

# **A SPECIAL REPORT ON**

**Community Outreach by Bharatiya Temple  
Seminar Series at Upper Dublin Library  
September 11- October 13, 2023**



## **Bharatiya Temple**

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **Dr. Uma Prabhakar, Program Coordinator**

Over the past 12 years, under the auspices of the late Dr. Sarada Thyagarajan, some members of our Bharatiya Temple have been participating and contributing regularly to a Lifelong Learning Endeavor program. This program, initially introduced by Mr. Dan Shoulberg at the Temple University, Ambler Campus and now being conducted at the Upper Dublin Library, Upper Dublin, PA, is an educational environment serving adults 50 years and older with courses and seminars designed to promote the joy of learning without traditional academic requirements.

Over these twelve years, our members have made several presentations at this forum on various occasions on topics including, “Festivals of India”, “Trade and Tariffs between India and the US”, “the British Occupation of India”, “the Impact and Influence of India on the US”, etc. The audience has been extremely appreciative of the efforts and the professionalism with which these seminars were prepared and conducted, and are always interested in learning more about Indian culture, economics, politics, social media, and interactions with other countries.

It became clear to us from these presentations that the audience is in general quite unaware of India's history or its present situation, thus making these types of outreach efforts extremely important in educating them and dispelling misconceptions they may have about India or its place in the world. Further, it also allows us to update our knowledge on these topics.

We presented seminars at the Upper Dublin Library on Indo-US Relationships between September 11 and October 18, 2023. A comprehensive series of seminars comprising six lectures focused on the following topics:

- 1) India under the British occupation 1700-1947 (Dr. Ravi Desiraju)
- 2) Political environment post-Independence in 1947 and relations with the US (Bala Balasubramanian)
- 3) Liberalization of India's economy in the early 1990s and the impact of agreements with the Bush Administration in the early 2000s (Dr. Prabhakar Chitrapu)

- 4) Brain drain from India to the US; impact on US industry/economy (Dr. Pallavi Chitturi)
- 5) Current India-US relations (Dr. Uma Prabhakar)
- 6) Influence of Indian arts and culture on the Western world (Dr. Dinakar Subramanian)

Based on comments from the audience, the presenters did a stellar job of engaging an equally enthusiastic and interested audience through well-researched and referenced presentations. More information on each of these topics is provided below.

The audience feedback was extremely positive and there was considerable interest in bringing back this group for additional seminars. We eagerly look forward to welcoming more members of the temple community who are knowledgeable and articulate to help us present such seminars in the future. Those interested may contact:

- Uma Prabhakar at [UmaPrabhakar1@gmail.com](mailto:UmaPrabhakar1@gmail.com)
- Ravi Desiraju at [Ravidesiraju@comcast.net](mailto:Ravidesiraju@comcast.net)
- Bala Balasubramanian at [bala710@gmail.com](mailto:bala710@gmail.com)

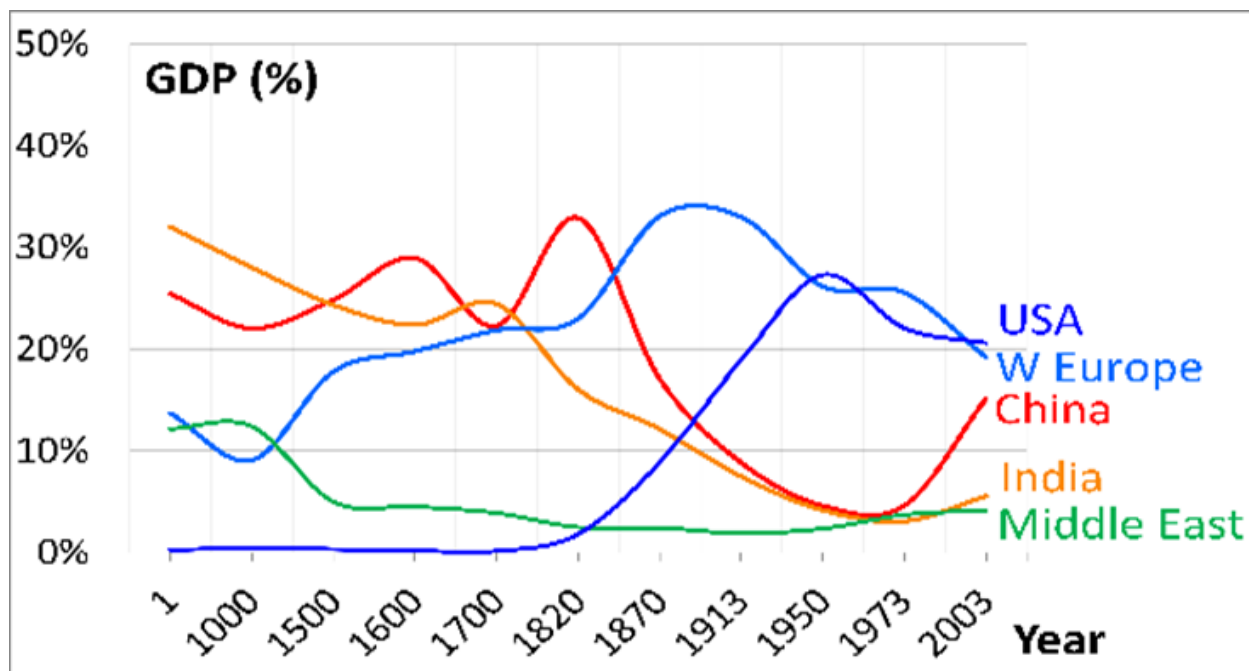


*Presenters (L to R): Bala Balasubramanian, Ravi Desiraju, Uma Prabhakar, Dan Shoulberg, Pallavi Chitturi, Dinakar Subramanian and Prabhakar Chitrapu  
(October 11, 2023)*

# INDIA UNDER THE BRITISH OCCUPATION 1700-1947

**Dr. Ravi Desiraju**

The British economist Angus Maddison concluded from his research that India was the richest country in the world at the start of year 1 AD with over 30% of the world's GDP. It remained the richest until about the year 1000 AD when Islamic invaders from the Middle East and Central Asia invaded with 2 goals in mind: to loot India's wealth and to convert Hindus to Islam. Eventually, they settled in India, ruled the country ruthlessly, destroyed about 60,000 Hindu temples and built mosques on some of those destroyed temple properties, converted more Hindus to Islam, and spent their loot in India building monuments such as the Taj Mahal.



*The global contribution to the world's GDP by major economies from year 1 to 2023, according to Angus Maddison's estimates. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, India and China were the two largest economies by GDP output.*

The British came to India in the 17<sup>th</sup> century initially as traders and eventually through bribery, chicanery, brutality, and violence, controlled all of India. When the British first arrived, India accounted for at least 27% of the world's GDP; when they left in 1947, India's share was less than 4%. An economist, Mrs. Utsa Patnaik, concluded that Britain stole at least 45 trillion dollars' worth of wealth during its occupation of India.

During its rule of India, Britain:

- Taxed the locals heavily and drove many to poverty and starvation.
- Destroyed thriving industries such as textiles, shipbuilding, and steel production to bolster support for these industries in Britain
- Introduced railways for the principal purpose of transporting raw materials from the interior of India to ports for shipment to Britain
- Created famines by exporting food from India to Britain resulting in starvation and deaths of about 35 million Indians, the most infamous being the Bengal famine where at least 5 million people died.
- Massacred hundreds of unarmed and defenseless Punjabis during Baisakhi celebrations in Jalianwala Bagh.
- Transported millions of Indians to distant lands as indentured laborers under false promises of lucrative jobs and assurances of prosperity.
- Promised self-rule in exchange for participation of 1 to 2 million Indians in World Wars I and II; they reneged on this promise and imposed harsh penalties on dissenters.
- Administered justice based on skin color.
- Financed the Industrial Revolution from funds looted from India.
- Destroyed the existing educational system in India resulting in a literacy rate of less than 15%
- Instituted a policy of “Divide and Rule” and deliberately exploited the caste systems to divide Hindus; this policy was also used to create tensions between Hindus and Muslims.

In summary, Britain’s rise from a poor country before the 1600s and later to an economic power and an empire was based entirely on its loot and brutal suppression of India and other colonies. During its rule, its actions resulted in the deaths of millions of innocent Indians and drove the entire country to abject poverty and starvation.

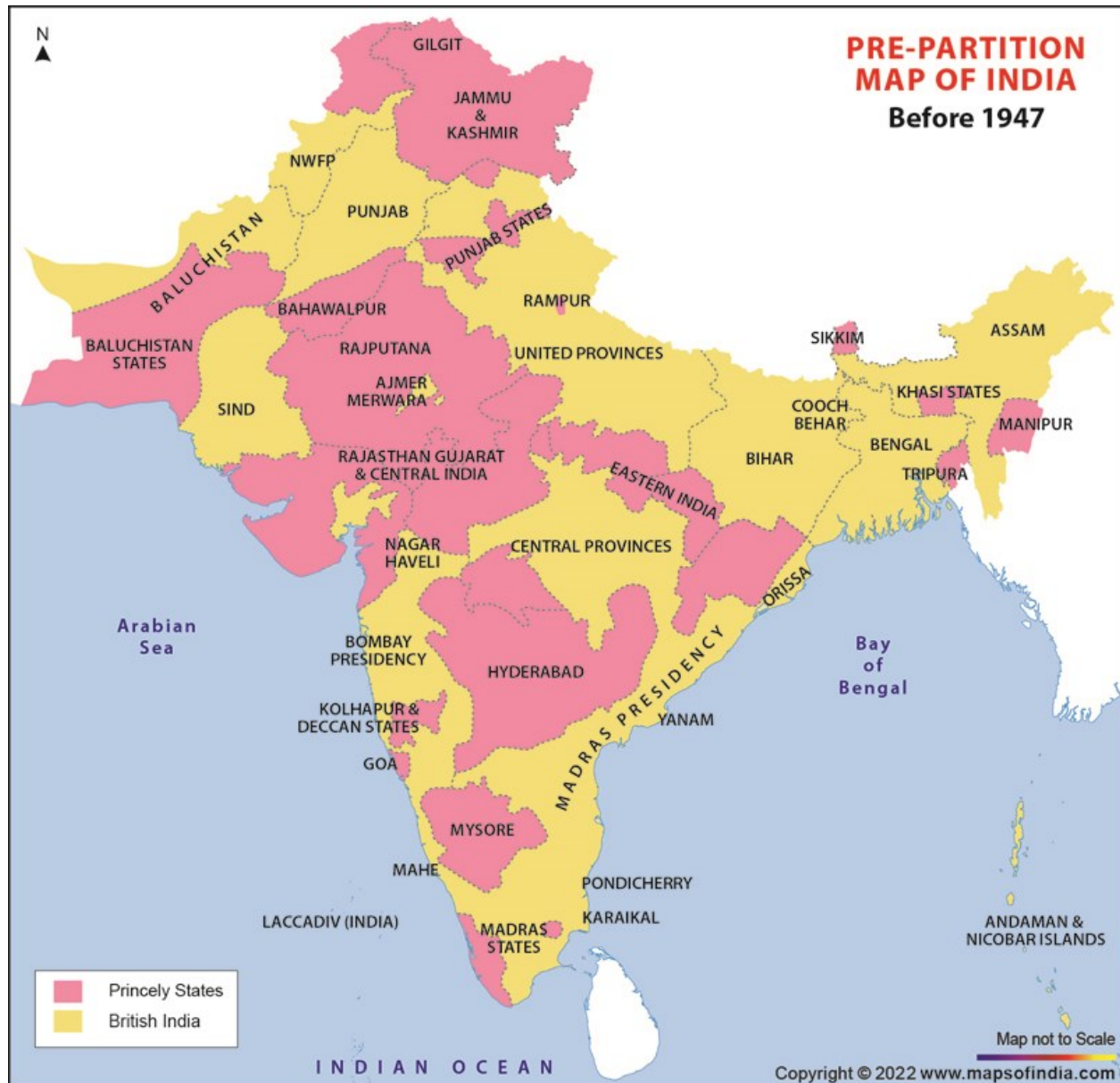
# **INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE, A YOUNG AND POOR COUNTRY WITH THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES**

**Bala Balasubramanian**

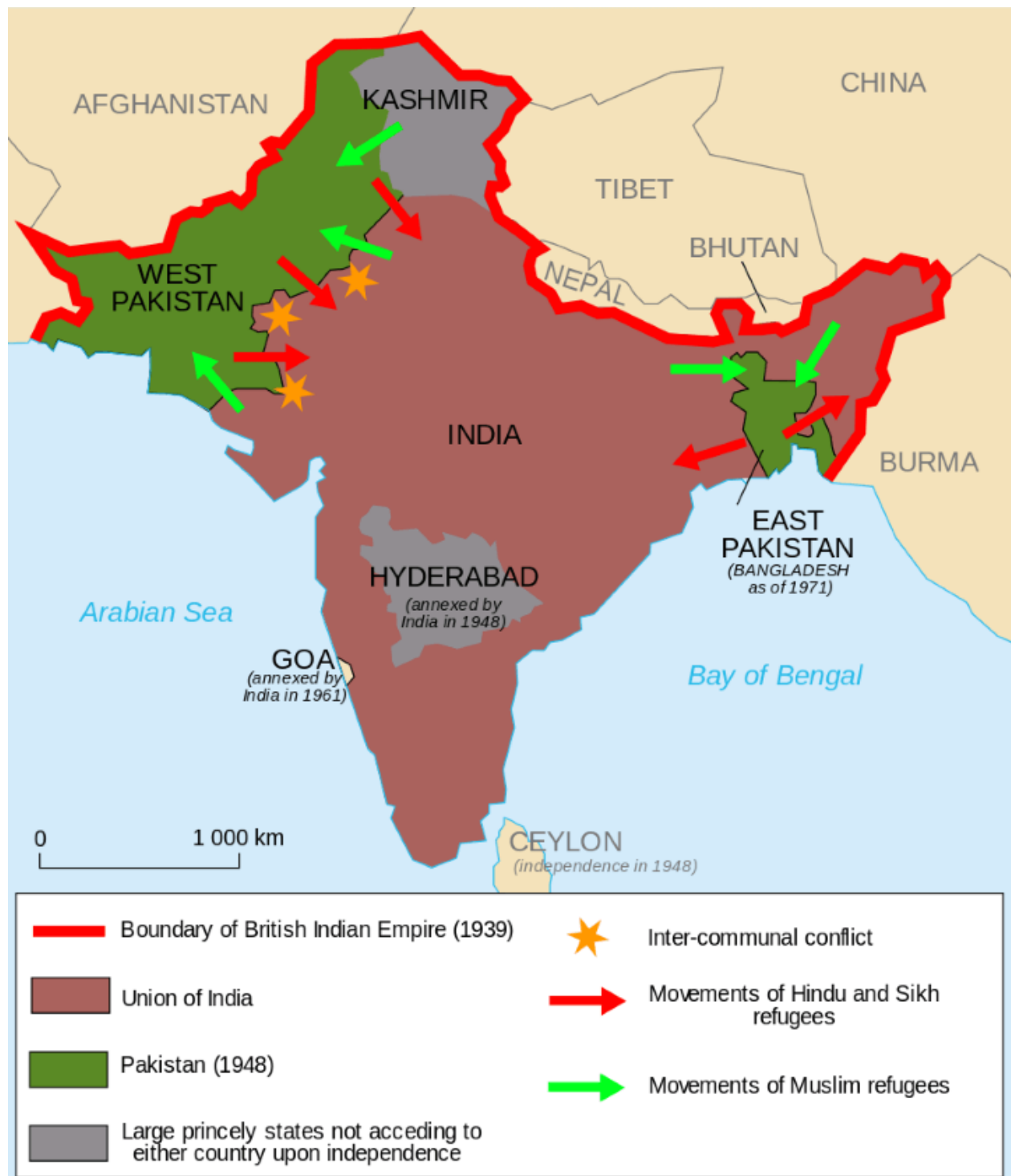
- 1) India attains Freedom at Midnight. Millions of people were displaced due to the partition of India and Pakistan. The British split the country into a Muslim-majority Pakistan (east and west) and a Hindu-majority India. Scores of people died due to religious and sectarian violence. Soon after the independence Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, was assassinated. Many world leaders, including Winston Churchill, expressed their doubts about India's capabilities to govern itself.
- 2) When the British left India, there were 565 Princely States who were not part of the independent Indian Government; more than a quarter of the Indian population lived in those states. Many of them wanted to chart their paths. Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, was tasked to bring all those states under a single government. Using negotiations, coercion, and military force, Sardar Patel successfully brought all those 'independent' states under the central government.
- 3) Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime minister and he was met with challenges of war with Pakistan over Kashmir and keeping the Indian Democracy together from various factions.
- 4) At the time of Independence India was a starving country of 350 million people and the PL480 food and financial aid from the US helped India through those tough times. India also embarked on the Green Revolution, her successful endeavor, to grow its agricultural economy and become self-sufficient in food production.
- 5) The India versus Pakistan war escalated in the 1970s with the United States Nixon administration supporting Pakistan. India was supported by the Soviet Union. India won that war decisively and a new nation of Bangladesh was formed with Pakistan splitting into two countries. This was a period of difficult relationship with the US.
- 6) India's relationship with the US improved in the 1980s, and India remained a vibrant democracy, though sometimes had chaotic coalitions. Economically India was still behind even though it became self-sufficient in food production, and had created marquis educational institutions such as the IITs, IIMs, and AIIMSS.



- 7) A remarkable Balance of Payment crisis ensued in India in the early 1990s, which resulted in many economic reforms. This became a boon in hindsight, and slowly India started faster economic growth and became a regional industrial power.



*India Post Independence Princely States*



*India-Pakistan Partition*





*India: Linguistic State Boundaries*

# **LIBERALIZATION OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY IN THE 1990S - THE PIVOTAL DECADE FOR US-INDIA RELATIONSHIPS**

**Dr. Prabhakar Chitrapu**

This topic was covered under two parts, namely:

- 1) Liberalization of Indian Economy in the 1990s and
- 2) US-India Policies before, during, and after India's Economic Reforms in the 1990s.

India experienced a financial crisis at the end of the 1980s. The fundamental reasons for this crisis were (1) Increasing fiscal deficit, (2) increasing foreign debt and (3) depleting foreign exchange reserves. Specifically, at the end of the 80s, the fiscal deficit was around 12% of the national GDP, the foreign debt was over 30% of the GNI (Gross National Income) and the foreign exchange reserves fell to about \$2B.

There were both external and internal reasons that caused the crisis. The external factors included the fall of the Soviet bloc (with whom India had enjoyed good trade relationships), the Gulf War which decimated the economies of Iraq & Kuwait (from which countries India imported oil), and the downgrading of the Indian bond rating by Moody's.

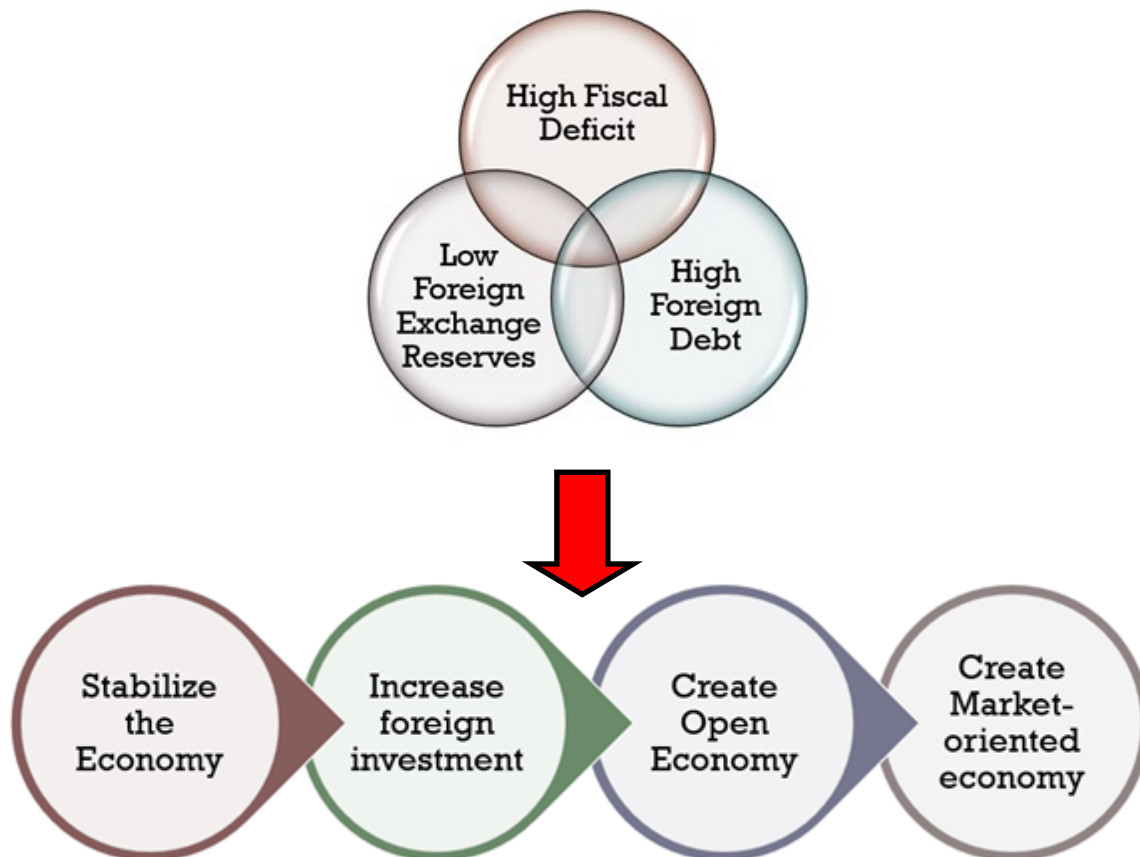
There were severe consequences of the financial crisis, including decreased value of the Indian Rupee (by some 25%), higher inflation and higher unemployment.

The crisis was averted, in part, due to international assistance, which included IMF and World Bank. Specifically, IMF provided a \$2.1B loan, whereas the World Bank gave \$0.5B loan, against a collateral of 67 tons of gold that was shipped to the Bank of England & Union Bank of Switzerland! Both IMF & World Bank also provided administrative assistance to the Government, while also putting several conditions in place.

The Indian Government, in turn, put in place progressive economic reforms, which included deregulation of the economy, privatization of state-owned enterprises, trade liberalization, financial sector reform & labor market reform. The main architects of these reforms were the then Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, and the then Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

These reforms yielded many social benefits namely, they stabilized the economy, increased foreign investment, created an open economy, and created a market-oriented economy. This resulted in the GDP growing at rates between about 4 to 8% during the 1990s and poverty decreasing from about 60% in 1981 to about 10% in 2017. Direct foreign investments in India rose from \$1.3B in 1991 to \$10B in 2000.

## Transformation of the Indian Economy in the 1990s



P.V. Narasimha Rao  
Prime Minister

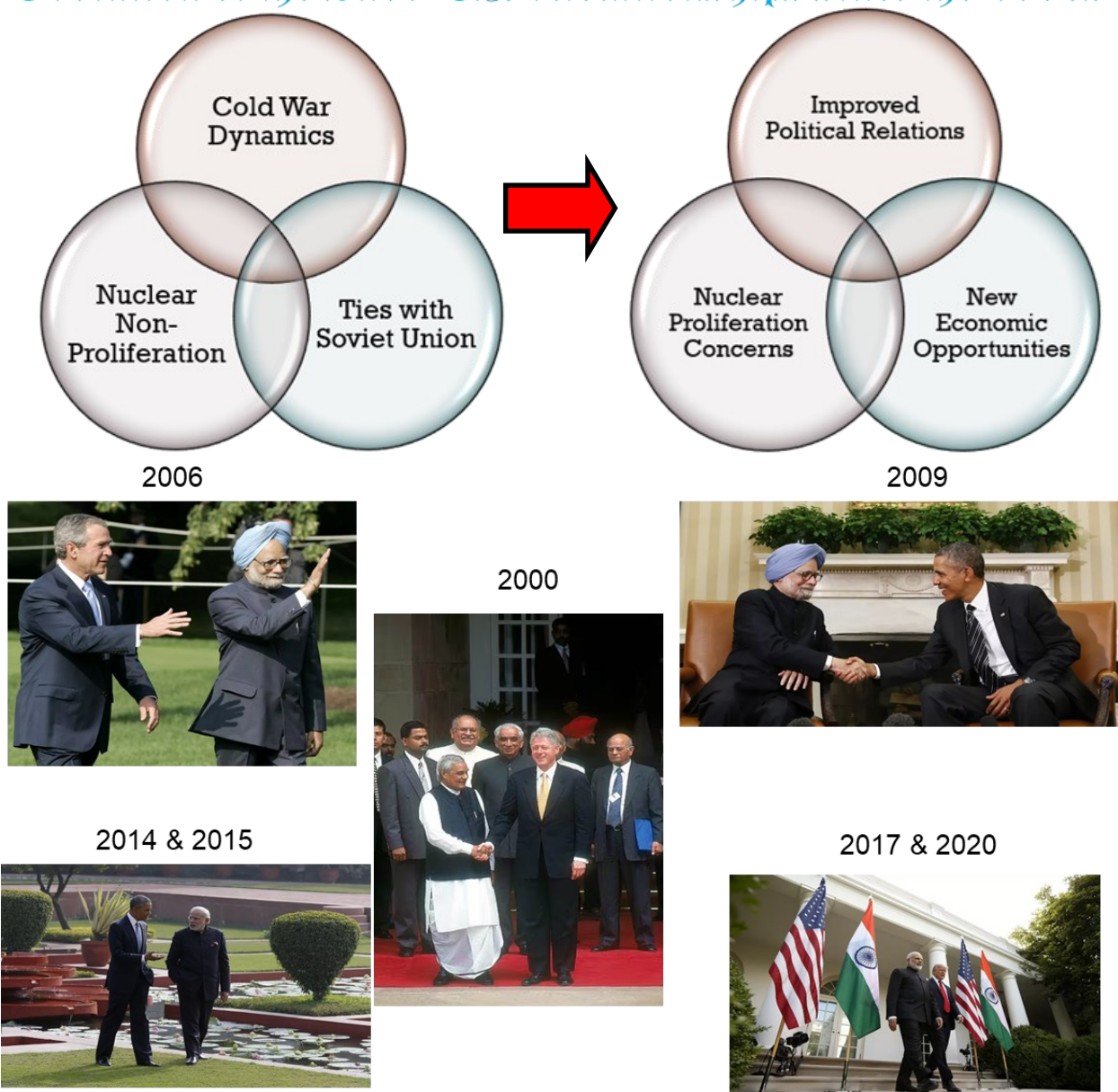


Manmohan Singh  
Finance Minister



The next part of the presentation focused on how the above changes impacted the US-India policies towards each other. Before the 1990s, the US policy was driven by cold war dynamics, ties with Soviet Union, and nuclear non-proliferation. These changed in the 1990s to improve political relations, new economic opportunities and nuclear proliferation concerns.

## Evolution of the Indo-US Relationships since the 1990s

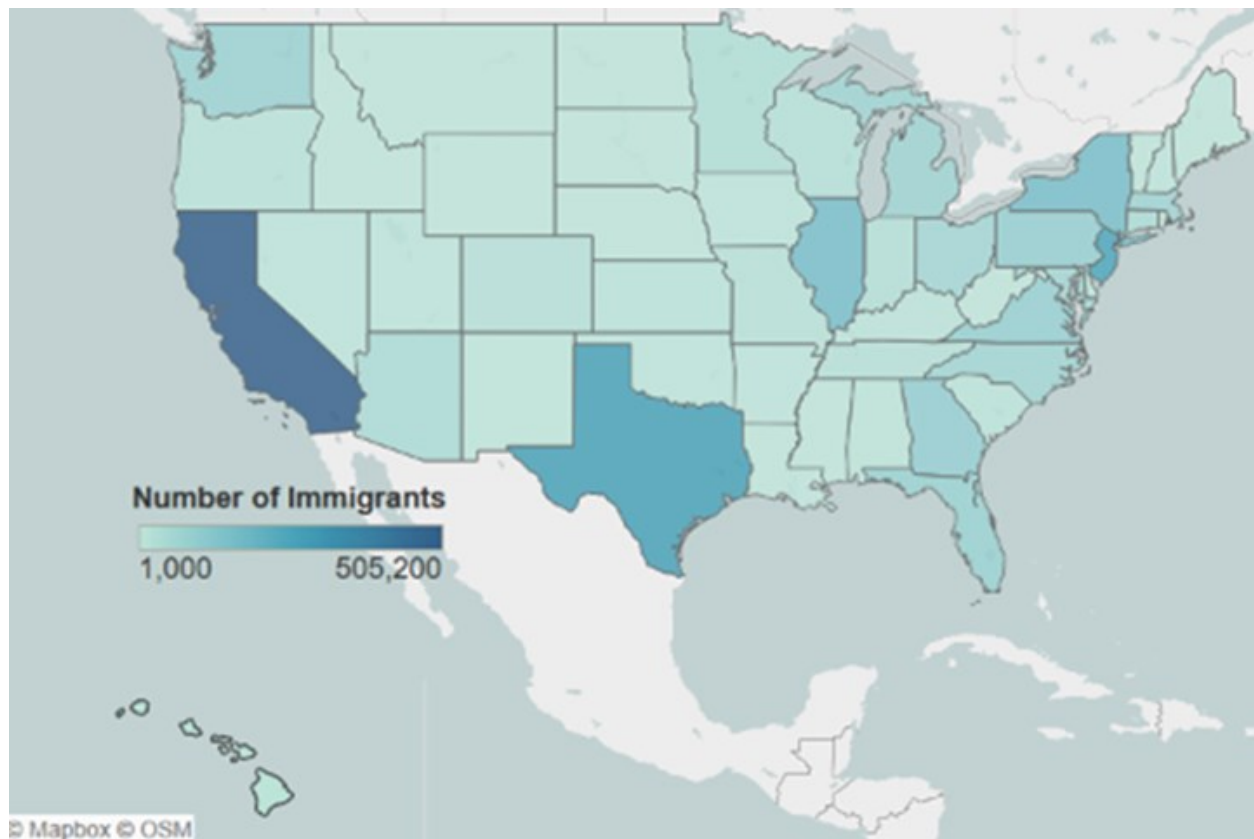


Overall, the economic reforms of the 1990s in India played a pivotal role in reshaping the US-India relationship. Economic liberalization opened up new avenues for cooperation and paved the way for the development of a stronger and more multifaceted partnership between the two nations.

## BRAIN DRAIN: HUMAN CAPITAL FLIGHT – INDIA TO U.S:

**Dr. Pallavi Chitturi**

Large-scale immigration of Indians to the US is relatively recent. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, immigration was confined to predominantly low-skilled migrant workers. Post-WWII Indian migrants came for professional jobs, and studied in U.S. universities. In 1965, the US Congress abolished the national-origin quotas that were largely limited to Europe, and with that there was an increase in immigration from India to the US. Today, Indians represent the 2nd largest immigrant group, after Mexicans, ahead of Chinese & and Filipinos. Currently, most Indians arrive through education, employment, or family-based pathways and represent the 2nd largest number of international students enrolled in U.S. higher education. The top states of Indian immigrants in the US and, the concentration of Indians in various areas of the US including their age and employment were also discussed at length.



*Top states of Residence for Indian immigrants in the US*



The key points leading to brain drain from India were attributed to the following reasons:

- Lure of better job opportunities and higher salaries.
- US has a more favorable environment for innovation and entrepreneurship
- Lack of opportunities for professional growth and advancement in India
- Desire to escape corruption

The contributions of immigrants and benefits to the US were expounded by examples of individuals of Indian origin who have contributed significantly to the US economy, science, and technology sectors and helped diversify the US population and culture. Immigrant Indians are well-represented in the US scientific community as seen by several Indian-born Nobel laureates in the US. Indian immigrants such as Sundar Pichai, Satya Nadella, Indira Nooyi, Ajay Banga, etc. are either founders or co-founders or heads of many successful companies.

While immigrants can contribute to increased annual remittance to India, India has also paid a price for such action in that they have lost skilled and talented workers hampering India's economic development. As a result, it has been difficult for India to compete in the global economy having had to depend on domestic entrepreneurs and workers to a greater extent. The level of innovation required to launch the country into higher economic growth can only be acquired if more of the best Indian minds choose to return.

Since the dot.com crash era, we have also witnessed a reverse brain-drain phenomenon. Two factors may have contributed to many IT experts being forced to return to India – 1) due to loss of jobs (2000 – 2002) and 2) security concerns in the post-9/11 period when Indians were discriminated against, often mistaken for Arabs (2001). Some have desires to return to their roots to enjoy a more family-oriented lifestyle. However, at large, that higher standard of living and progressive work culture in the US continue to attract Indians to this country.

## **INDO-US RELATIONSHIP IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY:**

**Dr. Uma Prabhakar**

Since India's independence, ties with the United States weathered the Cold War—era distrust and estrangement over India's nuclear program. During this period, relations with the US were strained at times due to India's perceived closeness to the USSR and the US's closeness to Pakistan. While India maintained its policy of non-alignment to remain neutral, she continued to receive economic/military aid from both the USA and Russia.

The transforming nature of the Indo-US relationship from tactical to strategic occurred in the 2000s'. The strengthening efforts included improvements in political and diplomatic ties, economic cooperation, and defense and security collaborations.

Further, improvements in political and diplomatic ties marked by frequent high-level visits and exchanges between the two countries led to 1) economic cooperation including increased trade and investment flows in technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, and, bilateral trade agreements and negotiations, 2) defense and security collaborations accentuated by increased defense agreements, military cooperation, counterterrorism efforts (intelligence sharing and joint military exercises, and defense technology transfers) and, 3) bidirectional economic activities resulting in trade between both countries doubling over the past decade to more than \$191 billion and Indian firms investing over \$2 B in manufacturing in the US. The presentation included several examples for each of these topics.

Since her independence over 75 years ago, India has come a long way in becoming the largest electorate in the world, the 5<sup>th</sup> biggest economy (surpassing the UK which is in 6<sup>th</sup> place), boasting a 600-fold increase in exports and 335-fold increase in foreign exchange reserves and a 6-fold increase in food grain production.

## India is the largest democracy in the world

There are 91.2 crore eligible voters

Registered electors (in crores) Total population (in crores)



**TOI** India@75: Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav | 2021 Census data not available •  
Source: Election Commission

*India ranks as the 5th largest economy in the world. (Source IMF)*

2023 marked yet another significant year of strong and bipartisan support between the two countries; the two world leaders, Mr. Narendra Modi – India’s Prime Minister, and Mr. Joseph Biden, the President of the US have visited each other’s countries and pledged collaboration on nearly many human endeavors. At the recent G-20 Summit held in New Delhi, the two leaders furthered their consolidation and deepening of trust between the two countries.

# **THE IMPACT OF INDIAN ARTS AND CULTURE ON THE WESTERN WORLD**

## **Dr. Dinakar Subramanian**

The impact of Indian arts and culture on the Western world was enabled mainly by these avenues:

- 1) Through immigration out of India to the West.
- 2) Westerners traveling to India for discovery.
- 3) Native Indians showcasing their skills at all corners of the world.

Immigration caused the growth of the Indian diaspora in many corners of the USA through involvement in universities (graduate school, faculty appointments) and through the start of businesses that supported the Indian diaspora.

Families, localities, and interactions grew which resulted in the blossoming of arts organizations, temples, and places of worship.

The rise of counterculture in the 1960s also resulted in religious practitioners establishing spiritual centers. Yoga, Ayurveda, and other disciplines spread.

The growth of arts organizations spurred a significant exchange of artists including musicians and dancers and many US universities have established colleges and courses related to Indian languages and art. US audiences have no dearth of choices in Indian music and dance performances.



Children of immigrants from the latter half of the 20th century are now part of the college culture that includes a fusion of Indian arts and culture into the mainstream of college extracurriculars.

Famous Indians drew thinkers from all over the world. India's freedom struggle especially influenced many such visitors to make changes in their sphere of influence.

Indian culture in terms of books, Bollywood, and cuisine is easily available and essentially is part of daily life.



*Temple hall collection exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.*

*Photo courtesy from the PMA website*

In summary, the influence of Indian 'things' can be seen everywhere.