CHAPTER ONE

New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the United States at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century

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Introduction and Definitions

Institutional markers of a sub-discipline: journals, the naming of -isms or academic categorizations as studies, the rise of model scholars to act as voices of that branch of knowledge have been some traditional, academic ways to broach subjectivities and their constructions. In this collection we explore and discuss the meaning of a new kind of subject construction informed by globalization—the new cosmopolitan subject—and all that it entails in life experiences for South Asians within the nation-space of the United States. For over a decade now, diasporic and postcolonial subject constructions have been studied at the nodes and intersections of newer forces such as globalization and cosmopolitanism. In the social sciences, migration experts guarded their scientific turf through statistical and empirical ethnography, and used theories of nationalism and world systems to explain globalization. In the humanities, this line of questioning has largely been pursued through tropes of cultural identity, porous national borders, and revived fervors of nationalism. Broadly speaking, scholars in both the social sciences and the humanities locate their inquiries into the globalized subject and the processes of globalization, the intersections of technology, travel, and labor, and the privileges/deprivations of citizens within the sphere of cosmopolitan modernity. It is time to reexamine the relationship of diasporas and the globalized, networked world in light of the dialogues presented for a decade almost in *Public Culture* and *Diaspora*, and following the rapid applicability of British Cultural Studies to almost any subject, but especially globalization, as indicated by debates around the many articles in *Theory, Culture and Society*.

As part of that project, our aim is not to examine discrete, bounded, and finite diaspora groups settled in the United States as much as it is to look at what we call New Cosmopolitanism. By using this term, we want to signal its difference from traditional diasporas so as to locate that new cosmopolitanism in a contemporary formation that results from the confluence of globalization (trade, migration, media, money, and culture), but also indicate its affiliations to traditional diasporic formations. We use the adjective "new" to distinguish it from the historical uses of the term cosmopolitanism, even though in some respects the new partakes of the historical meanings, especially in its links to privilege. As Brennan defines it, cosmopolitanism is an ambivalent phenomenon, both in its imperial incarnation, and in its ethical dimension.[1] Its ambivalence is grounded in national-imperial (in Brennan's discussion, often the United States) sentiments whose boundaries complicate the aspiration to world citizenship. However, our argument posits the new cosmopolitan subject as precisely not being grounded in a nation-state or in a class (intellectual or working class). She instead occupies a range of fluid subject positions, which can be trans-class, trans-local with competing value systems. For example, a new cosmopolitan subject could be a gay South Asian-American activist, a store owner, or a filmmaker, all enacting a range of new and changing subject positions. Consequently, we want to examine the ground that South Asians inhabit, ranging from the older immigrants to the newer ones, across first, second, and third generation populations whose life styles and life choices reveal an interesting blend of diasporic and cosmopolitan traits.

Theorists of traditional diasporas like Robin Cohen, Khachig Tölölyan, and Safran, have posited diasporas as stable, fixed populations. Though consisting of people displaced through choice, violence, trade, or imperialism, they nevertheless are bounded both in space (at a distance from their homeland), and through their bipolar relationships to the homeland. However, we define new cosmopolitans as people who blur the edges of home and abroad by continuously moving physically, culturally, and socially, and by selectively using globalized forms of travel, communication, languages, and technology to position themselves in motion between at least two homes, sometimes even through dual forms of citizenship, but always in multiple locations (through travel, or through cultural, racial, or linguistic modalities). It is these new forms of shifting choices and complex relationships that emerge from what were earlier "knowable" as diasporas that we call new cosmopolitanism. In a kind of shorthand, one could call them diasporas in motion, where motion could be physical, cultural, ideological; motion, moreover of people or by capital, technology, media forms, or culture. It is necessary to repeat, but also mark entities such as technology, media, and culture, for example, because these are the momentary and fragmentary locations that people inhabit in our rapidly globalizing world. New cosmopolitanism thus creates and defines itself by occupying in-between spaces of identity, culture, and communication, spurning fissures both along the lines of ethnic nationalism as well as the old assimilative logic of host cultures. One way of understanding this class of people may be through the metaphor popularized by Manuel Castells of the "network" that describes the newest form of globalization (Castells 1996).

These networks are mutable and linked to contemporary manifestations of globalization, constructed in the shifting space between older definitions of diaspora and traditional cosmopolitanism. Our present inquiry into this class of people called new cosmopolitans rests upon the work of immigration historians and cultural critics (Appadurai, Robertson, Rouse, Scholte, and Bauman). In addition to Roger Rouse's study of Mexican immigration through "transnational social spaces," also pertinent here is Bill Ong Hing's *Making And Remaking Asian America Through Immigration policy: 1850–1990*, which looks at the influx of Asians into the United States. In this critical anthology we define new cosmopolitanism as a set of practices linked to migration and globalization, distinct from earlier theories of diaspora and its transnational cultural formulations and affiliations. This new cosmopolitanism is marked by both elitist, highly educated, technologically driven, and a politically conservative population, which seeks to intervene in both the country of settlement and in the homeland equally, and by an increasing number of the working class, that is, with little education, with more liberal political views, and a marked interest in transnational popular cultural forms like Bollywood. This other group of South Asians, moreover, also includes people who form an expendable workforce, who have no political access to citizenship, but occupy nonetheless, the hybridized, overdetermined, multicultural, and multiracial spaces of urban America. The difference between the historical use of the term "cosmopolitanism" and the new one we posit lies in the particular nature of the current conjuncture. We examine how the globalization of capital and travel have worked to create a growing class of immigrants whose modalities of migration and settlement overturn older ways of thinking about home and abroad (for example in the United States, this middle to upper class consumer has an easier access to the materiality of homeland culture via foods, places of worship, etc.), as well as its accompanying high and mass cultural practices.

Our particular focus is the South Asian population in the United States in this contemporary conjuncture, which defines itself as somewhere between traditionally diasporic and a cosmopolitan floating class of people selling its skills to the highest bidder in the global marketplace. The term South Asian is both widely used but is also problematic because the region comprises at least six countries—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan—that do not identify themselves as a bloc, and are in fact riven by political rivalries and religious-political tensions. Nevertheless, given the shared histories, language, and culture among them, the patterns they have unwittingly formed in settling alongside each other in the United States, and how this proximity and their perceived racial difference from other Asian Americans has made "South Asian" an accepted and acceptable nomenclature, we find it appropriate to use the term even as we recognize its imprecise nature. Thus, although the United States census or demographic data has no category called "South Asian," we choose to employ this self-reflexive term because of its regional-cultural specificity. Most often, the term is used in conjunction with, or in place of Indian-Pakistani, or to denote people of the Indian subcontinent generally. It is this population and its cultural affiliations and habits that we examine under the phenomenon of a new cosmopolitanism in scholarly discourses and from within public and media representations.

Our second caveat in examining this phenomenon has to do with class and how, in turn, class is read with regard to South Asians in the United States. Traditionally, the post-1965 migration of South Asians to the United States has been selectively read as predominantly being a highly educated, "middle class," partially assimilated, population (Prashad 2000). However, this elides both the complexity and variety across the class spectrum that marks South

Asian migration and ignores their uneven placement and assimilation within US society. And, such a characterization obscures their similarity to other Third World élites who entered the United States after 1965. In terms of class and new cosmopolitanism, we argue that since new cosmopolitanism is a network of relations between home and abroad, native and diasporic, it allows different classes to partake in it at different levels. In other words, the term new cosmopolitanism does not privilege one class over the other, even though the word "cosmopolitanism" has traditionally evoked an élite, transnational connotation. Although we interrogate the automatic association of cosmopolitanism with class privilege in terms of historical linkages, we do recognize that the term itself slides among many different meanings ranging from Kantian, to Marxist,[2] and our contemporary one in usage.

A critique of this élitist and less than progressive sense of cosmopolitanism is apparent in the work of many scholars, most prominently that of Timothy Brennan. *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997) examines not just historical and contemporary cosmopolitanism, but also its connections to imperial and postcolonial cultural production. He pitches his critique of cosmopolitanism as a double-sided term, which offers both a vision of world citizenship and is a category that avoids "class historical engagement" (p. 31) by simultaneously embracing a language of authenticity and hybridity. This applies particularly to the case of South Asians in the United States because they have been progressively studied as diasporic, and sometimes as exilic and/or migrant (voluntary or enforced), viewed as postcolonial, then as urban and cosmopolitan, and now as a group occupying the problematic spaces created by globalization.

The late 1990s saw a sudden visibility of South Asians in technology, finance, around discussions of native versus foreign labor, as well as in cultural fields of cinema and popular music. This mini-phenomenon of the perceptible presence of South Asians waned with the concomitant bust. However, this phenomenon highlighted the somewhat anomalous way in which South Asians inserted themselves into American culture and its economy, even as it brought to the fore contradictory nationalist impulses in the United States about the relationship of globalization and technology, particularly now as India becomes the focus of the outsourcing furor. Therefore, although our use of the term cosmopolitanism is historically charged, particularly in its connotations of class, (Kant's cosmopolitan was a traveler, but never a worker, and the Soviet cosmopolitan was never a fellow traveler), it denotes the educated, worldly, highly mobile population that has made San Jose, Houston, Boston, and New Jersey its home. Yet, the positions of sanctioned and privileged visibility of these South Asians exist in tandem with the neo-orientalist constructions of South Asians in US terrains of academic and popular culture. This can be seen for example, in the academic presentations and publications about Bollywood or the large numbers of literary works by/about South Asians, and more visibly in how Apu from *The Simpsons* co-exists with the high-profile role of Parminder Nagra (of *Bend it Like Beckham* fame) as Neela Rasgotra on *ER*, or the glamorous hype surrounding the rich nuptial scene in Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*.

Such a multilayered presence of South Asians is one of the legacies of history because South Asia has occupied a clichéd (exotic) and somewhat obscure place on the fringes of American culture. But, South Asians have also occupied invisible identities as doctors and engineers that blended into majority cultures of the United States. These exoticized and benign framings have also coexisted, particularly in the United States, with images and rhetoric of South Asian abject poverty and failed socialism. Paradoxically, the media's crisis mode of presenting this latter image of South Asia has changed in the last decade, as South Asians found themselves being reinserted hurriedly, incompletely, and in many ways, questionably, into this New World Order. The rapid realignment of global economies, the frenzied hunt for technology workers, and the visible shift in cultural hegemonies from center to margin (and sometimes margin to center) has brought South Asia and its diaspora into a visibility unprecedented since the 1950s, when it served as a test case for postcolonial modernity. Silicon Valley is the most visible location of both the actual labor and the tangible wealth of this new tech-driven immigration. Other, equally important but less visible varieties of South Asian labor include students, artists, priests, intellectuals, economists, managers, stockbrokers, taxi drivers, and small shopkeepers. And yet, their apparent success is fraught with complex contradictions surrounding privilege, education, and the two-way flow of labor, culture, and capital. It is this range of class and educational backgrounds that remains obscured in most public representations of South Asians now living in the United States.

How do we understand this movement of South Asians to the United States as linked to other parts of the globe? Does it provide us with a model for decoding the place human capital plays within the rearticulation of global economy? Do the rapid transfer, amalgamation, and reformulation of people and culture offer us a new perspective of the citizen-subject? Does such a citizen-status allow us to redefine traditional ways of understanding the nation-state and transnationalism to look at people beyond their political profile as citizens to their cultural role as new cosmopolitans? Do the scale and speed of the recent waves of immigration mean that this group is anomalous? That is to say, is there a difference between traditional migrants and the new cosmopolitans, because not all migrants are cosmopolitans? How can we read these South Asian presences within popular and public culture as embedded within the nation, that is, are they part of a national culture—however haphazardly multicultural it is—instead of harking back to diasporic nostalgia? And finally, what are the shifting relationships between class and privilege that account for this group's success, which coexists with a level of invisibility? These questions serve as a heuristic device to examine the presence and life-conditions of South Asians in the United States, and allow us to define the meaning of new cosmopolitanism.

Theories of Diaspora, Globalization, Modernity, and Migration

In theories of diasporas, notably those of Robin Cohen (drawing heavily on Safran) (Cohen 1997, p. 26) and Tölölyan (1996, pp. 20–1) the emphasis is equally on the traumatic history of dislocation or expulsion, as in traditional diasporas of Jews, Africans, and Armenians, on the effects of the homeland on the diaspora (by maintaining religious linguistic homogeneity), or on how the homeland strengthens itself through its diaspora, as in the case of the national struggles of Israel, Armenia, and Ireland. In all of the above cases, however, the homeland and diaspora are always distinct, in a way that is clear, complete, and absolute, notwithstanding the strength of emotional attachments to the homeland, which, barring some historical trauma, generally weakens over generations. In all the cases cited above, diaspora populations remain physically removed from the homeland, except in the cases of (i) vacations or family reunions, (ii) pilgrimage as in the *aaliyah* that Jews make to Israel, and (iii) exceptional circumstances such as war, independence struggles against imperial powers, etc.

Cohen cites an alternative type of diaspora, which is based upon the sojourner model (pp. 85–9). He describes the circular migration of Chinese traders to and from South East Asia in the last two centuries, where members of a clan or family would take turns to live abroad, in exile as it were, before returning and letting another member emigrate to keep the business or trade running. This model is paradoxically different from the ones discussed above because it emphasizes both the circular and *temporary* nature of migration as well as the *permanent* presence of Chinese in South East Asia. Its link to our topic comes from its structure of constant motion between home and abroad visible in traditional diasporas (Tölölyan 1996), as well as its economic nature. The new cosmopolitans too seem conscious of functioning as South Asian Americans in the United States. However, it is important to point out that the sojourner model remains distinct from contemporary new cosmopolitanism of South Asians in that sojourners retained, for the most part, a distinct linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identity, based on their ultimate return to the homeland. New cosmopolitans do not depend upon geographical location or the eventual return home to maintain or practice a distinct South Asian identity.

Manuel Castells, in *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996) uses the term, "network" to talk about the new phase of modernity and globalization. Castells argues that since the 1970s, global capital (or as he calls it, informational capitalism) has structured time, distance, and space in a completely new way. In this networked world, technology profoundly influences the structures of state and society, identity, and culture, which are conceived of not as discrete blocks (here traditional ideas of the nation-state come to mind) but as fluid entities, which are in a state of flux. In Castells's network society, identity becomes one of the central ways to define self and community. But because identity is reliant on different networks: social, financial, cultural, and technological, it becomes a matter of self-definition and is always subject to change. This line of reasoning allows Castells to move away from the economic determinism of traditional Marxist theory, but he also sees an opening for a more varied set of groups, networks, and identities than were previously thought possible. New cosmopolitanism, then, becomes one way of thinking about replacing the diaspora/nativist model with a much more fluid set of identities.

Zygmunt Bauman in *Liquid Modernity* arrives at a similar understanding of contemporary reality through the vocabulary of modernity by using visual metaphors to describe the ways in which people move about the world, inhabit nation-states, even if it is temporarily, in the act of producing and consuming goods and services such that people now exhibit a tendency to "flow," "spill,"' "run out," "splash," "pour over,"' "leak," "flood," "spray," "drip," and "ooze," (2000, p. 11). These words bring to mind the dynamic nature of the subject beyond the established sense of place as one did in the older models of a more concrete or "solid" and cosmopolitan modernity. He links these metaphors most closely to the exercise of power, to say "Power can move with the speed of an electronic signal—and so the time required for the movement of its essential ingredients has been reduced to instanteniety . . . power has become extraterritorial, no longer bound, not even slowed down, by the resistance of space" (p. 11).[3] Other scholars, including Arjun Appadurai, have attempted to understand the meaning of a movable modernity that underlies the questions we want to pose. Appadurai's phrase, the "optics of globalization" is helpful in indicating who gets defined as belonging to nations and having citizenship and which groups get highlighted through older models of regionality in global studies or area studies. Though migration from South Asia has been ongoing for over a hundred years now,[4] and quite vigorously since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, the question before us is whether the last decade's migration has significantly changed the older models of arrival, settlement, assimilation, and the population's public profile within the United States. And if it has, is this true for all diasporas of this period, or is it anomalous? We suggest that the contemporary South Asian population is normative because it is clumped together in social stratifications and formations explicable under traditional categories of diaspora, identity, and nationhood. But, it is also anomalous because major internal divisions that dispute such classification challenge those older categories. For example, even as the tech diaspora is visible because of its place in the upper tiers of US society, it is different in very real terms from the East African Indian motel owners or the 7–11 store owners who are invisible, and have gone largely unremarked and unassimilated. The question takes on a special urgency in the wake of the economic failures in the technology sector and, in a more pressing context, in the way in which South Asians are singled out by governmental institutions and their functionaries after September 11, 2001. It is the children of the petit bourgeoisie in their upwardly mobile phase who are more strictly analogous with the South Asian diaspora in the United Kingdom and their working class histories, while the children of the PMC (professional-managerial classes) are more securely assimilated and less clearly ethnically marked.

Appadurai points out the need for a model that supercedes diaspora and assimilative hybridity, to one that includes "floating populations, transnational politics within national borders, and mobile configurations of technology and expertise" (p. 5). This statement bypasses obvious binaries of home/here and abroad/there to refocus attention on the mobility and partial presence of subjects instead of a point-to-point movement. This phenomenon, called variously "nomadic," cyclical, or flexible employment, forces us to employ different heuristic devices in the construction and dissemination of the "knowledges of globalization" (Appadurai p. 4), and consequently ask who occupies such new cosmopolitan spaces. Globalization is a complex term that has changed meaning over the long term.[5] According to John Tomlinson, there is an urgent need to understand the "complex connectivity . . . globalization refers to [in] the rapidly developing and ever densening network of interconnections and interdependencies" that in *Globalization and Culture* he calls "characteriz[ing] modern social life . . . [in all] the multiplicity of linkages" (1999, p. 2). Globalization implies proximity made possible for South Asians by travel, migration, education, and employment in general. It conveys an increasing immediacy now that technology and technology transfer, world markets and global labor move effortlessly and seamlessly as the engine of globalization which locates, relocates, and redefines people, allowing what we see as a new cosmoplitanism. Connectivity means experiencing distance differently, particularly in the context of technology, global capital flows, and cultural exchanges. The difference between this kind new cosmopolitanism and older modes of globalization engendered by the NAFTA or GATT treaties, for example, is that the scale and types of communicative flows were much slower and more controlled. Thus, the difference between here/there, us/them, home/abroad, was much more stable and recognizable as distinct. Consequently, in those earlier contexts connectivity signaled the safety and guarantee of physical distance in dealing with strangers, while in the context of a new cosmopolitanism, South Asians are jostling along with the masses in the United States.

Although most of these theoretical frames are helpful in speaking of migrant and/or resident populations, it is Rouse's incisive examination of the Mexican population's assimilation that is especially apposite. Rouse envisions a new model in which "continued movement back and forth and the concomitant circulation of money, goods and information have linked the various locales so tightly that they have come to form new kinds of social space—multi-local social settings that span the boundaries of the nation-states involved" (1995, p. 354). But instead of using the paradigm of "multi-local settings" to valorize a dated postmodernism, Rouse correctly points to the way in which "ascriptions of identity" to any given immigrant group tends to reinforce class-based inequalities. Thus, it allows us to uncover the fault lines between divergent groups of South Asian immigrants and the tensions of trying and failing to build identity around ethnicity (the predominant American model) instead of *class.*

Similar distinctions have to be drawn around Asian American nomenclatures. Lisa Lowe, in "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," situates Asian Americans in the United States and elliptically acknowledges the different histories, cultures, and nations within the blanket (even facile) term *Asia*. She writes, "Asian American discussions of ethnicity are far from uniform or consistent; rather, these discussions contain a wide spectrum of articulations that include, at one end, the desire for an identity represented by a fixed profile of ethnic traits, and at another, challenges to the very notions of identity and singularity which celebrate ethnicity as a fluctuating composition of differences, intersections, and incommensurabilities. The latter efforts attempt to define ethnicity in a manner that accounts not only for cultural inheritance, but for active cultural construction, as well" (1991, p. 27). Lowe's *Asia* works as a shorthand to signal the hyphenated Americans of Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese descent, for example, peoples whose histories of war and labor are again quite dissimilar to the South Asians. Thus, although Rouse and Lowe assess and capture the complex, coexisting phenomenon of a visibly marked and transparent identity of two large immigrant groups, their paradigms or explanations do not quite fit the South Asians in the United States. Similarly, insightful though it is, Prashad's (2000) arguments about the top-heavy nature of South Asians immigrants coming from and into the middle to upper classes do not fully address what we see as a new cosmopolitanism. These theorist do not, for instance, foreground the tensions within South Asia; tensions between religion and nationality as in India and Pakistan, or between linguistic ethnicity and nationality as in India and Sri Lanka, or between Pakistan and Bangladesh, or even broach the complex tensions within a single national group that exists in South Asian communities, which are central to understanding their patterns of assimilation/settlement within the United States. Finally, in terms of citizenship debates that these new models engender, Aihwa Ong's definitions of cultural citizenship (1999) and flexible citizenship (2000) are useful in understanding the class/mobility nexus that characterizes new cosmopolitanism. In discussing the idea of cultural citizenship, Ong uses the Foucauldian models of "governmentality" to show how class is read in terms of race in the United States as a "whitening" or "blackening" effect on new immigrants, thus re-situating them within comprehensible, local, categories. However, the net effect of this is to allow forms of citizenship praxis to certain already privileged populations, while denying them to others. And more importantly, under the rubrics of assimilability and difference, it excludes any discussion of the role class plays in the "Americanizing" of new immigrants.

South Asians in America

Yet, the quest for a new nomenclature should not blind us to the continued existence, indeed the exacerbation, of older models of power and knowledge. The work of Rumbaut and Portes in *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America* points out that many groups of immigrants, including South Asians, still follow the older models of European immigration and assimilation. By this they mean to define the classical, early twentieth-century model of immigration, assimilation and social mobility across three generations. In this certain East Asians and South Asians are the exception, not the rule, to new immigration into the United States, which as a result of its *origin* (predominantly Hispanic and Asian), its *class* (predominantly working class and/or refugee), and *national* US multicultural policies, especially in the area of primary education, has resisted assimilation (2001, pp. 4–7). Instead most contemporary immigrants' children undergo what they call "segmented assimilation" (p. 7). A large part of the explanation of South Asian exceptionalism in this regard, as Prashad has pointed out, rests on the class status of South Asians allowed into the country, and some of it rests on their bilingual abilities, in which they are distinct from other immigrants from Mexico and East Asia. As the recent issue of *Amerasia* on South Asia notes, "The 'culture' of Indian-America . . . is manifestly marked with the wishes, aspirations and prejudices of certain class instincts"(p. x). Class became a flash point within South Asians in the United States as well, when Kanwal Rekhi, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur and angel financier, spoke out in favor of restricting immigration from India to only educated professionals. In distinguishing between desirable versus undesirable immigrants from South Asia, his remarks uncovered the fault lines of educational and class privilege as well as racial and economic affiliations.[6] Rekhi's remarks are neither sudden nor unexpected, but it is important to point out that though this latest group of South Asians does come from the middle to upper middle class populations at home, their jobs in the United States places them on the lower rungs of the middle class. That is to say, though this group is well-educated, their life-style choices of food and leisure come from popular culture, thus marking them as new cosmopolitans. In the last decade, immigration from India, to take the case of the largest emigrant nation in South Asia, has overwhelmingly been in the form of short-term technology workers coming to America on six-year H1-B visas. As their numbers grew, the self-definition by South Asian Americans became a natural outcome of a gradual perception of themselves as a distinct group of Asian Americans. At present Indian Americans comprise 16.4 percent of the Asian American population, and according to the 2000 Census data, are the third largest in the Asian American community behind the Chinese and Filipinos.[7]

On the face of it, the ubiquity of South Asian presence in the arts, in media, in business, in the slow leakage of popular cultural marks of *Indianness* co-exists with a public ignorance of its nature, scale and complexity of the lived cultures and traditions both in South Asia and in the United States. For example, *mehendi* or henna tattoos, *bindis* or red dots on the forehead, and/or jeweled nose rings have become incorporated into metropolitan, mainstream teen fashion, as have signature Indian rhythms in music videos (Jay-Z's "*Beware of the Boyz*" for example). Stuart Hall's assessment that "global mass culture is dominated by modern means of cultural production, dominated by the image which crosses and recrosses linguistic frontiers much more rapidly and more easily . . . is dominated by all the ways in which the visual and graphic arts have entered directly into the reconstitution of popular life, of entertainment and leisure. It is dominated by television and film, and by the image, imagery, and styles of mass advertising" (1997, p. 27) is true in this case.[8] Vijay Prashad's *The Karma of Brown Folk* looks at this problem from the angle of taming the exotic, collates, and analyzes the stereotypes, to posit ready-made niches for Indians in this country. South Asians have come to the United States through multiple routes, beginning with Sikh farmers in the West Coast (Leonard) to the bourgeois population that arrived in the 1970s via East Africa and Canada, and a large, professional population that came directly, post-1965, as doctors, engineers, and educators. The final wave came around the late 1980s onwards, as students, computer engineers, and software specialists. Recognizing this uneven entry and migration pattern (geographic and economic) is crucial in avoiding an evolutionary (modernity based) model for the South Asian presence in the United States. The latest cosmopolitans build on the work of immigrants who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s, whose politics were those of unobtrusive, inoffensive, wealth accumulation. This is changing as the recent run by Bobby Jindal (R) for governor of Louisiana has showed. Jindal had to prove his "American" identity and downplay his ethnicity significantly over his political career to reach that position, as he had no natural "ethnic" constituency in Louisiana to support him. However, it is noteworthy that he positioned himself as mainstream, Christian, American, not as an Indian-American. In contrast, Swati Dandekar (D) was successfully elected to the Iowa State Assembly by claiming in her campaign that *America* is a land that assimilates its immigrants. Shahab Ahmad, a Bangladeshi American, elected to city council in Hamtramck in Michigan, is another such example who asserted the unlimited possibility of the American Dream during his campaign. It is important to recognize that this desire to participate in US public and social life as Americans is a new trend, which is almost contrary to the earlier stereotype of quiet, apolitical lives that many South Asians have led. Dandekar and Ahmad represent a new trend of involvement in American state and local level politics in their home states. They signify a two-way acceptance: not just of South Asians participating in American public life, but also an acceptance of South Asian Americans by the American electorate at large. The latest example of this growing trend of South Asians seeking public office is the case of Kamala Harris's victorious election (born of Indian and African American parents) in a nonpartisan bid to the post of Attorney General of San Francisco.

Which now begs the question—are there similarities between two historical periods of migration to the United States: the new flows of people from South Asia and early twentieth century working class European migrants? What seems anomalous in such a comparison is the uneven privilege that the former enjoy, which in turn is tied to their politics with regard to immigration, assimilation, wealth accumulation, and religio-cultural affiliations. There are clearly two distinct strands here. Many from this new cosmopolitan group are significantly short on progressive politics, even though a large percentage have been educated within traditionally liberal US universities and have had some form of postgraduate training. The effortless access to the PMC and its privilege of this population, combined with a carefully constructed nostalgia for their cultures of origin has resulted in a predominantly conservative, right-wing, and unabashedly capitalist nexus. Although this segment of the South Asian population is out of touch with the progressive politics in their homelands and with other South Asians in the larger US political scene, it also seems to be out of step with the progressive politics of the other minoritized citizens in the United States. What most in this group fail to realize is that being conservative in their private sphere and apolitical/invisible in the public sphere, that is, failing to establish any real solidarity, also makes them powerless to effect changes in their own lives. This combination of US domestic policies (anti-Muslim, anti-South Asian sentiment in the tech industry, and anti-outsourcing hysteria in public culture) and their lack of collective politics and lobbying makes this group of privileged South Asians quite vulnerable during cyclical ravages of the US economy. In contrast, over the last couple of years, another face of a younger group of South Asian-Americans has emerged that is becoming socially responsible. This younger generation seems more politically motivated, and considers itself American first and South Asian second. One way in which this manifests itself is through participation in volunteerism and social justice efforts. An example is that of Anup Patel, a young South Asian-American, who, having won the Barry M. Goldwater scholarship in 2004,[9] donated part of his fund money and three months of his time volunteering to help HIV infected children of prostitutes in Mumbai. Such cases of volunteerism are not unique; in fact, they are becoming more and more common in second and third generation youth, who see themselves in step with *Americans* of their age, rather than as model minority subjects as their parents had done.[10]

One could suggest that, for the most part, South Asians in the United States occupy a space that is in between here and there, which is almost an extension of the home country, but also a source of accumulated wealth and privilege in the host nation. Such mediations between the host country and country of origin as well as the circulation within the South Asian diasporas of bodies, goods, information, cultural products, ideas, and capital, captures precisely the new paradigm of a South Asian cosmopolitanism. In seeking to explain such flows of people and ideologies and their restricted situatedness, Bauman's (2000) argument about revising the conception of space—both occupied and imagined—is worth reiterating. It is especially pertinent to the unceasing, rapid global reality of ebb and flows in the South Asian case, who have allied themselves with the exercise of various kinds of technological capital/power to reflect these disembodied trajectories. But, while his use of "flow" suggests a horizontal movement, and implies that people move, work, and live on an equal plane, the reality, however, is that globalization is vertical and represents the power (of technology and capital) only of developed nations. Bauman's assessment of globalization works better at explaining this phenomenon in the global north better than it does in the whole world. Thus, "liquid" must be qualified and defined conditionally. A complementary reading of Appadurai's *Modernity at Large*, with its complex formula of "*scapes*" to describe the functioning of subjects in global culture, is useful in addressing this blind spot in Bauman's argument. Appadurai uses the term "uneven" to explain the operation of modernity outside the West. He suggests that we can no longer position the populations of the world on "center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple peripheries) . . . [because] the complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics that we have only begun to theorize" (1996, pp. 32–3). It seems fitting then for Bauman's sweeping, "fluid" model of the world to be developmentally nuanced by deploying Appadurai's elaborate trope of "*scapes*" that stress disjuncture as the ground for inhabiting, producing in, and consuming global culture in the perpetual present of modernity.

Popular cultural elements, on the other hand, make some South Asian aspects into pleasantly ethnic and consumably *American* objects (incense, henna tattoos) and others into targets for racism (sometimes, interestingly, the same object functions in both registers). In such exchanges what are perceived as ethnic South Asian or mainstream American get conflated, and either used or abused in those precise "disjunctured" locations that Appadurai posits. Although some South Asians are caricatured as ethnic jokes (Apu in *The Simpsons* or the endless taxi driver jokes) in the media, mainstream South Asian American professionals bypass such stereotyping. Such contradictory exchanges between ethnic South Asian and mainstream Americans get conflated, and are either used or abused in those precise locations of "disjuncture." Interestingly, many South Asians use this break or gap between ethnicity and normative dominant culture to their advantage. The dot.com millionaires of Silicon Valley, who occupy both the "technoscape" and "financescape disjunctures," for example, insist upon their simultaneous South Asian and American identities because their ethnicity/citizenship divide grants them access to favorable spaces of mainstream American culture.