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Asian Studies / Business / Ethnic & Immigrant Studies

Indian Entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley
The Making of a Transnational Techno-Capitalist Class

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6 x 9” Hardcover Level: College & Faculty
268 pages September 2008 US$104.95 / £61.95
ISBN: 9781604975277

Description

A steady, quiet, almost unnoticed flow of nearly three decades of skilled labor between India and the United States, beginning in the post-1965 period of immigration reform, has culminated by the turn of a new millennium into a significant force, operating at the upper echelons of the hi-tech industry and in the global center of technological innovation—Silicon Valley. It is not mere coincidence that at the same time that technologically talented Indians were making their presence felt in Silicon Valley, their brethren in Bangalore were making this unknown city in southern India the center of a developing nation’s hi-tech industry. Indians, then, both within the national context of an emerging economy, and as an ethnic minority halfway across the world in the United States, offer the researcher of globalization an immediate entry into understanding how changes in a global industry impact local communities separated by geographical distances but united through new means of technological communications.

In popular perception, the term “immigrant” connotes a position of disadvantage. When the term “immigrant” is overlaid with the process of immigration from a developing country, the picture is one of displacement, lack of alternatives, and the attendant worries about incorporating oneself into an alien culture. Even if the migration was that of highly skilled personnel, the description was pessimistic, obvious in the term “brain drain.”

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Description (Continued)

The author is not suggesting that these images were incorrect. Indeed, the loss of skilled engineers, doctors, and technologists, trained at government expense, was not insignificant for India. However, the successful entrepreneurial activity of Indians in Silicon Valley distorts this picture. To bring the moving reel of images back into frame, one has to view India as a new, emerging economy, the immigration process as transnationalism, immigrants as a transnational capitalist class, and the software sector as a global industry, where Silicon Valley and Bangalore are but two inextricably interconnected nodes. This book takes such a view.

This innovative study examines the emergence and growing power of a new group of immigrant Indians to the United States: the transnational techno-capitalist class of entrepreneurs operating at the upper echelons of the hi-tech industry in Silicon Valley and Bangalore. Using a historical analysis, coupled with field research in Silicon Valley and Bangalore, the book highlights the changing nature of immigrant incorporation of Indians within an increasingly globalized software industry.

Imbibing the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley, recognizing the importance of building strong networks, and relying upon their educational qualifications, professional credentials and powerful yet invisible family support, Indians are playing a central role in redefining what it means to be an ‘immigrant entrepreneur’ from a ‘developing country’. These powerful actors are negotiating on their own terms and forging their own transnational space in the global software industry to become a transnational capitalist class, with allegiance to global capitalism and a political project of pushing the ideas and ideals of capitalism in both their ‘home’ and ‘adopted’ countries.

This book is essential for all in business studies, ethnic and immigrant studies, and south Asian studies.

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About the Author

Monica Biradavolu is Post-doctoral Associate at Yale University. She holds a PhD in Sociology from Duke University and a BA, also in Sociology, from the University of Delhi. Her academic interests are broadly in the fields of globalization and international development, and she is presently engaged in research on a global health project on HIV/AIDS in India.