

From New Haven to New Delhi:

Globalization and its Human Scale

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by Josiah H. Brown '88

WHEN PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH traveled to India in March, my wife was there too, visiting relatives with our daughter. Our family's continuing journey—New Haven to New Delhi, and vice versa—reflects the human scale of globalization. Our experience also hints at America's most important emerging ally: the dynamic democracy of India.

Controversy over nuclear energy and outsourcing should not obscure other dimensions of India and its evolving relationship with the U.S. As Bush declared, "The United States and India ... are closer than ever before, and the partnership between our free nations has the power to transform the world."

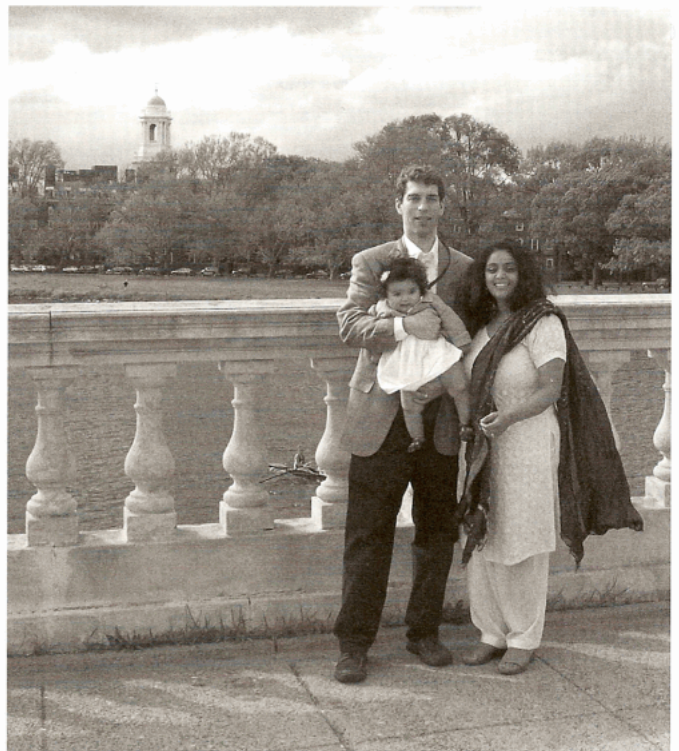
India figures centrally in issues from commerce to global warming, national security, and the future of the United Nations. The country has tremendous human assets as well as formidable problems. The U.S. National Academies identify India, like China, as a huge source of talent in math, science, and engineering. Companies including Microsoft, Dow, and IBM are locating research and development labs in India. General Electric alone expects annual revenues from India to swell from \$1 billion to \$8 billion by 2010. The middle class is estimated to be 250 to 300 million people.

Yet this middle class remains vastly outnumbered by the working class and poor, urban and rural. Caste persists. There are enormous differences according to region and political party.

These complexities, and stresses between the modern and pre-modern, are increasing. Decades ago, Jawaharlal Nehru called his nation "a geographical and economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads." Beyond residual poverty, severe troubles include corruption, gender inequality, environmental degradation, and public health. Half of India's children are malnourished, despite agricultural gains. Thirty percent of men, and 50 percent of women, are illiterate. Five million Indians have HIV.

What V.S. Naipul has termed "the torrent of India" defies easy description. Predominantly Hindu, India has a Muslim population larger than Iran's, Iraq's, and Saudi Arabia's combined. There are more Indians under age 15 than Americans overall.

In a Yale lecture last year, Finance Minister Chidambaram



Josiah H. Brown '88 with his wife, Sabar Usmani-Brown, and daughter, Athena Usmani Brown.

asserted, "We lived the multicultural society before the phrase was invented." Besides Hindi and English, 14 official languages are spoken. The Hindu nationalist government fell two years ago in favor of the Congress Party. Prime Minister Singh is Sikh, President Kalam a Muslim.

With each passing day, there are disturbing developments. Violence between extremist Hindus and Muslims has flared, notably in Gujarat and Ayodhya. The radical Islamist Deobandi sect originated in India, and the mostly peaceful mass protests against Bush's visit turned violent in Lucknow, where Muslim-Hindu tensions were a factor. Bombings in Mumbai and Varanasi heighten concerns over the festering Kashmir conflict. To the east, Maoist militants launch terrorist attacks.

Still, this nation of more than a billion souls exhibits remarkable coexistence and moderation of religious practices.

India's geopolitical position and democratic vigor make it more than merely a market for, or supplier of, goods and services. Like China, India is reassuming its historic place among the most powerful civilizations

Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu murdered by an extremist of that faith, died to uphold this ideal: "Indian culture is neither Hindu, Islamic, nor any other, wholly. It is a fusion of all."

Bush and Singh addressed large economic and geopolitical forces. But individuals propel as well as ride these forces—whether the issue is jobs, study abroad, or migration.

Global integration, with India in particular, is personal for my family. My wife and I married in 2004, with receptions in New Delhi and New Haven. She had come to Yale as a post-doctoral researcher in epidemiology and public health. Her family is Muslim, and our baby daughter is a U.S. citizen. Later in 2004, my brother married a woman he met in Lucknow; her family is Hindu.

The first surge in globalization, beginning in the late 19th century, brought waves of immigration to the U.S.—and jingoistic measures such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and Immigration Act of 1924, racist laws designed to favor immigrants from northern and western Europe.

Indians began arriving in large numbers after immigration laws changed in 1965, eliminating racial criteria and advantaging sought-after skills, and again in 1986. The population of Indians and Indian Americans in the U.S. has doubled each decade, growing from 400,000 in 1980 to two million today.

The generally positive experiences of Indians in the U.S. contribute to their esteem for this country. A 2005 Pew Global Attitudes survey revealed 38 percent of Indians regarded the U.S. as their top choice if they had "to recommend one country where to go to lead a good life"—versus 10 percent of Chinese, six percent of British, five percent of French and Pakistanis, and two percent of Indonesians. A survey by the Indian weekly *Outlook* yielded mixed results: most Indians thought the U.S. "a bully" even as they called Bush "a friend of India."

Americans and Indians have much to gain from deeper relations, despite areas of geopolitical risk and economic dislocation. U.S. investment in domestic policies including wage and health insurance and education would make Americans more secure in facing competition from India and elsewhere. American students also should work harder, while welcoming Indian classmates. Already, 80,000 Indians are among the half million foreign nationals studying at American universities. Though India ranks first in this respect, it lags well behind China and Korea in the number of postgraduate scholars it sends to U.S. universities.

Further easing barriers to Indians looking to study, work, and live in the U.S.—and encouraging additional Americans to visit India, as business students are beginning to do—would

help to fuse our nations' and peoples' interests. Cooperating on energy conservation and health technologies would improve lives, stimulate jobs, and benefit the environment. Granting New Delhi a permanent seat on the Security Council would make the U.N. more viable. In exchange for civilian nuclear collaboration, India should cap military nuclear production. It should exercise its leverage with dictatorial regimes, such as Myanmar and Syria, to foster open government and human rights.

Time and safety concerns prevented Bush from interacting with many Indians outside rarefied settings. He missed the Taj Mahal, the majestic 17th century tomb in Agra. In Sikandra he might have toured the tomb of Akbar, a Mughal ruler tolerant of various religions and cultures. Back in Delhi, Bush could have dined at Karim, a legendary restaurant in a Muslim neighborhood of densely packed shops and street vendors.

Globalization is not just an economic or political phenomenon; it is a cultural and personal one. A happy consequence and cushion of globalization—between India and the U.S. and among other nations—will be more global families. Call this intimate diplomacy. Countries including the U.S. and Canada have long thrived on immigration. Further knitting together the world's continents and citizens should be our aim. As historian Charles C. Mann notes: "Few things are more sublime or characteristically human than the cross-fertilization of cultures."

I first became interested in India 15 years ago while researching Chester Bowles, a former Connecticut governor and congressman who was twice U.S. ambassador to that country during the 1950s and '60s.

Most striking during a trip to India last year were the stark juxtapositions of its high-tech and low-tech economies, vividly illustrating both potential and poverty. On Delhi's streets, new Toyotas and cell phone ads share space with pedestrians, rickshaws, goats, and cows. Commercial vehicles run on compressed natural gas while cooking oil, dung, and dust foul the air. Near the Escorts Heart Center, which offers acclaimed cardiac care to private patients, rag pickers haul heaps of salvaged cloth.

The lives of cabdrivers and cooks are intertwined with the lives of countrymen immersed in the global economy: people like Murali, who leads Indian operations for Merrill Lynch while his brother works for rival Morgan Stanley in New York; Pankaj, who is helping Wipro develop its hand-held computing business; and Raveesh, who works for Microsoft. Striving is almost universal in cities like Delhi, as in New York. I met one poor family in which the father, lacking a high

school education, works two jobs and expects his elementary school-age children to attend school six days a week and to study substantially outside of class in order to reach college.

Two weeks after Bush departed, my wife and daughter left New Delhi for New Haven. My parents-in-law will join us here before flying back to Delhi, where they live in the Muslim enclave around India's National Islamic University. Meanwhile, my brother and his wife shuttle between Lucknow and the U.S. Together, we're participating in the global exchange of people, ideas, culture, and love.

India is far from the only country with which the U.S. enjoys such reciprocity. But, along with China, it is the biggest.

As President Bush recognizes, India's geopolitical position and democratic vigor make it more than merely a market for, or supplier of, goods and services. Like China, India is reassuming its historic place among the most powerful civilizations.

Our planet faces acute challenges of war and peace, religious fanaticism, disease, inequality, and environmental danger. Americans and Indians and our respective institutions

must ensure that close cooperation as well as healthy competition characterize our relations. Ultimately, our dual democratic examples may beckon to China while tempering risks in Pakistan, Iran, and other countries with restive Muslim majorities currently denied free governments. While the variables are many and the tasks imposing, by fully engaging with India, we will greatly enhance our chances of success. ■

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