On the Shoulders of Generations

Philanthropy in the Indian American Community of Silicon Valley

5th year anniversary

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of Silicon Valley

Acknowledgements

Letter From Emmett D. Carson
Chief Executive Officer
Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Silicon Valley has long been a magnet for people from all over the world, a place where multi-culturalism is part of our daily lives. We are committed to serving both this region and its diverse community of donors. At the community foundation, we understand that in our increasingly interdependent world, donors have ties to communities both near and far. Over the past five years, community foundation donors have supported nonprofits in our local region as well as nonprofits in more than 45 countries around the world.

As Silicon Valley's center of philanthropy, part of our role is to understand and share information about the role philanthropy plays within the many communities in our region. As this report notes, every culture brings its own special vision and values to giving.

This report, produced by LTG Associates, highlights the philanthropy of Indian Americans in Silicon Valley, a community that has already contributed much to this region's success. Our goal was to strengthen our own knowledge about the nature of philanthropy among Indian Americans, to celebrate the contributions of the Indian American community and to provide us with a model for future reports on culturally-based philanthropy that we hope to issue in the years ahead.

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Indian American Philanthropy in Silicon Valley: Introduction

Each culture brings its own special vision and values to philanthropy. For some, the vision may focus most strongly on a particular issue such as, health, education, or food security. For others, it may focus on particular groups of people in need such as children, the elderly, or people with mental or physical challenges. In some cultures, the vision focuses concern on one's own first and then others. These values and vision are carried with individuals when they migrate to other parts of the world, where a confluence of old and new cultures, values and traditions results in distinct approaches to and perspectives on philanthropy. This document explores and celebrates philanthropy in a relatively newly prominent immigrant population, the Indian American community of Silicon Valley.

The Asian Indian* community in Silicon Valley has grown dramatically in the past few decades. Nurtured by an educational system in India that emphasized the acquisition of solid scientific knowledge and technical skills, and drawn by the opportunities created by the nascent technology industry in the United States, Indians by the hundreds, then thousands, immigrated to Northern California to continue their schooling at prestigious universities such as Stanford and University of California, Berkeley. Those who arrived soon after immigration reform in the mid-1960s were well positioned to get in on the ground floor of the technology boom. They did so successfully, paving the way for later waves of immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s, many of whom were recruited directly from India by rapidly growing technology firms to fill a seemingly endless need for computer scientists, software engineers, and other highly skilled professions. The combination of hard work and strong skills brought to bear at the right time in the right place enabled many to achieve remarkable financial success.

These newly-wealthy individuals, many of whom arrived in the United States with few assets, have not forgotten their Indian roots. Many donate large amounts of their personal wealth to support a variety of causes in India, such as education and health care, in order to support others in creating the same opportunities for personal development and success that they themselves had, either in India or after arriving in the US. Others focus on the growing Indian American community around them, with an eye toward preserving Indian culture and tradition for future generations, as well as benefiting the wider community. As noted, the goal of this document is to describe and celebrate Indian philanthropy by drawing on interviews with more than 25 individuals who are highly active in philanthropy in Silicon Valley. After a brief overview of the roots of philanthropy in India, it will describe the history and characteristics of the Indian population in the United States, and then, using their own words, describe the vision and values of Indian American philanthropists in Silicon Valley. It will conclude with some thoughts on the future of Indian American philanthropy.

*Terms used in this document to refer to individuals of Indian origin are explained on page 4.

The Roots Of Philanthropy In India

The concept of philanthropy is deeply rooted in thousands of years of Indian tradition and woven throughout the culture. The importance of giving back to the community through civic engagement, donations, and volunteerism has been codified in ancient religions, spread by Mahatma Gandhi's movement for social transformation, and compelled by India's growing presence on the world stage.

Most religions emphasize the importance of giving to those less fortunate and of beneficence, including the dominant religions of India, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. The concept of unselfish giving is codified throughout both the sacred and secular texts of Hinduism, guiding daily activities and interactions. In Hinduism and Buddhism, an important part of one's *dharma*, religious obligations or moral duties, is *daan* (sometimes *dana*), giving generously without thought of a reward. This giving can be material, financial, or in the form of *seva*, volunteer service, which is also to be performed without expectation of return. Giving loses its spiritual value if it is carried out with an expectation of return or reward.[1] Providing food for the needy or carrying out other charitable acts is also a way to honor one's ancestors, the gods, and all of creation.

Although there is a tendency to focus on Hinduism when considering the influence of religion on Indian culture, other major religions of India support similar ideals and practices. One of the five pillars of Islam is *Zakat*, an obligatory giving of 2.5% of one's surplus wealth to charity, which serves to purify the remainder of the wealth.* Christianity encourages tithing, donating 10%of one's gross income, usually to support a religious entity, and time spent in service to the poor is considered to be service to God. Although giving ideally should be altruistic, for all these religions such giving is nonetheless believed to improve one's spiritual standing, as well as that of her or his family, now and in the next life.[2]

Building on the ideals of beneficence and selfless giving intrinsic in Indian traditional roots while expanding the vision to include social transformation, the Gandhian tradition established during India's struggle for independence urged people to action to improve the world from the village up. Gandhi believed that India's development had to start at the level of the community and emphasize job creation and the use of locally available resources. Rather than simply handing out food or money, the wealthy should devote a portion of their capital to promoting employment in the villages, but also provide safety nets for those who were unable to work.[3] Gandhi emphasized the role of volunteerism in empowering and transforming society, which led to an expansion of the voluntary sector since Indian Independence that continues to this day.

Giving for Indians has traditionally been a personal and private undertaking, focused on family, caste, community and village.[4] Donations were generally made in cash directly to the intended recipient. Religious giving concerns the individual level, where the donor meets a religious obligation and needy individuals receive assistance, although the funds may be channeled through a faith-based affiliate. Mass emigration and the establishment of Asian Indian communities around the world, sometimes referred to as the Indian Diaspora, increasing globalization and the resulting exposure to the institutionalized manner of charitable giving common in the United States and other parts of the Western world is beginning to change that pattern, especially for members of the Diaspora wanting to get funds back to India.[5]

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* Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium: India - Overview (http://www.asiapacificphilanthropy.org/node/19). Accessed 8 September 2011.

The Indian Diaspora In The United States
On Asian Migration

The late 1800s and early 1900s saw the beginnings of Indian migration to North America, mostly undertaken by Sikhs from Punjab to Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada and to San Francisco, California, in the United States, where the majority worked as farmhands, on railroads, or in mill work. From these beginnings, over the following decades, the community took root and grew in numbers and in economic security. According to a major report produced by the Bay Area Council Economic Institute:[6]

In 1920, Indian immigrants owned 2,100 acres and leased another 86,000 in California, mainly in the Sacramento and Imperial Valleys. Today their descendants produce 95% of the Sacramento Valley's peach crop, 60% of its prune crop and 20% of its almond and walnut production.

The number of Indian migrants moving to the United States up to the 1960s was relatively small due to highly restrictive quotas based on country of origin. The passage of the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act (also known as the Immigration and Nationality Act) greatly expanded the immigration quotas to the United States for individuals from more countries, including India. It created opportunities for immigration by individuals who possessed certain professional skills that were in high demand, as well as for reuniting with family already in the U.S.* As noted by an expert on the Indian Diaspora in Silicon Valley:[7]

The Hart-Cellar Act thus created significant new opportunities for foreign-born engineers and other highly educated professionals whose skills were in short supply, as well as for their families and relatives. The great majority of these new skilled immigrants were of Asian origin, and they settled disproportionately on the West Coast of the United States.

After the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965, the number of Asian Indian immigrants, among others, began to grow rapidly, especially among trained professionals such as doctors and engineers, and particularly in places such as California. Beginning in the early 1980s, those numbers increased dramatically as the burgeoning high technology industry in Silicon Valley attracted individuals with the much sought-after education and skills they had acquired from India's elite higher education institutions. Today California has the largest population of Asian Indians in the country, and the majority of that population is concentrated in the cities of Union City, Fremont, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, and San Jose.[8]

This history of Indian immigration and settlement has resulted in a variety of residency statuses in the U.S. Individuals of Indian origin born in India or another non-U.S. country who have migrated to the U.S. are generally referred to as "first generation" Indians. "Second generation" Indians are those born in the U.S. to parents of Indian origin, while "third generation" refers to children of American-born persons of Indian origin. First generation Indians who arrived in the U.S. in the early years of legalized immigration constitute a "first wave" of immigrants, while the much larger numbers of first generation Indians who arrived during and after the 1980s constitute a "second wave."

Throughout this document, the terms *Asian Indian* or *Indian* will be used to refer to individuals who have origins in the country of India regardless of where they were born. The term *Indian American* will be used to refer to individuals of Indian origin who consider themselves to be American and/or have settled permanently in the U.S. The term *Indo-American*, as well as the phrase "Indo community" is sometimes used by Indian Americans to refer to themselves.

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* It also offered asylum to people claiming religious or political persecution.

A Snapshot Of The Asian Indian Population In The United States

Despite having arrived relatively recently, the Asian Indian population in the United States compares very well with the general U.S. population in terms of education and income. According to the U.S. Census, as of the year 2000, nearly three quarters of the persons of Indian origin in the U.S. were foreign born, and more than half of these had arrived in the previous 10 years. The proportion of immigrants who are relatively new and who are non-U.S. citizens is even higher in the high tech counties of Silicon Valley (Table 1). The Asian Indian population overall is approximately 55% male and 45% female, and the median age is around 30 years. For comparison, the general U.S. population in 2000 was 49% male and 51% female, and the median age was 35 years.

Table 1: Time of Entry and Citizenship Status of Asian Indians in the U.S. and Selected Regions

	United States		California		Santa Clara County		Alameda County	
All Asian Indians								
U.S. born	27.1		28.1		22.2		24.7	
Foreign born	72.9		71.9		77.8		75.3	
Naturalized Citizen		39.8		39.7		23.7		32.7
Not a citizen		60.2		60.3		76.3		67.3
Foreign Born Only								
Entered 1990 to March 2000	**53.4**		**52.3**		**67.7**		**60.7**	
Naturalized citizen		13.6		12.6		5.7		9.9
Not a citizen		86.4		87.4		94.3		90.1
Entered 1980 to 1989	**28.2**		**28.6**		**21.6**		**25.7**	
Naturalized citizen		60.5		59.6		51.8		60.6
Not a citizen		39.5		40.4		48.2		39.4
Entered before 1980	**18.4**		**19.0**		**10.7**		**13.5**	
Naturalized citizen		84.3		84.3		80.8		81.9
Not a citizen		15.7		15.7		19.2		18.1

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Asian Indians have some of the highest educational rates of all population groups in the U.S. About 85% graduated from high school, about 60% have bachelor's degrees, and about 32% have graduate or professional degrees (Table 2). These numbers are even higher in Santa Clara County, the heart of Silicon Valley. For comparison, in the general U.S. population, about 80% graduated from high school, about 24% have bachelor's degrees, and about 9% have graduate or professional degrees.

	United States	California	Santa Clara County	Alameda County
High school diploma	85.4%	84.3%	92.8%	87.3%
Bachelor's degree	60.9%	59.7%	79.4%	65.9%
Graduate or Professional degree	32.4%	30.4%	44.7%	33.2%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Given the immigration history and the high levels of educational attainment, along with a high labor force participation that is roughly split between men and women, it is no surprise that the median household income level is significantly higher than that of the general U.S. population. In 1999 the median income in the U.S. for Asian Indians was $61,322, compared with a national average of $41,994. These numbers were significantly higher for those living in the Silicon Valley counties of Alameda ($78,056) and Santa Clara ($92,566).

Achieving The American Dream
Asian Indians In Silicon Valley

The American Dream has taken different forms for different people within the Asian Indian Diaspora in the United States, but it has been achieved by few as impressively as those who settled in Silicon Valley. The San Francisco Bay Area was a principal destination for Indians who began arriving in the mid-1960s, shortly after changes in immigration law took effect. But the decade between 1990 and 2000 brought the explosion of the dot-com industry, which was marked by a pronounced uptick in the number of Asian Indians immigrating to the U.S., and specifically to Silicon Valley to work in the technology-based industry.[6]

As India's information technology (IT) industry faced roadblocks from government tariffs barring joint ventures, Indian IT firms began to send their programmers to work in the United States. "By 1986, nearly 60% of Indian Institute of Technology engineering graduates were migrating overseas, principally to the Bay Area."[6] This was due largely to the limited job opportunities at home and exciting innovations in Silicon Valley. With the seemingly unlimited number of H-1B* visas available and the anticipated technological crisis of the "Year 2000 Problem,"† the IT field began to both bring in an unprecedented number of foreign-born workers, as well as outsource work to India. As more and more Asian Indians immigrated to the U.S., and to Silicon Valley in particular, to go to school (eventually exceeding China in terms of international students in the U.S.) and to work in the high tech industry, the Diaspora became an entrepreneurial force with which to be reckoned.

In general, Asian Indians in Silicon Valley have been highly successful in their endeavors. The community, particularly within the technology field, is perceived as very tightly knit and internally supportive.[9] There is an important emphasis on entrepreneurism within the population as evidenced by The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), an Asian Indian networking group of entrepreneurs established in Silicon Valley in 1992. It is estimated that between 1995 and 2005, 15% of Silicon Valley start-ups were headed by Indians, the largest number for any immigrant group in the country.[10] Other professional networking organizations that play an important role in Silicon Valley include the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPIO) and the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA). These networking associations facilitate the process of mobilizing the extensive human, social, and financial capital within the Indian American community in Silicon Valley, and of coordinating funds directed toward the betterment of society, both in Silicon Valley and in India, through philanthropic activity.

The remainder of this document will describe the vision and values of 26 Indian Americans who are highly active in philanthropy in Silicon Valley. The contributors to this document are philanthropists, including entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, computer and software engineers, health care providers and others, as well as officers of philanthropic, charitable, and educational institutions. The information was collected through individual informal interviews and a focus group, and will be presented using the contributors' own words wherever possible.

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*Non-immigrant employment visa for individuals in specialty occupations.

†Anticipated crisis caused by a design artifact in the hardware or software that caused erroneous results when working with dates beyond Dec. 31, 1999. Early computer systems dropped the first two digits of a year when storing or processing; such a system recorded the year 2000 as 00 and could not distinguish it from 1900. In the late 1990s, thousands of hours and millions of dollars were devoted to correcting the problem on computers around the world.

Giving Back
Indian American Philanthropy In Silicon Valley

Many of the now highly affluent Asian Indians in Silicon Valley arrived in the U.S. with very few resources. Through a combination of hard work, education, skills and vision, they were able to benefit from the technology boom to achieve remarkable levels of success, influence, and wealth. But they have not forgotten their roots, nor do they take their success for granted. They are keenly aware of their personal good fortune. Many consider "giving back" in one form or another to be an obligation as an Indian and a responsibility as a citizen that they are more than happy to meet.

Indian Americans living in Silicon Valley have established a strong and vibrant "Indo-American" community in the area. In addition to the professional networking associations mentioned above, a number of cultural and philanthropic organizations have been established in the past decade in Silicon Valley. The India Community Center (ICC), the largest of its kind in North America, was established in 2003 to serve the entire local community in all its diversity while also functioning to preserve and promote the composite culture of India as requested by the founding fathers of India at the time of independence.* ICC was mentioned by many of the contributors to this document as having a special place in their personal and philanthropic lives.

In 2001 the Asian Indian community in the U.S. mobilized around relief efforts after the earthquake in Gujarat, India, which led to the establishment of the American India Foundation (AIF), headquartered in Silicon Valley and New York.† Previously, many in the Diaspora sent charitable funds to India through personalized channels to ensure that funds were reaching their intended beneficiaries. The establishment of the American India Foundation provided a way to efficiently coordinate philanthropic funding from around the U.S. and direct it to trusted organizations in India. Over the last decade, AIF and ICC have become important focal points for the Indian American philanthropic community in Silicon Valley.

✳ Definitions Of Giving

"Giving back" can take many forms, but at its most fundamental it involves contributing material resources, time, knowledge, and/or expertise toward the greater good, ideally without expectation of return. This may take the form of supporting programs to help the needy, volunteering at organizations that preserve and support arts and culture for the general public, or donating funds at times of natural or man-made disasters. Many Indian Americans see their charitable and philanthropic practices as closely tied to India. As one contributor to this report explained: "The tradition comes from India. You go to a temple, even the poorest person is giving something to the temple." For many contributors to this document, "giving back" is at the heart of philanthropy:

I would define [philanthropy] as the duty of every individual, if he feels that he's standing on the shoulders of someone else, wherever he has reached in life, to give back to the community, to give back to the people who would be the shoulders for the next generation. I wouldn't be here if not for my parents, for my teachers, for everyone else who chipped in in their own unique way.

[Philanthropy] is a way for people who are fortunate to give back to the community in multiple forms, in the form of money, time, sharing your experiences. And give it to the ones who don't have it, or who deserve it in whatever form, and helping these receiving individuals to grow to the next level, their own dreams or having them to create a dream, or making them have a dream or achieve a dream and get to that dream or a goal.

Three terms commonly applied to giving activities within the Indian American community are *philanthropy*, *charity*, and *remittances*. Some, but not all, Indian American philanthropists consulted for this document distinguish among these three terms based on the

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*India Community Center: About us (http://www.indiacc.org/aboutus). Accessed 8 September 2011

†American India Foundation: About us (http://www.aif.org/who-we-are.html). Accessed 8 September 2011.

degree of involvement on the part of the person giving, as well as the depth and breadth of the intended impact. *Philanthropy* is viewed by Indian Americans as being more broadly envisioned and involving a deeper and longer term commitment than charity. Ideally, philanthropy takes the form of an ongoing personal relationship with a cause or an organization, with an ultimate goal of producing lasting transformation. On the other hand, the term *charity* was more likely to be used to indicate a one-time gift or act to meet a specific need, e.g., disaster relief, poverty alleviation, that does not necessarily demand personal involvement or investment:

> *Philanthropy connotes the contribution of time, money, and resources to efforts that target the community at large, efforts for the public good, as opposed to a gift for an individual.*

> *Charity has more of a human services tone to it, like food banks. I don't think of charity as giving to museums, or environmental causes. Charity helps human needs and services directly.*

While volunteering was not universally defined as a component of philanthropy, it was nonetheless considered an essential component of "giving back":

> *I'm a big proponent of volunteering because what happens is that in many circumstances, for example an orphanage that I'm involved with, it is not the money you give there. It's really the time you spend with the kids over there that makes a difference. A lot of time, the time is most expensive component because you cannot attach a value to time sometimes, so being able to set aside that is the most valuable thing that one can give.*

Supporting one's family is a primary obligation in Indian society. As such, remittances, sending money back to India, usually to one's family and close members of the social network, are an important form of giving, especially for first generation Indians. A

significant proportion of the funds that are transferred to India from Indian Americans falls into this category. Remittances were generally not defined as a component of philanthropy because they do not necessarily contribute to the greater good or help those less fortunate (outside the family network).

✺ Patterns Of Giving

Indian American philanthropy in Silicon Valley takes one of three major forms:

- Giving to causes that support India
- Giving to causes in the U.S. that support Indian American causes, and
- Giving to causes that support the general community in which they live and work

Many Indian Americans, regardless of generation, in Silicon Valley feel that donating money to India is a better investment because the money goes much further and the need is so much greater:

> *India is viewed as a much easier place to think about giving for two reasons. One, you feel like the need is there more; and two, you feel like the return is more there. Fifty dollars goes a much longer way in India than it does here. I think most Indian Americans tend to think this way, in terms of leverage and return on investment.*

Others feel that the focus of the Indian American community needs to be broader:

> *My belief is we should not just focus only on India just because we are Indian. There are equally serious challenges in the place where we live. I think we should give, if not equally, at least to whatever extent possible to repeat the same things, monetarily and time wise to support local organizations and institutions in a way that will make a better society and better community.*

Still, there is a real tension for many in the Indian American community to decide whether they should focus their philanthropy on projects and causes in India and other developing regions where the impact could be extensive but distant, or concentrate on local issues where their contributions support causes of importance to the community where they live and work:

The Asian Indians are very involved in India, sometimes too much. They only exclusively want to help India. The money goes a long way. But I say we also have to do something here. We can't just be doing it in India. This is the land where we made our money; this is the land where we flourished. There are needs here. Granted, the poverty here is not the same as poverty in India. But there are still needs here, and we must at least address it, support it. Some portion of the charity should be spent here, not all of it concentrated in India.

The poor people in India, what, 800 million are living on less than one, two dollars a day. So that makes sense that at just a human level, why that would be the case….On the other hand, America is home for this immigrant community as well as so many others, so it does make sense to start giving here as well, as this community has already started to do. And I see that increasing, and the trend is pointing in that direction.

Other matters many Indian Americans take into consideration when choosing to concentrate their philanthropy locally are whether or not to focus charitable endeavors on Indian issues such as Indian arts and culture or the Indian Community Center; or to branch out to support other non-Indian related organizations in Silicon Valley as the second and third generations have been doing:

I'm very involved in and passionate about priorities to my local community, meaning the city where I live, the county where I work professionally, and organizations or causes in within those communities that touch the lives of people near me. Issue areas include food, health care,

education, and the arts. One component that I have particular involvement in is the ethnic arts community because of the passion of my son about dance.

But across the board, the one consideration that appears paramount in making decisions about how and where to put philanthropic resources to use is the personal connection. That personal connection may take the form of knowing and trusting key individuals within the organization, and having faith that the organization is well run and uses its resources wisely:

When I come across particular individuals or organizations, specifically individuals, if I can make a connection with a person that I think is proven, independent of the specific issue -- I have to care about the specific issue, but if they care that much about it, they can probably inspire me too.

Most Indians will write out a check …if they know somebody who is involved in running the organization, and in that way there's a sense of trust that their dollar will find the right place to be. The personal connection does make a difference for many people.

For some, a personal connection means giving to entities or causes that they or their family personally value and benefit from:

I've considered giving to the India Community Center simply because my nephew has gotten such great experiences, classes, he's learned a lot, and he's had a lot of fun camps and things like that there…. It's very much the personal connection more than the fact that it's the India Community Center.

I tend to support the arts, visual, performing. I give to three museums, the symphony, NPR [National Public Radio], a bit to local environmental causes like the Golden Gate Park, and my alma mater …I think I support these causes because I'm a "frequent customer" and I believe that if it's something you find value in and you would really

miss it if it went away, then it's something you should support. You shouldn't just assume others will support it.

Indian Americans in Silicon Valley support a wide range of causes both in the U.S. and in India. As might be expected given the background of the community, education and literacy rank very high on the list of supported causes. Ways to contribute to education in India abound, from building village schools, to donating to programs such as the India Literacy Program, to supporting U.S.-based foundations that support primary or secondary education such as Pratham or the Foundation for Excellence. Many also support the universities from which they graduated, whether in India or the U.S. Education is the fundamental advantage to which the Indian American philanthropists attribute their success in Silicon Valley, and many expressed a particular commitment to help make that opportunity available to others. Programs that support girls' education are particularly important to the many philanthropists who are themselves women:

I favor supporting primarily education. I like to support education because that makes a difference in a person's life and you can become self-sustaining only when you are well-educated, so that's a cause that I'm very passionate about and I'm involved with many. I establish scholarships, fund major initiatives that make primary education changes in India for example. I try to establish tutoring programs in orphanages, things like that.

I give mainly to programs that support women's issues, like education and health. I have a daughter, and a son too, but I mainly give to anything that has to do with girls' empowerment.

Following closely behind education on the list of supported causes are health and health-related services and programs both in India and in Silicon Valley. In India, the focus is on basic health and well-being. For example, the Sankara Eye Foundation USA collects funds which are then transmitted to India to

provide thousands of low- or no-cost eye surgeries for the large blind and visually impaired population. In Silicon Valley, health-related giving focuses on issues of concern to Indian Americans, and to South Asian populations more generally. In particular, the South Asian Heart Center addresses the elevated rates of heart disease in the population. Organizations such as Maitri and Narika provide domestic violence services to support women of South Asian origin in the U.S who frequently encounter cultural and linguistic barriers to accessing mainstream women's shelters.

A third major category of giving by Indian Americans in Silicon Valley includes the arts and culture, especially programs that promote traditional Indian art forms such as dance and music. First generation Indians have been particularly focused on preserving the traditions for their children born in the U.S., many of whom may spend little or no time in India. More recent immigrant and second generation Indian Americans support these causes because they have been an integral part of maintaining their connection with their Indian heritage.

Generational Influences

Giving practices of Indian Americans in Silicon Valley as described by the contributors to this document show definite trends depending on where they were born, and if in India, when they arrived in the U.S. First generation Indian immigrants who arrived during the "first wave" (i.e., prior to the mid 1980s) appear likely to be more involved in "giving back" to causes in India such as poverty alleviation or education. This pattern changed noticeably with the later "waves" of Indian immigrants, who are more likely to contribute to causes in the community in which they are now living. One suggested explanation for this change is that "first wave" immigrants grew up in an India that was still struggling to provide basic necessities to its poorest citizens and thus they feel a greater need to give something back to their country of origin. "Second wave" immigrants (i.e., starting in the mid 1980s) were born in an India that had begun to develop dramatically in the years since Independence,

and were less likely to have witnessed, much less experienced, firsthand the severe poverty and deprivation that characterized India in the earlier part of the twentieth century:

My generation, our parents were all like low-middle class. Eating two meals a day was itself a big deal in most of these families, whereas the generation that is coming out of India in the last 10 years, they were born with TV, telephone, car…. We never had any of that.

I'm sure that I was influenced by my parents and my husband's parents, and their parents, and being immigrants and knowing and seeing real poverty definitely influences that.

Faith-based giving to temples, mosques, gurdwaras, etc., is another area in which the immigrant waves and generations differ. Perhaps due to their more personal connection to traditional Indian culture, much of which stems from religion, first wave Indian Americans seem much more likely to engage in religious giving. And for the earliest arrivals, building a temple was an important step on the path to becoming established in their new homeland:

We built a beautiful temple here in the Bay Area, and I've given substantial money, but that's part of the reason we wanted to build a temple. It's an identity. It's a place of not only worship but a place to have the community come together. This is how we place our roots here. …This is where our children will feel this is now home, not home away from home.

However, some Indian Americans, regardless of generation, feel that religious giving has its limits. While it may be important for the donor's spiritual well-being, there are limits to what it can do for the needy, or for society as a whole.

The approach to giving of persons of Indian origin who were born in the U.S. comes from a very different perspective and world view than that of those who immigrated in either the first or second wave. As noted by one contributor to this report, "the second generation doesn't continue giving to India. They are more likely to see the need to support local causes and the community." Both the issues that they choose to support and the pathways by which they contribute reflect their personal history of growing up in the U.S. and even perhaps never having visited India:

Second generation will have a very, very different approach to giving. I'm thinking of my son, who is 20-something. For example, he donates to the Lucile Packard Foundation. I don't know where it stemmed from, but my guess is that probably in school or whatever, there was something that he felt strongly or he spent some time doing, and now he's in a position where he can make small donation, whatever it is. I'm not talking about huge donations, but maybe it will grow into a much bigger donation.

I think there is a generational issue where for some [first generation Indians], issues around national security or eliminating poverty in a village in India is their most important concern, whereas in my [i.e., second] generation, I think there's a lot of concern about hate crimes and civic engagement.

Political, social, religious and community influences have shaped a culture of giving that is shared within families and is intergenerational. Many in the Indian American community described how their parents' generosity, even when they had very little to give, greatly shaped their own giving practices. They in turn are passing along that culture of giving to their children:

I was fortunate to grow up in a family where my parents were very vocal about giving, so it was ingrained in me early on. When you're financially solid, then you give. They were always generous, even when they didn't have a lot themselves.

There's probably some under-recognized influence on my own giving that come from my parents having come of age with Indian Independence and Gandhi and the whole social justice orientation. I don't feel alone as an Indian American with that

*set of values. I know many people of my
demographic with similar priorities.*

In the Indian American community of Silicon Valley,
children may exert influence on their parents'
philanthropic practices. Indian American parents
frequently noted how their children's interests and
activities with different U.S.-based organizations had
led them to become involved with new causes and
charitable organizations. Some older Indian
Americans have been impressed with the experiences
their children or nieces and nephews have had with
different community-based organizations such as the
Indian Community Center, and have been moved to
donate money to support programs in such institutions.
Other ways in which younger generations influence
the older are through their own philanthropic giving,
or their own community service. Community service
among younger generations of Indian Americans is
often encouraged through the school system and
provides exposure to many different kinds of local
charitable organizations:

*Having grown up in the area, [second generation
Indian Americans'] ties and their commitments
to local non-profit groups are very, very strong,
because they've been involved in them, whether it's
Habitat for Humanity, and as children and through
their school years, they've been involved in working
with them as part of their community service.*

✳ Philanthropy As Investment In The Future

Given the background and history of Indian American
philanthropists in Silicon Valley, it should come as no
surprise that many employ a business model when
considering how best to make use of their extensive,
yet still finite, resources. This approach, referred to
as *social entrepreneurship* or *venture philanthropy*, is
favored by many as a way to maximize the impact of
their finances or activities. Social entrepreneurs apply
concepts and methods from marketing and business to
affect social change at all levels, from the individual to
the global:[11]

*Social entrepreneurship [is] where you'll find the
principles of entrepreneurship and more brain
sharing, intelligence, into making sure that that
money or time that you give is leveraged in the
best way possible.*

*Some of the most personally satisfying
philanthropic efforts we've done as a family have
been ones where we've supported social
entrepreneurs and seen them take a very grass
root seed idea and build it into an organization.*

A well-known type of social entrepreneurship is
micro-finance or micro-credit, in which small loans are
given to individuals in support of business development
activities, for example, the purchase of a cart for selling
vegetables. In this case, the intent is to promote self-
sufficiency on the part of the beneficiary rather than
simply meet a momentary need for daily necessities.

*I look for opportunities where the help or resources
I contribute are going to make individuals self-
sufficient. I want to know how my contribution is
enabling the individual. …In addition to education,
I also support social entrepreneurism, where
women need a loan to set up shop to start a
business. I usually try to work one-on-one. I don't
have a lot of money, so I just pick one or two
projects where I can have an impact.*

From this perspective, philanthropy is seen as an
investment in the future, a way to create a sustainably
better community, society, and world. By invoking such
business concepts as *leverage*, *efficiency*, *scalability*,
and *return on investment*, philanthropists taking a
social entrepreneurial approach intend to have an
impact that will endure beyond their personal
involvement and investment in a particular program
or organization. The philanthropists consulted for this
document sought and supported ventures that they
felt, based on their own extensive and successful
experiences in business, would have a cascade effect
by creating jobs and sustaining valued services and
activities for all:

At the end of the day, its impact and leverage and thinking about what is the return on investment on the dollars we give. We try to measure it, and try to be honest with ourselves. We think of it very much like we think of an investment. We don't think of it as charity, we think about it as an investment of a different kind.

Philanthropy I tend to think of as donating to causes with a little more thought in terms of sustainability in terms of helping that particular organization grow and develop and be able to manage on its own after an initial input of funds.

American India Foundation is an entrepreneurial endeavor as well, with people coming together at a particular time, collecting because of the natural disaster, but then turning it around into an entrepreneurial endeavor to address a long-term problem in India, but in a different way, using venture philanthropy, and identifying some unique projects that can achieve sustainability and scalability.

Support for budding entrepreneurs is not limited to small enterprises in India. Philanthropists who made their fortunes by starting and running companies share their experience with young people just starting out. Just as with supporting education, the intent is to both honor those who helped them get started, and to support the next generation of entrepreneurs:

Some of the giving is not really giving, it's investing. A lot of young people who are in the community want to start companies, we help to incubate them. The equation isn't always a return on the money; it's more like helping people who are starting out, because others helped us. So we have group called TiE, and they help a lot of new entrepreneurs and so forth. As new entrepreneurs emerge, they need help, and we all try to help out. So it's in a way giving back.

As a practical matter, adherence to the Hindu traditions of *daan* and *seva*, described earlier, has meant that getting paid to perform charitable activities, such as managing an organization that

serves the poor, was not only considered inappropriate, it was seen as taking money away from the intended beneficiaries. As it became evident that this model had limitations for sustainability and scalability, philanthropists supporting non-profit organizations both in India and in Silicon Valley have encouraged a shift to the use of paid staff in the manner of for-profit entities that ideally provides continuity and improves organizational stability. This melding of the Indian giving tradition and the American non-profit model is an example of the evolution in thought and practice that occurs when cultures meet.

Indian American Philanthropy: The Future

"Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow-men."
Mahatma Gandhi

Moving forward, Indian American philanthropy will likely continue to change with the times. Assuming that India's economy continues on its current trajectory, it will become increasingly able to provide a better life for its citizens while depending less on resources from the Diaspora. Clearly, this will not happen overnight, and culture and tradition do not change quickly either. The historical and cultural roots of Indian philanthropy are evident in the vision and values expressed by the philanthropists who contributed to this document. The traditional values underlying giving are being passed down to the next generations. Honoring that which enabled them to do well in life, offering opportunities to the less fortunate, mentoring the next generation of entrepreneurs, and uplifting the needy will continue to be strong motivations to give and volunteer.

The context and opportunities for giving will change, which will in turn influence the giving patterns of future philanthropists. Expanding globalization, along with rapid changes in technology and information transfer, will influence their philanthropic goals and approaches.

By emphasizing sustainable self-sufficiency, today's Indian American philanthropists help those less fortunate and contribute to a better society in ways that will continue long after they are no longer giving. Future philanthropists will be able to transition from simply providing resources to the poor to solving the problems that create poverty in the first place.

As members of the Indian American community spend more time in the U.S., their giving patterns are beginning to expand to include causes such as battered women, female infanticide, Indian art, and other issues of importance to the Indian community living in the US. Those who have been exposed to a broader spectrum of giving are more likely to begin and continue giving themselves, and to consider a greater variety of approaches and issues. As noted by one contributor to this report, "Indians are realizing that it's really the environment of America that's caused them to be successful. And now they feel that they want to give back."

Future generations of Indian Americans will redefine philanthropy in ways that reflect their circumstances and worldviews. Currently the majority of giving among Indian Americans in Silicon Valley goes to India for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the dire need that still exists there. Many Indian Americans—especially those of the first wave and first generation—remember what it was like to grow up and, for some, to struggle there. However, as these first generation Indians age, they will have less influence on the giving patterns of the Diaspora. Indian Americans born in the U.S., who have fewer ties to India, will base their decisions on what they grew up with in this country, as well as what they saw modeled by their parents and peers. They also may take to new ways of giving that have not been part of the Indian tradition of philanthropy. Some of these, such as planned estate giving, do not tend to be used by first generation Indians who are planning to pass their accumulated wealth to their children.

Unlike some of the other [ethnic] communities, the Indo community is only about a generation old in this country, so the wealth is very new, and the giving in a systematic way is very new.

But it is that very newness that presents opportunities for innovation in philanthropy, such as the use of venture philanthropy to promote sustainable development. Given that a significant proportion of the wealth of this population grew out of the global boom in high technology industries, Indian Americans are well situated to be leaders in promoting social justice by using those technological innovations to bring resources and information to parts of the world where they are in short supply. By making available their knowledge, skills, and experience in addition to their financial resources, these philanthropists are poised to promote global change from the ground up.

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Gratitude

Silicon Valley Community Foundation would like to thank all of the individuals who graciously shared their time and experiences to help make this report a true reflection of Indian American philanthropy. We celebrate your commitment to community and appreciate all of the contributions that have been made to this report.

About Silicon Valley Community Foundation

The vision of Silicon Valley Community Foundation is to be a comprehensive center for philanthropy that inspires greater civic participation throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

The mission of Silicon Valley Community Foundation is to strengthen the common good, improve quality of life and address the most challenging problems. We do this through visionary community leadership, world-class donor services and effective grantmaking.

We value:

Collaboration	Integrity
Diversity	Public Accountability
Inclusiveness	Respect
Innovation	Responsiveness

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