security. One can thus always call someone 'second brother, second father.' I am especially lucky to have a large extended family." Manilal Padhiar states: "We live within 5-10 minutes of commute. They are there for me whenever I need them. That is the *best* thing you can ask for in this modern world. I am lucky to have not only my siblings nearby but also cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces."

### **6) What is the role of children in your community?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “Minor children have a role to learn from community elders. They are the learning body of the community. They learn about our culture, family values, religion, and education...everything! If you have instilled a good education in growing kids they will continue to teach younger ones.” Bhupinder Batra says: “Children are very important for us. They are being taught the Punjabi language in the *Gurudwaras*. There are certain religious teachings...divinity...that are taught. They are also taught to play certain instruments.”

Asha Chitnavis states: “Little children make life worth living. Grown children take care of the aged and keep our hopes alive. They will bring our dreams to fruition. Children are our future.” Son Hemant says: “Children stand for energy and progress. In the future they will take over leadership roles, guide us and ensure that families operate smoothly.” Indooben Dhaba asks: “Who will preserve our culture if not our children? Who will carry the family’s name? I do not want to live without my children and grandchildren.” Tina Kotecha says: “They challenge our value system. They are our moral compasses.”

Manilal Padhiar states: “Children are *very* important to me! For the last nineteen years I have spent every weekend with my boys. I coach them in field hockey. Both are playing for the U. S. national team. I have been organizing the annual *Raas-Garba* festival in Huntington Beach for 30 plus years. I am going to be retiring and the new generation is going to take over from me. The whole idea is to preserve the culture.”

### **7) What is your attitude toward India?**

Dr. Navin Adatia states: "I like it. I think it is a very progressive country...progressing by leaps and bounds...I am sure there are lots of things that can be improved but they are doing a good job. It is a wonderful country!"

Bhupinder Batra says: "I am basically an Indian and I can never forget that we still have a lot of connections in India. One of my brothers is still in India. We often go there. Even my business (arts and crafts)... 90 percent, is with India."

Asha Chitnavis is frank: "Even though my culture is Indian, I experienced a great deal of pain in India. I have no desire to return to India." Son Hemant states: "I should help India in any way I can. I would like to do research for the Indian government and help it to improve the quality of life for the country."

Indooben Dhaba states: "At heart I am very Indian and proud of it. I always teach my children not to lose their Indian ness...do not get me wrong, I am proud of my

American heritage too!" Tina Kotecha admits: "Mine is a very romantic view.

India is full of mystery and excitement. I will suffer from a sensory overload

when I go there this weekend!" Manilal Padhiar says: "Even though I have not lived there I still have a lot of affection and feelings for the country."

### **8) Which Indian customs are important to you?**

Bhupinder Batra says: "Fasting for different purposes...it is a good thing for your health. We celebrate *Diwali* from a different angle...our Guru Hargovind was released from prison by the Moguls. Of course, we do not call it *Diwali*; we call it *Bundichod* (release from captivity)." Asha Chitnavis says: "Observation of festivals, religious rituals, and hospitality." Son Hemant says: "The most

important is *Diwali*. The second most important is attending and observing Indian marriages.”

Indooben Dhaba says: “How can one be more important and the other less? *All* Indian customs are important to me. True, I may not be able to practice one or two the way I used to observe them in Uganda but they have not lost their importance!” Tina Kotecha opines: “For me it is important that I call family members with their respectful last names. I like to touch the feet of elders and get their blessings. Also, I would like to retain our language as much as possible.”

Manilal Padhiar states: “For me *Diwali*, *holi*, and *Rakshabundhun* are very important. *Holi* is especially important because it is a very democratic festival during which Hindus come together irrespective of caste, class, and gender. We have some non-Hindu participants as well.”

### **9) Which Indian values are important to you?**

Dr. Navin Adatia opines: “Family values are most important to me. Being together, having that closeness...compromise, sacrifice...they keep the family together.” Bhupinder Batra says: “Respect for elders and of course, teachers. Honesty, truth, and doing good to others are the key values of our community.” Asha Chitnavis states: “Family unity, taking care of parents, compromise, and sacrifice.” Son Hemant opines: “Respect for elders and hard work. It pays off!” For Indooben Dhaba obedience to parents, modesty, honesty, and taking care of parents and siblings are very important. For Tina Kotecha it is respecting elders and placing one’s family first, not the individual. For Manilal Padhiar it is family



unity, respect for elders, obedience to parents, and cooperation with the extended family.

**10) East African Asians are well known for their distinctive brand of hospitality. Has this changed in your family?**

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “No, it hasn’t changed! If somebody calls me up and says I am so and so, I know your brother or your uncle I am going to invite him depending on how he is and where he is. I would like to meet him first.”

Bhupinder Batra opines: “No it hasn’t changed. Everybody is welcome. In my family whosoever is in need we always try to help. In our temples we give free food to whoever comes. There are no restrictions.”

Asha Chitnavis admits: “No, it has not changed among East African Asians, generally speaking, but it has changed in my family as our resources are limited.” Son Hemant agrees with her. Indooben Dhaba says: “No, it certainly has not changed! Every summer we accommodate and entertain friends and relatives not only from Indiana but also Canada, India, and U.K. Sometimes even their friends and relatives tour California. They stay with us.” Tina Kotecha confirms what Indooben Dhaba states but she adds: “Once in a while we get freeloaders and ingrates but that is a risk we have to take.”

Manilal Padhiar states: “It definitely has not changed! Our friends and relatives and their friends and relatives stay with us whenever they tour Southern California. The concept of declining hospitality to a visitor, *any* visitor, does not exist in my family or community. When we go to U.K. or Canada our relatives and friends reciprocate. That has *always* been a major tradition.”

**11) What are your attitudes toward other minority groups?**

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “I consider everybody equal. I don’t have anything against any community or minority.” Bhupinder Batra says: “We get quite a few people here from Nepal...and also Americans and Spanish speaking people...Latinos...and of course, blacks. We have no differences...we are good to everyone and I would say in my experience they have always been good.”

Asha Chitnavis states: “Our neighbors are mostly Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. They are all decent and law-abiding people. Some of our neighbors are Chinese. They are hard working and respectful. I like them.” Son Hemant says: “I try to mingle with *all* ethnic groups because it does help me to make connections to improve my job prospects.” Indooben Dhaba says: “Most of my social activities are with Indians. Still, I try not to stereotype anybody. Every group has something unique to offer to us. If I had time I would try to learn as much as possible from my neighbors.”

Tina Kotecha says: “I am open-minded. I like to believe I am not bigoted, prejudiced. However, I do not approve of some Chinese and Korean immigrants who have bad manners. They cut in line. They have no respect for American etiquettes.” Manilal Padhiar states: “There are people who are hard working or lazy, filthy rich or poor. I have such opinions about individuals, not groups.”

**12) What is your relationship with other minority groups in the neighborhood?**

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “I have neighbors who are from different countries, different cultures. Even at the hospital where I work there are different

people. I deal with African Americans, Hispanics...all types of people! I never try to determine the social strata they are from!" Bhupinder Batra says: "My relationship with minorities in the neighborhood is a cordial one. The most common are the Portuguese, and of course, Americans."

Asha Chitnavis says: "Unfortunately, because I am so busy with domestic chores I cannot associate with any of my neighbors." Son Hemant socializes mostly with Hispanics and Armenians who used to work with him at Bank of America. Indooben Dhaba states: "There is a variety of ethnic groups in my apartment complex. Being a single woman my neighbors always ask me if I need anything. My attire (sari) fascinates them! I in turn, ask them (especially Chinese) for their vegetarian recipes. They are all nice people. I admire them." Tina Kotecha states: "I have no problem at all with them! My best friend is Taiwanese. My roommate was Vietnamese. I love eating Asian food."

Manilal Padhiar says: "I get along very well with *all* my neighbors regardless of culture or nationality. They are mostly white families, friendly people. We have been celebrating 4<sup>th</sup> of July together since 1979 and periodically try different foods. We are a very closed knit neighborhood." Cousin Pankaj says: "My neighbors are Anglo-Americans, black, and Vietnamese. We have learned that everybody can get along in this vast, complex society." Older brother Raju adds: "Some of our neighbors are Mormons. Their family life and beliefs are the same as ours." This makes for a cordial relationship and facilitates acculturation. Dr. Janak Raval's neighbors are mostly Anglo, Hispanic, and Chinese. They have all learned to cooperate to form a good neighborhood.

### **13) Has the job situation been helpful to you so far?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “With the ongoing state of medical insurance my profession is affected. There does not have to be a recession on.” Bhupinder Batra says: “It has not affected me so far because I am self-employed. My other son is a doctor and so is his wife. My second son is also in business. Of course, if there is a recession and loss of jobs it affects all the businesses.”

Asha Chitnavis says: “Yes. Both my sons are gainfully employed and expect to do better career wise.” Son Hemant, because of his numerous contacts, is horizontally mobile. Indooben Dhaba states: “I am a retired single woman. I do not need a job. My children and Social Security take good care of me.” Manilal Padhiar says: “I am self-employed. The only time I worry about the job situation is when business is slow. When others do not have jobs it negatively affects my business.”

### **Conclusion:**

Note that the responses of our subjects are overwhelmingly positive. They are cautiously for social change. In politics they are equally cautious. The major aspects of their communities, their preference for the type of family, the role of children, attitudes toward India, their adherence to Indian customs and values, attitudes toward and relationship with minority groups, are all indicative of wholesomeness and stability, the latter a necessary prerequisite for acculturation and the development of a sense of place. Some of the aesthetics, attitudes, and values mentioned in this chapter have been elaborated upon in the next one.

## **CHAPTER 7: ACCULTURATION INTO EL DORADO**

### **Introduction:**

Migration is not a new concept for human beings. After all, our earliest ancestors set the precedent by migrating out of Africa. Since then untold number of groups have migrated and in-migrated all over the world for all types of reasons. Every group has had to adapt to the new cultural and/or physical environment to survive. Those who could not adopt perished. Indeed, “adopt or perish” is the basic law of evolution.

However, there is a difference between freely migrating for a better life and being forced to migrate or flee (by a spiteful dictator) at a very short notice or no notice at all. Such was the case with our subjects. Furthermore, adaptation is all the more difficult (in theory at least) if the migrant group’s culture (language, cosmology, world view, etc.) is very different from that of the host society. This also applies to our subjects:

### **Definition:**

As John W. Berry points out in his article “Acculturation as varieties of adaptation” use of the concept appears as early as 1880. In the 1954 formulation of Social Sciences Research Council acculturation was defined as: “*culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from noncultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed,*

*as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, its process of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors.” (974)<sup>308</sup>*

In this dissertation the emphasis is on selective adaptation of the Southern California lifestyle. However, a regional lifestyle does not exist in isolation. There are aspects of the lifestyle that coincide with the larger American value system. Indeed, as should be emphasized, whenever and wherever a national value system, myths and rituals overlap with their regional counterparts there is a twofold effect: the regional identity of our subjects as Southern Californians and their national identity as Americans is simultaneously constructed, asserted, and enhanced. Berry points out that acculturation may be treated as a two-level phenomenon—that of the group and that of the individual.<sup>309</sup>

Acculturation requires the contact of at least two autonomous cultural groups; there must also be change in one or other of the two groups that result from the contact. Although, in principle, change can occur in either of the two parties (Bailey, 1937), in practice one group dominates the other and contributes more to the flow of cultural elements than does the weaker of the groups. (10)

Here our refugees and expellees are the group undergoing change. However, as we do not have any ethnic group that clearly dominates culturally in Los Angeles,

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<sup>308</sup> Amado M. Padilla, ed., *Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some New Findings* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1980), 9-10.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

change in keeping with the spirit of L.A. and thus resulting from contact with *any* group will be considered acculturation.

Do note that this is *not* a dissertation about *cultural* assimilation. In common parlance acculturation is often confused with assimilation. The latter requires relinquishing one's cultural identity and moving into the larger society. (13) This is a dissertation about integration, which implies the maintenance of cultural integrity as well as the movement to become an integral part of a larger societal framework. (13) Unless otherwise stated any explicit or implied assimilation is strictly *structural* i.e. being accepted into or making inroads into the dominant society's institutions. Also, the emphasis here is not on enculturation (although respondents have been asked a question about the subject), which is the process of generational continuity during which a person learns his parent community's traditional patterns.<sup>310</sup> The emphasis here is strictly on the expellees and refugees, not on their children.

It would be naïve to believe that traumatized and bewildered refugees in particular did not suffer from some degree of collective and individual confusion and anxiety upon arrival in Los Angeles. Such a state of mind is characterized by striking out against the larger society and by feelings of alienation, loss of identity, and what has been termed acculturative stress. (14-15) However, the emphasis here is not on psychological factors either.

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<sup>310</sup> Lechi Tran Oggeri, *The unique characteristics of the Vietnamese culture that affect the process of adjustment of Vietnamese refugees to American culture* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1984).

### The questionnaire

An attempt was made to locate an estimated total of 90 refugees and expellees. In the process an entire family of eight (Gujrati Lohanas) refused to participate. So did an Ismaili couple. An entire family of five Ismaili adults ignored my telephone calls after initially agreeing to participate. Yet others could not be solicited because their male Heads of family mistakenly believed that the participation of family members was not necessary.

In order to make this an *ethnographic* enterprise a total of 65 subjects were nevertheless located and verbally informed of the project. These would-be respondents were sent a written questionnaire that contained statements and/or questions pertaining to all the chapters. In most cases brief, essay type answers were required. From the very beginning it was an uphill battle against “I have no time” and apathy. Ten days after the initial questionnaire was mailed this student realized that most of the respondents would be unwilling to participate despite the fact that they were given a month to write their answers. Hence, a follow-up letter was sent asking them to answer questions pertaining to the three most essential chapters only. This did not seem to make any difference in their stance.

According to social scientists a questionnaire requiring written answers has a return rate of no more than 20 percent. Hence, this student did not expect all or even most of the respondents to fill in the questionnaire. However, an intense effort was made to obtain “Basic Data” from as many of them as possible to create a group/statistical profile. Two fully answered (one by an Ismaili college



graduate-cum-businessman, one by his mother, both refugees) questionnaires were confirmed lost in mail.

The only non-refugee/expellee participants are Dr. Navin Adatia of Arcadia and Mr. Ashwin Patel of Huntington Beach. The former was stranded in India as a student when his family was expelled to U.K. and the latter in the United States when his parents fled Uganda and became refugees. Both Dr. Adatia and Ashwin Patel experienced some trauma because of the suddenness of events. Dr. Adatia is an interviewee. Some of Ashwin Patel's written responses have been included below. The statistical breakdown from the returned questionnaires is as follows:

**1A): Gender:** 36 males and 20 females returned the questionnaire comprising a total of 56.

**1B): Quantitative contribution:** 7 males and 2 females answered the questionnaire almost fully in writing. They dealt with the three essential chapters. 1 male answered two chapters and 5 males gave sporadic answers.

It is also to be asserted that these respondents are representative not only of the 65 people to whom the questionnaire was mailed but also of the larger Uganda Asian refugee/expellee subculture numbering 90 for two simple reasons: 1) Overall it is a small group, 2) There are no great disparities of income, education, social class, etc. This was a relatively homogeneous group in Uganda and remains so here. There are only three respondents (two of them constituting a couple) residing in the upper class suburbs of Arcadia and Palos Verdes. Not a

single respondent is on welfare. This is as 'middle America' as a group can get in less than a generation.

Any areas not covered in the questionnaire were covered in the interviews conducted in two parts. Eight subjects were interviewed at length. Of these one (Zainul Kanji of Irvine) did not participate in the second round of interviews. Of the eight three had rendered written answers as well. The other five were chosen to broaden the range of respondents. Of the eight, six are male and three female, four are Gujratis, two Maharashtrians, one Ismaili and one Sikh Punjabi. The verbal responses of these interviewees are distinguished from written responses with the words "opines, says or states". For example, "Asha Chitnavis says: "....."

**2) Residence in the region:** 38 respondents are from Los Angeles County, 10 from Orange County, 4 from San Bernardino County (all from one family), 4 from Ventura County.

**3) Age group:** A) 8 are in the group 31-40. Having been children in 1972 they constitute the "younger generation" among our subjects. By self-admission they are also the most acculturated, B) 14 in the age group 41-50, C) 16 are in the age group 51-60, D) 10 in the age group 61-70, E) 8 in the age group 71-80.

**4) Marital status:** 7 single, 43 married, and 6 widows.

**5) Spouse:** 36 have spouses from their ethnic communities in East Africa.

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7 have spouses from elsewhere. Among them are 3 Gujrati males (2 cousins, Manilal and Pankaj Padhiar with Gujrati spouses from India) and 1 Maharashtrian

male (Ashok Pradhan) also with a Maharashtrian spouse from India. One Sikh Punjabi male (Jugdeep Batra) has a Punjabi wife from Iran, his brother, Jugmohan, has a Punjabi wife from the United States. One male (Bhasker Vyas) has a Mexican-American wife.

**6) Status upon flight/expulsion:** 38 left as refugees, 15 as expellees, and 1 as stateless.

**7) Status upon arrival in United States:** 27 arrived as refugees, 27 as legal immigrants. Not all refugees came directly to the United States. They went to other countries and later arrived here as legal immigrants. Two males, Ashwin Patel and Dr. Navin Adatia, were stranded (in the United States and India respectively) as students. Dr. Adatia was granted a Green Card on the basis of his medical qualifications. Ashwin Patel sought (and was granted) political asylum. Both later became citizens.

**8) Occupation in Uganda:** 7 had businesses, 10 were white-collar professionals, 2 were clerks, 30 were students, 3 were housewives and 4 did not specify their occupation.

**9) Current occupation:** This category encompasses a broad range: Accountant, attorney, assistant auto parts manager, auto mechanic, auto parts manager, bank processor, businessman/woman, beautician, civil engineer, collector, customer service representative, truck driver, executive manager, furniture manufacturer-cum-used clothing exporter, lab technician, laborer, loan rep, medical physician (doctor), office manager, pharmacist, principal management consultant, psychiatrist, salesman-cum-bookkeeper, sales

demonstrator. 1 male is retired. 6 females reported their occupation as housewives. Among families owning businesses the categories of housewife and store assistant/manager overlap.

The type of businesses our subjects own are: Computer sales, event planning, financial services, gas station, insurance-cum-real estate, ice cream store, and motel.

**10) Education:** 8 have 7<sup>th</sup> grade or below, 8 have Senior Cambridge/10<sup>th</sup> grade, 12 have high school/14<sup>th</sup> grade, 20 have college degrees. Of these 10 have a B.A. or equivalent, 2 have a Masters degree, 3 have Doctor of Medicine degree. Of these one is a psychiatrist. One respondent has a trade/technical diploma. 7 did not report their educational attainment if any. .

**11) Ethnic/religious breakdown:** Among the numerically dominant Gujratis the breakdown is as follows: 3 Brahmin, 23 Lohanas, 1 Patel, and 8 Suthar (carpenter), comprising one clan. All the Gujratis are Hindus.

Among the minorities the breakdown is as follows: 10 Ismailis (Shia Muslims), 4 Maharashtrians (Hindu), 5 Sikh Punjabis (comprising one family), 1 Hindu Punjabi, and 1 South Indian (Hindu Tamil).

**12) Residence in Uganda:** At the time of expulsion/flight 22 were from the capital city of Kampala, 19 from various medium sized towns, and 16 from small towns. However, there is an overlap here. A good number of the subjects

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have moved from Kampala to small and medium towns and vice versa. For example, the Chandarana family moved from Kampala to small town Lugazi, and

the Chitnavis family moved from Lugazi to Kampala and then to medium-sized town of Mbale. The majority have been urban dwellers for all of their life.

**13) Languages:** Except for 1 lady everybody speaks at least 2. The majority speaks 3-4 languages including English. Both Farid Kanji and Puthiyedath Warriar speak 5 each. Al Bhimani also speaks 5 and a smattering of Arabic, Farsi, and German. Chiman Kotecha and Vikram Jhala speak 6 each.

**14) Number of generations in Uganda:** 10 are first generation, 28 are second generation, 17 are third generation, and 1 is fourth generation. The last one is Hemant Chitnavis whose family had been shuttling between India and Uganda for four generations.

**15) Homeownership in Uganda:** 17 owned homes, 39 did not.

**16) Current homeownership:** 48 have homes, 8 do not. Of those in the latter category 5 are *not* apartment dwellers. They live either with their home-owning progeny, older siblings, or parents. Only 3 are of the latter category are actual apartment dwellers.

This student has taken the liberty to modify written responses to make them understandable. Oral responses have also been edited for cohesiveness. Care has been taken to retain the meaning when translating from Marathi, “Gujrati English” and downright bad English.

**Of human capital: Factors facilitating acculturation:** One should keep in mind that acculturation is *not* an automatic process. Certain factors that *anchor* our subjects have to be grasped to understand the process of acculturation.

**1) Family and community assistance:**

As stated before, our subjects were part of an established community (and tightly knit subcultures) in Uganda. In Southern California they joined other Ugandan Asians who had already settled here as legal immigrants. Collectively, they became a subculture within the larger East African Asian community that helped them acculturate to the Southland. This substantial East African Asian community, in turn, has become a subculture of the Asian-Indian community dominated by direct immigrants (with whom they have much in common) from the Indian subcontinent.

Friends and kin helped our subjects to settle and acculturate to Los Angeles. Mr. Prakash Chandarana (Gujrati Lohana, Hindu, 54, manager of formerly his own auto parts store, expellee) writes: "My older brother helped me to get a job and buy my own home. I inherited his auto parts business when he died. These ventures facilitated my acculturation into other aspects of society." Mrs. Asha Chitnavis states: "Upon our arrival from Chicago our neighbors (and friends from Kampala), the late Pranjivan Popat and family, helped us a lot. They had already found an apartment for us. His oldest son Ashok found a job for my oldest son, Sham. Mrs. Manjuben Popat familiarized me with the nearby supermarkets and introduced my family to her Gujrati Lohana community. It was also through Manjuben that my younger son found a job as a teller with Bank of America in West Hollywood."

Indooben Dhaba and her late husband were urged by their progeny to leave Indiana and settle in L.A. The children helped with resettlement. This

enabled the family to live separately in the same town. Tina Kotecha writes: “One of our friends was a Maharashtrian lady from Kenya. She was a part-time teacher whose daughter attended elementary school with me. The lady convinced my parents that wearing certain *American* clothes such as jeans, was necessary to fit in with other students at school and to wear less fashionable clothes, such as polyester pants, would simply set us up for ridicule (which did transpire). As a result, my sister who is a year older and exposed to school situations more, had a difficult time adjusting while I was able to adjust a bit more easily because I was allowed to wear some of the more *American* fashionable clothes a year earlier.” Tina adds: “In terms of simply making the transition more smooth, but not necessarily assimilation, many of us East Africans in L.A. area would get together once a month and have a dinner party. At this time, I compared notes with other friends around my age and learned that they had some of the same adjustments to make as I did. These kids were friends from Uganda.”

Raju Padhiar writes: “When we moved from South Carolina to L.A. we stayed with our cousin Manilal until we found a place to live.” Mr. Ashok Pradhan (Maharashtrian, 61, accountant, formerly of Kampala, currently of Walnut, refugee), states: “My younger brother who was already here made arrangements for me to stay with him and friends and eventually locate an apartment to move into.” Dr. Janak Raval (Gujrati Brahmin male, age 48, medical physician, formerly of Mbale, currently of Rancho Palos Verdes, refugee), states: “Friends from Mbale provided the environment of acceptance, friendship, and moral support. These bonds have continued till today.”

## **2) Maintenance of ancestral heritage:**

Most of our subjects have been in urban United States from 8-31 years. They have maintained much of the culture their forefathers migrated with from the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, one cannot acculturate to another culture without using one's own culture as an anchor. One cannot absorb another set of customs, ideals, myths, rituals, symbols, and traditions without being anchored in a set of one's own. This anchor is crucial because the road to acculturation is full of pitfalls that can cause anxiety, anomie, cultural misunderstanding, conflict, disorientation, and lower self-esteem:

**2A) The role of language:** All the respondents agreed that the preservation of their mother tongue is the key factor enabling them to communicate their joy, ideas, problems, etc. to their families and community members.

**2B) Maintaining coherence/unity of the family:** Prakash Chandarana preserved the unity of his family by threatening to deprive his son of all assistance if the former were to move out at a very young age. Asha Chitnavis writes: "No matter how wide the differences of opinion we respect and listen to each other. This has enabled us to maintain our unity." Zainul Kanji writes: "My entire extended family lives in Southern California. We get together approximately once a month."

Tina Kotecha writes: "We have a large extended family in L.A. and we get together often over holidays, both American and Indian. We spend a lot of time playing games that educate us about our family heritage and culture. This is one



way of preserving unity. Also, we hold *garba* almost yearly and our entire clan comes together to participate as well as to generally provide support for the event. After the event we all go to Denny's. In fact, one can say it has become a tradition. Typically, only the younger cousins used to go, though lately parents have joined in. It is really at this time that we share much about our feelings regarding our lives, families and create strong bonds as a result."

Raju Padhiar (Gujrati Suthar male, Hindu, 40, Auto Technician, formerly from Mbale, currently of Garden Grove, refugee) states. "We placed total trust in our siblings as there was nobody else to help us." Ashok Pradhan maintains close family ties with siblings who live only a few minutes drive away. His mother Susheela divides her time between the residents of two of her three children. Dr. Janak Raval states: "We have established a loving, nurturing, and supportive environment at home. We maintain frequent telephone contact and regularly visit relatives in the counties of Los Angeles and San Diego. We get together for important events and celebrations and go on holidays together." However, here *family* means much more than one's immediate family members. It also includes cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and close friends.

**2C) Helping/cooperating with extended family:** Prakash Chandarana helped (and still helps) numerous friends (including this student) and relatives by employing them in his auto parts business. He also helped them to buy businesses and homes. Prakash's younger brother Praful and mother stay with him. Zainul Kanji and his family members extend financial and emotional assistance to each other when needed. Indooben Dhaba and her younger daughter reside together.

Her older, married daughter and younger son, also married, reside separately but in the same town to be near each other.

Tina Kotecha lives next door to her parents (Chimanbhai and Bhanuben) and married sister Shital who, along with her family, lives with them too. Writes Tina: “We’ve all had situations where cousins don’t get along, our parents have issues with their siblings, etc. and we feel the impact of it. For example, my father has not spoken to one of his older brothers for several years now. However, we cousins have made a pact not to let our parents’ issues follow into our generation. In doing so, we show our cooperation. Also, whenever there has been a death in the family, those of us with roots in L.A. have flown back to L.A. to support each other. We then have *bhajans* (devotional singing) at that person’s home for thirteen nights straight, whether or not the rest of the community has been invited.”

Mr. Pankaj Padhiar (Gujrati Suthar, Hindu, 38, FedEx driver, formerly of Mbale, currently of Garden Grove, refugee) states: “I help my cousins and in-laws around the house or at the shop. It is fun hanging out with them.” Note that Pankaj and his family share a house with his older brother Raju and family. Their mother stays with them. Sushila Pradhan (Maharashtrian C.K.P. female, Hindu, 81, retired, widow, refugee) rotates between the residences of her oldest son (Ashok) and daughter (Sundhya) who reside only a few minutes away from each other. Her second son Dinesh also lives in the vicinity.

**2D) Preservation of customs and traditions:** Prakash Chandarana states that it is his duty to take care of elders. He teaches his children to do the same.

Tina Kotecha states: “*Garba* is probably one of the more important traditions. It is the one time where we are honoring Mataji. In a way that is fun for everyone through dancing.” Tina emphasizes: “*Diwali* is becoming more important as our generation is starting to feel that there is too much emphasis placed on Christmas. So the Kotecha family tries to get together to celebrate and have a meal. We all make 1-2 dishes and in that way share the responsibilities and reduce the burden for any single family. We then discuss with younger kids the meaning of *Diwali*.”

Manilal Padhiar has made a noteworthy contribution to the Southland’s vibrant scenario. Being a Gujrati he inaugurated the tradition of *Navraatri* (nine nights) *Raas-Garba* (devotional dancing) 31 years ago in Huntington Beach. It is a very popular ritual among Gujratis from East Africa as well as India and other parts of the world. Cousin Pankaj Padhiar and his family help Manilal in organizing and celebrating the festival. Dr. Janak Raval has given his children traditional names and maintained them without Anglicization. He says: “This provides a connection to the culture.” He and his family also practice various rituals and observe important ceremonies like marriages. He adds: “This reinforces the permanent bond of marriage and its sanctity.”

**2E) Religious beliefs:** Mr. Bhupinder Batra states: “Our religious beliefs did help us to establish ourselves again in this foreign land. Our belief that God helps those who help themselves, made us work harder than others. Be content with what you have and have faith in God. *No drinking, no smoking* is a part of my religion.” Prakash Chandarana writes: “Being a Hindu I do not believe in

violence. Also, I believe that if I do good things in this life I will have a better life next time around.” Zainul Kanji’s religious beliefs are progressive.

Tina Kotecha states: “My strongest belief is in *Karma*. I believe that you have choices that help you increase either your good karma or bad karma. I try, therefore, to be positive in all that I do in order to increase my good karma. When things aren’t going particularly well, I consider it as working off my bad karma. It’s helped me get through difficult times in my education and work. There is much competition here and failure at some point is a reality. However, given the strong emphasis on success, I’ve seen many people buckle under pressure. Knowing that I can control some things and more importantly, I *cannot* control others helps create sanity and stability in fast-paced L.A.”

Dr. Janak Raval states: “We are all equal before God. This belief allows acceptance and tolerance of such a diversity of people with various beliefs.”

**2F) Principles and values:** Prakash Chandarana believes in honesty and helping decent human beings. Asha Chitnavis writes: “My principle is humanitarianism. My duty is to be affectionate toward one and all. This enables me to be content and happy.” Zainul Kanji believes in ethical behavior and values education. Pankaj Padhiar believes in strong family ties. His older brother Raju believes in hard work and helping people with problems. Ashok Pradhan believes in respect for and adherence to the law of the land, in doing the right thing without fear or prejudice and in surrounding himself with others holding similar values. Dr. Janak Raval believes in friendship, dependability, honesty, integrity,

and truthfulness. He opines: “All these make one a person everyone wants on their team.”

**2G) The Indian connection:** It has been stated that one cannot acculturate without using one’s culture as an anchor. This connection is the main factor enabling our subjects to acculturate. The following are some major indicators of this connection.

**2Gi) Auspicious days:** This category often overlaps with religious festivals. Nevertheless, Indooben Dhaba mentioned the Independence and Republic Days of India. Asha Chitnavis mentions *Bhaaoobij* (brother bestowing sister with gifts and promising to protect her honor). This ritual is part of the *Diwali* celebration and is mostly a Maharashtrian tradition. However, Hindus at large observe a similar but secular ritual called *Rukshabundhan* (a sister tying a decorative string around her brother’s wrist and reaffirming their sibling relationship). During this ritual also the brother promises to protect his sister’s honor, to take care of her and gives her gifts. She, in turn, prays for him and wishes him a long life, fruitful family relationships, prosperity in business, etc. This ritual has remained unchanged from the one in Uganda.

Among Maharashtrian Hindus especially *Varshapratipada* (beginning of spring as well as New Year) is very auspicious. This day is also called *Goodipadva*. Note that *Diwali* is *not* the New Year for Maharashtrians but it certainly is very auspicious for reasons already stated. Another very Maharashtrian day is *Akshaitrutiya*. This is when Maharashtrians pay homage to and honor the (good and nice) deceased family members and ancestors.

Among Hindus in general an auspicious day is *Sunkrant* (the entry of sun into Capricorn). *Dasera* is a much more popular day. It is significant for the following reasons: 1) Lord Raam's victory over the evil Ravun, 2) The five Pandav brothers retrieving their hidden weapons after 14 years in exile, 3) *Holi*, the festival of color. It celebrates the disemboweling of the demon *Heerunyakashku* by *Lord Vishnu* who turned into half man and half lion to accomplish the deed. This is celebrated in a big way in a park in Cerritos where East African Hindu Asians get together with Indian immigrants. People douse each other with colored dyes/powder and water to signify joy. In the evening a giant bonfire is held to signify the demon's demise.

**2Gii) Associational activities/Religious festivals:** Dr. Navin Adatia says: "We have the Lohana Samaj of which I was the President for four years. We have the *Diwali* and *Navraatri* celebrations. We also celebrate *Jalaaram Jayanti* (the birthday of Gujrati Saint Jalaaram), as many people believe in him. We have *bhajans* (devotional songs) and music. The event is open to not just Lohanas and other Gujratees but whoever wants to attend. In Uganda we had a much larger population of Asians who were concentrated in a smaller area. The activities there were attended by a much larger number of people. We also had more activities. Here we have fewer people who are spread out and fewer activities." Dr. Adatia adds: "The participation of Gujrati migrants from India is 35 to 40 percent." Needless to say this substantial minority helps our subjects maintain their Indian ness.

Something about the Lohana Samaj should be noted. First, it is an extended clan-cum-caste association. The organization is built around a hard core of Lohanas, all from Kampala. They are related to each other either through blood or marriage. Second, the Samaj is so self-sustaining that the only concession made to direct migrants from India is when the Samaj needs a Brahmin priest to perform coming of age (for males), funeral, and wedding ceremonies. There is a total lack of Brahmin priests from East Africa.

Bhupinder Batra, a Sikh, states: “Celebrating birthdays of Gurus and remembering martyrs is another religious tradition. *Baisakhi* in April is the day of the birth of Khalsa and beginning of the harvest season.” Being the only Sikhs from Uganda, Mr. Batra and his family celebrate their communal festivals in concert with Sikhs from India and elsewhere. Mr. Batra adds: “We have ten *Gurudwaras* (temples) of which my family patronizes the one in Buena Park.” He adds: “We now have more than two hundred students who are taught the Punjabi language, *Gurumukhi* (the Punjabi script) and the reading of *Gurugranth* (the religious text). Our people thought if their children do not know how to read then they will be distanced from everything else. Also there are other associations and people who organize and celebrate other *Guru* days and cultural programs. Our religious activities are not much different from that of Uganda. Basic principles are the same so naturally we follow the same rules. The only difference is that because of an increasing population we have more participants. Also because we have more freedom we have more activities than in Uganda.”

Indooben Dhaba says: “We have picnics, *bhajan* (devotional singing), *bhojan* (communal dining), and *Raas-Garba* (devotional dancing). These activities are designed to keep the community together and alive. Our children learn about our culture thus. What makes me most happy is that 7-8 families are from Uganda!” She states that unlike Uganda (where people interacted with neighbors on a daily basis) here they live far apart. Also, they do not have time except for weekends. Hence, her community has fewer activities. She emphasizes that the Indian connection enables her Lohana Samaj to keep its Gujrati cultural heritage alive and thriving. She adds that *Diwali* is more than the beginning of the Hindu New Year. *Diwali* also incorporates *Dasera*. During *Diwali* Gujrati businessmen/women also perform *chopdapoojan* (worshipping the account books). Mrs. Dhaba also celebrates *Raamnavmi* (the birth of Lord Raam), *Krishnajayanti* (the birth of Lord Krishna), and *holi*.

Zainul Kanji says: “We celebrate *Khooshiyali* which is Imam’s (Prophet Mohammad’s) birthday. We celebrate different *Ids* (festivals) one of which signifies the New Year. Another is *Bakri Id*. This commemorates the event when...(was it Azrat?)...whoever was supposed to sacrifice his son and the son turned into a goat!” Zainul emphasizes that these activities are very different from those in Uganda. “In Uganda we actually cut a goat. Here there is no such thing. You cannot find a goat to cut. In Uganda *Khooshiyali* were very big time affairs. The entire town would shut down and everybody would join in the festivities. Here it is not that big a deal because there are not enough of us. We are a minority within a minority within a minority.... Plus we are very, very spread out.” Zainul



emphasized that immigrants from the Indian subcontinent do *not* influence the celebration of these festivities. “We do not have a lot in common. Our language, Kachhi, is different; our thinking is different. It is a different culture.”

Tina Kotecha cites *Navraatri* (nine nights of dancing) that is a celebration of the harvest. The dancing is also in honor of *Mataji* (a Gujrati Hindu deity). Tina says: “My father, Chiman Kotecha, organizes *Raas-Garba* in Diamond Bar where at least 2,000 people show up. A large number of them are from India. I notice that East African *Raas Garba* is more sophisticated though.” Tina also cites *Diwali*, the festival of lights. She emphasizes that migrants from India do not affect the celebration of *Diwali* as “we pretty much keep it within our family and Lohana community which is predominantly from Africa.” Note that Tina does *not* interact with migrants from India.

Manilal Padhiar belongs to a Temple group (*Gaayatri Pariwar*) in Norwalk. This group, consisting of Hindus from everywhere, is like a *melting pot* in his words. He adds: “On top of that I have a group of maybe 50-60 people (the *Wanna Eenchi Club*) from Uganda and Kenya. We get together for a picnic once in a while. This is strictly an East African group because coming from a similar background and speaking the same language we are more comfortable with each other. It is very hard to joke with people from India because they do not know what we are talking about. Then, I also belong to a Field Hockey Club (of which I am a founder-member) consisting of Sikh males from East Africa. After play we get together for beer and a dinner of goat meat.” Manilal also organizes the *Navraatri* (nine nights) annual *Raas-Garba* (dancing which is both devotional and

folk) festival in Huntington Beach. Dr. Janak Raval and his family also participate in the ritual. This is where Gujratis from East Africa and India commingle in large numbers. Despite the participation of direct migrants from India the organizational apparatus in Manilal's venture is purely East African Asian. However, note that despite the distinctions between the dancing styles the East African ritual of *Raas-Garba* encompass a world-view, a cosmology that is very much Indian. All Hindus, irrespective of ethnicity celebrate *Diwali* (the festival of lights) ushering in the Hindu New Year.

In East Africa during the four days of *Diwali* Hindu Asians would dress up in their finery and walk up and down the main street of their town. However, as they are spread out in the L.A. suburbia this ritual cannot be practiced any more. Also, it was common on the New Year's Day for neighbors and relatives to visit each other. This ritual too has come to an end. Instead, East Africans meet at a communal hall to celebrate the occasion. If that is not possible they use their phones to wish each other a Happy and prosperous New Year.

Ashok Pradhan celebrates *Ganesh Utsav* (celebration of Lord Ganesh), a very Maharashtrian festival with members of Maharashtra Samaj. Asha Chitnavis, being only loosely tied to the Samaj, will occasionally attend *Ganesh Utsav* and the *Diwali* get together. She also occasionally attends *bhajans* (devotional singing) organized by the Krishna Mandal, a subgroup within the Samaj.

### **2Giii) Foodways:**

**A) Ingredients/Recipes:** Dr. Navin Adatia says: "The majority of our spices are from India. Some, like chilies, are from Mexico. Our style is Gujrati

Kathiawadi. I think it is a mistaken notion that Gujrati food from East Africa is zestier than the one in India. It is a matter of personal preference.”

Mr. Bhupinder Batra says: “There is no difference between Ugandan Punjabi and Indian Punjabi foodways. We use the same seasonings and spices which are imported from India, Pakistan, etc.” However, my sons still like to eat *matoke* (plantains), *mogo* (cassava), and corn, which are very native Ugandan foods. Hemant Chitnavis (who prepares terrific meat and fish dishes) says: “Generally speaking our style of cooking is not all that different from that of India. However, our non-vegetarian cooking is not the same. For this we use seasonings and spices which Indians do not use.”

Indooben Dhaba says: “Just like them we make *chana*, *dhokla*, *kachori*, *samosa*, vegetable mix, etc. Our spices are the same as theirs. However, the proportions we use are different. The way we cook is different.” Tina Kotecha says: “I imagine we don’t use the same recipes. I know there are some foods that we have but Indians from India don’t. There is something called *Mogo* (Cassava). We make it into a vegetable curry dish; we deep fry it and put spices on it. We also make *Matoke* (plantains) but I am not into that. Our *mug* (grains) is also different from theirs. We also probably use more ginger here. I do not know if it is a big Lohana thing or a big Africa thing.”

Zainul Kanji says: “I like their food but our recipes are a little bit different. We have some foods that they don’t have and they have some foods that we don’t have. When we came to the United States we discovered an Indian and/or Pakistani dish called *Nihari*, a spicy beef stew that is cooked all night. I love it. In

Africa we don't have this thing." Manilal Padhiar states: "East African Asians have a distinctive style of cooking. Even though our recipes are the same the Indian style does not have that *clink* (punch/zest) to it. Indians are not generous with spices as their emphasis is on conservation. In contrast, East Africans are generous with spices and seasonings as they grew up in the land of plenty. They are also generous with portions." He adds: "Even our Kathiawadi style Gujrati vegetarian food is tastier than its Indian counterpart."

Note that irrespective of the divergence and differences (real or imagined) between Indian and East African Asian recipes and cooking styles the foodways of our subjects encompass an ethos, a worldview that is still very much Indian.

**B) Vegetarianism:** Dr. Navin Adatia, a Gujrati Lohana, is omnivorous but his family is vegetarian. He says: "I do not mind if my daughters were to eat meat. One of them tried it but did not like it." Indooben Dhaba says: "My religion comes from India. The *Bhagavad-Gita* tells us that this is a big world. When there are so many things (roots, vegetables) growing here why do you want to hurt and kill chicken, cows, fish, and other fellow creatures? You should not do that. You can make bread, *chapatti*, out of flour and get protein out of grains. You can make so many things out of natural ingredients. You do not have to kill to sustain yourself." She adds: "When you eat meat you get more sickness. I do not have diabetes or high blood pressure because I eat fresh vegetables." She emphasizes that her vegetarianism here is no different from that in Uganda.

Tina Kotecha says her brand of vegetarianism comes from the Hare Krishna Movement and *Vaishnavism* (a denomination of Hinduism). Her mother

is a Vaishnav. Tina says: “I have learned to be a vegetarian from her but it has been reinforced by my experience with Hare Krishnas who provide the rationale, the clarification why we are vegetarians based on the *Bhagavad-Gita*. My dad has the connection to the Hare Krishnas. We have actually grown up under two of those influences. My vegetarianism is not as strict. For example, I will eat eggs or things with eggs in it whereas my parents will not. They also prefer not to eat onion but they will if it is in the food.”

Manilal Padhiar is also omnivorous. He says: “Except for me my family is vegetarian. My father used to eat meat but being a follower of Jalaraambapa (the Gujrati saint) he does not consume it any more. My parents do not eat anything made out of eggs either.” Manilal has taught his Gujrati, vegetarian wife from India to clean and cook meat just the way he likes it. His parents do not object to meat being cooked and consumed in the house. Rare is the Gujrati Hindu who is *not* vegetarian. Association with Gujrati Hindu migrants from India and elsewhere nurtures his/her vegetarianism.

Whether they are vegetarians or not, the seasonings, spices, flour, grains, sweets, etc. are bought from ethnic shops owned mostly by direct migrants from India. These shops also sell ethnic arts, crafts, attire, film/music videos/CDs, etc.

**2Giv) Direct connection with the Indian subcontinent:** Since Bhupinder Batra grew up in the state of Punjab he has lots of friends and relatives (whom he is in close touch with) there. Also, since he sells Indian crafts he is dependent upon Indian suppliers for his goods. Asha Chitnavis maintains correspondence with her siblings in India. Her brother sends her Hindu (Maharashtrian) calendars

that enable her to keep track of festivals and religious events. Prakash Chandarana states that socio-religious interaction with direct migrants from India helps him to preserve and enhance the Indian part of his heritage. Hemant Chitnavis agrees with him. With his Indian friends Hemant attends Indian Popular Music concerts. Asha Chitnavis states that such interaction enables her to preserve her Marathi language, practice religious rituals, and reinforce her concept of hospitality. Zainul Kanji affirms that his Ismaili *jamaatkhana* (Community Hall) includes members from India and Pakistan. It makes for diversity.

Cousins Manilal and Pankaj Padhiar have Gujrati wives from India. Says Pankaj: "I was married in India and so I got the old culture. My wife and her family reinforce the old ways." Ashok Pradhan states that he keeps in touch with his paternal relatives from whom he receives cards and letters particularly on religious holidays. His wife is a Maharashtrian from Bombay. Her parents and cousins keep in touch with her and Ashok. Ashok's sister-in-law (brother's wife) is also a Maharashtrian from India. Ashok adds that over the past thirty years his family and the Indian families it interacts with have become an extended family. His interaction with direct Maharashtrian migrants from India has helped him to understand more of Indian culture. Dr. Janak Raval states: "Direct connections with India reinforce our culture and provide infusion of new ideas. Interaction with direct migrants from India provides a forum for social interaction and camaraderie with people who have a similar culture."

There are three facts worth noting here. First (contrary to this student's belief), most of our subjects (despite the generational distance from India) have

close relatives in that country. Second, a good number of our respondents have already been to India as tourists or plan to tour the country. Third, in moments of cultural ambivalence our subjects do use India and direct migrants from India as a positive or negative frame of reference.

**2H) Enculturation:** As stated before, this is the process of generational continuity during which a person learns his parent community's traditional patterns and helps preserve most of the ancestral culture. Prakash Chandarana has taught his children to take care of the family including elders. Asha Chitnavis also has taught her sons to respect elders, to take care of family members, to respect their opinions and compromise with them. Zainul Kanji has inculcated his children with the philosophy and rituals of Islam. This heritage is reinforced by their participation as volunteers in the Ismaili Jamaatkhana.

Raju Padhiar writes: "My father had a hard life in Uganda and I have had a hard life in the U.S. So I tell my kids to work hard because no one is going to give them anything for free." Ashok Pradhan writes: "A sense of having Indian parents was the main focus. Teaching respect for elders, Hindu religion and mannerisms." Dr. Janak Raval has inculcated to his sons an awareness of what it means to be of Indian origin. This has resulted in a positive sense of self worth. He has also taught them to help others, to be self reliant, and to cultivate an outgoing, social outlook.

### **3) Voluntary pluralism:**

A related factor that enables our subjects to maintain their culture (and acculturate to the United States) has existed long before their arrival in Los

Angeles. In reference to German-Americans Tocqueville discovered that what distinguished the American national spirit, character, and identity was not sectarian religion or ancestry but a culture of politics. The Americans were not a Protestant nation in the same sense that the French were a Catholic nation, or the Germans a folk. The unifying culture of the U.S. was not religious or racial but political. Without using the term, Tocqueville described the civic culture as a unifying set of principles and practices in government.<sup>311</sup> One became an American by subscribing to the principles of republican government.<sup>312</sup>

The nearest the United States comes to Amin's concept of a Tribal Nation is in its Myth of homogeneity. For Americans who are bewildered, bruised, or defeated by the freedom, competition and loneliness of the modern world, the images of static rural community still offer refuge.<sup>313</sup> The imagery of homogeneity, the almost monolithic view of society contained in the mythology of the rural small town, has served, and still serves, several important functions.<sup>314</sup>

First, it is a foil for individualism. Second, it serves as a constant demonstration of the democratic nature of American society. Third, it provides a sense of secure, unchanging rootedness in a society of the uprooted. (219) While not discounting the possibility of our subjects buying especially into the third aspect (security/rootedness) of the myth it should be understood that when it comes to the feeling of oppression, creation of fear and sheer disgust at forced

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<sup>311</sup> Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture* (Hanover: Wesleyan Univ. Press, Univ. Press of New England, 1990), 21.

<sup>312</sup> John Higham, *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America*, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1990), 188.

<sup>313</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 218.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.



miscegenation to achieve homogeneity it is nowhere near the Black African Myth of the Tribe.

*The civic culture, with its principles of separation of church and state, the right of free speech and assembly, facilitated and protected the expression of ancestral cultural values and sensibilities and, in so doing sanctioned the system of voluntary pluralism by which ethnic groups could mobilize their economic and political interests* (italics mine).<sup>315</sup> Speaking of Irish-Americans Fuchs tells us that the permission to maintain traditional religious and cultural loyalties helped to bind immigrants and their children to the American political culture. By making it easy to join the polity, by defining nationality in political terms, the *unum* ensured the allegiance of the *pluribus*.<sup>316</sup>

Prakash Chandarana opines that he does not feel pressured to do anything against his will. Asha Chitnavis affirms that because of the total freedom she enjoys she can mix with anybody she wants and does not harbor fear of anybody. Hemant Chitnavis concurs, “in this country we do not have any pressure or feel bound by arbitrary rules. We are free to do what we want.”

Tina Kotecha writes: “Because there is no pressure to assimilate I can be successful, it’s made the settlement process that much easier. I can still be educated to as high a level as I desire, make as much money as I desire, and maintain as much of my culture without really being shunned for it. That flexibility has allowed me to fit in my own way into the L.A. life.”

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<sup>315</sup> Fuchs, *Kaleidoscope*, 23.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Ashok Pradhan affirms that “freedom of religion and non-interference from government taught me to be unafraid to express my beliefs or to feel free to do my own thing within the bounds of law.” Dr. Janak Raval opines: “Voluntary pluralism, by respecting individual rights as well as providing latitude for making choices, has very greatly facilitated my acculturation.”

#### **4) Urban background:**

Our subjects moved from mostly urban Uganda to urban Los Angeles. Their urban background has been a factor in facilitating their acculturation. Also note that our refugees are now “twice or thrice migrants” and expellees “thrice (or more) migrants”. An urban background, including an extended stay in western nations like Canada or the United Kingdom should have made them more adaptable and as a result, more likely to acculturate better and faster than conventional immigrants. Let us see if that is true.

Dr. Navin Adatia learned to drive in Uganda, honed the skill in India and U. K. He could thus adjust quickly to driving conditions in L. A. The same applies to his language skill. Bhupinder Batra and family spent a year in London (U.K.), and 5 years in Vancouver, Canada, before migrating to L.A. He says: “We have lived in Delhi (India), Jinja (Uganda), and Vancouver (Canada). Los Angeles is bigger than any of them. Since we were already used to an urban lifestyle we adjusted easily to life here. Government agencies here are equally good for business purposes. For example, it was easy for me to obtain a business license by just going to the city office and presenting them with my particulars.

To give another example banks are more sophisticated here. Procedures are more streamlined. Now I know better how Los Angeles agencies work.”

Ayanullah (AI) Bhimani (Ismaili male, 51, Principal Management Consultant, formerly of Kampala, currently of Whittier, refugee) states: “The benefits include the understanding of living in a city with all the amenities that made it much more flexible and therefore we were able to adapt and assimilate quickly in the new environment.” Ayanullah has the broadest urban background of any our subjects. He has spent a year in Wallsee, Austria; three years each in Austin, Texas; and Sacramento, California; six years in Seattle, Washington; and sixteen years in Denver, Colorado.

Prakash Chandarana spent 4 years in Bangalore, India; and 10 years in Leicester (a heavily “East African Asian” city), United Kingdom. Prakash confirms that skills acquired in Uganda and United Kingdom (e.g. driving and dealing with bureaucracies) has helped him a great deal in Los Angeles. Asha Chitnavis confirms that it was easy for her to settle in Los Angeles because her family members knew, from their experiences in Florida, what kind of a skill to acquire for a particular vocation. Her skill as a Kitchen Aide (acquired in a Florida hospital) was transferred to that of a Diet Aide in an Anaheim hospital. Hemant Chitnavis spent one and a half years in two Florida towns, and approximately 1 year in Chicago before moving to Los Angeles. Hemant states that because of his upbringing in small-town and urban Uganda it was easy for him to adjust to life in small-town Florida. This, in turn, helped him to adjust to life in big-city Chicago. Again, this helped him to adjust to life in Los Angeles.

Of particular use was his driving skill that he had illegally acquired in Uganda as a teenager.

Indooben Dhaba learned the English language in Uganda and driving in Fort Wayne, Indiana. These skills helped her to acculturate to life in the latter. Twenty-five years in Fort Wayne, in turn, helped her to adjust to life in Southern California. She emphasizes: “Everything in L.A. is bigger than in Indiana. The six-lane freeway as opposed to the two-lane freeway, the houses... everything!” Vikram Jhala spent unspecified length of time in Bangalore and Ahmedabad (both in India), and London, U.K.

Zainul Kanji spent one and half years in Folsom, California; and 3 years in Royersford, Pennsylvania; before migrating to Los Angeles. Zainul’s adjustment must have been so smooth that he is not aware of regional differences. He says: “There is nothing different about California compared to Pennsylvania. Upon coming here I discovered what antiperspirant was. The English language and driving skills helped though.” Tina Kotecha states: “It wasn’t as much of a ‘shell shock’ experience because we were used to some of the urban amenities. Also, even though I had a slight accent when I first came to L.A. I did not (because of my urban lifestyle) stand out as much as a person from a rural background.”

Brothers Pankaj and Raju Padhiar spent some months in Wales (U.K.) and Spartanburg, South Carolina, before moving to L.A. Pankaj affirms that an urban background allowed him to fend for himself in Los Angeles. Cousin Manilal says: “Though small Mbale was a modern town. We had stop signs; we had roundabouts (traffic circles) and cars. So when I arrived here I did not have much

of a problem adjusting because everything here was the same except for size, big houses, big roads, everything was bigger!”

Ashok Pradhan states: “Having spent 25 years in Kampala (the capital of Uganda), I made friends with and came into contact with workers from diverse races. This helped me to accept residents of Los Angeles. Familiarity with the English language was a big help.” Dr. Janak Raval (who grew up in the same town as the Padhiars and spent ten years in Toronto, Canada), writes: “Working and living in an urban environment is similar: going to work for income, being familiar with cars and other transportation, apartment living, paying taxes, etc.” Hansa Sudra spent three years in Leicester, U.K., before joining her husband Rasik, in L.A.

#### **5) Lack of a ‘Myth of return’ to a motherland:**

Al Bhimani writes: “United States of America has given me a home and since I am a proud citizen of USA, I have no loyalty or moral obligation to any other country. USA is the motherland now and there is no returning to East Africa unless it is for professional and business related reasons. Besides coming from an English-speaking country, making America my home and living here was a practical reality with a huge incentive and plenty of obvious benefits.”

Prakash Chandarana opines that he *had* to make Los Angeles his permanent home and invest his money in the United States. Prakash has some property in U.K. and a lot of friends and relatives but he finds the place too cold and restrictive. Asha Chitnavis (who had a very painful stay in India as an adult, was almost made a widow by Amin’s soldiers and experienced the trauma of

flight from Uganda) asserts: "Now we have enough education, experience and skills. We will use them and invest our talents in Los Angeles. We will thus be happy." Hemant Chitnavis asserts: "When you have no country to return to you integrate all your resources in California."

Zainul Kanji's comment is also telling: "I have been here since age 13. I am emotionally an American." Tina Kotecha writes: "Knowing I am *not* to return to Africa allows me to accept Southern California readily as my home. I do not feel the need to compare the two worlds and desire something different." Pankaj Padhiar opines: "This is all we have to work with." His brother Raju writes: "I have nowhere to go. So I live here and try to make this place a better one for me." Dr. Janak Raval opines: "If you do not have a place you can fall back upon you must make the most of what you have. So you put in your very best effort."

#### **6) Turning the negative into positive:**

Note that both the expellees and refugees were traumatized. The former were given 3 months to leave Uganda. Even though most of them lost their property they at least knew where they were going e.g. Britain, India, Pakistan. However, the fear of violence, sudden severance from their place, the resulting flight, the anxiety and uncertainty they experienced in camps in concert was a more traumatic experience for the refugees.

As stated before, the anxiety and uncertainty may have caused anomie in some of the refugees upon arrival in the United States. However, for a group without a homeland to return to, the very painful refugee experience can also be used as a compensatory factor to facilitate acculturation and to achieve socio-

economic success. In other words, a severely negative experience can be transformed into a resource to acquire positive results:

Prakash Chandarana (expellee) says: “After settling in L.A. I worked harder with a very positive attitude. This enabled me to achieve social and economic success.” Asha Chitnavis (refugee), who had never worked before says: “I cleaned dishes in a hospital in Florida. In the evening I took courses in Key Punch and Ward Clerk. Then I worked in a factory taping boxes. After arriving in Los Angeles I worked as a Hospital Aide. As a result we did not suffer from cash shortage and life became easier and happier.” Tina Kotecha (refugee) states: “I think this applies to my parents more than to me. I learned from my parents that no matter how difficult a situation, you do turn it around, make it work and succeed as a result.”

Manilal Padhiar (refugee) writes: “We were brought up to be self reliant. We do not believe in borrowing money or handouts. Our lifestyle in Uganda was fairly high. To live like that we had to work harder.” Cousin Pankaj (refugee) says: “Yes. I saw the pain my parents went through. Growing up I knew that I had to be more successful than them.” Ashok Pradhan (refugee) does not think the trauma of flight is a negative factor. He opines: “The chance was mine and mine alone. We had to figure out what to make of this unexpected situation we were put in. The question was how to survive without a handout. Hard work and a positive attitude is what brought me and my family to where we are today.” Dr. Janak Raval (refugee) states: “The only wealth and security anyone can permanently

have is what one is: dedication and hard work to achieve any goal. Anything else is or can be transient.”

Before proceeding to the subject proper distinction should be made between willing (voluntary) and unwilling (forced) acculturation. An immigrant realizing the importance of the English language and going to night school eagerly to learn the same is an example of the former. Another immigrant giving up the habit of eating his food while slurping, smacking his lips, licking his fingers, and burping loudly (in accordance with the Hindu/Buddhist world view which stresses appreciation and spontaneity), and reluctantly learning not only to eat quietly (in accordance with the Judeo/Christian world view which stresses self-control and discipline) but to utilize a fork, knife, and spoon is an example of the latter.

A further distinction should be made between conscious and subconscious acculturation. An immigrant weighing the pros and cons (under the circumstances) of a cultural facet of the host society e.g. eating a hamburger, a taboo food in his community, on the way to work instead of spending valuable time cooking at home, is an example of the former. Lapsing into an American accent (a common immigrant feature) or what he/she *thinks* is an American accent while talking to people other than those in his/her community is an example of the latter. A still better example would be that of an immigrant happily buying his dream house in the suburbs but not knowing (or repressing into his/her subconscious) the negative features that come with it. Our subjects show evidence of voluntary and involuntary, conscious and subconscious modes of acculturation.



### Facets of acculturation:

**1) Climate:** It makes Los Angeles what it is. Mr. Chandrakant Bharania, (Gujrati Lohana, 56, Laboratory Technician, formerly from Jinja, currently of Los Angeles, refugee), writes. "L.A. climate is ideal all year round. People who migrate to L.A. cannot go wrong. Whatever your hobby is it will very well suit you." Prakash Chandarana (expellee) writes: "In L.A. there is year round sun. In the United Kingdom the climate is very cold and damp most of the time." Asha Chitnavis is more expressive: "It is fun to live in sunny L.A. Here one is not bothered by snow and ice nor does one get tired of work. One's soul is happy. We lived in Chicago for eight months and were fed up of the biting cold, snow, and wind."

Zainul Kanji agrees that climate makes L.A. what it is. He adds: "It is easy and tolerable to live here compared to Pennsylvania where it snows and is cold, humid." Tina Kotecha adds in support: "I like that we can just get ready and run out without having to plan extra time for bundling up/layering and for scraping snow off our cars. Since my parents are the ones to have decided to migrate here, I imagine it was a key reason. I know that the heat reminded them of Uganda. I lived in Chicago and while I feel for Chicago, the weather in L.A. lured me back." Manilal Padhiar opines: "L.A. climate is like Uganda's. This is the only place in the U.S. where one can wear shorts and Tee shirts 10 months a year. The mountains, the L.A. River, and the Pacific ocean give you the feeling that you are in the best climate in the world." Pankaj Padhiar affirms: "My job is in the outdoors. The warm climate is perfect." His brother Raju says: "Yes. The climate

enables you to do more things.” Dr. Janak Raval ‘totally agrees’ that the climate makes L.A. what it is. He adds: “It makes life very comfortable year round and permits many outdoor activities. This is in contrast to the long, cold winters in Toronto, Canada.”

**2) Space:** One of the key facets of the Southern California mythology is that the region is wide open for development and settlement. Chandrakant Bharania concurs: “Yes. L.A. is such a big place! There is plenty of land that can be developed fast. Buildings for businesses and houses can be built...” Asha Chitnavis says: “There is a lot of space in Los Angeles. There is space for creation of gardens or anything else.” Hemant Chitnavis opines: “A lot of land is still available for expansion, for building freeways and houses.” Pankaj Padhiar states: “Yes. There is lots of space for growth.”

However, some more perceptive subjects have a dissenting opinion. Tina Kotecha opines: “I drive quite a bit for work and L.A. has definitely become a *concrete jungle*. There is much too much development and many places now lack the character of individuality due to an influx of cookie-cutter strip malls, housing developments, and entertainment centers (the Block, City Walk, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Promenade).” Dr. Janak Raval adds: “Expansion only worsens urban sprawl.”

### **3) The new arrivals’ initial steps:**

**3A) In the midst of the Ultimate in the American Dream:** As stated in the previous chapter if California is the ultimate in the American Dream then Los Angeles is the ultimate in the California Dream. Chandrakant Bharania agrees. He cites the following factors: “1) Hollywood, where movies are made, 2) Expensive

cars are driven on freeways, 3) multicultural region, 4) National parks. Prakash Chandarana writes: “L. A. has a much broader range of leisure activities than anywhere else. It also has the best freeway system.” Hemant Chitnavis opines: “L.A. has the best of job opportunities, best of colleges, and best of food from around the world.”

Manilal Padhiar asserts: “Like I say, L. A. is the only place in the world where one can go skiing in the mountains, sun bathing in the desert, and swimming in the ocean all in one day!” Pankaj Padhiar says: “Fame and glory: Hollywood!” Brother Raju opines: “This is the place where you can do or try doing what you have always dreamt of.” Ashok Pradhan exults: “Since it is open to all ethnicities, races, and religions Los Angeles has the most diverse population. L.A. is the California Dream.” Dr. Janak Raval *reasonably* agrees. He says: “Being a large metropolis, it provides many amenities for sports, entertainment, and opportunities for meeting new people as well as acquiring new jobs.”

**3B) Finding that first job/Beginning a career:** Each of our subjects took a different route toward his/her goal. Dr. Navin Adatia says: “From landing to establishing a medical practice took me six years. It worked out pretty smoothly.” Mr. Bhupinder Batra says: “I never attempted to find a job. Soon after I arrived in L.A. I went into a combination boutique store and wholesale clothing business. I imported clothes from India. Starting the business was not very easy. It was a lot of hard work. We gave up the wholesale business after 4-5 years and in April

1984, at my wife's insistence, opened this Indian Arts and Crafts store. We did much better in this venture. We have been here for 20 years."

Says Hemant Chitnavis: "After arriving in Los Angeles at the end of February 1976 I attended a Bank Tellers school to acquire a skill. Fortunately, at the time not only were such jobs plentiful but also our neighbors, the Popats, knew a fellow Gujrati Lohana lady from Kampala who worked for the Bank of America. It was through her that I acquired a job as a Bank Teller. I made my way up to the position of Operations Manager. Due to increasing computerization the Bank decided to downsize in 1996 and let me go in the August of the same year."

Zainul Kanji's story is very different. He says: "I got a job immediately after I came to Los Angeles. The man who interviewed me was a fellow Ismaili. I worked on an assembly line for about one and a half years. Then I got laid off and worked in numerous places. I did not go to school until I was married and my wife was pregnant. Formal education happened when I was in mid 20s. I got my bachelors and Masters degrees while working full time. I have been working and bearing family responsibilities since age 16." Zainul chose to major in Information Technology Management because he had an uncle who was doing something similar. Zainul adds: "Of course, my wife pushed me to get my Masters. I could not have done it without her."

Tina Kotecha had a much easier time. She says: "It was very easy for me to get the first job because I didn't speak with an accent. I didn't dress weird or what Americans would consider weird. I didn't look unusual. The only difference really was my dark skin and my skin isn't as dark as a typical Indian's. So I didn't

experience the prejudice that I suppose other people would experience.” Tina emphasizes: “I have *never* had a problem finding a job.” Tina went on to become a lawyer as a protest against the pro-male bias in her family and Lohana community. She likes advising people. She likes the ethical and morality issues in law. Tina adds that her father, Chimanbhai, lost his job with British Caledonian. After that he went straight into the Insurance business and prospered. Tina says: “He did fantastic. My dad’s a talker, he has got the charm, and he didn’t have an accent. It was probably harder for my mom to get jobs because she still had an accent, braided long hair and things like that.”

Manilal Padhiar was one of the luckier Ugandans. At age 17 he got a job as a cabinetmaker (at \$5.50/hour) in only three days after arriving in Los Angeles. However, not having any transportation or any sense of direction or distance in L.A. he walked from North Hollywood to Laurel Canyon to West Hollywood (approximately 10 miles) for his interview. He says: “Coming from Uganda walking was not a big deal. As I was wearing a wool sweater I was soaking wet when I reached the premises. Since I was a refugee the manager decided to grant me the position for a probationary period.” As he had been an apprentice of his father who was a cabinetmaker, building contractor, and owner of a hardware store Manilal had internalized the craft. Thus he could parley the job into a successful career.

**3C) Residence in the Central City:** Dr. Navin Adatia says: “After living in L.A. proper for a few years I moved to Arcadia. I looked around, talked to people. Arcadia is a nice, pleasant place I liked. The presence of friends and

relatives in the San Gabriel Valley was not a factor in my move.” Bhupinder Batra and family lived for 6-7 months on the 5<sup>th</sup> street in Los Angeles and in early 1979 moved to the suburb of La Mirada where they had bought a house. They had a boutique store in Burbank. After spending 10 years in La Mirada the Batras moved to Cerritos and moved again to Artesia in April 2004 to be near their new store. Mr. Batra adds: “My family liked this house as it is a bigger lot.”

Hemant Chitnavis and family spent two and half years in Los Angeles proper (Wilshire district) before moving to Buena Park, Orange County, where they spent six years and eight months in an apartment. The move to Buena Park was necessary as Hemant’s dad found a job as a supervisor with Cannon in Costa Mesa. The commute from L.A. to Costa Mesa was too long and tedious. Also the Chitnavis family was weary of the rising crime rate in Los Angeles.

Zainul Kanji and his family spent about a year in Santa Monica, about twelve years in the Valley, and a year and half in Sacramento. He bought a house in Irvine in August of 1995. He states: “We moved to Irvine because of good schools and the Ismaili community. We had some friends here. Also, I wanted to be closer to where I was working but mainly it was the schools.” Tina Kotecha and her family lived in Inglewood for a year before moving to Diamond Bar.

Manilal Padhiar spent only a week in North Hollywood, three years in Studio City with his cousin in a one-room apartment, back in North Hollywood in a two-bedroom apartment for four years till the cousin got married and moved away. Manilal then was in Inglewood and Hawthorn for four years each.

**3D) Onwards to suburbia:** Boorstein writes: "...the suburbs really provided a new American "frontier." The multiplication of suburbs and the trend of population to the suburbs proliferated American federalism and multiplied opportunities for political participation."<sup>317</sup> For our subjects, as for most Americans, suburban living means home ownership.

**3Di) (Real Estate) Home/Property Ownership:** Dolores Hayden writes: "The dream house is a uniquely American form, because for the first time in history, a civilization has created a utopian ideal based on the house rather than the city or the nation."<sup>318</sup> In Los Angeles, people talk obsessively about their homes (they did so long before skyrocketing prices made such conversation a matter of financial as well as affective interest) in a way that they rarely do about their neighborhoods. They are proud of L.A. as an abstraction, but they love their gardens. At moments like these in Los Angeles, one really does start to think that when Jefferson wrote "the pursuit of happiness" he really must have meant private property after all!<sup>319</sup> Indeed, a privately owned house is the preeminent symbol of the American Dream.

Dr. Navin Adatia says: "My house is my own palace. I feel comfortable. I feel at home. I am more relaxed." Opines Bhupinder Batra: "It is a great thing to own a house and to be independent rather than be a renter. You have more freedom, and actually, kids have more freedom. And of course, it gives you some sort of satisfaction and security."

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<sup>317</sup> Daniel J. Boorstein, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Vintage, Random House, 1974), 289.

<sup>318</sup> Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The future of housing, work, and family life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 18.

Hemant Chitnavis says: “As the apartment owner in Buena Park kept raising our rent periodically we jumped at an opportunity to buy a townhouse in the suburb of La Puente with our paltry savings. Also, we wanted privacy. When you have your own house you do not have to worry about your neighbors.” He adds that owning a house gives one a sense of security. Also, one gets a tax break. Hemant emphasizes that the movement of any Uganda Asians to the suburbs had no bearing on his family’s decision. Asha Chitnavis opines: “My house is much more than property for me. It is a treasure! No one can eject me from here!” In Asha’s subconscious the ejection of her family by her brother in law in India looms large.

Indooben Dhaba and her late husband moved from Indiana to Laguna Beach eight years ago to be near their progeny who already had homes of their own. Although she lives in an apartment she is well off and enjoys a very comfortable lifestyle. Zainul Kanji says: “My house is a tax shelter and an investment. It is also a place to raise my family. Ultimately it is mine!”

Tina Kotecha says: “My parents were driving around one day and ended up in Diamond Bar. They saw the ‘cow crossing’ and ‘horse crossing’ signs. It reminded them of Africa with animals roaming around. At that time Diamond Bar was a ranch. They loved that it was warm, that it looked like Africa with the grass. So we moved to Diamond Bar.” She says the townhouse (before she moved out) meant *love* to her. She elaborates: “The warmth and the fact that it is so welcoming and open to everybody. You don’t find that so much in other homes anymore. This is something that is also indicative of East Africans. I also

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<sup>319</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 45.



associate it with democracy. We have a family forum. Whenever there is an issue we discuss it. Each person has an equally weighted say in it. It's not that whatever our parents say goes." Tina adds: "This democratic influence is very American. My mother was liberal by Indian standards but not liberal enough for Los Angeles. Mom had to adjust. My dad also learned to handle his girls in a more fair way." Tina agrees that owning a home results in freedom to organize one's life.

Manilal Padhiar says: "My neighborhood in Hawthorn was getting a little more rough so I thought it was time to move. There were too many gangsters indulging in drug dealing especially on weekends. I used to return home late from work and did not feel safe seeing those gangsters standing in front of my apartment complex. So I bought a house in Huntington Beach in 1979 and have been here ever since. This was my *only* reason for moving to the suburb." He adds: "My house means a lot to me because I poured my blood and sweat in it. This was especially true because once I lost my job and had to struggle making payments. In addition, the house has a great sentimental value because not only my immediate family but also relatives who moved to L.A. stayed here before moving on." Puthiyedath Warriar agrees that his home means individual fulfillment.

Our subjects' move to the suburbia has something in common with their counterparts from other immigrant groups. That is the desire for a better life, a desire to enjoy the American Dream embodied in their House. What they do *not* have in common with other immigrant groups is the fact that being near friends and relatives is *not* a major factor in the move. This is indicative of the fact that

the better educated (i.e. the Adatias and Batras) among them have either more options or they can create more options vocationally without the help of friends and relatives. The same is true of other subjects who have a distinctive, marketable skill. An example is Manilal Padhiar who does not have much education but has a highly developed skill as a furniture manufacturer. He can also fall back upon other alternatives (building contractor, owning a hardware store) learned from his father in Uganda.

Another factor our subjects do *not* have in common with earlier immigrants is that they have bought homes in *less* than a generation. This is clearly indicative, generally speaking, of not only our subjects choosing a broad range of vocational options but also hard work, family unity, and the compromises and sacrifices they have made. It should be admitted, however, that the Southern California economy is much more diversified than it was two generations ago and affords our subjects more options.

Sheer guts propelled the Chitnavis family to the suburbia where they had no friends or relatives in 1984. Not having much by way of education or money and uncertain of their future they gambled upon a new townhouse because they wanted their own home and the gamble paid off. The house enabled them to take roots and launch a venture for betterment i.e. send this student for his Ph. D. degree to UHM.

**3Dii) Lawn:** Where there is a home there is (usually) a lawn. Lawns are as American as Mom, baseball, and Big Gulps. They look good. They feel good.

They have aesthetic, visceral and even medicinal appeal.<sup>320</sup> Dr. Navin Adatia says: “Personally I am not into gardening but the front lawn beautifies my house. I let my gardener take care of the lawn.” Bhupinder Batra says: “We have a much bigger lawn at the back. It has more flowerbeds. It lends charm and freshness. It beautifies the whole house.” Manilal Padhiar says: “I had a front lawn in Uganda, too. It was similar to the one I have now. It has trees and flowers. It means ‘home’ to me. When I see the lawn I associate it with my home which, in itself, has so many meanings.”

**3Diii) Automobile:** After the privately owned house, the privately owned car/SUV is the most powerful symbol of Southern California lifestyle. Life in the L.A. sprawl is not possible without the automobile. In addition, individual freedom and the pursuit of individual happiness are, with life itself, the inalienable rights of Americans. These are articles of faith generated and sustained by all American myths. Freedom in contemporary society finds its most powerful (because most ubiquitous) symbol in the automobile, its operation by individual Americans (thereby assuring them of both freedom and mobility) and its operation in defiance of visibly established laws and authority (a proof of individual liberty). The addition of the names of particular brands of very expensive, “exclusive” cars adds the stamp of success, clearly understood by all, to the pursuit of happiness. (The foreign manufacture of the automobiles named makes them apt symbols, because contemporary American success is measured

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<sup>320</sup> Preston Lerner, “Whither the Lawn?": What Southern California’s Booming Population and Looming Water Crisis Mean for the Great Green Carpet of Suburbia,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 4 May 2003, 13.

by the accessibility and control of the goods of the rest of the world.)<sup>321</sup> The private car gives each individual a sense of control over time, distance, the machine itself, and the humanity with which one must come in contact, and therefore a sense of control over urban community. It is also a physical symbol of individual autonomy and of individual freedom.<sup>322</sup>

Dr. Navin Adatia says: "It is a means of transportation and pleasure-driving. It makes for convenience and allows freedom." Opines Bhupinder Batra: "It is not a thing of pride or status. Here it is a necessity. Most of my cars have been Camrys." Hemant Chitnavis says: "In L.A. if you do not have a car you do not get a job. With your own car you can come and go as you please. You can enjoy leisure trips with other people." Indooben Dhaba says: "Here if you do not have a car, or do not know how to drive then you are completely disabled. Not having a car is like not having two hands. If you know how to drive you do not have to wait for anybody and go wherever you want to go. The car allows me to be independent and self-sufficient. Without the car I would be nothing. Here life is difficult without a car."

Zainul Kanji says: "It is a way to get around. It expresses my identity to some extent." Tina Kotecha emphasizes: "The car means independence. It means responsibility. I own the car. I bought it with my own money. It is my first step toward success." Manilal Padhiar says: "First, it is my pride and joy. Second, it is my transportation to work. I have four cars. Since 1979 I have kept my oldest car as a souvenir because it is the first car I bought with my own money. We had ten

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<sup>321</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 128.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

cars and trucks back in Uganda.” Puthiyedath Warriar agrees that his car allows him freedom of choice and movement, that it means individual autonomy, freedom, and happiness.

5 respondents have only 1 vehicle in the family. 23 respondents have 2 vehicles, 23 respondents have 3. 5 respondents have 4 or more vehicles.

Note that the following rituals and rhythms (consumption, diversity, freeway commute, leisure, and democracy implied in all of them) in concert (mainly) constitute the L.A. lifestyle. These rhythms overlap. Some more rhythms are detailed in the next chapter (El Diablo).

**3Div) The Freeway Commute:** This is the central ritual of Los Angeles, for the freeway, quite as much as the Beach is where the Angeleno is most himself, most integrally identified with his great city.<sup>323</sup> Chandrakant Bharania opines: “Public transportation is not good in L. A. To go to work everyone needs a car and the freeway.” Mr. Praful Chandarana (Gujrati Lohana, 51, Sales Representative-cum- Bookkeeper, formerly of Lugazi, currently of Chino Hills, expellee) states: “The freeway is important because it is very fast.” Prakash Chandarana writes: “It is very convenient for getting from one place to another.” Asha Chitnavis opines: “We cannot go anywhere without the freeway.” Son Hemant adds: “Without commuting one cannot get a good job.”

Zainul Kanji calls the commute “a necessary evil.” Tina Kotecha states: “I have a long commute and I use that time to catch up on all personal matters. It’s where I can talk freely and privately but also feel like I’m being efficient because I’m traveling.” Raju Padhiar states: “The freeway gets you to places faster than

side streets. You get to see different places and meet new people.” Ashok Pradhan uses the freeway because of “the ease of reaching from point A to point B, with least amount of wasted time.” Dr. Janak Raval states: “It is necessary for getting to work and for getting to other parts of the city. The freeway is indispensable if you want to live in L.A.”

#### 4) Consumption:

4A) What Boorstein says about the European immigrants also applies to our subjects: “The peculiar importance of American consumption communities made it easier to assimilate, to *Americanize*, the many millions who arrived here in the century after the Civil War. Joining consumption communities became a characteristic American mode of acculturation.”<sup>324</sup> For a consumption community, like other communities, consisted of people with a feeling of shared well-being, shared risks, common interests, and common concerns. These came from consuming the same kinds of objects.<sup>325</sup>

The consumer society believes that ever-increasing consumption is the individual pursuit of happiness. It is “the promise of American life.” Consumption is the fulfillment of the American dream in this modern transformation of the mythology of American individualism.<sup>326</sup> Status, worth, and success are now judged by the quality and quantity of goods and services consumed. Economic and social mobility are based on consumption, individually and collectively, is a sign that wealth is more widely available, that society is increasingly democratic.

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<sup>323</sup> Banham, *Architecture*, 221.

<sup>324</sup> Boorstein, *Democratic Experience*, 147.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 187.

The poverty level is continually redefined, and the list of the necessities of life—which *must* be provided for all in such a democratic society—has been enlarged from the basic food, shelter, and clothing to include other basics of the consumer society: money, electricity, transportation, telephones, leisure, and access to mass media. The American standard of living means ever-increasing consumption.<sup>327</sup>

Note that in Uganda there were no Department stores. As in pre-industrial America the smaller stores that existed catered mainly to the well to do. The less expensive shops, too, were specialized, and their stocks of ready-made goods were small.<sup>328</sup> The average Asian could only afford to “window-shop” at these stores. The Asian male had his trousers and suits made by the tailor.

The Department store, as Emile Zola observed in France, “democratized luxury.” Now a flowing, indiscriminate public wandered freely among attractive, open displays of goods of all kinds and qualities. One needed no longer be a “person of quality” to view goods of quality. Anyone could enter a department store, see and handle the most elegant furnishings. In this new democracy of consumers it was assumed that any man might be a buyer. Just as standard of living, by contrast with wealth, was a public and communal fact, so, too, buying and “shopping” became public. In the department store, as in the hotel, the distinction between private and public activities became blurred.<sup>329</sup> The market was further homogenized and democratized by the fixed-price, one-price policy of the great new department stores. (108) Clearly marked prices on wares attractively displayed on tables and counters made social equality an element of

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<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>328</sup> Boorstein, *Democratic Experience*, 107.

the convenience of a store catering to a cross section of the population.<sup>330</sup> Sales and seasons produced a constant succession of changes. The cycle encouraged the egalitarian activity of department store shopping, and thus steadily increased membership in the society of consumers and stimulated identification across social classes.<sup>331</sup> Through shopping and buying activities women acquired not only knowledge of what to buy but also the power to determine what was sold. (144)

Our subjects shop at nearby supermarkets and drug stores to buy basic necessities. Shopping Mall is a favorite locale for them. They patronize ethnic stores to buy specialty items. Let us now see if our subjects have joined the most popular festivals of consumption. It is to be noted that these are also *national* rituals.

**4Bi) Father's Day:** Mrs. John Bruce Dodd, the prime mover for this holiday (164), would be happy to know that some of our subjects indulge in this ritual. For example, Prakash Chandarana says: "This is a very special day for the father. We usually go out to eat." Zainul Kanji confirms: "Yes. Family insists upon celebrating this commercial holiday." Tina Kotecha admits: "We simply get together for a meal and give my father a gift. It's become more of a "forced" participation in that it is on the calendar, advertising for Father's Day starts nearly one month in advance and so there is pressure to at least do something."

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Gunther Paul Barth, *City people: the rise of modern city culture in nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), 130.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 143.



This is when Manilal Padhiar pays respect to and displays love for his father. Pankaj Padhiar remembers and pays respect to his late father. Ashok Pradhan's son wishes him a Happy Father's Day. Dr. Janak Raval says: "It is recognition of the importance of the father with cards and gifts. It is a great way to express one's gratitude."

**4Bii) Mother's Day:** This is the next annually celebrated event, with its emphasis on origins, nurturing, and family in the midst of the revolutionary portion of the cycle.<sup>332</sup> Like other American festivals that had originated in church, Mother's Day too ended in the department store.<sup>333</sup> This is a very special day for Sarayu Chandarana. The family usually takes her out to dinner. Says Hemant Chitnavis: "It is a very special day for our mother. We take her out for lunch to show our appreciation and feelings for her." Zainul Kanji adds: "Yes. Phone calls. Lunch or other..." Manilal Padhiar pays respect to and displays love for his mother. Pankaj Padhiar praises his mother. Dr. Janak Raval says: "This is another great American tradition. I recognize the importance of my mother with a card, gift, and a telephone call."

**4Biii) Christmas:** With the passing decades of the twentieth century, Christmas became overwhelmingly a season of shopping. Gifts which first had the force of good manners actually acquired the force of law. The Christmas bonus (soon "expected but not appreciated") became a part of the anticipated compensation of employees. Gifts to policemen, mailmen, janitors and others tended to become a kind of insurance against poor service during the coming year.

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<sup>332</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 10.

<sup>333</sup> Boorstein, *Democratic Experience*, 164.

And the “executive gift” sometimes became a convenient device for evading the laws of bribery. (159-160) Santa Claus, above all, was responsible for moving the primary scene of the festival from the church to the department store. (160). He moved into private homes a long time ago. Inviting him for distributing gifts is a common ritual among immigrants of all creeds, our subjects included.

Another thriving American industry—greeting cards—was a byproduct of the American Christmas. By the early twentieth century the practice of sending Christmas cards, and then other greeting cards, had become widespread. (162) This ritual is far more common among our subjects than the preceding one. Hemant Chitnavis affirms: “We celebrate Christmas by sending greeting cards. Also we exchange gifts in our office and have dinner parties.”

Tina Kotecha states: “We get together with my sister and her kids and some family, usually from my mom’s side. We open presents, have a meal and play games. However, this celebration is not intense among the Kotecha family.” Ashok Pradhan’s family celebrates Christmas with a meal and gift exchange. Dr. Janak Raval says: “Not of much meaning since we are not Christians. We nevertheless participate by exchanging gifts with our Christian colleagues and office staff.”

Christmas, an official national holiday, which, if treated in a secular way (ignoring its powerful and important religious significance), is a celebration of hope, newness, salvation, and of great bounty and blessing—a combination of many of the dominant elements celebrated in the rest of the annual cycle.<sup>334</sup>

Prakash Chandarana states that this is a time for family get together. For Manilal

Padhiar also it is party time and family get together. He says: “We exchange gifts with our neighbors and close American friends, go out for dinner or have drinks in each other’s residence.” Ashwin Patel states that during Christmas his family gets closer. Attending Christmas parties is a very common ritual among our subjects.

However, some of our subjects do not celebrate Christmas or their participation in the ritual is limited. Dr. Navin Adatia states: “I do *not* celebrate the festival because it is Christian. I celebrate it as a holiday at the end of the year. My kids were born and raised here. They grew up with Christmas and Santa Claus. We do everything that kids do. We buy them gifts. Only kids get gifts because we do not want to commercialize it any further. We throw a party. It is usually a family get together.” Bhupinder Batra states: “I do not really celebrate Christmas. The kids do celebrate and we don’t discourage them. Today my granddaughter took a whole basket of gifts for her classmates. From our point of view, from religious point of view we are not used to it. We are not against it. My sons do go to Christmas parties.”

Asha Chitnavis states: “I light a lamp in front of a picture of Jesus Christ because I have faith in him. My younger son attends Christmas parties.”

**4Biv) Lack of consumer loyalty:** Harvey Molotch points out that the L.A. region tests rigorously, not only in sports where the best are demonstrably up against the best, but also in goods consumption. As in Japan—that other hotbed of consumption, waste, and innovation—Southern California is notorious for its lack

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<sup>334</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 10.

of consumer loyalty; people will switch from Nissan to Toyota, just as they led the nation's switch originally from U.S. brands to foreign ones.<sup>335</sup>

Our subjects are a mixed lot. Chandrakant Bharania looks for the quality of products, not for brand names. Zainul Kanji says: "Go for the deal." Tina Kotecha admits: "I've noticed that brands draw me initially but over time their quality declines because they think they've already hooked you." Manilal Padhiar does not care for brand names either. Cousin Pankaj says: "Anything works. Nike is the same as Payless Shoes (a low end discount chain). Shoes are shoes." Ashok Pradhan says: "I believe in worth. I would be a consumer only if I get my money's worth." Prakash Chandarana does look for certain brands. Asha Chitnavis insists on brand names only when grocery shopping for Indian food. Her son Hemant is a stickler for "SONY" only when shopping for a television set. Dr. Janak Raval's loyalty is based on Consumer Reports, other reviews of the quality of the product or personal experience. Otherwise he does not hesitate to switch brands. Ashwin Patel does believe in consumer loyalty across the board. However, he is a distinct minority.

**4Bv) Trendsetters:** While they are choosy and fickle, L.A.'s indigenous immigrants from everywhere act as a proxy for world taste as well as sources of creativity. The open spirit capitalizes on generic human playfulness, coincident with the vast expansion of technologies that can carry pleasure products to the world. The absence of stultifying tradition means that output is not restricted to specific cultural tastes. Nor whatever else its failings, has L.A. ever been reluctant to risk being what some might see as low-brow—a production virtue given that

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<sup>335</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 262.

such brow is not only at times exactly what the world wants, but also because what is lowbrow at one moment may be reincorporated as highbrow in the future. While the Japanese may succeed in developing successful products in diverse areas by opening an “outpost” (as they did with the car design in the U.S.), the L.A. honchos appear less deliberate, more innocent. Hollywood did not succeed in the world by first test marketing in global branches. Instead the moguls went global by doing what, for them, came naturally.<sup>336</sup>

### **5) Participation in diversity:**

I want particularly to emphasize the importance of what I am calling the rhythms of human plurality. I refer now to the rhythms of personal, communal, religious, and political freedom of movement and action, the gestures and motions through which people go in which they manifest in varying degrees—from testiness to enthusiasm—real pleasure over the diversity and plurality of human beings, over each of them having a private or communal place in the world, yet sharing together a common space of human appearance and responsibility for a public realm in which diversity and differences are celebrated as beautiful rather than feared as sources of conflict and threats to good order.<sup>337</sup> The following are some of the *major* manifestations of diversity.

#### **5A) The culinary aspect:**

**5Ai) Ethnic cuisines:** A major way of participating in the extraordinary ethnic diversity of L.A. is to partake of ethnic cuisines. Susan Kalcik in her article “Ethnic Food ways in America: Symbol and the Performance of Identity”, points

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid. , 262-263.

<sup>337</sup> Delattre, “Rituals,” 44.

out that a change in eating habits could be used to signal a change in status, usually from a less to a more desirable group. People adopt the foods of sophisticated groups to appear worldlier. Non-Western people adopt Western foods and food prejudices to indicate that they are progressive and civilized, and immigrants adopt the foods of their new land to indicate a shift in status.<sup>338</sup> Of course, these are not the only reasons why immigrants partake of other cuisines. Cultures mix most easily in foodways because not only does the mixture give pleasure to the palate but also there is the thrill of adventure, of crossing over and blending, of exploring a hitherto unknown territory. In addition, participants in the ritual do not get involved in conflict. Note that in the ritual of eating ethnic foods (especially in restaurants) are embedded two distinct rhythms: that of diversity and the one of consumption.

Prakash Chandarana tries different kinds of sandwiches, Mexican cuisine and Pizza. They make for variety. Asha Chitnavis states that her family likes Chinese take-out food, Kentucky Fried Chicken, onion rings, and Pizza. These foods are a welcome change from her usual Maharashtrian cuisine. Hemant Chitnavis patronizes Chinese (Taiwanese “all you can eat”), Mexican, Persian, and Thai restaurants. He loves variety in food. Tina Kotecha states: “I love going to different restaurants in different areas of Los Angeles because I can experience a little bit of another culture without having to travel in that country.” Raju Padhiar asks: “If you don’t try different cuisines how are you going to know about other cultures?” Ashok Pradhan loves all varieties of food, especially steak joints,

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<sup>338</sup> Linda Keller Brown & Kay Mussell, eds., *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1984), 50.

Chinese and Mexican cuisines. Dr. Janak Raval appreciates fine Chinese, Italian, and Mexican cuisines.

**5Aii) Borrowings:** Asha Chitnavis has also learned to make pizza, and various snack foods from Ugandan Gujrati women. Her son Hemant has learned to cook Pakistani Lahori style chicken from a Pakistani friend. Zainul Kanji has learned to cook Mexican fajitas and tacos. Manilal Padhiar (who comes from an overwhelmingly vegetarian Gujrati community) has learned to cook pasta, pizza, lasagna; American style barbecued chicken, lamb, and fish. He prepares Mexican burritos, enchiladas, and tacos; Chinese kung-pao chicken and won ton soup as well. Raju Padhiar cooks American hot dogs and fries; Chinese soups, noodles, and Italian pastas. Ashok Pradhan has learned to prepare American barbeques and Thai dishes. Dr. Janak Raval has learned to cook Italian pasta, pizza, and Chinese stir-fry.

**5Aiii) Hybrid creations:** America's Asian fusion cuisine was born in Los Angeles—it's the one city in America where it makes perfect sense for a Japanese chef and an American chef to collaborate on making Asian-French food.<sup>339</sup>

However, the best place to find fusion cuisine is not restaurants but homes of immigrants. Prakash Chandarana's daughter Nisha makes pasta with Indian spices. Her mother Sarayu prepares terrific Indo-Mexican bhel (snack) by combining Indian spices and Mexican ingredients. Asha Chitnavis makes Maharashtrian style chicken with Pakistani masala. Pankaj Padhiar combines Chinese and Punjabi ingredients to create hybrid Chinese-Punjabi dishes.

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<sup>339</sup> Colleen Dunn Bates, "Bon Appetit: Los Angeles," *Westways*, July/August 2002, 76.

C.Paige Gutierrez in her article, “The social and symbolic uses of Ethnic/Regional foodways: Cajuns and crawfish in South Louisiana”, states that the crawfish—both as animal and as food—is the predominant ethnic and regional emblem for Cajuns and for southern Louisiana.<sup>340</sup> Furthermore, it is said in Arcadiana that a newcomer can become a local only if he can learn to eat crawfish and drink dark roast coffee.<sup>341</sup>

Note that in Los Angeles there is no particular food or drink that is quintessentially Southern Californian. The mere act of a denizen crossing his ethnic boundary and trying a different cuisine or creating a hybrid dish using different recipes is symbolic of his/her identity as an Angeleno. Of course, there is something called “California Cuisine” with a distinct Asian flavor but its appeal appears to be mainly Yuppie and Anglo-American. Because it is expensive this cuisine has priced itself out of the immigrant market.

**5B) Of more borrowings:** Participation in diversity is not limited to cuisines only. One should not discount the possibility that our subjects have adopted the attire of other groups, learned their languages or other cultural facets.

Dr. Navin Adatia attends different functions such as the African American *Kwanzaa*, Jewish *Bar Mitzvah*, Latin American social functions, and Asian rituals. Bhupinder Batra admits that being an older person he does not move about much. However, his sons do go to certain meetings and musical programs with a multicultural flavor. Prakash Chandarana *thinks* he has acquired an American accent. Tina Kotecha writes: “I sometimes borrow dress styles from other cultures

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<sup>340</sup> Brown & Mussel, *Foodways*, 170.



to look different and stylish. For example, the Vietnamese have a dress called *Au Dai*. It is very similar to the Indian Punjabi dress. I sometimes wear that to Indian functions or I'll wear something of Chinese fashion in an Indian way." Tina goes to ethnic festivals and likes Arabic, French, and Greek music. She likes to learn languages if possible. Manilal Padhiar wears American jeans because they are cheap, comfortable, and durable. He also has acquired a taste for Mexican music and dance from all the parties he attends. Cousin Raju has learned to speak Spanish to help him not only at work but also around Southern California and Mexico. Our male subjects wear suits with American designs and females wear perfumes made in America.

Dr. Janak Raval has acquired the following attributes: 1) The positive work ethic from Anglo-Americans, 2) The mainstream ritual of wearing business suits for formal events. He says one thus gains acceptance. One fits in, 3) He has internalized the mainstream ritual of introducing individuals at social gatherings especially when newcomers are involved. This makes everyone feel comfortable and at the same level, 4) He has learned to communicate clearly. This leads to greater harmony and understanding within a group, 5) From Hispanics he has learned to value strong family bonds and acquired a laid back, relaxed style.

**6A) Leisure:** All the subjects reported in writing or during the interview that they indulge in leisure activities such as family or communal picnics, visiting friends and relatives, and going to Indian movies or watching them at home. Their familiarity with popular L.A. landmarks (i.e. County Museum, Griffith Park Observatory, Disneyland, Universal Studios, etc.) is strengthened when close

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid. , 178.

friends and relatives from overseas visit. Gujrati Lohanas especially have friends and kin in U.K. and East Africa. Our Lohana subjects are busy during the summer entertaining these visitors.

**6B) Rose Parade:** One of the major leisure rituals and an even more important means of acculturation into the mythology of L.A. are watching this parade. The widely heralded Tournament of Roses, held each New Year's Day in Pasadena, has carried the fair name of the "Crown City" into every corner of the country. It calls forth a lavish profusion of gorgeously beautiful flowers in mid-winter for the delectation of the assembled throngs of people. The simple, sincere message of all the pageantry is: "The Southland is an invitation to health, happiness, and prosperity."<sup>342</sup>

It should be added that flowers and other organic material is organized around a theme. Plus, various mechanical devices are used to enable numerous sponsors (e.g. Airlines, banks, corporations, cities, counties, and even countries) to sponsor some 60-70 floats. During this ritual Los Angeles also shows off its ability to muster money, ingenious technology, youthful energy, and organizational ability into a highly enviable showcase.

Chandrakant Bharania exults: "...the flowers, the designs of the floats...what a brilliant idea! It can only happen in Pasadena!" Prakash Chandarana states: "We celebrate our climate, energy, and technology." Asha Chitnavis says: "...the sun, the flora, the fauna, volunteers and the organization...!" Tina Kotecha states: "I used to watch it. I don't so much. When we were young we used to watch the parade live so there's some nostalgia

associated with it. It's definitely a feeling of belonging to this city when we watch it." Manilal Padhiar writes: "We welcome the New Year with a display of roses and other flowers." Ashok Pradhan watches the Parade because he is proud of being an Angeleno and the fact that he is so close to an internationally televised event. Dr. Janak Raval watches the parade because it reinforces his sense of belonging to L.A. Most of our subjects have seen the Rose Parade in person and continue to see it on television every year.

### **7) Communal rituals:**

**7A) Birthdays:** Writes Asha Chitnavis: "We buy a cake for birthdays."

Note that in Asha's culture a birthday treat was a sweet dish prepared by the lady of the house. Both the cake and taking someone out for a birthday treat is a very American ritual for her. Tina Kotecha has a more incisive look. "The birthday parties here, particularly Sweet 16 parties for girls, have evolved from simple, communal parties. It reminds me of the Mexican Quinceria, almost like a debutante's day. The emphasis in L.A. appears to be on being a star, a princess, etc. So people seem to want to make their celebrations as grand as possible." Dr. Janak Raval's family has a cake with candles for birthdays. Indeed, none of our subjects celebrate a birthday without a cake.

**7B) Funerals:** Dr. Navin Adatia says: "Personally I think cremation is a more kind of aesthetic way, more healthier way to dispose of the body. There is a religious reason to it." Bhupinder Batra says: "Like Hindus we cremate our dead so they become one with nature." Says Asha Chitnavis: "According to Hindu precepts what comes from nature should become one with nature. So we cremate

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<sup>342</sup> Hunt, *California*, 51-52.

our dead. The ritual releases the soul from earthly restraints. Cremation also prevents any disease from spreading.” Indooben Dhaba says: “Since everybody is cremated it does not take up space. I do not want my body and bones to be preserved underground and to be taken care of thereafter.”

Zainul Kanji says: “I do not know why Muslims bury rather than cremate their dead. It is a Muslim custom. We send the soul back to Him.” Tina Kotecha says: “We believe the body is just an exterior, a garment. It’s the soul that survives everything. The burning does not touch it. You help purify a body by cremating it.” Manilal Padhiar says: “Cremation is a wonderful thing. You can keep the urns at home or do whatever you want with them. Burial takes up space but cremation does not. Also cremation is democratic. The rich and the not so rich end up in the same place.”

There is a very visible change in funeral rituals of *all* of our groups. First, instead of bringing the body home it is taken to a mortuary. Second, unlike the East African Asian tradition where a body would be placed on a board or table, the deceased is kept in a casket. This is aesthetically appealing, hygienic, and lends dignity to the deceased. Third, cremation in a mortuary is not only faster it is less messy.

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “A mortuary is very beneficial. Back home you had to get the wood, start the fire itself and clean up after the cremation. Here there is no such hassle.” Bhupinder Batra says: “Cremation, American style, is better than the one in Uganda.” Indooben Dhaba says: “Mortuaries are good because a body is nicely dressed up for viewing and placed in a nice coffin for the

funeral. In Uganda ladies were not allowed to go to the funeral but here we do.” Tina Kotecha says: “L.A. is the land of convenience. Mortuaries work around people’s schedules. They let you mourn on your own timetable. They make death more palpable. The casket goes into the machine and a button is pressed. You do not see the body after that. In addition, unlike the practice in India or Uganda, women also attend funerals. This breaks down the gender barrier.” Manilal Padhiar says: “In the modern world a mortuary is an advantage because a body can be kept in it for months. Friends and relatives in U.K. have an opportunity to arrive late to pay their respects to the dead.”

Also, in Uganda, as in India, people did not wear suits to funerals because that would be arrogance, “showing off” during a sad, painful occasion and therefore, an insult to the deceased. However, among our subjects men wearing suits is a common sight at funerals. Women working in offices also attend funerals in business attire.

**7C) Graduation:** As per Dr. Janak Raval graduation is celebrated with parties and dancing. In East Africa parties to celebrate the occasion were common but dancing and alcohol were taboo among those who were neither Goan nor Ismaili.

**7D) Weddings:** There is an equally marked change in the wedding rituals. Writes Prakash Chandarana: “Ceremonies are shorter.” Pankaj Padhiar adds: “Nowadays weddings are more Vegas style.” Slow dancing (a Goans and Ismaili ritual in East Africa) by the newly married couple and guests is now common to Gujratis and other groups. Dr. Janak Raval states that at weddings cake, western

music and dance are common. Alcohol is served at receptions. Mr. Vinod Dave, a Gujrati Brahmin priest from India, told this student a few months ago that he tailors his hymns and the accompanying rituals to the requirements of the couple. For example, references to the bride as being an obedient woman playing second fiddle to her husband are cut out if a request is made for the same. This would have been a sacrilege in Uganda.

### **8) Popular culture (sports):**

It should be noted that most of the men among our subjects watch one or more of the following popular American sports: basketball, baseball, and football on television. Some of them, like Prakash Chandarana and Dr. Janak Raval, sometimes watch these sports in stadiums. Sports are a primary means of acculturation not only to the regional lifestyle but also our national mythology.

What is the significance of these sports to our subjects? Spectator sports have become the most popular and the most involving of the public rituals of twentieth-century industrial, urban America. And the people who participate in the games are communicants, not merely spectators. Local teams draw large numbers of enthusiasts. Sandlot teams, teams sponsored by local businesses, teams of workers, teams made up of ethnic immigrant groups, all attract aspirants, players, managers, advisers, and spectators. The Little Leagues of modern life, with their intensive involvement of children and parents, continue a pattern of popular participation now more than a century old. The games and their teams are not only sources of activity and entertainment, their rituals provide opportunities for communication among townspeople who would not otherwise have had any

relationships at all. The teams, and participation in the rituals, are avenues by which newcomers are included in communities; individuals can win social approval and make the contacts with people that bring social mobility and economic advancement.<sup>343</sup>

The mass appeal of American games—their requirement of large numbers of communicants—reinforces the ideal of democratic participation and democratic community in their initiates. The games are contests between teams, rituals of competition modeled on competition between two political parties, one wins and one loses, one is “in” and one is “out.” Increasingly in the twentieth century, the rules governing the rituals of games were changed to assure that one team wins—that there is clear victory rather than tied scores, thus reinforcing the American ideal of victory and success—what English author John Fowles has called “the old Puritan fallacy: life is either a destination, an arrived success, or not worth the cost.” In what some believe is the organized violence ritualized in modern games, many find realities and truths about themselves, their communities, and the world they live in. (253)

In very large towns and cities, where few people can see any connection between an individual and his work, teams play a vital, often central, role in creating a sense of individuals operating within a community—as opposed to the common urban sense of masses of disparate and unconnected individuals (endless, streaming). (254) The logic of the team-sport ritual brings the imagery of the machine and of humans organized into machine-teams together with ideals of heroism, individual work, and skill acquisition. It is in both the specialization

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<sup>343</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 252.

and the uniformity of the team that baseball—and football and basketball—idealizes the life of Americans in industrial cities. (255)

One of the characteristics of American games is their essential democratic quality. Even those who are poor, if they are good athletes, can expect to get college scholarships, high pay, and upward mobility from American games. Those games were, from the very beginnings, visible proof that the communities (and the nation) in which they were played were democratic and classless. (256)

Participation in sports rituals, particularly in the big leagues, is taken as an indication by most that the individual player is a success, and group to which the player belongs is fully part of the community, essentially an American and entitled to all that it means. Participation, even at local levels, is taken as a sign by all that there is equality among those who visibly participate. The teams and their games are a means of upward mobility, leading in some few cases to fame and fortune, but more importantly and more frequently leading simply out of the orphanage, out of the ghetto, out of poverty. Playing the game makes people American, makes them equal—even though they may seem different, unequal. The ritual of the games makes people really part of a community, part of America. (257)

What Barth says about baseball *in particular* also applies to our subjects: Speed occupied the spectators, who were constantly under pressure to match the hectic tempo of the modern city. Baseball ignored any urge to participate in the play and, like urban politics, followed representational lines. The action in the ballpark demonstrated to them that it was possible, after all, to keep up with the fleeting moment. By making intense competition against an opponent its essential feature, baseball seemed to legitimize and extol each spectator's daily struggle for success. Watching the rivalry on the diamond introduced standards of competition into the spectators' lives. The game also



reduced their daily tensions because its ups and downs seemed more momentous than their own lives. The spectators learned to appreciate baseball's demonstrations of efficiency and excellence—qualities many of them took as keys to success in industrial America. They followed the dynamics between individual competition and cooperative success. Fans loved the order and efficiency of professional baseball. Life and work in the modern city had awakened them to an appreciation for an economy of motion. The sharing of excellence demonstrated on the field converted the enjoyment of a diversion into an education and a conditioning agent. Momentarily removed from their struggle for a decent existence in the modern city, fans also learned to appreciate the game's examples of fairness and decency. The ballpark attracted residents of the modern city who watched the game as another step in the daily process of becoming Americans. To immigrants, it indeed seemed a *true expression of the American spirit*. The ritual of watching baseball forged a bond between diverse groups of people, and watching baseball took precedence over ethnic games because rooting for big-city teams also gave rootless people a sense of belonging. The features of intense rivalry as well as a limited amount of sportsmanship, general enthusiasm as well as rabid partisanship oriented crowds of people toward an acceptance of competition as a part of daily life, an awareness of a distinct urban vitality, and an appreciation for recreation.<sup>344</sup>

Prakash Chandarana enjoys watching baseball, basketball, and football with his family. Hemant Chitnavis watches soccer and Tennis. Indooben Dhaba watches baseball. She says: "When I was a little girl in Uganda I used to watch cricket. Here I watch baseball instead. I do not learn anything by watching baseball but I enjoy myself." Zainul Kanji watches the Super bowl. He plays soccer and tennis with other Ismailis. He also enjoys watching tennis on television.

Manilal Padhiar watches baseball at the bar and relaxes. His favorite game is soccer that he plays with friends on Sundays and whenever he has free time. Manilal has made a distinctive contribution to the Southland's sports scenario.

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<sup>344</sup> Barth, *City people*, 174-190, passim.

Twenty-five years ago he started a Field Hockey Club and began coaching boys. Today five of his boys are playing for the U.S. national hockey team. His sons play for the U.S. National Junior Boys team. Manilal himself practices with the U.S. national Hockey team. He says hockey means a lot to him because he used to play it back home. He emphasizes: “Hockey is my game and my life. It is also convenient because unlike other sports, it does not drag on. You are done with it in an hour and you go home.”

Cousin Pankaj plays basketball to get rid of the daily stress. His older brother Raju plays the game for exercise and watches it on television. He sometimes watches football and plays tennis for relaxation. Ashwin Patel watches football, soccer, and tennis. Ashok Pradhan watches the World Series of baseball, a few Laker games and the Championship game. He also watches professional tennis. Dr. Janak Raval’s sons play baseball. They also play basketball in local teams and he coaches them. The family frequently goes to NBA games at home. They are all Laker fans. Janak watches football on television. His sons play soccer and he coaches them. The boys have learnt to play tennis as well. Note that in Uganda tennis was an expensive game to indulge in and golf was definitely an elite sport. Professional wrestling is popular among the children of our subjects. Especially appealing to these children is the theme of “good vs. evil” embodied in wrestling.

What is notable is that while many men watch cricket on Pay For View and follow international matches only one respondent (Vikram Jhala) plays cricket, the most popular sport then among East African Asians.

### 9) Status of women:

In this student's opinion, there is no better indication of acculturation than a change, however minor, in the status of women in a notoriously patriarchal society. Bharati says of their status in East Africa: "*Women should have a secondary place in society*, is not just a facile statement of the Rotary Club in-between lunch-and-speech conversation type, but a very germane reflection of the consanguinity syndrome in Hindu society."<sup>345</sup>

**9A) Dating:** Of this ritual in East Africa Bharati says: "Prospective mates are allowed to enjoy drives in their parents' cars or go to the movies. Indulgence of a mild sort amounts, on a cautious guess, to about 10 percent, and though (American and British) movie-inspired kissing is good style, a little necking and hardly any petting at such occasions; premarital full sexual intercourse among young adults of the same social and economic grouping is virtually non-existent, and its suggestion elicits shocked horror."<sup>346</sup>

Things seem to be changing here. Dr. Navin Adatia says: "It is not that prevalent. It is not like western culture where they start dating at 14, 15, 16 years of age. They do date at a reasonable age. They go out and have lots of fun. Boys and girls make plans and that is ok." Bhupinder Batra says in a matter of fact tone: "I can see our children go to school and colleges and of course, there is dating. Also, quite a few inter-caste marriages have taken place. Things do happen when they date. They have a chance to study each other. Though the

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<sup>345</sup> Ghai, *Portrait*, 51-52.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*

Indian community is very reserved and more orthodox the younger generation wants to be freer.”

Prakash Chandarana states: “Yes, the concept of dating exists in my family and community. Parents are accepting the American life style.” Hemant Chitnavis opines: “The concept exists and is useful because nobody wants to end up with a wrong life partner.” Indooben Dhaba says: “Yes, we have it and it is a good practice.” Zainul Kanji affirms that the concept also exists in his Ismaili community. Tina Kotecha says: “Dating in Indian community is frowned upon until you are much older. It has to be structured in that the parents pre-approve your dates. That’s how it is supposed to be but the reality is different. The ideal age range for dating is early 20s *after* you graduate from college. 21 is the magic number.”

Manilal Padhiar also agrees that dating exists in his subculture. Cousin Pankaj disagrees. Older brother Raju states: “Not so in my family as my kids are still young. But I do know of some families that allow dating in their homes.” Ashok Pradhan affirms that the practice exists among Maharashtrians.

**9B) Arranged Marriage vs. Love marriage:** Bharati writes about marriage in general then: “An overwhelming majority of all marriages, Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim, are still arranged by the parents, but the children have a veto to a far more real degree than in the Indian sister communities.” (45)

Bharati says of love marriages then: “Such marriages are not arranged by parents and constitute a negligible proportion of marriages in the higher income brackets and are virtually unknown in the lower income brackets. The male

partner, especially among the *modernized* and affluent, makes bold of the fact that he broke the old outmoded fashion to which the majority adheres.” (47)

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “You do not see arranged marriages happening here any more. Friends and family act as go-betweens and introduce the boy and girl to each other. They get a chance to know each other for a while before deciding if they are compatible. Even in Uganda it was not a *totally* arranged marriage. Mediators did play a role there too.” Bhupinder Batra says: “Nowadays boys and girls meet and if they want to get married they inform their parents that they have found somebody. Their parents look into the matter and if they like what they see they consent to the marriage. I have seen a lot of such marriages and there is nothing wrong with it.”

Prakash Chandarana states that the practice of arranging marriages has changed. Asha Chitnavis says: “Nowadays members of the younger generation arrange their own marriages.” Hemant Chitnavis opines: “This practice has changed because here the younger generation has all the freedom it wants.” Indooben Dhaba says: “In the olden days boys and girls had no choice. They had to obey their parents. Now they get to know each other and if they are suitable for each other they get married. We agree to the arrangement, we have to go with them.”

Zainul Kanji states that the practice has changed among Ismailis as well. Tina Kotecha says: “I guess it’s semi-arranged nowadays. It depends upon how you define *arranged marriage*. In the strictest sense your parents would choose your partner. You don’t have a choice whatsoever. We don’t have that any more,

thank God! We do have this pre-approval process where parents first pick prospective grooms or brides and then you have a choice to pick somebody out of the ones they picked. That's highly prevalent from what I can see in the Lohana community certainly."

Manilal Padhiar does not agree that the practice of arranged marriages has changed. Note that his marriage was arranged. Cousin Pankaj states: "It is not the parents' choice any more. Indian society is more open to western ways." Brother Raju opines: "There are some families that carry on the tradition of arranged marriages. Others allow their children to marry into other castes." Ashok Pradhan opines: "The practice has changed somewhat." Dr. Janak Raval states: "More often marriages occur as the youth meet and fall in love. This has led to a greater incidence of interethnic and inter-religious marriages."

**9C) Purity:** Bharati says of our subjects in East Africa: "The identification of *purity* with virginity is axiomatic, and naively uncritical even among completely westernized people. The young men's naiveté about women and their notions of romantic love are in part created, and wholly reinforced by the Hindi movies which form the focus of East African Indian secular entertainment across all the groups constituting the Asian minority." (46)

**9Ci) Sexual double standard:** As for this related issue Bharati says: "A girl who is suspected of having lost her virginity, either abroad or at home, is not likely to find a marriage partner at all, regardless of her religious and caste background. The same, of course, does not apply to men." (47)

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “Overall there is a double standard. Usually, the son gets more freedom and privileges than the daughter gets.” Bhupinder Batra opines: “It has always been there. It is still there.” Prakash Chandarana and Asha Chitnavis agree with him. However, her son Hemant opines: “I believe in equal rights for women in jobs and *other* fields.” Tina Kotecha says: “The official word is that you cannot date until you are older. But if the boys date and they are caught it’s not the end of the world. If anything there is a ‘wink, wink, great guy, that’s my boy’ attitude. For the girls there are consequences like solitary confinement.” Tina confirmed that this double standard extends to sexual expression.

Manilal Padhiar says this double standard has changed in his subculture. Cousin Pankaj agrees. Brother Raju says: “Women have become more outspoken and they can stand up for themselves. They like to be classed equal to men.” Dr. Janak Raval says: “The double standard has diminished with the community spread out and less coherent.”

**9Cii) Occupational double standard:** Bharati says: “An unmarried girl who acts in a matter-of-fact manner in the modern sense, as in taking employment in such techno centric organizations such as television, radio, the Press, or sales promoting business, or even the fact that she went to school in Britain makes young men suspicious very much like their parents, about her eligibility as a wife. Even the most *advanced* young men tend to bracket such girls as ‘club-types’, and once this nomenclature is applied to any girl, her marriage chances are profoundly jeopardized.” (46)

Prakash Chandarana states that times have changed. He says: “East African Asian women here are more independent and self confident.” Asha Chitnavis disagrees with him. Hemant Chitnavis says: “The status of our women has definitely changed. They have become equal partners in life and at work.” Indooben Dhaba asserts forcefully: “We do not have the double standard any more. Men and women have equal rights. For example, when it comes to buying a house they have equal say.”

Zainul Kanji affirms that the status of women in his Ismaili community was not secondary to begin with. Tina Kotecha says: “Certainly my generation is very open. We are fully emancipated though there are expectations that we do know how to run a house whereas a man is not. We are able to pursue whatever educational dreams we have. For our moms I imagine it is fairly liberal. My mom is allowed to do whatever she wants. I have more choices than my mother had.”

Manilal Padhiar agrees that the status of women has changed. Cousin Pankaj opines: “Women now have more responsibility toward improvement in financial growth.” Brother Raju adds: “Women have much more freedom to come and go as they please. They have become more educated, have more opportunities to do anything they want.” Ashok Pradhan states: “I do not believe it was secondary. If you mean women held second spot or status? Not in my family and my upbringing! Outside the family, yes.” Dr Janak Raval opines: “Women’s status has changed since more of them are working for a second income. Traditional roles are under stress and an equilibrium has not been reached.”



The type and range of opinions clearly indicate that the status of women, unlike the one in East Africa, is not static any more. Not only is it in a state of flux but also it is changing for good. It is hard to gauge the type, extent, and intensity of resistance from senior citizens but it is very clear that the change that is taking place is the most beneficial aspect of acculturation.

#### **10) Success:**

It definitely facilitates acculturation. Prakash Chandarana, with hard work and finesse, succeeded in his auto parts business, and bought a second home (a large one this time). He says people now like him and respect him a lot more. As a result, Prakash is now very active in community affairs. Zainul Kanji earned undergraduate and graduate degrees while working full time. His employers as well friends and relatives were very impressed with his work ethic. Tina Kotecha writes: "After some struggle I passed the California bar exam, that has allowed me to work with a good firm that in turn has opened up many possibilities for me."

Manilal Padhiar, through hard work, honesty, and a genuinely generous and helpful attitude has succeeded in business, sports (field hockey), community affairs (Hindu temple and Gujrati *Raas-Garba*), and in organizing the Fourth of July celebrations in his neighborhood. His cousin Pankaj helps him coach the national Field Hockey team. Pankaj states: "Some of my nieces and nephews play on it. It reinforces the family bond." Older brother Raju writes: "I fix cars for a living. I enjoy people being amazed at how good the car is after I am done with it. A client can drive a car without worrying once I repair it. My quality service

results in me meeting new people.” Ashok Pradhan states: “I have successfully maintained a steady job over the past 25 years or so. I have earned recognition and respect from my employer.” Dr. Janak Raval’s professional achievements (including leadership at the institutional level) have led to recognition by L.A. Radiological Society.

In our society the most prominent indicator of success is the acquisition of a home. It is noteworthy that 48 of our respondents are homeowners. Those who are not homeowners live with their home-owning parents, progeny, or siblings. Nevertheless, the former contribute to family expenses, mortgage, repairs, and family unity. If success facilitates acculturation then it is equally true that acculturation facilitates success. After all, it does require familiarity with the language, institutions, ideals, and rules of the host society and the proper expression of them all to succeed.

### **Conclusion:**

A comparison of their former lifestyle in East Africa and contemporary lifestyle in Los Angeles will clearly show if they have succeeded in acculturating or not. Let us pause and read what Bharati writes about them: “It must not be forgotten that in East Africa the corpus of western influence is itself very limited in scope. (57) The Indians in East Africa have not had the benefit of direct contact with the British and European intellectual world and those who went and go abroad for studies, do so with narrowly set targets: the medical or dental profession, law. Perhaps engineering; none of these professions or the preceding training are culture-giving per se: it is quite possible, and rather easy, to take a

medical degree in London without ever having heard anything about modern British literature and philosophy, and the fine arts, etc. It would for these reasons be unfair to the Asian and the western elements that coalesced in East Africa to stipulate a humanistic or aesthetically discursive climate where there never was any institution of precedence.” (58)

Bharati adds: “*Western impact provides the form rather than the content of modern living among the Asian minority* (Italics mine). There is hardly any direct enjoyment of value-free food, drink and sex or the other goods of an emancipated, open society, as appurtenances to the sort of detached eudemonism, which many Indians in East Africa could afford. There is no self-persiflage, hence little sense of humor. (60) As the hallmark of modern culture in its ideological sense—humanism, self-reliant, kinship-free planning, autonomous value judgments, etc. inclusive—is secularism, this has not transpired to the Asians of East Africa. (61) For all this, no one can blame the Asians; there simply was a lack of precedence for acculturation. The west to which the Indians of East Africa have been and are exposed, is not the west of Mozart, Picasso and Bertrand Russell, but the west of tea and sisal estate manager or expert, and the government officer whose intellectual and golf handicaps are very disparate indeed.” (61)

Well, upon arrival here the vast majority of our subjects still did not go to school to learn about Bertrand Russell and Picasso but some, like Zainul Kanji and Tina Kotecha, did go on to acquire advanced education. Also, unlike East Africa, our subjects are no more a self-contained community that can blithely afford to ignore the larger non-Asian Indian Los Angeles around them. Whether

they arrived here as adults or children, they have had to come into contact with Americans of all sorts, at all levels and in every type of human interaction. As a result acculturation *has* taken place. The point here is that westernization no longer merely constitutes the form, the outer shell, of their identity. It can be safely stated that having spent 8-31 years in Los Angeles our subjects have been reasonably acculturated into the Los Angeles lifestyle. Westernization in the form of Americanization, Los Angeles style, is now a vibrant part of their identity. The majority of our subjects have become *genuinely* tricultural. The selective but successful acculturation is a testimony to their stability, contentment in their tricultural existence, and self-confidence. It is also indicative of not only the socioeconomic progress they have made in *less* than a generation but also of the progress they will be making.

However, there are two negative facets of the group that, despite acculturation, need to be considered:

**A) Relative ignorance:** First, their intellectual awareness of acculturation is not in-depth. None of them could tie the freeway commute to the broader mythology of the Good Life, with the exception of Dr. Navin Adatia nobody knew the architectural style of his/her house, or seems to have grasped the democratic aspect of the suburbia (Tina Kotecha being the exception here), the front lawn and the sports they watch. They are into the hard-earned enjoyment of Southern California lifestyle *not* in its analyses. They are happy that they have made it. Nothing else counts. In their defense it can be asserted that in-depth

intellectual awareness is neither a prerequisite for acculturation nor a condition for maintaining their new way of life although it would certainly help.

**B) Of success and (*lack of*) social consciousness:**

In American belief, the individual has always been the primary economic unit of the society. He/She is the engine of progress and wealth.<sup>347</sup> “Consumer” is the modern label for the American individual in economic clothing.<sup>348</sup> The pursuit of happiness is at the core of the mythology of the individual. (188) The reality as well as the most visible symbols of the consumer society—automobiles and highways, single-family dwellings in mass developments, and supermarket-shopping malls—are also part of the imagery and logic of the mythology of individual independence. (197)

Single-family homes are the substance of American independence. A person’s home is his or her own castle. The sturdy yeoman lives on his own land. Owning your own home gives you a place—visible to the whole community, the whole society. And—purchased with credit, filled with machines and appliances which the homeowner consumes—it is the dual symbol of independence and consumption. (197)

Unlike East Africa, the ethnic or caste group here does not have a tight grip (comparatively speaking) on the individual any more. What is good about this scenario is that even though our subjects have gained more privacy and asserted their independence from their respective communities by buying homes, cars, and SUVs they have *not* gone totally individualistic. They are also not

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<sup>347</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 131.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

defiant of authority. They are still strongly rooted in family and community, have maintained the culture they brought with them and are contributing to the healthy dynamics of Southern California individually and collectively.

What is negative about this scenario is that having bought houses and cars (both high status symbols in East Africa) they have settled in a state of bliss which does not allow them to see beyond their immediate family and ethnic group. Symbolically they have regained what they had lost upon their expulsion/flight. In fact, materially, they have more than what they had in Uganda. Concretely they have achieved their American Dream. They have climbed Mount Everest. Now they are on cloud 9. The only thing that remains to be done is to ensure that their children will prosper and that their group remains culturally viable. Besides paying bills, their activities are confined to these immediate goals only. They have no vision of reaching out to other ethnic groups (on whom they are interdependent) institutionally, or to try and understand the intricacies of Southern California.

## CHAPTER 8/ LOS ANGELES: EL DIABLO

### Introduction:

According to Dr. Floyd Matson one should show El Dorado as well as El Diablo (negative side) of a region. To deny that a negative side exists is to deny one half of a reality. Indeed, when one strives for and acquires a lifestyle it comes with both the positive and negative aspects. This chapter deals with the negative side of Los Angeles. Like the positive side, it is multifaceted and extremely complex. The two aspects are interrelated. Although this aspect is shown from the perspective of intellectually sophisticated people (journalists, planners, professors, scholars, teachers, writers, etc.) an attempt is also being made to find out if our subjects are aware of the various facets of this aspect. If our subjects are only crudely aware of it, are blissfully unaware of it, or make light of it, then it only goes to show the power of the Myth of Los Angeles.

With this *power* in mind the negative aspect is intentionally being shown in detail to evoke the question: "If El Diablo is so big why do they keep coming here? Why do they stay here? The answer is simple: "El Dorado is much, much bigger than El Diablo."

As per David Thompson there is a shared assumption that Hollywood's L.A. is an affliction, a place where idiots or worse make rubbish for staggering salaries; a place of smog, deceit, vanity, cultural cancellation, death of the soul, et

cetera.<sup>349</sup> Of course, there is a grain of truth in every stereotype but for a more factual look at the underside of L.A. read on:

**1) Of the ravages of nature:**

**1A) Earthquakes:** It is not only the desert that haunts the imagination of Southern California; there is an abiding fear of earthquakes.<sup>350</sup> California is an active earthquake country. It has in the San Andreas Fault, along with its other wonders and marvels, the largest known earthquake fault in the world, which extends more than a thousand miles and knifes through urban Los Angeles.<sup>351</sup> In recent decades the region has been jolted by earthquakes, which caused sizeable damage (Sylmar, 1973; and Northridge, 1994). Indeed, seismologists are confident that due to a steady build up of pressure a major earthquake (on the scale of 8.00 plus) will occur in less than thirty years.

The newcomers, of course, dismiss the earthquake menace lightly but the older residents speak of earthquakes with awe.<sup>352</sup> While taking elaborate precautions against earthquakes (such as ordinances limiting the height of buildings) Southern California amusingly minimizes the actual dangers involved.<sup>353</sup> This attitude and its manifestations are a testimony to the powerful Myth of Los Angeles where it is sunny every day, everything looks promising and nothing can go wrong! However, Prakash Chandarana opines: “Unexpected earthquakes are very scary.” Asha Chitnavis says: “I fear earthquakes. They can

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<sup>349</sup> Michaels, Reid, & Scherr, *Imagining California*, 28.

<sup>350</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 200.

<sup>351</sup> McWilliams, *Great Exception*, 246.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 200.



cause incalculable damage.” Some of Southern California’s rich folklore is woven around earthquakes.

**1B) Brushfires:** The *Santa Ana*, which is named for one of the canyons it rushes through, is a *foehn* wind. It has distinct characteristics: it occurs on the leeward slope of a mountain range and, although the air begins as a cold mass, it is warmed as it comes down the mountain and appears finally as a hot dry wind. For about twenty scattered days a year of the *Santa Ana*, which, with its incendiary dryness, invariably means fire.<sup>354</sup> Every summer burning hillsides are a common site in the basin. Wade Graham emphasizes that in California, an explosive hillside intermix is a traditional form of urbanism, and it has shown a discouraging pattern. When a neighborhood burns in Malibu or Berkeley, the owners rebuild, generally with insurance and disaster relief money, building bigger and more expensive houses. Property values rise, the area becomes more desirable, and more houses are built even higher on the slopes. Eventually, another fire torches the neighborhood, and the insurance and relief payments, being larger, cover the cost of rebuilding even bigger structures, and so on. So far, no limit to this perverse cycle has been reached.<sup>355</sup>

Prakash Chandarana writes: “Brushfires are caused by the hot weather. They burn all the vegetation. In turn the soil becomes soft. As a result, in the rainy season we have floods.” Asha Chitnavis says: “Houses are burned and great damage is caused. Beautiful trees are destroyed.” Ashok Pradhan says: “Brushfires, both natural and man-made are nature’s way of getting rid of dried

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<sup>354</sup> Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (New York: Noonday; Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), 218-219.

vegetation and such. It is a financial burden in the long run. Not much can be done about it. As for arson, not much you can do as an individual.” Dr. Janak Raval states: “Since we are not campers or smokers we do not cause brushfires. Thus this ravage of nature has to be faced with little choice.”

**1C) Landslides/floods:** With the top cover gone there is nothing to hold the soil in place. Joan Didion correctly observes that Southern California has two periods of torrential subtropical rains, which continue for weeks and wash out the hills and send subdivisions sliding toward the sea.<sup>356</sup> If the topsoil remains intact a hill may still start moving because of soil under the grass-cover made porous by rain. During every rainy season some houses actually slide down a hill or fall over a cliff undermined by rain. The existence of these hazards is nothing new. However, what is surprising is that so many of the newcomers are not aware of these dangers and when they do become familiar with the same, make light of it.

The general lack of cultural understanding in Southern California is strikingly shown in the neglect of forest resources, a matter intimately related to the ability of the region to husband its limited water supply. Flood and forest problems arose in direct ratio to the increasing density of population. There is, for example, an almost perfect correlation between the number of forest fires and population increases. With so much of the sparse cover of the mountains having been removed by fires, it is not surprising to note a correlation between the increasing amounts spent on flood control and the number of forest fires. During the rainy season of late years, waters trumpet down the canyons and arroyos,

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<sup>355</sup> Wade Graham, “Burn it to Save it!”, *L. A. Times Magazine*, October 20 2002, 36.

<sup>356</sup> Didion, *Bethlehem*, 219.

causing extraordinary damage.<sup>357</sup> Asha Chitnavis notices: “Floods not only destroy homes but they also carry away property and people.”

Wallace Stegner points out the houses that in Oakland, Los Altos Hills or the San Fernando Valley are carried by mudslides down upon houses below are a dramatic result of benching clay hills for building sites. Highway cuts that in another climate soon heal with turf and shrubs remain, unless heroic landscaping measures are taken, as raw eroding wounds. Yet builders go on planning, and planning commissions go on approving, subdivisions on watershed hillsides, on unconsolidated fill drastically susceptible to earthquake damage, on agricultural land as productive as any in the world.<sup>358</sup>

Ashok Pradhan says: “Floods are also nature’s way to ‘clean up’ if you will. Other than the financial burden a flood puts on citizens by way of increased costs, taxes etc. we have to live with it.”

## 2) Homeownership:

**2Ai) About space and illusion:** Those of us who have actually grown up in poverty and perpetual scarcity are grateful that this country gives us the means to acquire a house and stock it with consumer goods. However, the concept has a starkly negative side that immigrants either consciously ignore or repress into the subconscious. What is being hinted at is the fact that back home we were quite used to, if not very happy with, living in apartments and neighborhoods with high population densities. In other words, building upwards would maximize space and accommodate many more people than building horizontally. It would also

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<sup>357</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 194-195.

<sup>358</sup> Adams et. al., *Dynamic State*, 214.

minimize environmental destruction. However, the vast majority of the denizens of the United States, and most certainly those of Los Angeles, do not see it that way. Everybody insists upon acquiring his/her Dream House. This ideal is buttressed by the fact that not owning a home is evidence of failure in our society.

Asha Chitnavis opines: "Because one finances the purchase of a house the actual price is much more than the listed price. Plus, the house is not really yours till it is fully paid for!" Manilal Padhiar opines: "To make payments for 30 years is a big commitment. Add to this the cost of maintenance and repair." Cousin Raju says: "It is a money pit. It takes a lot of work. One is always fixing something or the other."

Indeed, we have a cultural problem here and it is the most fundamental one. However, to be critical of the very concept of (single) homeownership is an anathema in Los Angeles.

**2Aii) Lawns:** They consume vast amounts of water, which is scarce to begin with in perennially parched Southern California, and getting scarcer as newcomers move here by the millions. Lawns require vast amounts of chemicals in the form of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, which turn them into environmental minefields. They do not support our native fauna, which leads to a breakdown of the local ecosystem. For better or worse, the lawn continues to resonate with millions of Southern Californians who are happily oblivious to its flaws.<sup>359</sup> Lawns are so satisfying because they make one feel like one is in control of nature. But what one is doing is throttling nature.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Preston, "Whither the Lawn?", 16.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid. , 17.

The numbers game gets more complicated when our population growth is factored into the equation. State officials project a scary 50 percent increase, from 35 million to 53 million residents, during the next 25 yrs. The Metropolitan Water District may lose a sizeable portion of the water that now comes from the Colorado River. (17)

Prakash Chandarana states that hiring a gardener to maintain the lawn is an extra expense. Zainul Kanji is blunt: “It is a pain in the butt. I have to cut the grass every two weeks. I am too cheap to hire a gardener. The same thing with the backyard.” Manilal Padhiar says: “Cutting the lawn every weak is a chore.” Cousin Pankaj agrees with him. Brother Raju adds: “It takes away some of your time.” Dr. Janak Raval says: “There is always the need to cut, fertilize, and water it so it at least looks as good as the neighbor’s!”

### 3) Excessive consumption:

The poet William Blake wrote two centuries ago: “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.”<sup>361</sup> This certainly is *not* true of Southern California. There was a time when wretched excess was the exclusive province of divine-right monarchs and mega-millionaires. The rich still lead lives of otherworldly extravagance.<sup>362</sup> However, today the rich are just one end of the continuum of surfeit. Wretched excess has become a truly egalitarian motif, one that cuts across class and cultural lines. Call it the Big Gulp Culture, because it manifests itself not just in opulence but also in sheer outlandish size. All around us, everything—our cars, appliances, the food we eat, the entertainment we

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<sup>361</sup> Patrick J. Kiger, “Living Ever Larger: How Wretched Excess became a Way of Life in Southern California,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, June 9 2002, 10.

enjoy—is oversized, overstuffed, overdone, over-elaborate and, at times, bewilderingly overwhelming. (10,12)

“When do you have enough in America? Never!” says French anthropologist Rapaille, who has spent much of the past two decades in this country analyzing the American consumer. “It’s a culture of excess, a permanently nouveau riche mentality. We want the biggest, the most extreme of everything.” (12)

The trend seems unstoppable, even in the face of economic uncertainty and the cataclysmic events of 2001. A survey published in *Advertising Age* in March 2001 for example, showed that even after the shock of the September 11 terrorist attacks, 60 percent of consumers’ spending habits remained unchanged. In some ways, our anxiety actually stimulated the urge to acquire. (12)

At the same time, it is hard not to worry about the consequences of living so large—obesity-related diseases, accidents caused by the massiveness of our vehicles, mountains of credit card debt, the environmental carnage we are wrecking by gobbling up resources. You have got to wonder how much of the enmity from people elsewhere in the world is the result of our excessive ways. And as one looks down the road from 6 ½ feet up one wonders: “How big a gulp does one have to take to finally feel satisfied?” (12)

Prakash Chandarana opines: “Our food portions are very big. Fountain drinks are bigger, so are the sandwiches.” Asha Chitnavis says: “We drink tea from big mugs. Food portions in restaurants are bigger.” Hemant Chitnavis says:

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

“In a restaurant they literally overfeed you by serving more food. This has contributed to Americans being overweight.” Pankaj Padhiar agrees that McDonald’s fries are too large.

Today we are likely to buy groceries in 100,00-plus-square-foot warehouse clubs, where we pay from \$30-\$100 for an annual membership. This entitles us to stuff our shopping carts with products that are themselves gigantic—44-pound bags of dog food and 300-tablet bottles of pain reliever (12-13). Raju Padhiar says: “Here you buy more food than you need.”

Oversized floor plans and kitchens characterize the Dream House. The 12 to 15 feet “Great Room” (for watching a 64” projection TV’s) often with a two-story atrium ceiling, increasingly has replaced the living room. Raju Padhiar opines: “We buy houses bigger than our needs.” The house likely is filled with bigger furniture, appliances and fixtures including the out-sized refrigerator, and mattresses nearly twice as thick as they were in the mid-1980s. In the bathroom, the standard tub is giving way to a “garden tub,” an oval tub for two with powerful water jets. About 7 percent of bathroom remodeling upgrades now include a TV or stereo. The garage is getting bigger too--a three-car space is now standard. (13)

Our subjects have been infected with the consumptive bug. Prakash Chandarana says: “Bigger SUV’s means higher gas consumption.” Hemant Chitnavis agrees with him. Asha Chitnavis says: “My oldest son has bought so many knickknacks he does not even use!” Zainul Kanji has bought exercise equipment that is gathering dust. Tina Kotecha admits: “I usually buy too many

clothes.” Raju Padhiar says: “You buy good looking clothes from the store and never wear them. We have more than one car in the family.” Ashok Pradhan opines: “Consumer items, particularly clothing, are sometimes bought when there really is no need.” Dr. Janak Raval sums it up thus: “We live in a large house. We have three cars for just two drivers. Our SUV is a gas-guzzler. Our restaurants and fast food places have large-size helpings and 16 oz. Drinks. The food is literally junk—high fat, high calorie and low fiber.”

A telling comment by Kurt Bernard, publisher of *Barnard’s Retail Marketing Report*, a hot read among trend-conscious merchandisers, puts everything into perspective. He declares: “Southern California is not an upscale market. Any sense of opulence is an illusion, a Potmekin prosperity made up of pyramiding credit-card debt, leasing (as opposed to buying) and spending instead of saving.”<sup>363</sup>

Peter Michelson argues that in the United States “accumulation had become the basic cultural rhythm.”<sup>364</sup> What I am thinking of is not just accumulation but the rhythms of accumulation as a process of acquiring and laying waste, of acquisition and disposal, of production and consumption—the rhythms of motions and gestures through which we regularly go as we participate in these processes. These rhythms have articulated themselves most powerfully as the techno-rhythms by which the flow of activity in the techno-system and the techno-culture is energized—techno-rhythms of “rationally” organized control of domination of nature and of humanity in the interest of accumulation. The

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<sup>363</sup> Steve Salerno, “Debt not be proud,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, January 29 1995, 8.



rhythms of accumulation are inherently expansive and imperial, competitively laying claim to everything within reach, sparing no one in whom dreams of acquisition or consumption can be touched or artificially generated, tending (so it appears) to draw everyone into the dance and even enjoying it, though if unchecked by countervailing rhythms such as those of craftsmanship and human plurality it is a dance of death.<sup>365</sup>

The rhythms of accumulation are deceptive at least in this: They appear to be linear, directional, and cumulative, with acquisition following an ascending line we call progress, economic development, and increasing affluence. But at least from the perspective of experience as well as from the perspective of the world, the rhythms of accumulation are not linear but circular. Their tendency is acceleration, but what they gain is not greater proximity to some goal the achievement of which might yield rest and satisfaction, but velocity in a circular rhythm of movement that acquires increasing independence of all goals as it circles faster and faster, feeding upon itself in a process that is intrinsically endless, gathering centrifugal force as it accelerates, carrying its participants farther and farther from the still point at the center. (41)

The appearance of linearity in these circular motions is due in part to the rhythms of accumulation setting the pace for rhythms of mobility—of upward and social mobility, which proceeds by accumulation and is expected to manifest itself in accelerated accumulation, and of occupational and geographical mobility.

Interwoven with these rhythms are those of mobility in the global flow of natural

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<sup>364</sup> Peter Michelson, "Where did Neighborhoods Go?", *The New Republic* (October 7, 1972): 25, quoted in Roland A. Delettre, "The Rituals of Humanity and the Rhythms of Reality", *PROSPECTS* 5 (1980), 40.

resources and of agricultural and manufactured goods as well as of human beings and cultural symbols and their constitutive and reconstitutive powers. All such mobility is further articulated according to the formative rhythms embodied in the prevailing modes of transportation and communication. (41)

There is nothing inexorable about any of these developments. We are not simply passive subjects of mysterious historical forces. These developments reflect the play of interests and the struggle for power, as well what Clifford Geertz calls the continuing human “struggle for the real,”<sup>366</sup> and they embody the consequences of values held and commitments and judgments made. The rhythms of this sort, once set in motion, may develop a momentum of their own that becomes difficult to change if those rhythms have become fundamental to our own sense of reality and formative of our imagination respecting what is humanely possible and desirable. (41) A natural outcome of excessive consumption is the equally excessive rhythm of waste.

#### **4) Trouble in academia:**

The effects of the impending crisis in education are not as obvious as darkened streets and empty taps, but they reveal our state’s same inability to act—as well as the growing paradox between the lifestyle we demand and the honesty and sacrifices we shun. California’s institutions of higher education—the marvelous tripartite system of junior colleges, state universities, and elite universities that was once the envy of the nation—are in paralyzes. At some California State University campuses, 30- 40 percent of the course offerings are

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<sup>365</sup> Delattre, “Rituals”, 40-41.

now remedial in nature. In response, we advocate ending the SAT as a criterion for admission. Classes taught by part-time faculty nearly approach the number of those offered by professors.<sup>367</sup>

Prakash Chandarana does not think there are any problems with our educational system. Hemant Chitnavis says: “Grade school scores have fallen and teachers are underpaid. Students cannot express themselves. State colleges have become expensive.” Zainul Kanji opines: “We have too many choices. You can graduate without necessarily earning the right.” Tina Kotecha is incisive: “I don’t think they teach children to show respect to elders. While they should teach children to question and think critically and certainly *not* to follow an elder blindly, it can all be done with a certain decorum and level of respect.” Pankaj Padhiar says: “Our colleges are overfilled and too expensive.” His brother Raju opines: “They cost more than you can afford. You pay taxes to pay for the schools but the schools never get all of the money.” Ashok Pradhan says: “I cannot say much as my son has done very well in school. In general, depending upon the area there are some problems such as drugs, smoking, truancy, etc.” Dr. Janak Raval opines: “The public schools are not of a consistent standard. It all depends upon the neighborhood! State colleges are generally large and often not as good as private colleges.”

Despite their misgivings about the system *all* of our subjects are confident that California will remedy its academic problems. It is noteworthy that most of

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<sup>366</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam observed* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), title quoted in Roland A. Delattre, “The Rituals of Humanity and the Rhythms of Reality”, *PROSPECTS* 5 (1980), 41.

<sup>367</sup> Victor Davis Hanson, “Paradise Lost,” *Westways*, July/August 2001, 15; reprint, Wall Street Journal @ 2001, *Dow Jones*.

them have either sent their progeny to California colleges and universities or have themselves graduated from the same. Overall, our subjects are very aware of the importance of education.

### 5) Transportation woes:

**5A) LAX airport:** That Los Angeles Airport is habitually backlogged and in dire need of expansion is no surprise, given the dysfunctional nature of American air travel these days.<sup>368</sup>

**5B) Public transportation:** Prakash Chandarana says: “Public transportation in L.A. is poor due to addiction to the automobile.” Asha Chitnavis and Manilal Padhiar agree with him. Hemant Chitnavis says: “Public transportation takes too long.” Tina Kotecha agrees: “Our roads are congested and public transportation isn’t as efficient as in other countries.” Ashok Pradhan opines: “Public transportation is not always practical considering the size of L.A.” Dr. Janak Raval says: “We have too little well-planned public transportation.”

It is not clear as to how many of our subjects would be willing to minimize the use of their vehicles for the sake of public good. So far this student has met only one Uganda Asian male (a legal immigrant out of Uganda) who uses the Metro rail.

### **5Bi) About the freeway:**

**A) Congestion:** But our highways may be even in worse shape. Quite literally we have no continuous north-south freeway of three lanes in the entire state. (15) The older U.S. 101 freeway in places is not free at all. It is little more than a highway laced with cross traffic—one potted and patched right lane

clogged by a caravan of trucks, the left a nightmarish obstacle course as cars dodge trucks passing other trucks. Interstate 5 is more a collapsed vein, in most places no wider than when it served 20 million Californians two decades ago. (15)

According to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2003 Annual Urban Mobility Report, traffic congestion is getting worse in every way—extending to more hours of the day, to more roads, creating longer travel times than ever before, and, in some cases, making driving more dangerous. A typical commuter in greater Los Angeles is stuck in traffic 90 hours a year, the worst in the nation by far. All this congestion, of course, results in lost time, wasted fuel, increasing frustration, and a consequent decrease in the quality of life.<sup>369</sup>

There are traffic tie-ups all the time for one simple reason: there are now too many cars in Los Angeles to fit on freeways that were never built to accommodate them all.<sup>370</sup> This new congestion is steadily pecking away at both constituent parts of the Los Angeles mystique: velocity and ease. Three hours plus from Irvine (Orange County) to downtown, bumper to bumper, even for a Californian, is an acquired taste to say the least.<sup>371</sup> Los Angeles's ratio of freeway space to cars ranks worst in the nation, one-third too small to meet existing demand.<sup>372</sup>

Prakash Chandarana states that vehicles on freeways cause pollution. Asha Chitnavis says: "During a freeway commute there is always the possibility of a

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Stephen Finnegan & John Lehrer, "Big Projects, Big Benefits: We must take action to improve traffic flow on Southern California's roads and freeways," *Westways*, January/February 2004, 61.

<sup>370</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 34.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>372</sup> Lee Green, "infinite ingress," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, January 25 2004, 13.

accident. Also, one is likely to fall sick due to the pollution.” Hemant Chitnavis complains: “The main problem with the freeway is that when it is jammed with cars it takes too long to commute. One has to spend time and energy on the commute.” Zainul Kanji complains: “The commute cuts into family time.” Tina Kotecha opines: “It causes frustration and therefore, insensitivity and inconsideration in people. It basically brings out the worst in many of us.” Pankaj Padhiar complains: “Our freeways are always jam-packed.” Brother Raju agrees: “Too many cars and a lot of time commuting!” He dislikes it when traffic is at a stand still. Ashok Pradhan opines: “Freeways are inadequate considering the number of vehicles.” He dislikes the tension created by the commute. Dr. Janak Raval also complains: “Too many freeways with too many cars with just one driver each! The commute is a great waste of time and creativity!”

**B) Crime on the freeway:** Freeways are not even that peaceful anymore. Freeway shootings remind everyone who has not heard the news that in America nowadays the urban outdoors can be lethal.<sup>373</sup> Popular actor Bill Crosby’s son was mugged and shot dead as he stopped on the 405 freeway to change a punctured tire in wee hours of the morning.

**C) Placelessness:** Martin Wachs points out in support that the freeway is a tangible facility that is also a flexible path through a maze. It is a pathway that encourages purposeful interaction between far-flung but interconnected communities; yet it contributes to the sense of placelessness noted by so many critics of the region. An invitation to unfettered motion at high speed in a shiny black limousine or a sexy convertible, and at the same time the source of tedium

and frustration that comes from endless delays in traffic jams. Inviting people to experience desert, mountain, and ocean within minutes of one another, it is a major source of the smog that makes them invisible. It is a lifeline, by which millions are supplied with their daily sustenance, yet it can be a place of carnage and police chases.<sup>374</sup>

**D) Paradox:** Most important of all, during the freeway commute Angelenos act out one of the most spectacular paradoxes in the great debate between private-freedom and public discipline that pervades every affluent, mechanized urban society. What seems to be hardly noticed or commented on is that the price of rapid door-to-door transport on demand is the almost total surrender of personal freedom for most of the journey.<sup>375</sup> A variety of commanding authorities—moral, governmental, commercial, and mechanical (since most drivers have surrendered control of the transmission to an automatic gearbox), direct the freeway driver through a situation so closely controlled that, as has been judiciously observed on a number of occasions, he will hardly notice any difference when the freeways are finally fitted with computerized automatic control systems that will take charge of the car at the on-ramp and direct it at properly regulated speeds and correctly selected routes to a pre-programmed choice of off-ramp.<sup>376</sup>

**E) Ecological damage:** The vast majority of Angelenos are blissfully unaware of the impact of the freeway on the remaining and paltry wildlife in the

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<sup>373</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 38

<sup>374</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 106.

<sup>375</sup> Banham, *Architecture*, 216-217.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

area. The perpetually clogged 101 Freeway “is a huge barrier to them,” says Ray Sauvajot, senior Park Service biologist in charge of a coyote study in the Santa Monica Mountains. “They don’t attempt to cross it at all. Those that do get hit.” On the other major roadways in the study, the 23 Freeway that connects the 101 to the 118, “there have been a lot of road kills,” 20 in one nine-month period alone, says Sauvajot. “In our study, road kill is the No. 1 cause of death.”<sup>377</sup>

The finding echoes what was discovered in seven months at the 241, a toll road in Orange County. Although five underground crossings for animals were built and fences erected, at least 30 animals (including bobcats, coyotes, deer and other wildlife) were hit and killed while attempting to cross the road, which bisects a wildlife preserve.<sup>378</sup>

#### **6) Automobile: Not exactly a boon.**

The much-vaunted automobile, or rather our obsession with it, has contributed greatly to loneliness in the region. The problem is that once everyone is in his or her own car there is unlikely to be much community left, a fact that still seems to surprise people in L.A., who regularly complain of a loss of intimacy all the while relying on machines like television and automobiles that, by their very nature, corrode intimacy and enhance alienation.<sup>379</sup> Also note that a large part of the smog in the L.A. basin is due to effluents from the automobile.<sup>380</sup>

Prakash Chandarana agrees: “The automobile causes environmental and noise pollution.” Asha Chitnavis adds: “Some people are injured or die due to

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<sup>377</sup> Deanne Stillman, “In Defense of an Urban Survivor,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, October 20 2002, 20.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 99.



accidents on the freeway.” Son Hemant says: “One has to spend a lot of money on gas, insurance, and maintenance.” Hemant also agrees with Rieff that the Angelenos’ obsession with the automobile deprives them of contact with other people. Tina Kotecha states: “It causes pollution and adds to alienation.” Raju Padhiar says: “Cars break down at the wrong time. One is always getting them repaired. The cost is high. Sometimes one cannot afford to buy a new car.” Ashok Pradhan adds: “A car is expensive to maintain. With the increase in traffic driving is hazardous at times.” Dr. Janak Raval is more analytical: “Not only does it promote pollution but it makes you selfish, self-centered, and wasteful.” Fortunately, our subjects are *not* afflicted by loneliness because they are solidly rooted in their respective communities.

#### **7) Crime and violence:**

In the year 2000, 694 bank robberies occurred here, a puny number compared with that for 1992, when the seven-county Los Angeles region produced 2,641, but still enough to maintain our generation-long streak as No. 1 in the land. The reason for L.A.’s distinction range from the ready escape provided by an extensive freeway system, the ever-expanding number and business hours of branch banks to the estimated quarter-of-a-million gangbangers who call this place home.<sup>381</sup>

The region is not all a vast, happy, comfortable suburbia. In the desperate black slums of Compton and South Central Los Angeles so-called drive by shootings have become nightly occurrences, as gang members, aboard what are,

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<sup>380</sup> Banham, *Architecture*, 216.

in effect, mobile gun platforms, roam the graffitied streets and the run-down housing courts. Many people here intermittently sleep on the floors of their apartments lest they be blown away in their beds by a stray round.<sup>382</sup>

However, this bleak side of Los Angeles is almost nonexistent to most denizens. As Rieff so succinctly says: “Though I would will myself to believe in the reality of these images, I found myself only half doing so. The comfort around me was too strong, the horrors on the streets too removed, too weightless. They might as well have been taking place on the moon.”<sup>383</sup>

In addition to interethnic conflict, crimes of hate have also emerged as a major problem accompanying Los Angeles’s transition to the status of prismatic metropolis. According to the Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations report, in 1996 a figure more than double the 1987 rate was documented, with 995 officially classified hate crimes in the Los Angeles County area. This number reflects a 50% rise in the number of hate crimes directed at African-Americans in just one year, from 196 in 1995 to 295 in 1996. These data probably do not reflect the actual magnitude of the problem in Los Angeles, as it is likely that many such crimes, especially those perpetrated against new and undocumented immigrants, go unreported.<sup>384</sup>

Note that nonviolent crimes like burglaries, malicious mischief, petty theft and grand theft are common. With the fear of crime rampant—it is said that criminals from South Central L.A. refer to the Westside and the San Fernando

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<sup>381</sup> James Ricci, “The Good Guys and the Satisfying Nature of Bank Robberies,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, March 11 2001, 5.

<sup>382</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 38.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

Valley as the “lands,” for lands of opportunity—neighborhoods like Brentwood are a sea of barred windows and octagonal signs planted in the shrubbery or rose borders that read, “Westec Security: Armed Response.”<sup>385</sup>

However, beneath the surface the situation, according to Edward W. Soja, is far more complicated. The new topography of race, class, gender, age, income, and ethnicity has produced an incendiary urban geography in Los Angeles, a landscape filled with violent edges, colliding turfs, unstable boundaries, peculiarly juxtaposed lifespaces, and enclaves of outrageous wealth and despair. How this immanently conflagratory metropolis was kept from socially exploding until 1992 is wound up in the development of the Carceral City, a geography of warlike fortifications and enclosure, of ever-watchful surveillance and creative means of social and spatial control, a place where police has become an insistent substitute for polis.<sup>386</sup>

Even nature contributes to crime in the region. It is not mere folklore that suicide and violent crime rates climb when the hot *Santa Ana* winds blow. Raymond Chandler once wrote about the *Santa Ana*: “On nights like that every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands’ necks. Anything can happen.”<sup>387</sup>

How do our subjects perceive crime in Los Angeles? Prakash Chandarana says: “I will say there is a higher rate of crime in the categories of murder and robbery.” Asha Chitnavis opines: “Here one fears that someone will force his way

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<sup>384</sup> Bobo et al., *Prismatic Metropolis*, 25.

<sup>385</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 100.

<sup>386</sup> Scott and Soja, *Urban Theory*, 448.

<sup>387</sup> Didion, *Bethlehem*, 218.

into your home and kill you. One harbors the same fear when one goes out. ”I don’t think it’s imagined. I think given the age of technology, we’re perhaps more exposed to it.” Pankaj Padhiar states that a good deal of the crime (at least 50 percent) exists in the public imagination only. His brother Raju states: “Crime and violence are bad. Criminals always take from people who have just enough or nothing at all.” Ashok Pradhan says: “Crime and violence are a big problem. However, what one *sees* is likely to be conditioned by the media.” Dr. Janak Raval is more lucid: “This is a real problem with L.A. as with every major U.S. city. We just try to avoid the areas where they are most prevalent. We have alarms to guard our homes, offices, and cars. I have been a victim of a car theft myself.” Any person is likely to be a victim of a conman in L.A. Let us read more about the subject.

#### **8) Lack of ethics:**

Business methods and practices, which would be abhorrent in a more stable community, are tolerated in our environment. It is not surprising that California should be one of the first states to regulate the activities of real estate agents. “The easy flow of capital,” writes Dr.Dumke, “encouraged fraud and consumption.” Each boom has underscored the same traits.<sup>388</sup>

Edward W. Soja refers to Los Angeles as the world’s most fulsome “scamscape,” a highly creative milieu of deception that has taken fraud to new heights of accomplishments. The Los Angeles region, and Orange County in particular, leads the country in practically every kind of legal and illegal fraud: in real estate (always a local specialty), in stock trading (junk bonds were invented

in Beverly Hills), in automobile insurance (with carefully scripted and staged “paper accidents” taking place everywhere), in telemarketing (with phone swindlers in “boiler rooms” bilking billions a year), in the defense industry (from faking reports on nuclear missile firing devices to charging \$1,200 for screwdrivers), in occupational safety and welfare payments (an army of “capper” lawyers is always ready to script fake claims), in politics (with another army of duplicitous “spin doctors” prepared to smear any candidate with whatever “facts” necessary), and in two crowning moments of fraudulent specialization, the first in the savings and loan industry, with Keating’s Lincoln Savings headquarters in Orange County leading the way to the largest banking scandal in U.S. history, and the second in the fiscal practices of local government, with the startling bankruptcy of Orange County in 1994. In one of the more than 300 telemarketing boiler rooms in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, a sign at the desk captures the genuine sincerity and public commitment that feeds the hyperreal scamscape. It proudly states: “We Cheat the Other Guy and Pass the Savings on to You!”<sup>389</sup>

Prakash Chandarana does not agree that Los Angeles is the world’s largest scamscape. He says: “There is much more deception and fraud elsewhere in the United States.” Asha Chitnavis agrees with him. Hemant Chitnavis disagrees with them both. He says: “There is a lot of different types of fraudulent schemes going on here all the time. Insurance, medical, and Real Estate fraud are quite common.” Zainul Kanji’s biggest concern is White Collar crime although he does not think L.A. is any different from other places. Tina Kotecha disagrees with

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<sup>388</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 241.

<sup>389</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 454-455.

Prof. Soja: “It’s a large place with a variety of people. He may have based his opinion on his experience (only).” Pankaj Padhiar opines that the L.A. scamscape is the result of money and greed. Brother Raju says: “It is true. Lots of people say or do things that hurt you. They take your money or other objects that belong to you” Dr. Janak Raval states: “It is partly true. L.A. is the home of Hollywood which sets the tone for the society at large.”

### 9) Selfishness:

It is not important that forbidding walls around subdivisions do not deter crime. They are social boundaries. They define “community” and give it an entry point, financially and socially: only certain people can get in.<sup>390</sup> Indeed, another dimension of the Carceral City is the “Sunbelt bolshevism” Mike Davis so well describes. Los Angeles homeowners, like the Sicilians in *Prizzi’s Honor*, love their children, but they love their property values more. “Community” in Los Angeles means homogeneity of race, class and, especially, home values. These “revolutionary” home owner-backed slow-growth insurgencies have created “white walls” of zoning regulations, agile NIMBY (not in my backyard) protest movements, increasing “suburban separatism,” and new “homeowners’ soviets” in the attempt to turn back the tide (and the clock) of urban restructuring. In what has been called “the Watts riots of the middle classes” in part to commemorate the victorious tax revolts of the 1970s but also evoking images of the gang power and turf wars of wealthy white adults, there has been what Davis calls “a reassertion

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<sup>390</sup> Garreau, *Edge City*, 281.

of social privilege” by the Anglo middle classes just in the nick of time, given their diminishing numbers and increasingly confused class identities.<sup>391</sup>

Selfishness rears its ugly head in different forms. For example, in Chino Hills where Prakash Chandarana resides, there is strong resistance by old time residents to the proposed construction of a Hindu temple. In La Puente where the Chitnavis family resides, most residents have opposed a Redevelopment Plan (which would benefit the whole city) for just one street. Threatened homes are one of the reasons.

Tina Kotecha states in sympathy: “Yes, this is an age of heightened awareness and protection. People work hard to establish homes and sometimes lose sight of the big pictures. I think it is human nature.” Dr. Janak Raval agrees: “It is partly true. But if the homeowners do not band together who will guard their interests?”

#### **10) Alienation:**

**10A) Lack of a sense of permanency:** This, in part, accounts for the unreal appearance of the region and the restless character of its population. As much as anything else, it is the lack of a functional relationship between these homes and the land on which they rest that creates the illusion of unreality. The houses have no earthly relation to the environment. And I do believe that the character of the architecture, while reflecting the restless character of the

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<sup>391</sup> Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage, Random House, 1992), 153-213; passim.

occupants and their recent arrival in the region, also contributes to their rootlessness and their feeling of unreality about the land in which they live.<sup>392</sup>

**10B) Incessant migration:** This also accounts for the loose social organization of Los Angeles, the lack of social integration, and the notorious lag in social development. The original social system and its carriers have been destroyed not once, but at repeated intervals, as a result of continuous migration. Other communities have also had to assimilate newcomers, but newcomers have been a “continually perpetuated majority” in Los Angeles. Not only because so many of them are newcomers, but also because of the sprawling character of the community itself, the residents of Los Angeles are not integrated to their jobs, their neighborhoods, or their social institutions. A less than normal circulation of leadership, brought about by the same cause, has contributed to the confused social scene.<sup>393</sup>

Incessant migration has made Los Angeles a vast drama of maladjustment: social, familial, civic, and personal. There can be no doubt that Los Angeles has paid a high price for its rapid growth. The price is indicated in the pathology rates in many categories: bankruptcies, crime, divorces, juvenile delinquency, narcotic addiction, and so forth. (238-239) Social neuroticism is a distinct phenomenon in Los Angeles where perversion is perverted and prostitution prostituted. (239) Californians grew convinced that a quick, profitable strike was a better road to fortune than hard work, that it was wiser to court the values to be derived from unearned increment than those added by toil and craftsmanship. Such a

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<sup>392</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 361-362.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.



philosophy does not breed stable communities and helps account, observers believe, for the frequency with which many Californians move from place to place and job to job. It helps explain their high divorce rates, their alcoholism and suicides. Not irrelevant is the fact that California has always offered fertile soil for odd religious sects, strange economic panaceas, weird burial practices, and hosts of utopian colonies ranging from congregations of socialistic freethinkers to communes of hippies.<sup>394</sup>

Sociologists in the 1950s were still working with the classic definition of *community*: “an aggregate of people who occupy a common and bounded territory within which they establish and participate in common institutions.”<sup>395</sup> However, lack of common grounds—communities of interest—is the larger trouble. Angelenos are either too new or too unsettled to develop the sense of shared geography that holds on in places like Riverside or Barstow. A feeling for community is not defined by real estate. Belonging is what builds the sense of shared space, a rarity in driven Los Angeles.<sup>396</sup> Tina Kotecha rightly observes: “Given that L.A. is large and sprawling and we all commute in our cars most of the time, it is only but natural.”

Asha Chitnavis opines: “People in L.A. are too individualistic. That causes alienation.” Tina Kotecha felt lonely only because she was in college. She says: “Once I went to UCLA I was working full time and going to school full time. So I didn’t have the opportunity to go back home as often as I did when at UC

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<sup>394</sup> Lavender, *New Beginnings*, 13.

<sup>395</sup> Garreau, *Edge City*, 275.

<sup>396</sup> David Glidden, “Café California: A Lack of Common Ground,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday, 10 December 1989, p. M4.

Riverside. In the suburbs I was so used to my family, my extended family, the community that we had here. As much as I had a lot of fun in college and living on my own in L.A. I didn't anticipate that there would be times when no one would be around and I wouldn't have anything to do there. I am used to someone always being around. When living in the city in a one-bedroom apartment you don't feel that connection as you do in a suburb, that sense of being in a home. It would just be pockets of time for two, three years." She adds that she dealt with the problem by sleeping a lot.

Ashok Pradhan points at another aspect of alienation. He says: "At times you feel you don't necessarily belong in a particular place. Depends on what you are doing and who you are with." Manilal Padhiar says: "I felt lonely and alienated for a while after arriving in L.A. Upon expulsion, my family was split three-ways. My father's Uganda passport was confiscated so he went to India with my grandmother. My mother, being a British subject, went to U.K. with my siblings. I ended up in L.A. as a refugee. I felt very lonely for about six months to a year. I used to cry. Television was my constant companion during this period. I also used to drink a couple of beers and they would relax me. Then I would go to parks and being socially aggressive invite myself to play tennis or volleyball with other people. I would also go to the movies to forget my loneliness."

Alienation may be the affliction of a considerable population of the Los Angeles region. But is it true of our subjects? The answer is an emphatic *no*. Like Gans who found out that for his West Enders community and neighborhood were not synonymous our subjects are tied to their larger East African Asian

community which is spread out in the suburbia. In America the main idea behind community now is voluntary association, not geography.<sup>397</sup> Job, avocation, church, or other institutions define peer groups—community—. <sup>398</sup> Blood relation, caste, hometown and religious affiliations tie our subjects closely together. And the people of Southern California have sophisticated technology (cell phones, telephones, internet) to maintain and strengthen that bond with others we call *community* (italics mine). (275)

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “I came here with the determination to succeed. I was not going to let anything else interfere with that. Then I made friends, my family is here. Everything I need is here. Why should I feel lonely?” Bhupinder Batra says: “I have never felt lonely here as we have quite a few relatives including in-laws. Moreover, I am involved in a business that caters to the Indian community which is always there.” Asha Chitnavis says: “I either keep busy doing domestic chores or listen to devotional or old melodic film songs. These activities keep me happy.” Son Hemant says: “Los Angeles is full of so many people of so many ethnicities and I have so many friends among them that I have never felt alienated.” Indooben Dhaba asserts that she has always been too involved in her family and community to feel alienated. Zainul Kanji has never felt alienated because he has always been with his family.

### 11) **Exploitation of illegal labor:**

As Rieff states: “...what was most peculiar was not how nice it was to have someone cleaning up after you, but that Los Angeles, of all places, with its

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<sup>397</sup> Garreau, *Edge City*, 275.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

belief in itself as the most democratic of American cities, would turn out to pullulate with servants. Indeed, L.A. is proving to resemble a Third World country, a place where, after all, the American commonplace was that you could live cheaply and have what was all too euphemistically referred to as “ help,” a good deal more closely than it did its image of itself.”<sup>399</sup>

Indeed, Los Angeles is now a place where a middle-class person can live in a First World way for Third World prices, at least for domestic help.<sup>400</sup> This illegal help comes from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras (“OTMs”, the Border Patrol officers called them, “other than Mexicans”), and from half the rural states of Mexico as well. (88) They make up over 35 percent of the population of greater Los Angeles and whose children constitute over 50 percent of the enrollment in the L.A. Unified School District. (91)

When you arrive at many a Southern California hotel or restaurant, you are likely to be first greeted by a Latino car valet. The janitors, cooks, busboys, painters, carpet cleaners, and landscape workers who keep the office buildings, restaurants, and malls running are also likely to be Mexican or Central American immigrants, as are many of those who work behind the scenes in dry cleaners, convalescent homes, hospitals, resorts, and apartment complexes. Both figuratively and literally, the work performed by Latino and Latina immigrants gives Los Angeles much of its famed gloss. The Los Angeles economy,

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<sup>399</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 83.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

landscape, and lifestyle have been transformed in ways that rely on low-wage, Latino immigrant labor.<sup>401</sup>

Many people employed in business and finance, and in the high-tech and the entertainment sectors, are high-salaried lawyers, bankers, accountants, marketing specialists, consultants, agents, and entrepreneurs. The way they live their lives, requiring many services and consuming many products, generates other high-end occupations linked to gentrification (creating jobs for real estate agents, therapists, personal trainers, designers, celebrity chefs, etc.), all of which in turn rely on various kinds of daily servicing that low-wage workers provide. For the masses of affluent professionals and corporate managers in Los Angeles, relying on Latino immigrant workers has become almost a social obligation.<sup>402</sup>

The increasing number of Latina immigrants, searching for work in California, particularly in Los Angeles, has pushed down wages and made modestly priced domestic services more widely available. As a result, demand is no longer confined to elite enclaves but instead spans a wider range of class and geography in Southern California. While most employers of paid domestic workers in Los Angeles are white, college-educated, middle-class or upper middle-class suburban residents with some connection to the professions or the business world, employers now also include apartment dwellers with modest incomes, single mothers, college students, and elderly people living on fixed incomes. They live in tiny bungalows and condominiums, not just sprawling houses. They include immigrant entrepreneurs and even immigrant workers. In

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<sup>401</sup> Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotello, *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001), 3.

contemporary Los Angeles, factory workers living in the Latino working-class neighborhoods can and do hire Latino gardeners to mow their lawns, and a few also sometimes hire in-home nanny/housekeepers as well. In fact, some Latina nanny/housekeepers pay other Latina immigrants—usually much older or much younger, newly arrived women—to do in-home child care, cooking, and cleaning, while they themselves go off to care for the children and homes of the more wealthy. (8-9)

In Southern California what is being played out is not simply the California dream but exercises in oblivion. The two worlds coexist—indeed, in reality they have become interdependent but to the residents of this region the illegal aliens often appear as nothing more than the ubiquitous background to life, especially in localities like West L.A.<sup>403</sup>

Prakash Chandarana agrees that not only are there sweatshops but illegal laborers in general are overworked and underpaid. Asha Chitnavis is aware that underpaid illegal aliens from Mexico and Central America work as gardeners and factory hands. Son Hemant adds: “There is exploitation of illegal labor on farms, manufacturing, and restaurants. They are also used as domestic servants.” Raju Padhiar opines: “The rich get richer and the poor cannot do anything but to work for low pay in order to survive.” Ashok Pradhan says: “It is a shame but it is a way of life. It is unfortunate but there does not seem to be any easy solution.” Dr. Janak Raval is perhaps being sarcastic when he asks: “How else can you make a product or render a service cheaply and at a profit?”

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid. , 6-7.

<sup>403</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 86-87.

## 12) Inequality:

Paul Ong and Evelyn Blumberg emphasize that despite, or perhaps because of significant changes in the Los Angeles social landscape, economic inequality remains a deeply embedded facet of Los Angeles life. The disparity in income between rich and poor continues to widen with the increase in percentage of low-wage workers and the steady rise in the poverty rate. Not surprisingly, economic inequalities often coincide with racial and ethnic divisions, leaving African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians disproportionately represented at the bottom of the economic ladder. Therefore, while many residents bask in the well-celebrated Los Angeles charms, others, the poor of Los Angeles, survive in impoverished inner-city neighborhoods, the very same neighborhoods that exploded into violence on 29 April 1992.<sup>404</sup>

Economic restructuring during the 1970s was, perhaps, more extensive in Los Angeles than in the rest of the United States as the dual process of deindustrialization in the high-wage sector and reindustrialization in the low-wage sector shaped the industrial structure of the region. Contrary to expectations, secular growth did not lower the poverty rate. Economic growth did not necessarily lead to rising average incomes when it was accompanied by an increasingly unequal distribution of income. Since the early 1970s the poverty-reducing factors of growth were overpowered by changes in the income distribution. Such has been the trend in Los Angeles. (323)

Los Angeles' evolution into a multiethnic world city was built on ethnic and racial inequality. Minorities were consistently pulled into the region to fill the

growing supply of low-wage jobs, the ones often dismissed by white workers for their lack of status, their dangerous work conditions, and low pay. Over the last few decades, minority workers were disproportionately employed as agricultural workers, as domestics, as operators in low-wage, nondurable manufacturing industries, and in the growing service industries as janitors, busboys, and so on. Only African-Americans made some occupational progress, gaining access to higher-wage manufacturing and government service jobs. (325)

Prakash Chandarana says: “Despite the Myth of model minority a large number of Hmong and Vietnamese suffer from inequality.” Asha Chitnavis says: “Rich people in L.A. do not socialize with common folk. So there has to be inequality.” Son Hemant opines: “There is inequality in jobs and pay scales. This depends upon who you work for.” Raju Padhiar says: “There is not enough wealth to go around.” Ashok Pradhan says blissfully: “People bring inequality upon themselves.” Dr. Janak Raval states: “Not on the face of it but subtle.”

### **13) Prejudice/Discrimination/Segregation:**

Prejudice results in discrimination. Segregation is a manifestation of discrimination. Susan Anderson vividly describes the history of injustice against African-Americans in her contribution “A City called Heaven: Black Enchantment and Despair in Los Angeles.” She notes that the civic culture in Los Angeles has managed to exclude, violently at times, labor, the Chinese-, Japanese-, and Mexican-American communities, liberals, and Jews along with

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<sup>404</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 311.



blacks. In fact, the history of Los Angeles is a history of animosity in the extreme toward each of these groups. (340)

Let us see if our subjects have any notion of prejudice and discrimination. Dr. Navin Adatia says: "I have never encountered outright discrimination. Sometimes you feel that it does happen. Nobody has said you cannot have this because you are an Indian or different. Sometimes when you are part of a crowd you get that feeling but it has never actually happened. Also, you got to realize that this is such a cosmopolitan city that I have not seen it happen to anybody else either." Bhupinder Batra states: "It happened to me during the Iranian crisis. Because I wear a turban some people would shout from far away 'Iranian go home!' Mr. Batra adds that the insults hurt but he coped with them by ignoring them.

Prakash Chandarana says: "It is there but you cannot feel it due to the wide diversity of population." Asha Chitnavis states: "While working as an aide at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Anaheim I could sense that my Mexican-American colleagues were talking derisively about me and against me but I ignored them. They even tried to have me fired by falsely complaining to the supervisor that I was slow and inefficient." Hemant Chitnavis opines: "There is a lot of discrimination in here but it is very subtle. Job discrimination is definitely there. Not being black, Hispanic or gay I experienced it when working with a bank in West Hollywood. Some people I had trained were promoted above me because of my ethnicity. The discriminators were Caucasian (including women) or gay". Hemant adds that he coped with the hurt by bearing the injustice quietly.

Indooben Dhaba says: “Here nobody has ever discriminated against me. They are friendly, helpful, and nice people.”

Zainul Kanji states: “I experienced it in Pennsylvania. I have not really noticed it here. It could be subtle.” Tina Kotecha says she was once the victim of an ethnic slur. The perpetrator was a white male in his 20s. He assumed she was a well-dressed Latino female and said: “Oh! Looks like the help has moved up!” Tina adds: “Other than that I have never experienced any prejudice. So I don’t understand it when other people say they have experienced it.”

Manilal Padhiar says: “Now that I am grown up I can see that there is a lot of prejudice at some level. Some white people do not want you to get ahead of them. Some of them were resentful of me because I was a recently arrived refugee and driving a car.” Cousin Pankaj states that he has never experienced prejudice. Ashok Pradhan says it happens “at times.” Dr. Janak Raval opines: “It is not obvious but subtle. However, it can be addressed through positive action, legislation, and the courts.”

In Uganda our subjects resided in largely segregated, self-contained cities and towns. What is their notion of segregation now? Prakash Chandarana says: “The South side is heavily black because they were barred from housing.” Asha Chitnavis says: “The existence of ethnic ghettos is evidence of segregation.” Manilal Padhiar agrees that it still exists. His cousin Raju opines: “One feature of segregation is people keeping to themselves and not mixing to become something new or different.” Ashok Pradhan states: “You still see it in lifestyles, way of life and financial status.” Dr. Janak Raval says: “It exists on an economic basis.”

Let us read about an issue most Angelenos are blissfully unaware of.

#### 14) Homelessness:

This is an extreme manifestation of segregation. One could argue about the real nature of racial segregation in Los Angeles but there is no question that class segregation is well nigh absolute.<sup>405</sup> Jennifer Wolch, in her contribution “From Global to Local: The Rise of Homelessness in Los Angeles during the 1980s”, details the phenomenon. In alarming numbers, Angelenos were cast away from traditional anchors of family, job, and community as waves of economic and social polarization resulted in spreading homelessness. In 1990-1991 an estimated 125,600 to 204,000 people were homeless in Los Angeles County at some point during the year, and between 38,420 and 68,670 people were homeless on any given night. Many thousands were precariously housed, living in fear of eviction or foreclosure, doubled up with family or friends, or constantly on the move as livelihoods and life-sustaining relationships eroded and personal vulnerabilities came to outweigh strengths.<sup>406</sup>

The successive waves of economic restructuring (deindustrialization, reindustrialization, public sector retrenchment, and service sector expansion) left the regional economy in a vulnerable condition. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, and young workers were particularly concentrated in low-skill, low-wage jobs, and their numbers grew rapidly during the decade. This growing pool of low-skill workers faced increasing competition for jobs, most of which were

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<sup>405</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 29-30.

<sup>406</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 390.

nonunionized, offered low wages, little job security, few benefits or opportunities for advancement and were apt to be part-time and/or temporary.<sup>407</sup>

The surge in poverty linked to economic marginalization was not remedied by the nation's welfare state, despite the rhetoric of a "social safety net" and a "kinder, gentler nation." Rather, mirroring a trend throughout advanced capitalist countries; public resources were shifted from social needs to investment capitalists in the hope of improving the U.S. position in the international economy. Funding reductions and regressive administrative changes were enacted in many welfare programs during the 1980s. This remaking of welfare occurred at federal, state, and local levels. In Los Angeles, a particularly reactionary county government dealt with the swelling ranks of needy people by acting to restrict the level and availability of poor relief and other key social services. More and more people were impoverished, fueling the city's homeless crises. (394)

Given spreading economic marginalization and welfare state dismantling, it is hardly surprising that decent housing was increasingly beyond the reach of more and more households. To make matters worse, the stock of affordable housing diminished over the course of the 1980s. Housing and rental costs surged ahead of the nation at an alarming rate. The rate of housing production could not match the rates of immigration and new household formation in the region. But other important factors conspired to cause a significant deterioration in the position of low-income renters. Demolitions of affordable housing accelerated, the lost units being replaced by upmarket rentals; local regulations and price inflation inhibited the conversion of units through the shadow market. Housing

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid. , 392-393.

simply became beyond the means of large segments of the urban population. Available affordable units were often overcrowded and of declining quality. Vacancy rates were negligible at the low end of the housing market. The working poor and those on welfare were obliged to compete for the diminishing number of affordable units. People were forced to invent unconventional methods of putting a roof over their heads, including everything from converted garages to cardboard boxes. (420-421)

Let us see if our former expellees and refugees (who had temporarily become homeless), now homeowners, have any sense of homelessness in the region. Prakash Chandarana says he is aware of homeless people on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. Asha Chitnavis is also aware of them. Son Hemant says: “People can be seen sleeping on the streets in downtown L.A. They make cardboard shacks to live in and light small fires to keep warm.” Raju Padhiar opines: “The homeless indulge in crime, violence because they have nothing to lose.” Ashok Pradhan says: “I am seeing more and more homeless”. Dr. Janak Raval states: “Homelessness is a problem in urban areas.”

### **15) Poverty:**

The underside of what is optimistically called the New Majority is exposed in the high rates of poverty extending through all communities. Asians, including immigrants from Cambodia, Korea, Philippines, and Vietnam, have, at 14 percent, poverty rate twice that of whites. Even those least associated with poverty in the public mind have had, in order to make a living, to scuttle at the

bottom of the region's economy. (358) Fortunately, *none* of our subjects suffer from poverty.

Extremes of poverty in Los Angeles rival the Third World; extremes of wealth flourish here too. According to the United Nations, the U.S. has the largest gap between wealth and poverty in the developed world and that ratio is widest in New York and Los Angeles, comparable to Bombay, Karachi, and Mexico City. (358)

The violent events in April 1992, our first "multiethnic riot", belong—as nearly all else in Los Angeles—in a global context. Wrenching changes have permanently transformed the economy and, by doing so, have created a profound inequality in the lives of low-income Angelenos that is becoming characteristic of American cities. The brunt of this restructuring, which forcefully emerged in the 1970s, was felt in low-income black neighborhoods with plant closings, the loss of manufacturing jobs, and the disappearance of commercial neighborhood enterprises. Decreases in public funds exacerbated the losses. (356-357)

Los Angeles has now become identified as the city whose contemporary history is bracketed by two violent, large-scale riots that have provided revelation of the plagues in America's social reality. This, perhaps, is L.A.'s perverse gift: the city as oracle, the prophetic urban place that utters a message no one wants to hear. (357)

Let us now look at some issues that more directly affect our subjects. Let us also try and find out if the subjects are aware of their role in the issues.

### 16) Smog:

It is the psychological impact of smog that matters in Los Angeles. Smog breaks the legend of eternal sunshine. However, the area was never totally pure atmosphere. The Spaniards called it the Bay of Smokes and could identify it from the ocean by the persistence of smoke from Indian campfires, while plots of land in South Cucamonga were advertised in the eighties as being free from “fog-laden sea breezes”. But there is a profound psychological difference between fogs caused by Nature’s landforms, light breezes and God-given water, and air-pollution due to the works of man.<sup>408</sup>

The growth of industry has brought a host of problems some of which are peculiar to industry in California or have a special relevance here. “Symbolic of these (problems),” writes Dr. James D. Parsons, “is the low, gray pall of exhaust, and factory fumes that lingers for most of the summer over the Los Angeles lowlands, trapped by the coastal temperature inversion and the mountain barriers to the north.” For decades now, the land-moving afternoon breeze from the ocean, and the mist, which accompanies it, has been a major factor in keeping Los Angeles cool in the summer months. But, with the arrival of industry, the land breeze, once an asset, now serves to hold the fumes of industry over the city; fog, once hailed with relief in summer months, has now become “smog,” a major problem.<sup>409</sup> The smog problem was, and is, too big for one person to feel much

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<sup>408</sup> Banham, *Architecture*, 216.

<sup>409</sup> McWilliams, *Great Exception*, 244-245.

blame, and it seems far too big for one person to solve. Therefore, we mentally adapt.<sup>410</sup>

Physical adaptations happen too, unfortunately. “One thing is certain: smog is harmful to your health” (SCAQMD, 1996). About 1,600 people died prematurely in 1996 due to the south coast’s air pollution. Ozone damaged lung tissues and reduced immunity. Bronchitis and asthma risks were higher in polluted areas. Children and athletes were at particularly high risk, partly because they spent more time outdoors relying on mouth breathing, which bypassed the nose’s filtering system. One study showed that children raised in the South Coast Air Basin suffered a 10 to 15 percent decrease in lung function. Loving, protective parents unwittingly let their children be harmed.<sup>411</sup>

Prakash Chandarana agrees that we have a smog problem due to industries and a lot of automobiles. Asha Chitnavis concurs: “We have a lot of smog and pollution due to excessive number of cars and trucks.” Hemant Chitnavis sees the brighter side: “With the use of modern technology the level of smog has diminished. The government has introduced stricter rules.” Tina Kotecha states: “I think we tend to be a bit more selfish in L.A. and not consider the effects of smog on the next generation.” Manilal Padhiar says in support: “The smog level is better than the one in 1970s”. Cousin Pankaj agrees that smog is bad for health.” Brother Raju adds: “Smog destroys the ozone layer and makes people sick.” Ashok Pradhan is hopeful. He says: “The pollution is getting better.” Dr.

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<sup>410</sup> David Carle, *Drowning the Dream: California’s Water Choices at the Millennium* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2000), 132.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.



Janak Raval states: “The problem has been partly reduced through legislation but a lot more needs to be done.”

The smog problem that has plagued Southern California since the 1940s is also a water issue. The imports of eastern Sierra water fostered decades of growth in the city after 1913. Colorado River waters and, later, the State Water Project irrigated even more growth. Without imported water Los Angeles might still be famed for its healthful air, the image it sustained through the 1930s. (133)

### **17) Dependence upon imported water:**

Turn off the flow of water that now reaches the region from such remote sources, as Owens Valley and the Colorado River and the whole region would be bankrupt. The absence of local water resources is, indeed, the basic weakness of the region—its eternal problem.<sup>412</sup>

Today the entire area from Santa Barbara to San Diego is an irrigated paradise. Water gurgles from irrigation pumps, water rushes along irrigation laterals and canals, and costly sprinkling systems spray a seemingly inexhaustible supply of water on elaborate lawns and gardens. Nowadays the land looks as though it had always been watered. But it is actually semi-arid. Throughout Southern California there is not a single river, as people ordinarily understand the term, not a single natural lake, not a single creek with a year-round flow of water. Disastrous droughts have, in years past, spread desolation and ruin in the region.<sup>413</sup> Note that the average rainfall here is thirteen inches. New York, by

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<sup>412</sup> McWilliams, *Southern California*, 183.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-184.

comparison, gets almost fifty.<sup>414</sup> Small farmers and agribusiness have contributed to the problem of water by pumping it on such a massive scale that the word “pumping” is a misnomer. It should be called “mining.” instead.<sup>415</sup>

However, the problem of water is also a cultural one. It has two facets, which feed on each other. First, the mythology of Southern California does make everything seem plentiful both to the native-born and the immigrants. Second, the latter (who constitute the majority) come overwhelmingly from scarcity-ridden Third and Second World nations. Compared to where they grew up the resources of the region *are* plentiful. Hence, squandering water on little-used swimming pools, fountains, lawns, and car washes is a regional pastime.

Prakash Chandarana agrees that we squander water on car washes, farms, and lawns. Asha and Hemant Chitnavis and Ashok Pradhan are aware that we import water from Colorado and Northern California. Raju Padhiar goes deeper: “We are using other people’s resources and keeping ours.”

### **18) Energy/Power: Related issues:**

In states like Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, a profound distrust and distaste for all things Californian is as prevalent as the rain. The wave of resentment that has accompanied U.S. Energy Department orders to sell Northwest power to California—when the Northwest is facing its own energy shortage and sharp electricity rate hikes—comes from a long-standing conviction

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<sup>414</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 249.

<sup>415</sup> McWilliams, *Great Exception*, 277.

that California has grabbed more than its share of the dwindling resources of the West.<sup>416</sup>

The development of the massive hydropower dams that now supply the electricity being sent to California gave the region an economic edge but set the stage for conflict when drought-prone California began talking of tapping into Columbia River water supplies—an idea that inspired such profound resentment that it has never really gone away—even as Seattle and Portland have bloomed into successful high-tech economic centers in their own right.<sup>417</sup>

The problem is exacerbated by two factors. First, the volatility in the California market is pushing prices up in the Northwest and hurting businesses and consumers. Second, California has somewhat saddled itself with its own environmental regulations. It has access to energy resources it has not been able to tap because of its own regulations. Privately, North westerners fear they may be powerless to block a political assault from California against cheap Northwest power supplies. (A5)

Prakash Chandarana sites the use of Malibu lights, a very Southern California feature, as an example of wasted electricity. Hemant Chitnavis opines: “We will have to rely on imported electricity till we build nuclear plants to meet our needs.” Raju Padhiar emphasizes that not only are greedy Southern Californians using other people’s resources (and keeping theirs) but also the former cost more. Lastly let us take a brief look at the issue that is at the heart of El Diablo.

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<sup>416</sup> Kim Murphy, “Power-Sharing fuels resentment in the Northwest,” *Los Angeles Times*, Tuesday, January 16 2001, p. A5.

**19) Excessive migration/in-migration:**

**19A) Excessive growth:** California's greatest problem has been its people's inability—and unwillingness—to slow down.<sup>418</sup> Unlimited growth has caused unlimited pollution: jet contrails, jungles of billboards and wires, used-car dumps, grimy harbors and grimy oilfields, hillsides and forests shredded by the monstrous machines of lumbermen and freeway builders, crop-dusting airplanes trailing plumes of pesticides, din of trucks, blare of automobile horns—for years many people, conditioned by a century of boosterism, seemed not to mind. For here was visible proof that opportunities had been seized, jobs did exist, and California was indeed the land of the future: don't rock the boat. Those who succeeded could leave the jungles for suburban homes besides glistening pools and forget the trash—forget that even some of their children were so bored with aseptic plushness that a drug culture seemed preferable.<sup>419</sup>

Although Dr. Parsons was commenting on the negative aspects of industrialization in particular, his words are applicable to growth in general: “In concentrating its growth so heavily in California's two great metropolitan districts, the West may well be building its house of cards. As the man-made superstructure of California's economy towers higher and higher, its dependence on the cooperation of a capricious Nature increases commensurately. The vulnerability of its water and power supplies alone suggests serious doubts as to the wisdom of continued expansion, at least until the economic application of atomic energy to peaceful ends has been demonstrated...In terms of its resource

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> Lavender, *History*, 165.

base California is probably being drastically oversold as a future industrial center. Yet the rising tide of *progress*, defined as bigness in everything, is not likely to be stopped by less than war or earthquake, drought or economic collapse.”<sup>420</sup>

The West’s dependence on distant and easily disruptible dams and aqueducts is just the most palpable kind of vulnerability it now has to face. The more insidious forces—salt water poisoning of the soil, groundwater mining, and the inexorable transformation of the reservoirs from water to solid ground—are, in the long, a worse threat. If Hoover and Glen Canyon dams were to collapse, they could be rebuilt; the cost would be only \$15 billion or so. But to replace the groundwater being mined throughout the West would mean creating an entirely new Colorado River half again as large as the one that exists.<sup>421</sup> Civilizations have risen and fallen without apparently perceiving the full import of their relationships with the earth. For soil exhaustion and mineral exhaustion have been felt locally in other periods of history without stirring the rulers of the threatened communities to take effective measures against these dangers.<sup>422</sup>

Mike Davis in his article “How Eden Lost Its Garden: A political History of the Los Angeles Landscape”, concludes that the bulldozers that so troubled William Whyte are now halfway across the Mojave, and developers uproot Joshua trees with the same mindless zeal with which they once cut down the citrus empire. Suburban sprawl has grown another hundred miles broader in circumference, and Los Angeles’ smog blights the view at the Grand Canyon.

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid. , 222.

<sup>420</sup> McWilliams, *Great Exception*, 245-246.

<sup>421</sup> Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Viking, 1986), 498.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles' inner-city neighborhoods and blue-collar suburbs, swollen with two million new immigrants, continue to suffer the long drought of recreational and green space. Public action mitigates the environmental crisis primarily for the top 10 percent of the population, which benefits from the conversion of wetlands into marinas and from hidden subsidies for hillsides living. Profligate meddling with nature is unabated, and Southern California remains radically unplanned, undesigned, and out of control.<sup>423</sup> Unlimited growth has placed excessive pressure on the precious water supply. L.A. is now forced to confront an idea that is utterly inimical to its spirit, that of limits.<sup>424</sup>

Prakash Chandarana is aware of this excessive growth and confesses that he has contributed to many of its facets including pollution. Asha Chitnavis says: "Here we cut down trees and destroy nature. We have too many homes .Yet they keep building houses all over L.A." She is also aware of her contribution to the problem. She adds: "In order to build my dream home vegetation had to be destroyed, animals, birds, and insects were driven away." Son Hemant says: "Sprawling housing tracts are the symbol of excessive growth. This is because a lot of people move to L.A. for better climate and career/job opportunities." He adds: "By owning a car and using it for commuting I contribute to pollution and waste of gas." Tina Kotecha agrees: "I contribute to pollution by commuting to work alone virtually every day." Raju Padhiar opines that too much waste accompanies excessive growth. As for his contribution to the problem he says: "I have contributed to all of the facets. We all do things that are bad but don't know

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<sup>422</sup> Mumford, *Culture of Cities*, 322.

<sup>423</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 178.

about.” Ashok Pradhan is perhaps feeling guilty-conscious. He does not care to discuss his contribution toward the problem. Dr. Janak Raval is also in denial: “I am employed, pay taxes, and buy goods and services all of which support many others.”

Regional planning is essentially the effort to apply scientific knowledge and stable standards of judgment, justified by rational human values, to the exploitation of the earth.<sup>425</sup> In Southern California scientific knowledge has been applied to build everybody’s American Dream House but it is highly debatable whether stable standards of judgment and rational human values, beyond a certain point, have really played a positive role. What is not debatable is that the earth has been thoroughly exploited.

**19B) Disorientation:** It must be granted that there is some value in mystification, labyrinth, or surprise in the environment. Many of us enjoy the House of Mirrors, and there is a certain charm in the crooked streets of Boston. This is so, however, only under fewer than two conditions. First, there must be no danger of losing basic form or orientation, of never coming out. The surprise must occur in an over-all framework; the confusion must be small in a visible whole. Furthermore, the labyrinth or mystery must in itself have some form that can be explored and in time be apprehended. Complete chaos without hint of connection is never pleasurable.<sup>426</sup>

In the L.A. sprawl there is little scope for mystification or surprise to make life interesting. In most places our streets are straight. Our connections are

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<sup>424</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 249.

<sup>425</sup> Mumford, *Culture of Cities*, 329.

endless. The only distinction we have here is that of social class. The architecture of upper class suburbs is different from those of middle class suburbs that, in turn, are different from blue-collar suburbs. Other than that, one cannot tell one suburb from another. Jim Heimann emphasizes that it is not easy to find places in L.A. He invites us to join the rest of the basin in the endless game of trying to figure out where the countless towns, cities and communities begin and end amid the seamless Southern California sprawl.<sup>427</sup>

Southern California's past reveals this identity problem was not always so. Before the freeways and the endless development, smaller towns and cities, separated by open spaces, were easy to identify. And a local identity was clear when city portals were girded with neon posts, sculptural pedestals displayed civic nameplates, nearby hills were decorated with the town's initials or arches spanned Main Streets like gaudy ID bracelets.<sup>428</sup>

What these markers did was to establish a sense of place for residents and visitor alike. Segue 70 years ahead. Freeways and subdivisions have filled in once rural Southern California. A populace welded to its cars is forced to describe the cityscape in visual shorthand. Many original city identifiers have been lost to progress or swallowed up by sprawl. Rarely can Southland communities be located by some distinctive landmark or entry point. This lack leaves a confused public begging for new solutions to separate and identify an urban monolith of coagulated gray mass. (M1, M6)

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<sup>426</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1960), 5-6.

<sup>427</sup> Jim Heimann, "Reclaiming a Sense of Place Amid the Urban Sprawl," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 January 1998, p. M1.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*



### **Conclusion:**

First, it should be admitted that our subjects are not really familiar with most negative aspects of Los Angeles. For example, they do not really know about the ravages of nature. Any floods and landslides they see are strictly on television. The majority of them have no personal experience of this aspect of L.A. The same applies to the issues of crime and violence. Since most of them have not been to college their understanding of the flip side of academia is superficial. Exploitation of illegal labor is something they know little about. Neither our subjects nor the wider Uganda Asian community is familiar with the interrelated issues of discrimination, inequality, poverty, and segregation. Whether or not they owned homes in Uganda they do come from relatively comfortable surroundings. Since they live in comfortable middle class suburbs and hardly ever go to the Los Angeles downtown or Venice (where thousands of the homeless live) the issue of homelessness is a foreign one to them. The subject of lack of ethics does not invite any interest unless they personally have been victimized. They are also blissfully unaware of selfishness as evinced in NIMBY movements.

Second, whatever understanding they have of any negative aspect is shallow. They could see the impact of excessive growth and their role in it only after some explanation, in a *roundabout* way, of the phenomenon. They are aware of the negative aspects of homeownership only because it is so personal. After all, it affects their American Dream.

Ignorance is indeed bliss but myth does seem to be playing a role here. Someone has correctly stated that in a Myth-story a particular contradiction is perceived to have been resolved. If that is not the case then the Myth holds that contradiction in a bearable state of tension. For example, when Angelenos commute through the poorer sections of their region they are convinced that the day is not far away when collectively we will be able to resolve the issue of poverty.

There are additional causes for this lack of depth. Again, one could *justly* attribute this to lack of education, lack of relative exposure to these issues, lack of time for studying the issues, and the Power of the Myth of Los Angeles. However, there appears to be another unseen (but felt) factor at play. It is the factor of trauma inflicted by Amin's brutal regime and the unexpected expulsion or the equally unexpected, sudden flight from Uganda. Because the trauma has not been overcome fully they do not want negativity in their lives. Subconsciously, they appear to be resisting the realization of negative factors. As a matter of fact, there is a childlike innocence in their wonderment when the negatives of L.A. are mentioned. Both the individual and collective mind, even after 8-31 years of acculturation, does not appear ready to deal with the flip side of Los Angeles.

On the positive side the picture is much brighter. Despite their superficial answers all those who furnished written answers agreed with the following statement: "I am sure that the positive aspects of Los Angeles heavily outweigh the (real or imagined) negative aspects of the region."

## **CHAPTER 9: A SENSE OF PLACE**

### **Introduction:**

Since the beginning of humanity untold number of groups have made a home in (what we modern humans consider to be) inhospitable terrain. People have adapted to cold tundra and hot desert, flood plains and steep valleys, dark caves and thick jungles. People have taken roots even among or near hostile groups. The list is endless. By comparison our subjects arrived in a hospitable society that, despite the contradictions detailed in the previous chapter, remains unsurpassed for its opportunities, technological achievements and creation of a leisurely lifestyle. Indeed, the negatives of L.A., even in their totality, are nothing more than a pinprick compared to the negatives of many other societies. Then compared to a tension-filled, frightful present and an uncertain future in Uganda the flip side of L.A. is peanuts! Is it any wonder that our subjects have developed a Sense of Place here? Let us understand more about the subject:

### **Definition:**

What then is Place? “Place” is one of the trickiest words in the English language, a suitcases so overfilled one can never shut the lid. It carries the resonance of homestead, location, and open space in the city as well as a position in a social hierarchy. The authors of books on architecture, cultural geography, photography, poetry, and travel rely on “sense of place” as an aesthetic concept but often settle for “the personality of a location” as a way of defining it. Place for such authors may engage patterns in the mellow brick of an eighteenth-century

building, the sweep of the Great Plains, the bustle of a small harbor full of sailboats, but such images can easily become clichés of tourist advertising. In the nineteenth century and earlier, place also carried a sense of the right of a person to own a piece of land, or to be part of a social world, and in this older sense place contains more political history. Phrases like “knowing one’s place” or “a woman’s place” still imply both spatial and political meanings.<sup>429</sup>

People make attachment to places that are critical to their well-being or distress. An individual’s sense of place is both a biological response to the surrounding physical environment and a cultural creation, as geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has argued.<sup>430</sup> From childhood, humans come to know places through engaging all five senses, sight as well as sound, smell, taste, and touch.<sup>431</sup>

As social relationships are intertwined with spatial perception, human attachment to places attracts researchers from many fields. Environmental psychologists Setha Low and Irvin Altman define “place attachment” as a psychological process similar to an infant’s attachment to parental figures. They also suggest that place attachment can develop social, material, and ideological dimensions, as individuals develop ties to kin and community, own or rent land, and participate in public life as residents of a particular community.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), 15-16.

<sup>430</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1977): 6, quoted in Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>431</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 5-12.

<sup>432</sup> Irwin Altman & Setha M. Low, eds., *Place Attachment* (New York: Plenum, 1992), quoted in Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), 16.

Tuan refers to one's sense of place as *topophilia* (feeling for the topography or land). Topophilia is the affective bond between people and place or setting.<sup>433</sup> The word "topophilia" is a neologism, useful in that it can be defined broadly to include all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment. These differ greatly in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression. The response to environment may be primarily aesthetic: it may then vary from the fleeting pleasure one gets from a view to the equally fleeting but far more intense sense of beauty that is suddenly revealed. The response may be tactile, a delight in the feel of air, water, earth. More permanent and less easy to express are feelings that one has toward a place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood.<sup>434</sup> Topophilia is not the strongest of human emotions. When it is compelling we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol. (93)

Preservationists speak, often, not just of architectural beauty but also of the character of a place, or its essential spirit, or the quality of life there, or of its livability, genius, flavor, feeling, ambience, essence, resonance, presence, aura, harmony, grace, charm, or seamliness.<sup>435</sup> However, it should be noted that the character of a place might contain desirable as well as undesirable aspects.

Let us hear what our subjects have to say about Sense of Place. Dr. Navin Adatia opines: "It is important to take roots in a place so you can call it your own. You can't have your feet in different places and keep saying 'this is mine but

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<sup>433</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 4.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>435</sup> Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place: A new way of looking at and dealing with our radically changing cities and countryside* (New York: Vintage, Random House, 1991), 15.

that's mine too.' By taking roots you make yourself at home and that's most important." Says Bhupinder Batra: "Yes, of course, we should belong to a place. Once you become attached to a particular place you have a stake in it. Secondly, you always think that of course, this is my place now. It should develop...it should improve. You start thinking about how this can be done. That gives you some more interest in the place."

Asha Chitnavis opines: "A sense of place results in a stable, steady mind. You feel safe and experience joy." Son Hemant says: "It is important to take roots in a place because you feel that you are at home there...either through buying property or doing a business. It gives you satisfaction. I have a Sense of Place for La Puente because I have lived here for twenty years. I feel that I should be a part of anything that happens in the neighborhood."

Indooben Dhaba states: "I have moved enough times within Uganda and twice within United States to understand what you mean. If one does not have a sense of place one feels lost and alienated. When I go touring I like the new places I see but my heart is really in Laguna Beach where my family is. One must be rooted in a place *and* in a community to be properly human." Tina Kotecha is different. She says: "The place does not matter to me. It is the family that is more important." Manilal Padhiar says: "If you take roots in a place it's like a tree growing in a certain spot. Your family can continue using you as an anchor. Even though I am from Africa my roots have been transplanted here. You cannot keep moving periodically. I want my children *and* grandchildren to say: "We are from Huntington Beach."

The following indicators have been used to gauge our subjects' development of a sense of place in this region:

**1) Nature:**

**1A) Appreciation with aesthetic judgment:**

However intense, aesthetic appreciation of scenery is fleeting unless one's eyes are kept to it for some other reason, either the recall of historical events that hallowed the scene or the recall of its underlying reality in geology and structure. The most intense aesthetic experiences of nature are likely to catch one by surprise. Beauty is felt as the sudden contact with an aspect of reality that one has not known before; it is the antithesis of the acquired taste for certain landscapes or the warm feeling for places that one knows well.<sup>436</sup>

Bhupinder Batra says: I am very proud of the City of Cerritos not only because it is so well planned but also because it is the most racially diverse place in United States." Prakash Chandarana exults: "During winter driving to and from work I see beautiful snow-capped San Gabriel mountains. For a change they are not hidden by smog." Asha Chitnavis says: "There is a big hill in front of our complex. Even though there are houses and apartment complexes on it the hill is very pleasing." Son Hemant states: "Mount Baldy is very pretty when it snows. We go skiing there." Indooben Dhaba states: "It is not only the ocean that pleases me. There are lush, green, small hills in and around Laguna that are very pleasing. Even when they dry out in summer it is soothing to look at them." Tina Kotecha says: "I feel the same sense of calm when I look at the ocean at Laguna Beach or

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<sup>436</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 94.

Newport Beach and when I look at Mt. Baldy from Diamond Bar. The ocean looks all the nicer when it rains and Mt. Baldy when it is covered with snow.”

Manilal Padhiar states: “When I go to the beach I see the ocean, the sun, the moon...it is green...the air is clean and fresh...these are all natural things, I appreciate the nature in and around Huntington Beach.” Ashok Pradhan has experienced all of nature’s elements (e.g. animals, birds, hills, insects, lakes, mountains, rivers, snow, streams, trees, valleys, wild flowers, grasses, etc.) with awe and wonder because he has been a camper and frequent tourist. Dr. Janak Raval (who lives near the Pacific ocean) states: “The soft sand and sound of waves on a beach—calm, soothing snow on a ski slope—beauty of nature, soft and quiet. Mountains—majestic nature.”

**1Bi) Appreciation without aesthetic judgment:** What people in advanced societies lack (and counter cultural groups appear to seek) is the gentle, unselfconscious involvement with the physical world that prevailed in the past when the tempo of life was slower, and that young children still enjoy. An adult must learn to be yielding and careless like a child if he were to enjoy nature polymorphously.<sup>437</sup>

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “There is beauty all around you. Trees are beautiful. Rain is beautiful even though it is raining like crazy out there. The desert has its own beauty. Snow has its own beauty; cold and summer are also beautiful. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages.” Bhupinder Batra says: “Nature is always beautiful...flowers, trees, and even human beings. Even a

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid. , 96.



desert has its own beauty. It is all natural...it is created by God. We should appreciate nature. It is a very important part of our life.” Prakash Chandarana says: “I enjoy it when it rains whether it is light or heavy.” Asha Chitnavis says: “The trees behind and on the side of our townhouse are very pleasing. They are all the more beautiful when they bear flowers. During hot summers the cool breeze from these trees keeps our residence cooler than others in our complex.” Son Hemant says: “When I see Mt. Baldy from a distance I know I am approaching San Gabriel Valley where my family’s townhouse is located.” Indooben Dhaba says: “The Pacific ocean and the beach are the most visible and popular aspects of our town. No matter what the season and what the weather it is always soothing to see them even from a distance.”

Zainul Kanji enjoys the beaches and parks of Newport Beach irrespective of the month or the number of people. Tina Kotecha says: “No matter what the season being by the ocean brings me a sense of calmness and makes me feel introspective. I sometimes go to Crystal Cove and Newport Beach when I feel like I need to get away. The warmth in Los Angeles brings a feeling of relaxation and often times laziness. When driving around Diamond Bar, particularly in the direction of the mountains, I feel at peace because of the familiarity of being in my home environment.” Pankaj Padhiar says: “Rain, It washes your soul like it washes the earth. You can sleep better.” His brother Raju states: “A park is the place where you can get away from the big city and be at peace with nature.”

In Uganda they did have more contact with nature, their urban lifestyle was far less complicated and hectic than that of Southern California. The

suggestion here is that the “laid back” mindset they brought with them does allow them to maximize the physical enjoyment of nature however fleeting it may be.

**1Bii) Human incidents:** The appreciation of nature is more personal and longer lasting when it is mixed with the memory of human incidents.<sup>438</sup> Dr. Navin Adatia says: “Because of heavy snow I was stuck in Lake Arrowhead for two more days. It was frustrating because I could not get out, I had to return to work, Then I realized ‘wow! It is nice and beautiful!’” Prakash Chandarana says: “I love Shabarum Park in the City of Industry because my children’s birthdays have been celebrated there.” Asha Chitnavis says: “Once when we were having a picnic I fell while playing a game. Everyone had a good laugh. At another picnic I lost at cards. They poked gentle fun at me. I will always remember these incidents fondly.” Son Hemant says: “It rained while driving with friends to Apple Valley. It made the mountains look pretty.” Indooben Dhaba states: “While driving with my daughter through a Pass in Laguna our car had a puncture. The Auto Club tow truck was late in arriving. As if that was not enough, there was a sudden downpour! I had no regret getting thoroughly soaked because the chirping of birds and the little squirrels running around made it worthwhile!”

Manilal Padhiar states: “While celebrating *holi* for the very first time on the beach one of our youngsters mistook a browned-skinned, curious passerby to be one of us. The youngsters doused the passerby with colored water. Fortunately, the stranger did not take offense and joined in the celebration!” Raju Padhiar says: “We had a birthday party for my brother’s first son in a park near our house. We

had all of our family there and it was nice to see all the young and old enjoying each other's company. It made me feel close to everyone." Dr. Janak Raval states: "Graduation of my nephew outdoors on the beautiful Loyola University Campus with all family present, a unique and memorable experience!"

**1C) Scientific curiosity:** It also endures beyond the fleeting when aesthetic pleasure is combined with scientific curiosity. Intense awareness of environmental beauty normally comes as a sudden revelation. Such awareness is least affected by received opinions and it also seems to be largely independent of the character of the environment. Homely and even drab scenes can reveal aspects of themselves that went unnoticed before, and this new insight into the real is sometimes experienced as beauty.<sup>439</sup>

Tina Kotecha says: "When in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, we went on a camping field trip to Lake Arrowhead and took long hikes to observe various plants and flowers." Raju Padhiar states: "I went camping with my friends and to live off the land. We had to hunt, fish, and find water. It made me realize the natural way of life."

**1D) Nature's intransigence:** Attachment to place can also emerge, paradoxically, from the experience of nature's intransigence.<sup>440</sup> Dr. Navin Adatia says: "You can be upset about an incident but you cannot hate nature...once my carpet got wet due to rain at my other home. Why get upset about it? I had it repaired and that was that." Bhupinder Batra states: "While living in La Mirada there was a big earthquake. It caused some damage, cracks to our house. After we

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<sup>438</sup> Vaughn Cornish, *Scenery and the Sense of Sight* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1935), quoted in YI-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental perception, Attitudes, and values* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1974), 95.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

repaired the cracks we became attached to the house even more. Wherever you live you become attached to the home. We were there for about ten years.”

Hemant Chitnavis says: “When it rains heavily the garden drains are clogged. I have to unclog them while it is still pouring. I thus become attached even more to my home.”

Indooben Dhaba says: “This happened soon after my husband and I moved to Laguna Beach to be near our children. I went to the grocery store to buy some items. I forgot about the rainy forecast and forgot to close the door near the rear balcony. The sofa in the balcony was ruined and rainwater seeped onto the carpet in our dining area. Believe it or not, the experience made me like my small apartment and the complex itself even more!” Tina Kotecha states: “I suppose the hot summers in Los Angeles, though often unbearable, make me appreciate L.A. more than the hurricanes, tornadoes of the south and the cold in the east. Though I have not personally experienced a severe earthquake, I am familiar with earthquakes and they remind me that I am at home.” Raju Padhiar says that the cold, heat, and rain take their toll on one’s house. One has to fix it up. Thus one becomes attached to one’s house even more.

## **2) Painful lessons of life and place:**

Likewise, negative aspects of life (e.g. death, divorce, failure in a business venture, family conflict, relative poverty, separation, unemployment, etc.) can also result in a greater bond between oneself and one’s place.

Bhupinder Batra states: “We went to the beach. My granddaughter was with us. The children were running to the water and we were sitting. There was a

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<sup>440</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 97.

large wave and I thought she was gone! We were so scared...we all ran toward the place where she was playing. Fortunately, she was still there but that was a scary moment for me! This happened in Long Beach.” Prakash Chandarana says: “My older brother’s sudden death from cancer was very shocking and painful. Nevertheless, I worked harder and continued to operate his auto parts business. I became attached to it even more.” Says Hemant Chitnavis: “The sudden death of my father and the long-lasting pain made me realize how precious my family is. The home he had bought with paltry savings became even more precious.” Indooben Dhaba says: “My husband died after a prolonged bout with cancer. This happened less than three years after we moved to Laguna. Thus the apartment, nearby streets, park, and stores became more meaningful because we used to frequent them.”

Pankaj Padhiar is emotionally attached to the mortuary where his father’s remains were cremated. Pankaj was 5 years old when his dad died. Brother Raju says: “After our father died I and my friend Dave started a business. It was hard, working long hours and days, to make a living. Once we became successful the auto repair business became all the more meaningful.” Ashok Pradhan says: “My father’s death brought the family closer. My younger brother’s divorce also brought us closer and we learned to value companionship. As a result, we were drawn closer to our homes.”

### **3) Amiable design and place:**

William H. Whyte found that there is a demonstrable correlation between “amiable” design and the quality of experience available in a plaza. According to

Whyte two interconnected elements of amiable design are shallow steps and low flights of steps.<sup>441</sup>

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “It should be pleasant, soothing, should make me feel at ease, and induce calmness...pleasant lighting, colors, the way the furniture is...it doesn’t have to be one particular thing.” Bhupinder Batra opines: “It should be pleasing to your eyes...and not only to your eyes but to your mind also. It gives you pleasure and sort of feeling of contentment. Sometimes it also gives you some inspiration to do better...like some color scheme in the room or a place of worship, certain decoration, certain writings on the wall that create a pleasing effect.” Prakash Chandarana says: “In my business well-arranged goods are aesthetically pleasing and a factor in my success.” Asha Chitnavis says: “I look for aesthetics and intelligence in a pleasing design. A good example is the nearby McDonalds with its arches and children’s play area with vibrant colors.” Hemant Chitnavis says: “Cerritos Mall is pleasing because stores are small. They make you feel as if you are in a small town.” Indooben Dhaba states: “The decorations and furniture in my apartment are not fancy but they are aesthetically pleasing and functional. I do not believe in buying expensive furniture just to impress my friends and relatives.” Tina Kotecha states: “There’s a restaurant in Los Angeles called Moustache Café. Part of its seating is in an enclosed patio area that is covered with vines and twinkle lights overhead. I always feel a sense of relaxation and understated elegance when I dine here.”

Manilal Padhiar says: “I like my environment to be sunny. I like to see plants and the ocean from my window.” Pankaj Padhiar is pleased with the

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<sup>441</sup> Hiss, *Experience of Place*, 16.

outdoor theater in a Park in Huntington Beach. The theater is well designed. Dr. Janak Raval says: “Large water fountains in an indoor mall induces a sense of calm. High ceilings and large windows in home or office provide a sense of space, belonging, and calm.”

#### **4) Job satisfaction and place:**

There is a relationship between how people experience the offices they work in and their productivity level on the job. There are at least seventeen different aspects of office design—ranging from how enclosed an office is to how noisy it is—that can affect job performance, job satisfaction, people’s abilities to communicate with other workers in an office, or their satisfaction with their surroundings. (17)

Dr. Thomas J. Allen found that more than eighty percent of an engineer’s ideas come from face-to-face contact with colleagues, but also that engineers will not walk more than about a hundred feet from their own desks to exchange thoughts with anyone. The cutoff point in this case is a walk that takes more than half a minute, so conversation has to be available almost next door. Engineers attend conventions reluctantly, he found, and they completely reject any of the technological substitutes for personal encounter. They hate asking for information on the phone, and they get even less out of reading technical journals. (19)

Bhupinder Batra says: “There should be easy access to the place of work, even for subordinates, it shouldn’t be too ostentatious, there should not be a concentration of the same type of machines or goods.” Praful Chandarana states that the aesthetically pleasing interior including the furniture facilitates interaction

with colleagues and supervisor at his auto parts store. Older brother Prakash agrees that his auto parts business is very clean and well organized. He derives a lot of satisfaction from the place. Tina Kotecha states: "I share an office with another person. We are the only employees who have our desks directly facing each other while others have set their desks in such a way that their backs are facing each other. I believe the way our desks are set fosters friendliness and positive interaction. I look forward to going to work because I don't feel so alienated. Also, I am on a separate floor from the main part of the law firm and there's less scrutiny on my floor and less interaction with partners; therefore less politics to deal with. As a result, I'm able to dress casually more often than not and be comfortable while I'm working."

Manilal Padhiar says: "Greenery around the office or an ocean view creates a pleasant external environment. Internally, you can have plants and nice lighting. I like furniture that is functional and California Contemporary, plenty of space for work. The color scheme has to be earth tone. I like granite which is a natural stone." Pankaj Padhiar loves his boss's office, as it is "very nice and clean. That is where one day I will be!" Brother Raju says: "The place where I work has lots of tools and different cars with different colors. It is always satisfying to work on a variety of cars. When I build car engines for my customers I make them look good and different. They really get their money's worth." Ashok Pradhan says: "My office environment is genial and pleasing. I have had positive interaction with colleagues and employees. The length of my employment essentially has been due to my employers and the way they have treated me." Dr. Janak Raval



states: “Sufficient space, good, comfortable furniture and well lit offices (preferably with natural light) promote a sense of self, well being, and enhance productivity.”

### **5) Security and place:**

People’s sense of security in a public space is spatially anchored.<sup>442</sup> This is especially true of Los Angeles where the *perception* of crime is strong.

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “A safe locale is one where I have control of the place.” Bhupinder Batra opines: “Physical safety is very essential for your mind. It can help in the development of your thoughts and... security of work...and an unrested mind, agitated mind is not good for business or any company.” Praful Chandarana frequents the public library in Chino Hills because it is safe. He goes there to seek knowledge. Praful also patronizes movie theaters in Chino Hills and Diamond Bar because they are safe. Prakash Chandarana frequents nearby supermarkets and the Puente Hills Mall because there is good security. Asha Chitnavis feels very safe at the Puente Hills Mall because it is crowded. She also feels safe at the nearby Bank of America branch, as there is always a car with security guards. Hemant Chitnavis frequents the Mall and grocery stores because they have security staffs. Indooben Dhaba feels very safe in her apartment complex because it is gated and tenants look after each other. Tina Kotecha says: “My office. I work there and there is high security so I feel relatively safe (I say relatively as the events of 9/11 have cast some doubt that any place could be safe enough). Then I feel safe at the temple where I go to pray and perhaps naively assume that not much bad can happen in a holy place.”

Manilal Padhiar says: "Huntington Beach is safe for me but if I was living in Compton or South Central then I would have to put alarms and bars on my windows and make sure my kids don't go out and play. A safe place is one where I feel physically safe, where I can leave my house and go somewhere without worrying, and my kids can play on the street safely." Pankaj Padhiar likes frequenting his son's school and his work place because they are both safe. He also enjoys his "job security." Brother Raju patronizes the local shopping center because there are a lot of people walking around. There are also a few police officers. The other safe place he frequents is the courthouse. Ashok Pradhan frequents shopping malls and the LAX International Airport because of the sheer number of people and tight security. Dr. Janak Raval frequents shopping malls and movie theaters for the same reason. Puthiyedath Warriar frequents beaches and parks because they are less vulnerable to crime.

People need reasons for going to a place, and the more reasons they have, the more secure they feel and the more time they will spend there; they will visit more often, and they will make longer visits. (87-88) There are two sorts of reasons for spending time in a public space: passive reasons, like standing and looking around at people, or sitting and reading and eating a sandwich; and active reasons, like talking to people, asking for information, or buying a book, a drink or a sandwich. (88)

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid. , 87.

## 6) Necessity and Place:

Boorstein says: “The chain store announced and symbolized a new kind of community. The new consumption communities were, of course, shallower in their loyalties, more superficial in their services. But they were ubiquitous, somehow touching the American consumer at every waking moment and even while he slept. Man was no longer local. As the American population adopted mobility as normal, the new arrivals in a new suburb or city who might not know their neighbors would at least feel somewhat at home in their A & P (where they knew where to find each item) or in their Walgreen’s (where familiar brands abounded).”<sup>443</sup>

Rieff adds in support: “To the white-collar worker, the new mini-malls were a godsend. Instead of fighting traffic all the way out to the mall, and then fighting for a place to park (if possible, close to the store you had come to shop in) once you got there, you could now pick up a quart of milk, or take in the dry cleaning, or script Xeroxed—by pulling into a strip mall on your way to or from work.”<sup>444</sup> Rieff continues: “However much Angelenos might complain about these mini-malls, the fact remained that, just as with automated bank teller machines (an innovation that dates only from the late seventies), they soon found it all but impossible to remember life in L.A. without them.”<sup>445</sup> The rise of the mini-mall was in fact synchronous with the proliferation of good restaurants, cafes, and bars that transformed a Los Angeles that had not felt much need for them during the course of the 1970s. (142)

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<sup>443</sup> Boorstein, *Americans*, 112.

<sup>444</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 141.

Prakash Chandarana frequents the Mobile gas station in his neighborhood because it is the nearest one. Asha Chitnavis frequents the Fiesta supermarket because it is so near. Also, the shopping strip within which it is located contains a chain store called Big Lots. Herein she can buy quality items at prices half off. Son Hemant frequents department stores like J.C. Penny, Macys, Robinson May, and Sears when he needs clothes. He also frequents grocery stores like Max, Fiesta, and Food for Less. The AM-PM convenience store and the Union 76 gas station are patronized regularly. Auto garages are drab places but he has to use them out of sheer need. Indooben Dhaba buys nice, inexpensive items from the Goodwill Thrift Store even though it is not fancy. Being a widow on Social Security she likes to save money by not buying from Department stores. Tina Kotecha has a different angle: “It drives me crazy. I don’t like the feeling of domesticity often times and it feels like it’s a chore to go to these places.”

Brothers Pankaj and Raju Padhiar frequent the gas station around the corner out of sheer necessity. Ashok Pradhan frequents Albertson’s, the gas station, Macy’s and Vons. He emphasizes: “Visits to these places are sheer need based and do nothing to my psyche.” Dr. Janak Raval says: “Institutional cafeterias at work are dull and predictable—same menu, same people!” He emphasizes that frequency of use leads to familiarity and attachment, which makes shopping in the local grocery store efficient and less time consuming.

### **7) Familiarity and attachment to place:**

Familiarity breeds affection when it does not breed contempt. We are well aware of how a person can become deeply attached to old slippers that look rather

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

moldy to an outsider. There are various reasons for this attachment. A man's belongings are an extension of his personality; to be deprived of them is to diminish, in his own estimation, his worth as a human being. Clothing is the most personal of one's belonging. It is rare adult whose sense of self does not suffer in nakedness, or who does not feel a threat to his identity when he has to wear someone else's clothes.<sup>446</sup> Of course, our subjects did not leave Uganda in a state of nakedness but they were either deprived of most of their belongings or left the same behind. The avid participation of Uganda Asians in the rhythm of consumption (and over-consumption) can in part be attributed to a subconscious desire to regain and keep what they lost.

Beyond clothing, a person in the process of time invests bits of his emotional life in his home, and beyond the home in his neighborhood. To be forcibly evicted from one's home and neighborhood is to be stripped of a sheathing, which in its familiarity protects the human being from the bewilderment of the outside world. (99) Our subjects, better than conventional migrants, know the value of owning a home in Los Angeles because they were either deprived of their homes or had to leave the same behind when they fled.

Prakash Chandarana admits: "I am emotionally attached to my car. It takes me everywhere." He also loves his new home. He has spent a lot of money on it and it is beautiful. He also goes to the nearby Mobile gas station at least twice a week and misses it if he does not frequent it awhile. Asha Chitnavis is very fond of furniture in her house for a variety of reasons. Its design and color are pleasing. It is comfortable. Above all, she likes it because her late husband liked it a lot.

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<sup>446</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 99.

She adds: "My townhouse is my *American Dream* home. I value it more than my life. In India I spent my life in poverty. In Uganda I lived in rented apartments and a home. I am very happy in this little home of mine." She is fond of the Puente Hills Mall because it is pleasing and she does not realize how the time is passing. Hemant Chitnavis is attached to his home not only because it is his first home but also it gives him privacy. He is attached to the nearby ARCO gas station because sales clerks are friendly. He is fond of the Nevas Auto shop in Walnut because the staff is trustworthy. Indooben Dhaba has bought so many gift items from the Big Lots Discount store at the nearby strip that she will frequent the store at least once a week even if she has no intension of buying anything! Tina Kotecha states: "I'm attached to my car because I spend a lot of time commuting and it's a place where I can decide if I want to interact with people by talking to them on the phone while preserving some privacy." Tina is also attached to her home because she has lived in it for many years. In addition, her immediate relatives live next door. She is also fond of the dry-cleaning store because she and the owner catch up on each other's lives.

Pankaj Padhiar is attached to his computer because it has numerous useful features. His bond with his home is a very loving one. Brother Raju says: "My '68 Chevy. I worked hard to make the money to buy it and I fixed it the way I wanted it when I was in high school. I still own it." Raju is attached to his home because it is a secure place where he can relax after a hard day of work, a place where his family gets together. Cousin Shashi says: "I am attached to my home because it is my pride and joy." Ashok Pradhan is attached to the washer and dryer,

refrigerator, and his car. He loves his home because it is one place where he can “hang his hat.” Dr. Janak Raval is attached to some comfortable clothing and his car. They instill in him a sense of belonging. His car especially makes him experience “exhilaration with acceleration”. He is attached to his home because: “It’s an extension of you. It is the place where you have many memories with your family in the past, present, and future.” Rasik Sudra is attached to his home because therein he can do whatever he wants.

### **8) Memory and place:**

Identity is intimately tied to memory: both our personal memories (where we have come from and where we have dwelt) and the collective or social memories are interconnected with the histories of our families, neighbors, fellow workers, and ethnic communities. Urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories, because natural features such as hills or harbors, as well as streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes.<sup>447</sup> If place does provide an overload of possible meanings for the researcher, it is place’s very same assault on all ways of knowing (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste) that makes it powerful as a source of memory, as a weave where one strand ties in another.<sup>448</sup>

Prakash Chandarana states that the Diamond Palace restaurant in Diamond Bar is more than a restaurant. His Lohana Association gathers there to celebrate events and festivals. Also memorable is the Memory Garden Memorial Park and Mortuary in the City of Brea, Orange County, where his brother’s remains were

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<sup>447</sup> Hayden, *Power of Place*, 9.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

cremated. Note that this is a popular cremation site for Uganda Asians. Asha Chitnavis says: "I frequent two public places. One is the mortuary where last rites for the deceased are performed. It is my duty to attend such rites. Also, some day when I die I would want others to attend. I rarely go to the nearby Hindu temple in Whittier but when I do I forget my daily chores and become one with Gods. Here I am spiritually inspired and do not get tired of life." Hemant Chitnavis frequents the Sanatan Dharma temple in Norwalk where a lot of community gatherings take place. At least once a month Indooben Dhaba will drive by the hospital where her late husband was treated for a prolonged period. Tina Kotecha states: "I used to study at the UCLA cafeteria/coffee house next to the Law School and remember the long days and nights of studying and meeting new people, all of which are positive memories."

Raju Padhiar says: "I remember the mortuary in Costa Mesa where my father's body was cremated. It is a sad and angry memory for me. On the other hand, the Garden Grove hospital where my first child was born is a pleasant memory." Dr. Janak Raval (who goes to or passes by frequently) has this to say about the L.A. downtown skyline: "On a clear day it stands for all that is beautiful and good in L.A. On a smoggy day it represents the greed and waste that is L.A."

### **9) Imageability and place:**

It is that quality in a physical object, which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement that facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment. It might also be



called legibility, or perhaps visibility in a heightened sense, where objects cannot only be seen, but are presented sharply and intensely to the senses.<sup>449</sup> Just as this printed page, if it is legible, can be visually grasped as a related pattern of recognizable symbols, so a legible city would be one whose districts, landmarks or pathways are easily identifiable and are easily grouped into an overall pattern.<sup>450</sup>

In the process of way finding, the strategic link is the environmental image, the generalized mental picture of the exterior physical world that is held by an individual. This image is the product both of immediate sensation and of the memory of past experience, and it is used to interpret information and to guide action. The need to recognize and pattern our surroundings is so crucial, and has such long roots in the past, that this image has wide practical and emotional importance to the individual. (4)

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “The Huntington hospital where I work is clean and very pleasant. There are trees and the visibility is big time! These are the attributes of an ideal environmental image.”

9A) Obviously a clear image enables one to move about easily and quickly: to find a friend’s house, a policeman or a button store. But an ordered environment can do more than this; it may serve as a broad frame of reference, an organizer of activity, belief or knowledge. Like any good framework, such a structure gives the individual a possibility of choice and a starting-point for the

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<sup>449</sup> Lynch, *Image*, 9-10.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

acquisition of further information. A clear image of the surroundings is thus a useful basis for individual growth. (4)

Prakash Chandarana states that the big hill in front of his gated community is very visible. It has an electricity pole on top. Also, a Honda dealership next to the freeway in Diamond Bar enables his customers to find his auto parts store in nearby Walnut. Asha Chitnavis states that the hill with houses and apartments in front of her townhouse complex is prominent and helps to define her section of the City of La Puente. Even more prominent is the bigger hill three miles away with the tall (formerly Sheraton Hilton) hotel. This is the tallest structure in the vicinity and is highly visible for miles around. It is the prominent point of reference in the sub-region. In her immediate neighborhood there are four clear images very close to each other. One is the Sheriff's station with a prominent helipad, the High School, the Chrysler and GM dealerships opposite each other, and the ARCO gas station a couple of blocks away. For Hemant Chitnavis the big Catholic Church at the intersection of Glendora and Temple streets a block away from his residence is a major landmark. For Indooben Dhaba the Hare Krishna temple near the beach is a major landmark because of its architectural features and distinctive function. Tina Kotecha says: "As I'm driving towards downtown and see the skyline, I know which way I need to go to get to work. The Disney Concert Hall is down the street from my office. When I see it, I know without thinking how close I am to my office."

Pankaj Padhiar states that the gas station around the corner enables him, his friends and relatives to find his residence. As per brother Raju the large Bank

building at the Southeast corner of Beach Boulevard (one of the two major streets in central Orange county) and Warner tells him that he is close to his home.

Ashok Pradhan states that at a campus like UCLA walkways and posted signs make it easy for pedestrians to get from one place to another.

**9B)** A vivid and integrated physical setting, capable of producing a sharp image, plays a social role as well. It can furnish the raw material for the symbols and collective memories of group communication. A striking landscape is the skeleton upon which many primitive races erect their socially important myths. Common memories of the “home town” were often the first and easiest point of contact between lonely soldiers during the war. (4)

Prakash Chandarana states that the Masonic Hall in the City of San Dimas stands out because it has a spire and is located in the middle of a residential area. It is where his Lohana Association conducts devotional singing and prayers. Asha Chitnavis states that when she attends prayer meetings at the Bhakta community’s Hindu temple in Whittier she reinforces her identity as a Hindu in concert with other Hindus. The temple stands out because it is located in the corner of a neighborhood that is fully Latino and blue collar. Indooben Dhaba has made quite a few friends by frequenting the Hare Krishna temple in Laguna Beach. They enable her to preserve her Indian ness. For Tina Kotecha the Diamond Palace Restaurant in Diamond Bar and the Masonic Hall in San Dimas are important because her Lohana Samaj often have parties, prayers, and other events there.

Manilal Padhiar states that an ideal environmental image should be big, functional, aesthetically and architecturally pleasing. Pankaj Padhiar frequents the

famous Huntington Beach with his friends. The beach and the surrounding commercial as well as residential areas make for a very pleasing, informal, people-friendly environment. As for brother Raju the *Gayatri Mandir* (temple) in Artesia is where his group meets for religious rituals. Ashok Pradhan also goes to a (unspecified) Hindu temple for worshipping and meeting his friends. Dr. Janak Raval reinforces his identity as a Southern Californian by frequenting the distinctive downtown Staples Center for Lakers' home games. It is especially enjoyable when his team is winning. To him the roar of the crowd, the blare of the announcer is very exciting indeed.

9Ci) A good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security. He can establish a harmonious relationship between himself and the outside world. This is the obverse of the fear that comes with disorientation; it means that the sweet sense of home is strongest when home is not only familiar but distinctive as well. (4-5) Again, the big hill in front of his home gives Prakash Chandarana a sense of emotional security. Asha Chitnavis feels secure when she sees the High School in front of her gated townhouse complex that is itself a symbol of security. Tina Kotecha says: "I have a cousin in Tustin Ranch who has an apartment in a large, gated complex. The largeness of the complex, the soft colors and the quaint style of the individual apartments make me feel at home."

For Pankaj Padhiar clean streets in his neighborhood constitute an environmental image. For brother Raju, again, the large bank building makes him feel emotionally secure. Ashok Pradhan states that there is a vacant Korean

church on the hill in front of his tract. It is a beautiful and distinctive landmark with a long, green spire. The sight of it makes him happy. Dr. Janak Raval says: “The view of the ocean from the backyard shows nature at play, and it is home!”

9Cii) Indeed, a distinctive and legible environment not only offers security but also heightens the potential depth and intensity of human experience.

Although life is far from impossible in the visual chaos of the modern city, the same daily action could take on new meaning if carried out in a more vivid setting. Potentially, the city is in itself the powerful symbol of a complex society. If the city is visually well set forth, it can also have a strong, expressive meaning.

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Prakash Chandarana states that Spectrum, the mini shopping mall near the freeway in Chino Hills is exciting because it has a lot of restaurants and stores. It is also very visible from the surroundings because of its architecture. Tina Kotecha says: “Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Museum of Contemporary Art are close to each other on the same street and there’s always activity there. The former is a silver metal building uniquely shaped and very hip. They seem to represent the pulse of Los Angeles.”

For brothers Pankaj and Raju Padhiar the Huntington Beach is the most exciting and vivid place in Southern California. Many types of contests are held there every summer and they get to meet different people from around the world. Ashok Pradhan states that the library and the Senior Citizens’ Center in his city are vivid landmarks and make life exciting and meaningful. Dr. Janak Raval is

more expressive: “The HOLLYWOOD sign! It is the symbol of the L.A. Dream! It conveys the message that anything is possible here!”

**9Ciii) Disneyland:** The careful design and thematic orientation of the magic kingdoms (i.e. Disneyland, Stanford Industrial Park, and Sun City) made them highly legible. The four environments served as what one student of urban America has called “epitome districts,” that is, “special places in cities (which) carry huge layers of symbols that have the capacity to pack up emotions, energy, or history into a small space.”<sup>451</sup>

In western towns where rapid, horizontal growth threatened to erase all common points of reference, magic kingdoms helped to preserve a sense of mastery over the environment by providing landmarks for the cityscape of the eye and the mind. Landmarks not only play a centering role in mental maps but also serve as symbols that offer a quick, shorthand method of characterizing a place. Disneyland, in addition to making Anaheim the first identifiable business district for all of Orange County, became both landmark and symbol for the entire region.<sup>452</sup>

Mental maps, by simplifying the landscape, help individuals to understand it. Thus they strengthen a sense of meaning and a sense of place. (296) A sense of buoyancy (ease) is deliberately evoked at Disneyland, where all the buildings are scaled down to something like seven-eighths size. This is not enough of a reduction to make the buildings look like miniatures, but this slight shrinkage

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<sup>451</sup> John M. Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992), 295.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

does have the effect of helping people relax and feel more in control of their circumstances.<sup>453</sup>

Our subjects appear to be familiar with the importance of Disneyland. Prakash Chandarana states: “It is the most prominent man-made feature in Southern California.” Asha Chitnavis writes: “Despite its consumptive aspect Disneyland is the most well-known symbol of the region.” Tina Kotecha states: “It is synonymous with Southern California. Disneyland is marketed as a place of utopia, good feelings and fantasy. Southern California is marketed the same way.” Raju Padhiar opines: “Most people think of Southern California when Disneyland is mentioned.” Ashok Pradhan quotes his visiting friends and relatives from overseas: “How lucky of you to live close to Disneyland!”

### **10) Neighborhood and place:**

This is the district in which one feels at home. Another more abstract sense of neighborhood is that it is the district one know fairly well both through direct experience and through hearsay.<sup>454</sup>

**10A) Degree of spatial experience and concern:** The middle-class homeowner has an intimate experience of his house. At the same time he has an abstract but intense interest in his neighborhood as a piece of real estate the quality of which directly affects the market value of his house. Beyond economic considerations the homeowner values the neighborhood and will defend its integrity because it represents a desired way of life.<sup>455</sup> After all, for a place to have an identity people really must feel they are stakeholders in it. They must feel

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<sup>453</sup> Hiss, *Experience of Place*, 75.

that it is, at gut level, theirs; that they are willing to fight over it and for it. They must see it as having an importance relative to their personal interests. They must see it, at some level, as community.<sup>456</sup> Indeed, our subjects do perceive their neighborhoods as community at some level.

Bhupinder Batra opines: “An ideal neighborhood is one that give you peace of mind, security, and...of course, friendship with neighbors. It should be a sweet and clean area.” Prakash Chandarana likes to see his neighborhood clean and safe. He is concerned about the value of his property. Asha Chitnavis states: “I want decent people as my neighbors. I want my neighborhood to be clean and safe.” Tina Kotecha is concerned about the housing and urban over development of Diamond Bar. Pankaj Padhiar is concerned about his neighborhood because of his kids. Ashok Pradhan affirms: “We look out for one another and make sure no unusual elements hang out or frequent the area.” Rasik Sudra declares: “I feel at home here but it is L.A. Anything can happen any minute! I can live with that!”

**10B) Neighborhood satisfaction:** By and large people are satisfied with their residential area. For those who have lived at a place for many years, familiarity breeds acceptance and even attachment. (215-216) Newcomers are more prone to voice discontent; on the other hand, people may express contentment with their neighborhood despite their real feelings, because it is difficult for them to admit that by moving for economic gain they have in fact made fools of themselves. People of high income most often express satisfaction, which is hardly surprising since they are where they are by choice, and they have

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<sup>454</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 215.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.



the means to improve the quality of their neighborhood. Less affluent people are less enthusiastic: the reasons given for why they like their area tend to be general and abstract, whereas those given for disliking it are more specific and concrete. Satisfaction seems a rather weak word: it may mean little more than the absence of persistent irritation. Satisfaction does not mean strong attachment. City dwellers put a higher value on the quality of their neighborhood than on either the conveniences of the city or on the quality of their home. (216)

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “I value my neighborhood because that’s where I spend a lot of time. Here people know each other; they are friendlier. When they know each other and are friendly they can bring the whole area up aesthetically and socially, and not just dollar wise.”

Mr. Batra likes his neighborhood because not only has he made friends there but also because there is little traffic and no crime. Praful Chandarana is satisfied with his neighborhood because it is very quiet. Brother Prakash is satisfied because it meets his requirements (clean, safe, property values). Asha Chitnavis is happy with her neighborhood because it meets her expectations. Son Hemant is happy because in addition to the Union 76 gas station, Denny’s, and the Sheriff’s Station there are two freeways only minutes away. Indooben Dhaba says emphatically: “I have no regrets about choosing to live in this apartment complex. It is so pleasant, so airy and bright that I could never think of living in another apartment complex!”

Manilal Padhiar is happy because his neighbors are “very cool, helpful people.” He adds: “I am happy with my neighborhood because my mom who does

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<sup>456</sup> Garreau, *Edge City*, 269.

not speak any English can sit with a neighbor for hours or walk around the neighborhood with her, their kids can come into my house or my kids go to theirs.” Pankaj Padhiar is satisfied with his neighborhood because it is safe. Brother Raju is satisfied with the same neighborhood because it is peaceful, not too crowded, his neighbors are very approachable, and close relatives live nearby. Ashok Pradhan is happy because his neighborhood is clean and newer. His neighbors are good. Also, since his house is located in a cul-de-sac there is no traffic. Dr. Janak Raval is satisfied because his neighborhood is a gated, safe community off the seashore, has clean air and is very scenic. Rasik Sudra is satisfied with his neighbors because they are very good people.

#### 11) **Freeway and place:**

Speaking of contradictions a symbol can be two-sided. It can have both positive and negative aspects. The freeway is one such symbol.

Freeways connect dispersed locations of workplaces and dwellings, typical of contemporary working landscapes. As interstate freeways carry automobiles speeding at 65 miles per hour, it becomes more difficult to analyze the experience they provide in terms of human perception and memory, but easier to track the production of that American automotive space as the world’s largest and most grandiose public works project. Perhaps the most basic feature of freeways and the one most overlooked by the preoccupied commuter is that they are impressive structures, the most awesome works of design in the daily lives of most of us. They can even be beautiful.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Brodsky, L.A. *Freeway*, 5.

The most public of places the freeway is not conducive to meaningful social relationships. It has been argued that for Angelenos places become merely points to pass through, that Angelenos are concerned with the functions of the freeway and less with locality.<sup>458</sup> Can such an artifact foster a sense of place? The answer is *yes*.

Angelenos identify with two places. One is the neighborhood; the other is the entire Los Angeles metropolitan area. It is the identification with the latter the freeway system reinforces. Being an auto corridor par excellence it suggests relevant location, as a way that an individual can relate to a plethora of places. In an area of sprawling suburbanization and hundreds of randomly attached communities, the freeway serves to evoke a sense of clarity and sharpness, to delineate and integrate urban space. It has created a new Sense of Place. (23)

## **12) Automobile and place:**

The car is also a two-sided symbol. The private car gives each individual a sense of control over time, distance, the machine itself, and the humanity with which one must come in contact, and therefore a sense of control over urban community. It is also a physical symbol of individual autonomy and of individual freedom. It is a palpable connection, by its very presence, between one community and another in the individual's life. The car itself is both a symbol and reinforcement of the sense of belonging to a particular place, because the individual sees the car in different places but once inside it, is in the same place.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid. , 33.

<sup>459</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 235.

### 13) Art, consumption, and place:

Harvey Molotch links the three in his article “L.A. as Design Product: How Art Works in a Regional Economy”. He emphasizes that every designer’s hand; whether a teen’s use of fond objects to structure a day’s outfit or a sophisticated studio’s rendering of a new car model draws from the surrounding currents of popular and esoteric arts and modes of expression—verbal, literate, and plastic—that makes up everyday life. These interpretations of daily rounds and high culture, ways of life and circulating beliefs, are raw materials of what can come from place. They are factors of distinctive production and consumption, part of the “anthropology of goods” that characterizes all societies.<sup>460</sup> Molotch further emphasizes that all the forms of indigenous creativity intersect—fine art and folk sentiment, kitsch and camp, freeway-sign tagging and garden tool design.<sup>461</sup> That museums fail to show the connection does not mean that populations fail to make it. The image of places comes from the sense people have—local people and those far away—of the cultural-material interactions within them. And this reputation of place becomes another aspect of local economic structure, a part of its geographic capital. People desire goods associated with a specific place because they want, from a distance, the place itself. We cannibalize a place—take in some of its social and cultural power, its cachet—by consuming the objects from it. The admired human relations that adhere in its products can be appropriated through the material acquisitions. Paris was the scene of the opera, Chevalier, and the

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<sup>460</sup> Mary Douglas & Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), quoted in Allen J. Scott & Edward W. Soja, eds. *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the end of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996), 225.

<sup>461</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 225.

avant-garde (civilization—“a model of enlightened consumption”) as well as the charm of the waif. It had great fashions, and the glamour became generalized such that what went on there among designers, clients, and commentators created, in itself, an export market for products attributed to its milieu. The demand for Swiss watches, made by a people imagined as precise and workmanlike, likely goes beyond any inherent superiority of the products. The positive connection of product image to places yields a kind of “monopoly rent” that adheres to places, their insignia, and the brand names that may attach to them. Their industries grow as a result, and the local economic base takes its shape. Favorable images create entry barriers for products from competing places.<sup>462</sup>

If one were to expand the definition of the word “art” then one has to listen to Dr. Navin Adatia who says he has some Asian Indian clients. Without differentiating between them he adds: “Psychiatry is more of an art form than science. Members of any recent migrant group will have adjustment problems in a region. They go through culture shock and readjustment. Younger persons adjust better. Sometimes even a younger person has a difficult time. Older the person much more difficult is the time fitting in.” Mr. Bhupinder Batra sells Indian crafts. His clientele consists not only of all sorts of Asian-Indians but also Caucasians and Hispanics. They buy a lot of Hindu religious items. He thereby caters to the immense diversity of L.A. Note that his business is located on Pioneer blvd. in “Little India” within the City of Artesia. This “Little India” has made a considerable contribution to the diversity and tax base not only of Artesia but also of surrounding towns.

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid. , 229-230.

Prakash Chandarana states: “I supply auto parts for repairs. Without their vehicles Southern Californians cannot enjoy their American Dream.” In a related occupation, Raju Padhiar repairs cars and enables his customers to enjoy the Southern California lifestyle. Tina Kotecha writes: “I have a City mug from Starbucks. It shows trendiness and loyalty to L.A. Southern California is viewed as being very hip and Starbucks is also viewed as a hip coffee shop. The mug is also more expensive than your average mug. It displays the ‘ostentatious ness’ of Southern California in some sense.”

Manilal Padhiar, a furniture manufacturer, says: “Furniture wise and house wise Los Angeles is very much ahead of the rest of America. Our furniture is contemporary and more functional. Also, looks wise it can be more sophisticated. We use different colors, mostly blues, green, light red, white. Unlike easterners we are not into earth colors. My customers are into natural wood because they may want to color it different later. Exotic (imported) wood and plastic laminate are very much used in Southern California. L.A. furniture is also big and functional because our houses are big. The coffee table, couches, and beds... everything is big! Our designers will borrow ideas from Europeans and turn them into something Californian, something contemporary.”

#### **14) Style and place:**

If a denizen of a region identifies with a place by buying a product made in that place it is equally true that he/she identifies with the place by using a product no matter where it is made. What matters is that the product reflects the spirit of the place. This is especially true in Southern California where so much of

clothing reflects the ethos of the region but carries labels like “Made in China”, “Made in Taiwan”, etc.

**14A) Attire:** Like the spirit of the city, L.A. fashion is strongly nonconformist and highly artistic. The design often seems to be an extension of the landscape, and downtown’s edgy ambience continues to be an inspiration.<sup>463</sup> For example, the clothes of designer and longtime Angeleno Michelle Mason are really laid back and she thinks that has a lot to do with the L.A. lifestyle. For designer Jared Gold creative momentum is the order of the day for the local fashion scene. “There’s a really high concentration of people who are very open to and supportive of the arts,” says the designer who works in a turn-of-the-century Westlake hotel. “I don’t see how I would be able to do what I do anywhere else.”<sup>464</sup>

Prakash Chandarana wears “L. A. style special light clothing in summer.” Hemant Chitnavis says: “We have an informal dress code.” Indooben Dhaba states: “We are proud to wear Indian dresses but here you can wear anything you want and people will not say anything. In Uganda you could not do that. Here you can wear shorts, you can even wear a bikini! In Uganda women and even girls could not do that.”

Zainul Kanji says: “I wear shorts almost all the time. Whenever I can get away with it I wear shorts.” When asked why he wears shorts all the time Zainul said defiantly: “Because I can! And it is o.k. It is not a problem. On the east coast this would not be allowed.” Tina Kotecha says: “The glamour that is L.A. is

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<sup>463</sup> Bianca Perlman, “West Coast Swing: L.A.’s blossoming fashion week still has plenty of edge,” *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 28 October 2001, 11.

reflected in some of my clothes. I guess that means the boldness of the colors. My work clothes in particular tend to be more refined and tailored. People here have such a strong sense of self and such confidence. That's what I think about in reference to my clothes in L.A."

Manilal Padhiar states: "Los Angeles people have a very free idea of dress. They do not tie themselves to fashion. They have their shorts and T-shirts on. An Angeleno wears a hat and he doesn't care how he looks. I really like that and I personally follow that. I do not like to wear suits and ties." Raju Padhiar writes: "I enjoy all things Southern Californian. I wear clothes with all colors." Dr. Janak Raval does not specify which attire he wears but his statement reflects the spirit of L.A.: "I follow my own mind rather than be a follower of a *fashionable* trend. On occasion this may be in sync; at other times it will be different."

**14B) Residential architecture and place:** Dr. Navin Adatia says: "My house is big. The architecture is Southwestern. The furnishings, the colors are also Southwestern. I also have statues of Hindu deities and typical Indian pictures." Bhupinder Batra says: "My house is big, very spacious! We have Malibu lights and in the backyard seven trees which are old and fifty feet tall. We have a big Dining room and a Big Screen TV." Prakash Chandarana states: "My house is spacious. It has a lot of sunlight. Its design is bolder. It reflects the Southern California spirit." Both Asha and Hemant Chitnavis state that their townhouse has a very 'Southern California' look to it. It has a high atrium ceiling. Their

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid.



townhouse complex has a swimming pool and Jacuzzi. These are very “L.A.” features.

Indooben Dhaba says that houses here are not only bigger compared to Indiana but they are brighter and their designs are sharper. Zainul Kanji says: “My Dining Set has a Southwestern design.” Manilal Padhiar has furniture that is a combination of California Contemporary and Art Deco.

### **15) Patriotism and place:**

There are two kinds of patriotism, local and imperial. Local patriotism rests on the intimate experience of place, and on a sense of the fragility of goodness: that which we love has no guarantee to endure. Imperial patriotism feeds on collective egotism and pride.<sup>465</sup> Note that *all* those who supplied written answers stated that they are proud of being Angelenos.

**15A) Participation in the political process:** Claiming American values and institutions as their own and employing the rhetoric of the civic culture, Irish Catholics illustrated Tocqueville’s proposition that patriotism is nurtured and reinforced by participation in the political process.<sup>466</sup>

Dr. Navin Adatia is not affiliated with any political party. He examines the issues and the views of candidates. He adds: “Hopefully they will follow through with what they say. Politicians never do what they promise.” Bhupinder Batra is a registered democrat and he votes in all the elections. He elucidates: “As a citizen it is our duty to participate in the process. It is for the betterment of our society. Though we are not very active people here and not very ambitious...if we don’t

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<sup>465</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 101.

<sup>466</sup> Fuchs, *Kaleidoscope*, 44.

participate we can lose certain rights.” Lately Mr. Batra has been active in the drive to have a sizeable section (dominated by Indian businesses) of the City of Artesia declared as “Little India.”

Asha Chitnavis asks her sons (the whole family is pro-democrat) for advice and also votes in all the elections. Her son Hemant does the same but in addition he indulges in lobbying on behalf of an Indian Special Interest group. He writes: “We have learned ways of raising funds for political purposes, for lobbying on behalf of our community so we can get more help from the state government.” Hemant’s group has organized auctions, fashion and movie shows, and music nights. Indooben Dhaba states: “I am a Democrat and vote in all the elections. I do not necessarily understand all the issues but I vote for candidates of the Democratic Party anyway. I am very proud to be a citizen of this great nation. I would be neglecting my duty if I do not vote.”

Zainul Kanji is a Republican but does not like President Bush. Zainul votes in all the elections. So does Tina Kotecha. Manilal Padhiar votes in all the local elections but he does not vote in the national elections if he is not happy with the candidates running for office. Manilal sometimes invites a prominent local politician to attend one of the Gujrati Hindu festivals he organizes. Ashok Pradhan is not very seriously involved in politics. However, he does exercise his constitutional right to vote without prejudice. Dr. Janak Raval says: “I plan to vote as I have become a citizen.” Most of our subjects vote in all the elections. They value their vote because their memory of no democracy under the British,

limited, fearful democracy under Obote and a brutal dictatorship under Amin is still very fresh.

However, just as their social vision does not extend beyond their families and immediate community their participation in the political process does not extend beyond voting in elections. One would think that being deprived of political participation for 2-3 generations in Uganda would make them avid participants in different ways and at different levels here. Alas, that has not happened! One could argue that lack of time and relative lack of education are keeping them disinterested. This argument holds no water because the Vietnamese (both indigenous and ethnic Chinese), despite tougher barriers (i.e. language, race and lack of education), are active in local politics, school boards and make themselves heard loud and clear. The disinterest bred in our subjects for three generations in Uganda seems to have become a firm, psycho-cultural factor. Despite having more education, relatively speaking, than the Vietnamese (or for that matter, most other Asian groups), and greater exposure to American ways there is not a single Uganda Asian (with the exception of Hemant Chitnavis) or East African Asian anywhere in Southern California (or United States) active in politics at any level. Even Hemant's political activities are geared to benefit a pro-India rather than any pro-Africa group. True, unlike their brethren in U.K. who are concentrated in a number of cities and towns our subjects are dispersed in the suburbia. This dilutes their political strength. This, again, is not a satisfactory answer considering a substantial number of our subjects' exposure to British and Canadian cultures and the resulting, relative finesse.

**15B) Of Property rights:** Unlike Uganda, our subjects' property is guaranteed both by the Constitution and Civil Courts. There is no danger whatsoever of their property being confiscated by either a socialist administration or a brutal military regime. This assurance, in turn, reinforces their faith in the rule of law, democracy, our values, and mythology. In a limited way they wholeheartedly participate in the political process that, in turn, strengthens their patriotism.

Dr. Navin Adatia opines: "It's your own place and you can develop it the way you want it. It makes you feel good. It makes you a little bit more proud saying you know I have achieved it. A sense of security goes with it." Bhupinder Batra says: "Personal property is my own mind, my own heart, and my own feelings. For example, my house means my own place, family uplift, and safety." Al Bhimani writes: "As a United States citizen, the U.S. Constitution with its Bill of Rights and the Power of Law provide me with numerous incentives to invest in property and business ownership, and thereby achieve my *American Dream*." Hemant Chitnavis states: "Where one's life and property are protected one becomes more loyal to a place." Tina Kotecha agrees: "I tend to be more loyal to a place where I know my property is not going to be summarily or arbitrarily taken away." Manilal Padhiar states: "Having personal property means you are well established and successful in your field. You can expand upon it and create more wealth for yourself. You thus make progress. It is your progress as well as society's progress." Pankaj Padhiar agrees. Ashok Pradhan states: " 'Patriotism' is

a sense of freedom. When you have that you feel safe and take roots.” Dr. Janak Raval opines: “The protection of property rights greatly enhances patriotism.”

**15C) Ritualized patriotism:** Note that the following are national rituals the participation in which enhances not only local but also national patriotism. These rituals also transcend consumption:

**15Ci) Fourth of July:** The first portion of the annual cycle culminates, in the summer, with the Fourth of July, Independence Day, and a ritual reinforcement of the ideals of revolution, independence, freedom, and nationalism.<sup>467</sup> The second half of the annual cycle is less concerned with the revolutionary mythology of America, and more with the celebration of the peoples and the land of America. Labor Day, Columbus Day, and Veterans Day all build a pattern of remembrance of the New World, of pathfinders and discoverers, of workers and fighters.<sup>468</sup>

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “I celebrate it because I am here and I am a citizen. I celebrate it just like everybody else. We get together and see the fireworks.” Bhupinder Batra says: “We being the citizens of America should celebrate and we do celebrate it. We go to the Park for kids. They enjoy watching the fireworks. Of course, they bring their own fireworks along! Sometimes we go to the beach for a picnic.” Praful Chandarana celebrates the Fourth of July by picnicking on the beach. Prakash Chandarana shows his patriotism by celebrating the day and combining it with his daughter’s birthday party. He further shows his patriotism by displaying bumper stickers of the American flag. Asha Chitnavis

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<sup>467</sup> Robertson, *American Myth*, 10.

celebrates by serving Maharashtrian style chicken. She also shows her patriotism by displaying the American flag in her living room. Son Hemant watches fireworks. He also flies an American flag from his car window. Indooben Dhaba goes to watch the fireworks along with her progeny and their families. They have a picnic at the park before that. Tina Kotecha says: “We celebrate by gathering the paternal side of my extended family at Laguna Beach for a picnic and fireworks show.”

Manilal Padhiar organizes a celebration in his neighborhood. Ashok Pradhan watches television programs with patriotic themes and displays the American flag from his house. He also celebrates the Fourth of July by attending a fireworks display. Dr. Janak Raval states that watching the display imparts in him a tremendous patriotic feeling. He also exhibits his patriotism “by thought and conduct in being a good citizen.”

**15Cii) Thanksgiving:** Modern celebration of Thanksgiving Day is a ritual affirmation of what Americans believe was the pilgrim experience, the particularly American experience of confronting, settling, adapting to, and civilizing the New World. Turkey is consumed at Thanksgiving feasts because it was native to America, and because it is a symbol of the bounteous richness of the wilderness and the sustenance Americans have taken from the wilderness. It is a symbol of the peculiar combination of wildness and civilization, which is America. Pumpkins, cranberries, squash, and corn—all native, some cultivated, all plentiful—reinforce the symbolism of the feast. (So, of course, do tomatoes and potatoes—also natives of the New World—although Americans are less

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

conscious of those facts and less likely to see these common foods as part of the ritual.) In the feasting as well as the family reunions of Thanksgiving, Americans affirm the survival of civilized people and their culture in the New World through the use of the plenty which was native to the wilderness and through the ingestion of the wilderness itself. (15)

Thanksgiving affirms adaptability as the essential element of survival—in the New World, in America, in Americans. The assumption of the Thanksgiving story—reinforced by the ritual foods—is that all right-minded, sensible human beings will seek out and accept and use those things in their environment which will contribute to their physical and social survival, and that they will take up such things immediately and make them part of their lives—whether foodstuffs, techniques of building shelter, fuel, clothing, plants, animals, or trails through the woods. Log cabins, corn, turkeys, canoes—all these are symbols of the settlers' adaptability. Daniel Defoe first introduced to literature the model of behavior that underlies the story in *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. That model of adaptability has become so ingrained in Americans that all Americans assume such behavior to be human nature, not something conditioned by their own culture. The Thanksgiving story and celebration affirms the myth that all Americans, since the Pilgrims, are, have been, and ought to be people who survive in a hazardous, violent world by protest, ingenuity, and adaptability. (17)

Compared with the ritual of July 4<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving far more subtly expresses and reaffirms values and assumptions about cultural and social unity, about identity and history, about inclusion and exclusion. Thanksgiving is highly

structured and emotion laden, with its celebration of family, home and nation.

Though for some people Thanksgiving is a secular celebration, for most it is also religious (in the common anthropological sense of making reference to the supernatural), as a prayer is said before the meal and/or people attend a church service, which includes a special Thanksgiving sermon.<sup>469</sup>

In Anthony Wallace's sense that the goal of ritual is a transformation of state to some desired end (Wallace, 1966), participation in this ritual transforms a collection of immigrants into Americans by connecting them to a cultural history stretching back to the *founding* of the country. The tradition of America that immigrants will be incorporated—or, at least, their children will be—as true members of the society is accomplished, and the belief that we are 'a nation of immigrants' is confirmed and validated.<sup>470</sup> In the United States, Thanksgiving was and is part of the process by which for the immigrant real social relations of the village, neighborhood or extended kin-group were broken apart and reformed. (184) This indeed, is very true of our subjects.

Dr. Navin Adatia states: "We get together, sit around and have a nice dinner. It's a holiday and I like to celebrate all the holidays. We do not have turkey. We have a vegetarian meal instead." Bhupinder Batra says: "We always have a party in somebody's house. We thank the Lord. We have come so far and we are grateful for that. We have been provided with food, shelter, and everything." Hemant Chitnavis writes: "On this day I do eat Turkey with friends to celebrate the occasion when Red Indians feasted the Pilgrims." Indooben

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<sup>469</sup> Janet Siskind, "The Invention of Thanksgiving: A ritual of American nationality," *Critique of Anthropology* 12, no. 2 (1992): 168.



Dhaba and her family also get together for a Thanksgiving Dinner. She says: "We are here, the greatest nation in the world, because of the generosity of its people. Being vegetarians we do not eat turkey. However, we do express our gratitude and reaffirm our commitment to this nation as law abiding, loyal citizens." Zainul Kanji exults: "Yes! Turkey and works! We are thankful for being here!" Tina Kotecha has a slightly different perspective: "We get together with our father's side of the family, have a potluck dinner, play games and choose one person in the room to discuss some experience we've had with them that has impacted our lives. I love this ritual because even though it is just as *forced* as Father's Day and Mother's Day we are all expected to talk about what we are thankful for. It brings our family closer and closer each year."

Manilal Padhiar and his extended family get together for dinner. He either cooks turkey at home or invites himself for dinner at a neighbor's house. He says: "Our history...the pilgrims...make a lot of sense. It is a religious and family holiday. Anybody of any race or ethnicity gets together and celebrates. It is a very nice feeling for the whole country I guess." Cousin Raju writes: "I thank people who came here before us and made a good life possible for all of us. We, in turn, make a good life possible for our children." Mr. Ashwin Patel, (Gujrati, 54, stranded in the United States as a foreign student in 1972, Customer Sales Representative, formerly from Mbale, currently of Huntington Beach) says: "This is when we get together with family and friends." Ashok Pradhan also has a Turkey dinner with family and friends. Dr. Janak Raval says: "We thank God for

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

all that we have received during the year. This is another worthwhile tradition.

P.S. No turkey! We are vegetarians!”

There are other ways to display one’s patriotism. For example, Al Bhimani wears Green every year on St. Patrick’s Day. Stickers saying “Proud of being an American” are common on the doors/windows of our subjects’ residences and the bumpers of their vehicles. Tina Kotecha defends America when debating politics with foreign nationals.

**15D) Wounded patriotism:** Dr. Navin Adatia says of the effect of 9/11 on him: “There was no direct effect on me since I was here and it happened over there but there was pain and suffering. I have also got some clients who suffered shock, pain, and anxiety because of it.” Bhupinder Batra says: “Even though we were not directly involved in it, it hurt to see thousands of lives snuffed out in a few minutes.” Prakash Chandarana says: “I was emotionally very hurt. I hope we never see this kind of terror again.” Asha Chitnavis was deeply hurt by the attack and got very angry with the perpetrators. She wants them to be punished. Indooben Dhaba says: “What a despicable crime! What was the need to take so many innocent lives?” Tina Kotecha opines: “It makes me question how safe any single place really is and makes it difficult to see the sense in many of the things that preoccupy our minds on a daily basis.”

Manilal Padhiar states: “It is something that never should have happened. Personally I lost a lot of business after that. Some of my major clients cancelled their contracts because they lost investments in New York.” Raju Padhiar asks: “Whom can we trust?” Ashok Pradhan says: “My sense of security was

considerably taken away. Security measures have imposed a great economic burden on us. Also, there are long lines at the airport and other places due to security checks when one goes traveling.” Dr. Janak Raval says: “It was a cowardly act on innocent civilians.”

Note that though *all* of our subjects felt the pain of 9/11 our Ismaili subjects had to contend with more than that. They report that having Arabic names like Abdul, Ali, Ayanullah, Mahmood, Naseem, Nargis, Salma, Salim, Shamim, Shaukat, Zulfikar, etc. can invite trouble. Ismailis, like Arab Americans, have been recipients of angry glances and verbal abuse. However, these undeserved gestures of anger/hatred have not shaken our subjects’ love for, loyalty to, and faith in America.

**15E) Citizenship and patriotism:** Dr. Navin Adatia says: “I value it highly. I am proud to belong here.” Bhupinder Batra states: “I am proud of it. We have earned it by working for it. We have paid taxes, obeyed the laws of the land and have been faithful to United States.” Indooben Dhaba exults: “I am very proud of being the citizen of the greatest nation in the world!” Manilal Padhiar states: “It is a very great feeling. I feel I am a part of this country. When you are traveling outside the country your government is with you...if something happens you know that you will make it home safely.”

Note that all but four (Prakash Chandarana and family) of our subjects are citizens. Prakash is not unpatriotic. In his own words he is “too lazy to file citizenship papers.”

### 16) Ethnocentrism, and place:

This is a related trait. Given that a particular culture is the basis for everyone's reality, it is no wonder that people everywhere exhibit ethnocentrism, the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture.<sup>471</sup> Still better, ethnocentrism is the tendency to evaluate other cultures in terms of one's own and to conclude that other cultures are inferior.<sup>472</sup> Strong ethnocentrism is a bulwark against the forces for cultural homogenization.<sup>473</sup> The illusion of superiority and centrality is probably necessary to the sustenance of culture. When rude encounters with reality shatter that illusion the culture itself is likely to decline. In the modern world of rapid communications, it is difficult for small communities to believe that they are in any literal sense at the center of things, and yet some such faith is necessary if they are to prosper.<sup>474</sup>

Except Tina Kotecha all those who furnished written/oral responses agreed with the ethnocentric statement: "*The United States is the greatest nation in the world.*" Furthermore, being bi-national, tri-national or even more (and having been acculturated into the American myths of the Mission and Manifest Destiny), they all had something to say about the role the U.S. should play in world affairs:

Dr. Navin Adatia says: "It is the greatest and the most powerful country. It should play a humanitarian role as much as possible. It should not get involved in wars." Bhupinder Batra states: "If it is the number one nation then it should play

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<sup>471</sup> John J. Macionis, *Sociology*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001), 79.

<sup>472</sup> Richard J. Gelles & Ann Levine, *Sociology: An Introduction*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill College, 1999), 95.

<sup>473</sup> Tuan, *Topophilia*, 31.

the role of the number of nation! It should bring about international peace and if it can afford it should help poor nations no matter where they are and for that we need varied political and social approaches.” Says Prakash Chandarana: “We should help underdeveloped countries to become democratic.” Asha Chitnavis agrees with him and adds that we should furnish aid and technology to bolster their economies. Hemant Chitnavis agrees with them both. Indooben Dhaba opines: “I wish we would give more aid to Uganda so it can get back on its feet. We should buy more products from India and less from China.” Tina Kotecha opines: “We should play a humanitarian role and protest against the most obvious abuses where possible, but not determine the meaning of freedom for everyone.”

Manilal Padhiar says: “USA should play the role of securing the world because it is the biggest power...all the countries are getting out of hand...democracy is a must today...freedom of speech and religion, equal rights...all these issues should be brought before any country that does not have them.” Pankaj Padhiar opines: “The U.S. should play a big role because we are the Big Brother.” Brother Raju says: “We should help poor countries.” Ashok Pradhan says: “Be a Big Brother but do not try to dominate others. Help underprivileged countries.” Dr. Janak Raval states: “We should assert our leadership role but with respect for other countries. We should work together, not be a bully.”

### **Conclusion:**

It should be clear that the varied facets of a Sense of Place have a symbiotic relationship. For example, frequent contact (familiarity) with a gas

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid. , 31-32.

station one utilizes out of sheer need may result in one liking the place. One may thus come to like even a drab place like a thrift store. In totality, these facets constitute one's sense of place.

Physical contact enables one to establish a firmer relationship because all of one's senses are involved. However, even without physical contact one may develop fondness for a place. Visual contact and the size of the object or place involved play a key role in establishing not only a sense of belonging but also a boundary for the immediate sub-region. For example, this student is not into mountaineering or hiking but frequent sighting of the San Gabriel Mountains (especially when they are snow-capped) makes him aware of the boundaries of his sub-region. This mountain range is visible not only from the San Bernardino County where it is located but also from substantial parts of Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Participation in a lifestyle and love for it results in more than the development of affection and love for one's sub-region. It can extend to the larger region by sheer (psychological) association. For example, this student resides in the San Gabriel Valley that constitutes the eastern section of the L.A. Metropolitan region. The San Fernando Valley is at the other end of the region and constitutes a distinct subculture. Even though visits to this sub-region are rare and the *feel* there is different, the joy and pride in belonging to "L.A." is just the same.

The length of time one has spent in a place is also important. The longer one has lived in a place the stronger is the sense of place. Our subjects have lived

long enough in the region to take roots and develop affection for it. Let us look at the length of their stay in an ascending order: 1 for 1 year 6 months, 1 for 8 years and 2 months, 3 for 12 years and 8 months, 2 for 13 years and 2 months, 2 for 14 years, 2 for 15 years, 1 for 16 years, 1 for 16 years and five months, 1 for 17.5 years, 2 for 20 years, 1 for 21 years and 7 months, 1 for 21 years and 9 months, 1 for 22 years, 2 for 23 years, 4 for 25 years, 2 for 25 years and 2 months, 1 for 28 years, 2 for 30 years, and 26 for 31 years.

Like acculturation they may not be adequately able to articulate their sense of place but it is certain that they have taken roots. The depth and firmness of these roots varies from immigrant to immigrant depending upon his/her resources (including personal attributes) and situational factors.

We are human because unlike animals, we have culture. A culture cannot be inculcated into us without the process of acculturation. The process itself would be impossible if our subjects, like so many Angelenos, were footloose and mobile. In other words, they have to be reasonably rooted in a place. They must have a sense of place (and as we have seen, they do).

Notwithstanding any initial moves from an apartment or two 13 of the respondents are still in their first home, 29 respondents are in their second home, 7 respondents in their third home, and 4 respondents in their fourth home. Any implied geographic mobility has been local. Real Estate may be the business of L.A. but it certainly is *not* the business of our subjects. Even our apartment dwellers (Indooben Dhaba and daughter) have stayed put in their apartment for

more than 8 years. Tina Kotecha has lived next to her parents for an unspecified number of years.

The two processes in their totality have a symbiotic relationship and a cumulative effect. The more firmly rooted a person is in his/her place the more receptive he/she is to acculturation. The more acculturated he/she is the more likely this person is to take reasonably deep roots. Only a handful will achieve the perfect balance between the two. Most will experience slight imbalance in one or the other area or both areas every now and then. However, a drastic imbalance in one or both is likely to cause alienation. As stated earlier, there is no evidence of this among our subjects.

In addition, our subjects do have an advantage over conventional migrants. First (as shown earlier) they have the stimulus of the trauma of expulsion or flight. Second, ancestral memory does play a role in their acculturation. Through folklore and myth the stories of the departure of their ancestors from the Indian subcontinent, arrival into a truly wild East African landscape (and successful adaptation resulting in substantial success) are told and retold to boost morale and to show the way. Lastly, besides being truly *The Uprooted* many have experienced varied urban backgrounds in different countries and know what it is to be an urban nomad. Their desire to take roots and to belong is stronger than that of the conventional migrant. Their development of a sense of place is probably faster and they better appreciate having taken roots so fast and firm in the region



Perhaps the most telling evidence of their acquisition of a regional identity as Southern Californians is the fact that none of them want to go back to Uganda in any capacity other than tourists. This is in direct contrast to some of their brethren in the United Kingdom (mostly Gujratis) and Canada (mostly Ismailis) who have gone back or who intend to go back, boost the Ugandan economy and prosper again. Here it should be borne in mind that this return migration is from very cold climates that have taken a heavy toll in arthritis, early deaths, heart attacks, and rheumatism. These British- and Canadian-Ugandans would rather return to Uganda to enjoy a more liberal economy, dual citizenship, collect the British version of our social security, and above all, the pleasant climate.

In contrast, our subjects not only do not have to worry about climate but also whatever they have here and likely to have in future is infinitely more than what Canada, Uganda, and the United Kingdom (or for that matter, all the world combined) have to offer. Note that only one Uganda Asian has returned to Uganda so far. Then in his late 20s he left in 1977 because he missed Uganda “too much” and could not “handle” L.A.

## **CHAPTER 10: SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PROSPECTS**

### **Introduction:**

Every immigrant periodically takes stock of his/her situation and adjusts his strategy for achieving certain goals accordingly. Our subjects are no exception to this rule. What is most obvious about them is that they have successfully acculturated to the L.A. lifestyle and developed reasonably deep roots here.

Now that they have become bona fide Angelenos let us find out what our interviewees have to say about what has happened, where they are going, etc.

They answered the following questions thus:

#### **1) How well were your expectations about California fulfilled?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: "They are fulfilled pretty much. I got where I expected to get, good services, and good practice. I am happier. Everything has fallen very much in place and things have been running pretty smooth. So I am quite satisfied." Bhupinder Batra says: "In terms of both lifestyle and occupation *all* my expectations have been fulfilled." Asha Chitnavis says: "My biggest desire was to be a homeowner and it has been fulfilled." Answers Hemant Chitnavis: "I would say about fifty percent. This is because of ongoing problems with the job situation. The economy is not steady anymore." Indooben Dhaba says: "Yes, my expectations have been fulfilled. I meet good people and educated people. Weather wise it is nice. I miss Indiana but still it is nicer here."

Zainul Kanji says: "They have been fulfilled fully. I have no regrets about coming to California." Tina Kotecha affirms: "My expectations have been

fulfilled very well. There are so many opportunities. You can do anything you want here if you put in hard work and when you put in hard work you can really succeed in L.A. There is no reason for you to ever say you didn't make it in L.A. There is no excuse here. I can honestly say that I have done virtually everything important to me that I wanted to do and I don't have any regrets. People I know, for a fact, from other countries, my own cousins, my friends, cannot say the same thing. The freedom that you get in L.A. you don't get anywhere else. You don't feel stifled here."

Manilal Padhiar says: "When I came here I merely was looking forward to a job and an apartment. I exceeded my expectations and I am content with my achievements. Since this is a land of free enterprise I could have done better because the sky is the limit here. I have no more ambition. I would like to hang on to what I have till I retire."

**2) Do you feel you have been changed by the L. A. experience? If so, how?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: "Yes. I have grown up. That is the biggest difference. My dress has definitely changed because I like to dress according to my profession. Unlike Uganda here I have less leisure activities due to lack of time." Bhupinder Batra says: "Yes. The diversity here is immense. The

opportunities are just as broad. I feel the energy all around me. I have become more broadminded. I am glad and grateful to be part of this society." Asha

Chitnavis states: "I have come to love the United States a great deal because it grants us a great deal of freedom and guarantees it. Unlike India or Uganda here I

can do what I want. I do not have to worry about others watching me. Also, I have learned things from other immigrant groups.” Says son Hemant: “Yes. California is the best state in the nation. Interacting with different ethnic groups gives you a different perspective. We are not narrow-minded or narrow-focused anymore.”

Tina Kotecha is more expressive: “Absolutely! I think I would be a very different person if I were raised just in Africa or England. I think I would be more narrow minded, far more conservative, and I wouldn’t be as independent. The emphasis people place here on independence is greater than anywhere else. I have seen it. Here, because they value independence including that of women (and my parents have accepted that) they have had the opportunity to see that their daughters can stand on their own feet, be independent and take care of themselves. That is one less thing to worry about for my parents if they are going to die tomorrow. This is not necessarily true in other communities. This is only true of L.A.” Manilal Padhiar says: “Yes. I have become more open and more communicative. I was always social but L.A. has opened up my inner self even more.”

Some Immigrants deny that they have changed. For example, Indooben Dhaba states: “I do not think I have been changed by the L.A. experience *at all!*” She is not aware that she has become more open minded and more flexible *after* spending some time in Los Angeles. The independence she cherishes so much would have been unthinkable in Uganda. If she had not changed at all she would still be living with one of her children or (like Sushila Pradhan) periodically moving from the residence of one child to another. Note that immigrants-in-denial

is not a *new* phenomenon. Even a well-traveled lady like Indooben is possibly reacting to the subconscious fear that she *has* changed or *is* changing too much and losing her cultural identity.

Zainul Kanji is ambivalent and, therefore, contradictory. First, he denies that he has been changed by the L. A. experience. Then, goaded further to introspect he agrees that he has changed. He says: "I don't know something specific about California or Los Angeles...well, this is a laid back atmosphere. You are not required to dress up to go to work...As for driving habits obviously we are driving a lot more here than we would have anywhere else. We are spending a lot more money on gas; we are spending a lot more in taxes than we were in Pennsylvania. California comes with its own set of issues both positive and negative. Positive would be the weather without a question. It is very different from that of Pennsylvania. There are no seasons here. Schools are better here. I mean here, in Irvine, not in Los Angeles. Negative aspects are the pollution and the blight all around us especially in places like Compton and South Central."

Someone has correctly said: "Ambivalence is the baggage of every immigrant to America." The degree, extent, and expression of ambivalence (and resulting contradictions) will vary from immigrant to immigrant but no immigrant is immune from it. In other words, *all* of our subjects are Indoobens or Zainuls at one time or another.

In chapter 6 it was made clear that this is a dissertation on acculturation, *not* assimilation. Nevertheless, average people are not aware of the former term whereas the latter one is in wide usage. Believing that our subjects probably

regard the difference as a matter of semantics (indulged in by academics) this student decided to use the latter term anyway (in two of the next questions) to avoid confusion and invite honest responses about our subjects' present condition. Here the term *assimilation* is being used *reluctantly* as a utilitarian device *only*. This student does *not* subscribe to the Myth of the Melting Pot inherent in the term.

**3) How assimilated do you think you are in the Southern California society?**

Dr. Navin Adatia opines: "We have assimilated fairly well. I have been all over Northern California and had no difficulty assimilating there. Here also I don't feel like I am being singled out in any way." Bhupinder Batra says: "I think we have assimilated to just the right degree. Our success in business and society in general is a testimony to our assimilation." Asha Chitnavis states: "Since I do not work outside of my home I really do not get an opportunity to meet other people but when I do the interaction is mutual and hearty." Says Hemant Chitnavis: "I think we are assimilated in a very nice way. I have friends not only from Asian-Indian ethnic groups but also from Chinese and Hispanic groups." Indooben Dhaba opines: "I am comfortable with people. I can deal with government agencies. I vote."

Zainul Kanji states: "Totally. I do not know what I do differently than my neighbor does. We have the same interests. We play tennis. We hang out at the beach. We do barbeques. The only difference is that he goes to Church and I go somewhere else." Tina Kotecha affirms: "A hundred percent! I am a fast food

junkie. L.A. is all about eating fast and getting to places fast. I live in my car. I am very independent. I have got a sense of freedom and a sense of being able to do anything I want. The confidence that you get in L.A...I have that.” Manilal Padhiar says: “I have always wanted to live and identify myself as an Indian but I also want to maintain my American lifestyle and ways. In me these two identities are mixed. I have been to church, gurudwara, and temple. I am willing to learn and am open to new experiences.”

#### **4) How assimilated is your second generation?**

Speaking of his two daughters Dr. Navin Adatia states: “They are probably much more (assimilated) than I am. They are both born here. They have been used to this society right from the start.” Bhupinder Batra is proud of the adjustments his family has made in Los Angeles. He says his sons have not lost any part of their Indian heritage. His granddaughter not only speaks Punjabi but also plays the harmonium and sings Punjabi devotional songs. However, earlier Mr. Batra wrote about the *larger* Sikh community: “American society being a melting pot has affected our traditions. I have felt more and more of this being a Sikh and have seen a lot of our youngsters giving up their culture and traditions.” Hemant Chitnavis opines: “Our younger generation has no respect for elders. Also, this generation wants to live a separate life.” Indooben Dhaba says: “My son was successful in setting up his business because he is so well adjusted. He knows how to deal with people. My daughters are also successful in their careers. They make good money. They are also happy because they are well adjusted.”

Zainul Kanji states: “Again, *totally*. My kids don’t speak Kachhi, Gujrati, or anything else. We speak English at home.” Again (speaking of ambivalence and resulting contradictions), Zainul adds: “They know that they are Ismaili, they know that their culture is Indian yet they are Americans.” Tina Kotecha has no children of her own but referring to her nephew and niece she says: “They are far more assimilated than we are. We can at least associate with food from Africa and things like that but they don’t...and the language too. They don’t speak Gujrati as much as we do. They understand it but it takes more of an effort. We speak to them in English. In our community functions everyone speaks in English.”

Manilal Padhiar says: “My older son is 60 percent American and 40 percent Indian with certain concessions. He is an individual and wants to do things his way. For example, he does not like Gujrati *rotli* (flat bread) so he will ask for regular bread. He has more options than I did at his age. My son is into the ‘surf look’. He is totally a Southern California boy.” Raju Padhiar is more expressive: “We borrowed western culture and combined it with our Indian heritage for our kids. We try to maintain the Indian part which our kids are forgetting and becoming more westernized.”

The range of facts and opinions expressed above encompass the confidence, happiness and optimism of Dr. Adatia, Mrs. Dhaba, and Manilal Padhiar, the ambivalence of Mr. Batra, the nonchalance of Zainul Kanji (who is “totally” assimilated by self admission), the disappointment (and possibly anxiety and fear) of Hemant Chitnavis and Raju Padhiar. Tina Kotecha’s statement reflects a desire to preserve both her Indian and African heritage. This range of



feelings is quite normal among *all* immigrant groups. However, the question here is: “Are the children really losing their Indian ness and becoming part of that mass society only to become indistinguishable?” There is no single answer that would encompass *all* of the children of our subjects. Some will undoubtedly lose their Indian ness and assimilate culturally as well physically into some other group. Some will become tricultural or even multicultural.

In all this talk about acculturation and assimilation, about L.A. and India, one tends to forget all about the African heritage of our subjects. Our subjects’ American-born children do not have the “East African Asian” look and body language that distinguish their parents from direct migrants of the Indian subcontinent. The former also do not speak Swahili. Whatever African traits the children have are in the form of ancestral memory, folklore and foods (cassava, plantains, passion fruit). Partaking of these foods (prepared Indian style) is their way of expressing symbolic Ugandan ness. The parents have become tricultural whereas the children have become bicultural. They seem to be effortlessly and joyfully enjoying their bicultural heritage.

If they have lost the African heritage are they acculturating in the larger American society or the larger group consisting of direct migrants from India? This query is necessary because (from appearance at least) the children of our subjects can no longer be distinguished from the children of direct migrants from India. Perhaps the former are “mixing” in both groups.

Another interesting development is clearly a negation of our Myth of the Melting Pot. It is a negation because none of the children have married into the

larger white populace or even other Asian groups. Marrying a Hispanic is something unheard of and marrying a black person is (yet) unthinkable. There is an increasing trend among *all* Asian-Indian groups to intermarry. For example, the son of a Gujrati Lohana family from Uganda recently got married to the daughter of a Maharashtrian family from India. The daughter of a Ugandan Gujrati Patel friend of this student got married to the son of a Sikh Punjabi family from India. Our respondent Tina Kotecha (Gujrati Lohana female) recently got engaged to the son of Gujrati migrants from United Kingdom. The incidence of interethnic marriage among children of direct migrants from India is greater. They seem to be setting an example and pace for the children of Asian Indian origin.

Speaking of a group's struggle to survive John Higham writes: "In the typical process of development, however, a substantial proportion of every generation after the first marries outside the group and becomes more interested in other associations."<sup>475</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that even though the children of our subjects are sporadically marrying outside the *immediate* caste/ethnic group they are still marrying *within* the *larger* group that has the same or similar world view and ethos. The inter-religious marriage of a Gujrati Hindu to a Gujrati Jain is one such example. Some examples of interethnic marriages have already been stated.

What does this trend portend? No metaphor can capture completely the complexity of ethnic dynamics in the U.S. "Melting pot" ignores the persistence and reconfiguration of ethnicity over the generations. "Mosaic," much more apt for pluralistic societies like Kenya or India, is too static a metaphor; it fails to take

into account the easy penetration of ethnic boundaries. Nor is “salad bowl” appropriate; the ingredients of a salad bowl are mixed but do not change. “Rainbow” is a tantalizing metaphor, but rainbows disappear. “Symphony,” like “rainbow,” implies near perfect harmony; both fail to take into account the variety and range of ethnic conflict in the U. S.<sup>476</sup>

The most accurately descriptive metaphor, the one that best describes the dynamics of ethnicity, is “kaleidoscope.” American ethnicity is kaleidoscopic, i.e. “complex and varied, changing form, pattern, color...continually shifting from one set of relations to another, rapidly changing. When a kaleidoscope is in motion, the parts give the appearance of rapid change and extensive variety in color and shape and in their interrelationships. The viewer sees an endless variety of variegated patterns, just as takes place on the American ethnic landscape.<sup>477</sup>

##### **5) How do you see yourself fitting in the American experience?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: “I think I have done fairly well. I have progressed the way I expected and wanted to. I have done ok.” Says Bhupinder Batra: “Considering the fact that we are not just average, typical immigrants we have done very well. We do not just fit into the American experience. We give the American experience a new meaning.” Asha Chitnavis opines: “We have suffered a lot, sacrificed a lot and have succeeded eventually in buying our American Dream House, no matter how small. We have played out the American Drama and it has been more intense than that of the average immigrant.” Says Hemant Chitnavis: “Like other Americans I do worry about the job situation. Other than

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<sup>475</sup> Higham, *Send These to Me*, 11.

<sup>476</sup> Fuchs, *Kaleidoscope*, 276.

that we have adjusted very well to this place and life. I know that for a fact because when I go to other countries I do miss California a great deal.” Indooben Dhaba says: “For refugees we did very well in Indiana with the help of the Lutheran Church. We built upon that experience and did even better in L.A.”

Zainul Kanji opines: “I already spoke English. I went to high school here. I grew up in the American education system. I grew up in this culture. I got assimilated very early on.” He adds that he found it much easier than his parents to fit into the American society. He emphasizes: “I have done very, very well for a refugee.”

Tina Kotecha says: “I think I personify the American experience. I have enough memory of my world before coming to L.A. that I can appreciate what I have here whereas the generation ahead of me doesn’t have any connection. I think I have succeeded because I know how much the other people have struggled. I know what place we started from and where we are today. I have witnessed the struggle of my parents. They couldn’t necessarily fulfill their dreams. My mother wanted to be a doctor. That never happened because there were certain expectations for a woman. I have been empowered by my parents, by L.A. I was able to take the struggle to another level. I can take my career, my life in any direction. We are the luckiest generation.”

Manilal Padhiar says: “Unlike Americans born and brought up here we are conservative with our money. We do not spend it unnecessarily. We save it. In less than a generation we have done very well as refugees.”

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

### **6) What do you think of your prospects?**

Dr. Navin Adatia says: "I will continue to practice my art, my profession. I will hopefully retire at a good age and travel. But then I am not crazy about retirement. I like my work. I will not completely retire. I will do some work here and there. I might do some charity work for example." Bhupinder Batra says: "I am content with what I have achieved. Still, if I were to aspire to anything more the sky is the limit here." Asha Chitnavis states: "I would like to become a school aide and I know I will succeed in becoming one. The United States is a great country (and the only one) because here one can do what one wants and become what one wants." Son Hemant says: "It is a lot better here than any other country like India. No matter what you do hard work does pay. You will not go hungry and you will at least be able to pay your bills. Eventually you will be able to afford what you want. As soon as I establish some contacts and have reasonable capital I do plan to get into some kind of business. It may be export-import or a restaurant." Indooben Dhaba says: "I enjoy in California. I enjoy traveling. My children are helping me. If I was in Indiana I don't think I could go any place. The future looks good for me."

Zainul Kanji says: "Again, my prospects are good. I see some changes occupation wise because the field I had majored in (Information Technology) is not in demand anymore. It is being outsourced. I am not in control of my destiny in this field." Note that Zainul and his wife have opened a Child Care Center in San Diego County. Tina Kotecha opines: "I can only go up from here because, I really think, if you put in hard work, you are smart about things, you will succeed

in L.A. My future is rosy.” Manilal Padhiar says: “I do not want to do what my father did in Uganda. I want to retire and enjoy the rest of my life in peace. I know I will be able to do that.”

If a group of expellees and refugees has done so well in less than a generation then its expectations and projections for the second generation have to be brighter. Let us see if that is true.

**7) What do you think of the prospects for the next generation?**

Dr. Navin Adatia states: “I think my daughters’ prospects are very good. My older one is in the Law School at Boston University. My younger one is at UCLA. She just finished her first year. They both know what they want to do. Both are on the right track. There is a good future for both of them.” Bhupinder Batra says: “We have given our children a solid foundation. They have used it to educate themselves. Their prospects cannot be anything but rosy!” Asha Chitnavis says: “I will be very happy when my older son, Sham, gets his Ph.D. and begins a career as a professor. My younger son’s business venture will succeed and that will also make me very happy.” Indooben Dhaba states: “In Uganda men used to sit in their shops and sell salt and sugar but here my children’s future is bright. Their prospects in business are brighter as they have so many opportunities. They are expanding their horizons. I have been to Australia, England, Japan and I can tell you America is so different!”

Zainul Kanji opines: “My children’s prospects are very bright. They will be able to do whatever they want. They are only limited by what they want to achieve. The road is open for them. They just have to make sure that they have the

energy to travel down the road.” Tina Kotecha states: “Their prospects are even better than mine. My niece and nephew can have an amazing life. We are teaching them that there is no limit to what they can do. The family, the extended family is the key.” Manilal Padhiar says: “We have a rich history and culture. Our children are well adjusted and well behaved. We will always be there to support them. There is no reason why they should not prosper!”

All of the seven facets mentioned above have a symbiotic relationship. One can neither acculturate nor assimilate if one does not have the resources (education, experience, drive, flexibility, money, willingness to adapt, etc.). As we have seen, our subjects have plenty of drive to succeed economically. A substantial minority of our respondents (and non-respondents) have become successful entrepreneurs. Our subjects have used the urban experience of Uganda, U.K., Canada, India, and other countries to adapt to L.A. They have been flexible enough to change without losing their cultural identity. Adaptation (willingness and flexibility to try a different vocation), initiative, commensurate risk-taking, hard work, and sacrifice has clearly resulted in socio-economic success in less than a generation. They have gained a hard-earned place into the American society and fit in it comfortably.

Indeed, there is nothing to hold either of the generations back. There is no British colonist to bar them from owning land. They are not being used as a buffer against the locals. There is no Obote decreeing that the entrepreneurs among them split their profits 60-40 in favor of the government. There is no double standard against them if they choose to join government service. There is no Amin

demanding that they marry the locals in order to become full citizens of the United States. Nor can anyone deprive them of their precious American citizenship using technicalities as an excuse.

Though not highly educated the first generation has been a role model and set the pace for the second generation. The overall success of the former has considerably and visibly influenced the prospects for the second generation that is bent upon acquiring an education. Unlike their parents and grandparents they have no intention of being locked into lower middle class occupations of clerks and secretaries. The children are pursuing majors like biochemistry, business, law, medicine, nursing, real estate, teaching, etc. The sheer range of majors and the zeal with which they are pursuing these majors and occupations is clearly an indicator of further success and fulfillment. These children are contributing to the mystique of hard working, successful Asian immigrants.

Another encouraging indicator of overall success for both generations is the fact that the culture clash between the two is minimal. The cooperation between the two is much greater than conflict. The incidence of alcoholism, alienation, divorce, drug abuse, spouse abuse, etc. among the older generation is negligible and nonexistent among the younger. If the first generation had not been positively changed by the L.A. experience the success, the contentment would not have been possible for either of them.

### **Conclusion:**

It is noteworthy that despite their painful departure from Uganda none of our subjects keep harping upon the subject. Also, despite his/her commendable



success in *less* than a generation nobody gloated about it. There is a dignity, a quiet confidence reflected in their body language and speech. These are indeed the characteristics of a successful immigrant group that started with virtually nothing. They are not intellectually sophisticated but are very street smart. A measure of their gutsy attitude and vitality can be evinced in the fact that a substantial minority (especially non-participants in this project) of them is either involved in business or planning to get involved.

What accounts for this gutsy attitude? Well, their expectations about California have been fulfilled. They have been positively and irrevocably changed by the L.A. experience. In their own words they are “well assimilated” in this society and so are their children. They are not intellectually oriented but in a quiet sort of way are aware that they are not ordinary immigrants either. They do not make a big deal about it. They are confident that their prospects (and those of their children) are bright.

What Joel Millman writes about the Chinese and Filipino immigrants also applies to our subjects: “A talented generation of Far Eastern immigrants has chosen California for renewal, theirs and ours... The immigrants’ propensity to save, and to treat home ownership as a saving mechanism, drew them to the Asian towns.<sup>478</sup> California is America without being too American.<sup>479</sup> Indeed, our subjects are not only talented but they also believe in hard work and sacrifice. The refugees among them are particularly to be commended because they came here

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<sup>478</sup> Joel Millman, *Other Americans: How immigrants renew our country, our economy, and our values* (New York: Viking, Penguin, 1997), 257.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

traumatized and penniless. The ancestral habit of saving has stood them in good stead. Not only have they bought homes (that have become an investment) but also they neither live on credit nor are they debt-ridden. In this extraordinarily international region it has been relatively easy for them to adopt without fear of losing their cultural identity.

What roles are our subjects are going to play in Southern California's future? Marc Wilder, an urban planner and former Long Beach Council member, sees L.A.'s exotic mix (to which our subjects have already made a rich contribution) as a geography of hope—a unique opportunity to build a bracing, multiracial, multicultural urban civilization: “We are going to be different from anywhere,” he says, “and we are going to do things differently because a Cambodian, a Hispanic, and a Jew share the same space... We will see new kinds of institutions made by new kinds of people.”<sup>480</sup> A security analyst says in support: “Twenty-first-century Los Angeles will combine the best of every culture that has come here. It will combine Asian family loyalty, Hispanic industriousness, and Anglo-Saxon respect for individual liberty. That's an entirely new package; no culture like that has ever been created before.”<sup>481</sup>

What about Los Angeles? As Edward W. Soja himself says: “The dialectic of extremes, of utopian dreams and dystopian nightmares, of paradigmatic successes and exemplary failures, has always characterized the history and geography of Los Angeles, giving pause to any categorical predictions about its

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<sup>480</sup> Garreau, *Edge City*, 284.

<sup>481</sup> Rieff, *Third World*, 136-137.

future. All that can be said in closing is that Los Angeles, as always, is worth watching.<sup>482</sup>

What about the larger scenario of immigration? Immigration is not just a quaint tradition; it is the very source of our national vitality. Self-selected immigrants—many of them American patriots even before they arrive—constantly infuse the nation with new blood, new ideas and new optimism.<sup>483</sup> Immigrants are our oldest and most dependable pool of “riser,” a kind of demographic yeast that guarantees shared prosperity. They are the villagers entering and renewing our cities, repeating a pattern of self-cleansing as old as civilization itself. Essentially, we could not be Americans if we were not foreigners first.<sup>484</sup>

Our subjects have proved that not only are they talented but they are successful California gamblers. They have started from scratch and rebuilt their fortunes without climbing on anybody’s back. They have renewed themselves. So long as the tradition of immigration inspires in Americans a generosity of spirit and understanding toward others, as well as toward themselves, it will continue to be a fructifying symbol holding aloft its historic promise of human renewal in a world in perennial need.<sup>485</sup> And so, however controversial the issue of immigration may become, we can safely say this: A future without immigrants would be a future unworthy of America.<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Scott & Soja, *Urban Theory*, 460.

<sup>483</sup> Eric Liu, “Why we need immigrants,” *USA WEEKEND*, September 23-25, 1994, 3.

<sup>484</sup> Millman, *Other Americans*, 314.

<sup>485</sup> Rischin, *American tradition*, iv.

<sup>486</sup> Liu, “immigrants,” 6.

### **DISSERTATION SUMMARY:**

The very first rule this student followed is that “the past shapes the present and the present, in turn, shapes the future.” Hence, he detailed not only the historical, British colonial context that brought the forefathers of our subjects to Uganda (chapter 1) but also the reasons that resulted in the expulsion or sudden flight of the latter in 1972 (chapter 2). The main reasons were their own ethnocentrism and superiority complex, their distinctive brand of racism toward black Ugandans, their total lack of political power, and their virtual monopoly on retail trade. In addition, their success was the envy of not only black traders but also of black politicians who used them as scapegoats to gain votes. The emerging educated, black elite also eyed their successful businesses. The average black person also resented them for their snobbishness and exclusivity. Throughout the drama the main culprit, the colonial British regime, remained hidden. Add to this the element of a rural, uneducated; black dictator who viewed citizenship in primordial, tribal terms and one has an ideal recipe for a grand disaster.

The second rule this student followed is that everything is connected. Hence, the main technique here was to explain the larger concept of the United States and eventually narrow the explanation down to the topic at hand. Hence, he proceeded to detail the attributes that collectively constitute the powerful myth of the United States (chapter 3). In common terms he elaborated upon the reasons that attract legal/illegal immigrants and refugees to this land. The next step (chapter 4) was to detail the mythological appeal and distinctiveness of California.

The main reason behind this was that for our subjects California has its own appeal, a magic that is second only to the United States as a whole.

Then a detailed look at the Los Angeles metropolitan area was given (chapter 5). The main attributes (the exceptional climate, the ultimate in opportunity, experimentation, and diversity) of the region were shown in-depth. This was a necessity because without a context one cannot understand how the process of acculturation or the development of a sense of place takes place. This was followed by a brief look at some of the aesthetics, attitudes, and values (chapter 6) of our subjects.

The actual topic of acculturation was dealt with in chapter 7. The flip side of L.A. (El Diablo) was shown in detail in chapter 8. The purpose behind this chapter was to show that El Dorado is much bigger than El Diablo. How our subjects have taken roots in the physical landscape (their sense of place) was then shown in chapter 9. In the last chapter (10) our subjects analyze their success and speculate about their prospects.

There is a huge difference between an immigrant who has been sponsored by a relative or an agency and a refugee who has had a few days or no time at all (like this student's family) before departure. The former has some idea as to what awaits him. The latter arrives traumatized. The former has plans for negotiating the strange, new environment. The latter is trying to recover from shock let alone deal with the new circumstances. Nevertheless, a refugee has to cope with both the factors.

This student set out to prove that his subjects, despite their traumatic departure, have successfully acculturated to the Los Angeles lifestyle, taken roots here and have developed a regional identity as Southern Californians, Angelenos to be specific. He can humbly assert that he has succeeded in his goal.

Besides the interviews and written answers it is impossible to provide documentation of any kind to prove this student's case. Unlike United Kingdom (where the minority Uganda Asian expellee subculture is highly visible economically and socially) there are no newspaper articles or television documentaries here singing the praise of our subjects. The proof is in the pudding, in their honest interviews and written answers. It could also logically be argued that relative lack of culture conflict, depression, mental illness, etc. is also indicative of their success.

Now the question arises: "How has this dissertation contributed to the field of American Studies?" The answer is as follows:

First, a subculture within a subculture has been brought to notice. As has been pointed out in the preface, our immigration literature on Asian Indians is about immigrants from India *only*. This dissertation corrects that deficiency to some extent.

As a corollary a genuine attempt has been made to convey the message that immigrants should not be lumped into a group and ascribed characteristics (real or imagined) of the dominant group within the subculture. To be specific, even though our subjects are Indians (or Pakistanis) *culturally* on one level they arrived here as Africans too. Notwithstanding the fact that they did practice their

own brand of apartheid vis-à-vis the Africans they unwittingly absorbed African influences in aesthetics, cuisine, folklore, language, landscape, politics, etc. Indeed, the sheer range of Africanisms in them will never be known. What is important is that even after 31 years of abode in Los Angeles and reasonable contact with direct migrants from India our subjects can clearly be discerned (from their looks and body language alone) as *East African* Asians.

Why is this student making such a big deal about a subculture within a subculture? The reason is simple. Every group has a right not only to preserve its cultural identity but also to be recognized for what it is. Take for example, the Chinese. We Americans, in our ignorance and simplemindedness, conveniently disregard the fact that there are Chinese immigrants spanning several generations from *outside* of Mainland China. Some of us are aware of the Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan but nobody seems to be aware of the Chinese (mainly) from Burma, Canada, the Caribbean Islands, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

What is being stated here is that even though such communities have common features with the culture of their ancestors they have become bicultural, tri-cultural and even multi-cultural by acculturating to other climates. We do them a disservice by *not* recognizing their very complex identities and contributions to the United States. By calling our subjects "Indians" we ignore their African as well as American heritage. We thus marginalize them. Not only the general public but also our intellectuals are guilty of this. Let us recognize diversity within diversity, and pluralism within pluralism.

Having said this one is likely to be accused of fostering separatism by old-fashioned assimilationists. No, this is not a plea for separate political representation at any level in any region, for separate schools, or for ballots in many different languages. This student's request is: "Please, we are *more* complex than direct migrants from anywhere. We have *more* to offer by way of culture, experience, ideas, tolerance, etc. Recognize us for what we are, utilize our very complex heritage and we will all benefit."

In immigration literature the word *acculturation* is widely used. Therefore, it is safe to assume that various authors have conducted acculturation studies of different immigrant groups from different angles. For example, Lechi Tran Oggeri has studied the process of "adjustment" of Vietnamese refugees. Indeed, one cannot *adjust* to the host society without acculturating. So this student cannot lay claim to distinction as far as this particular aspect is concerned.

However (and to mention the second contribution), many indicators have been used to prove that our subjects have developed *a sense of place*. There are quite a few books that deal with theoretical aspects of this subject. Hiss, 1991; Meinig, 1979; and Tuan, 1974; are a few that should be mentioned but, as yet, this student is not aware of any book or dissertation that actually shows how an immigrant group has taken roots.

Third, the processes of both *acculturation* and a *sense of place* have been combined to prove that our subjects have developed a *regional identity*. Again, there is plenty of literature on the built and natural environments but this student is not aware of any work that combines all *three* subjects.



Speaking of the ongoing debate between those who advocate cultural assimilation (and view the United States in Euro-American terms) and those who espouse maintenance of ethnic identity this student is clearly in the latter camp. However, a word of advice here for the assimilationists:

First, the establishment of this country has been artificial. In other words, the people (immigrants and their descendents) who constitute the majority and who founded this country came here with established ways of life (customs, religions, traditions, world views, etc.). In other words *we did not begin organically*. Therefore, it logically follows that a society that does not begin organically *cannot be defined culturally*. Second, as pointed out by Kessner and Caroli in chapter 3 (United States: The Distinctive Civilization) this country never separated out a pure stock whose germ plasma contained us all. Therefore, it also logically follows that *we cannot be, and should not be*, defined racially.

Third, as pointed out in chapter 6 (Acculturation into El Dorado) what distinguishes the American national spirit, character, and identity is not sectarian religion or ancestry but a culture of politics. One becomes an American by subscribing to the principles of republican government. One does *not* have to be of European descent or a Christian to be an American.

Those who view America in white, Euro-American terms need to learn certain additional facts: First, with the Immigration Act of 1965 the composition of immigration has drastically changed. Now the majority of immigrants to this country are from Asia and Central America. Second, compared to the European immigrants of yesteryear they have more options when it comes to vocations.

Third, technology enables them to preserve relationships and much of their culture. Airplanes, automobile, fax machines, television, telephone, CD's, still/video cameras, etc. facilitate interaction and cultural preservation. Fourth, increasing globalization of not only technology but also trade and commerce is slowly but surely shrinking the world. There is increasing interaction between disparate cultures in critical aspects and we are becoming increasingly interdependent with other *non-christian, non-white* societies. Witness our outsourcing of certain categories of jobs to India and the Philippines. This interdependence results in increasing immigration from those countries.

As a corollary it should be added that many of these new immigrants may be running away from oppressive conditions but they certainly have no intention of forgetting their ancestors or abandoning their cultures. There are equal numbers of immigrants (if not greater) who are educated, relatively polished, and suave. They bring a very different set of ideas than their European predecessors. The Hindu-Buddhist immigrants are particularly resistant to cultural assimilation. They give a well-deserved, cold shoulder to our Myth of homogeneity. Note that California has already been recognized as the first *International State* in history. Our tri-cultural, law abiding, mainstream, successful subjects from Uganda are richly contributing to this exceptional State and the equally exceptional Los Angeles region.

To sum up, the notion that the United States is *meant* to be dominated by Euro-Americans culturally, numerically, and politically was always unfair and a

mistaken one. In California, and especially in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Region this notion meets its well-deserved death.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: 1) Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, G. K. Hall & Co.; 1971. 2) Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1989).

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<sup>ii</sup> Even today there is a substantial subculture of Indians (descended from Africans) in the southern state of Hydrabad. There also exists a small, Islamic Negro tribe in the western state of Gujrat.

<sup>iii</sup> This is akin to white planters in Hawai'i finding indigenous laborers reluctant or unreliable. Hence, laborers from Japan, Phillipines, and other countries were imported into the state.

<sup>iv</sup> This system of passbook was not introduced in Uganda or Tanganyika.

<sup>v</sup> This is akin to Pioneers of the American West believing that they were settling in a cultural vacuum. For a better idea of the same read Henry Nash Smith's book, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, reprint (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970). For an incisive look at our central myth, for the distinction between fact and collective fantasy read Patricia Nelson Limerick's book, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988).

<sup>vi</sup> This is akin to some of the early pioneers and mountain men in the American West temporarily living with Native American women.

<sup>vii</sup> This is an argument for Pluralistic Integration. For more about the same in the United States context read John Higham's book *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America*, rev. ed (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1984).