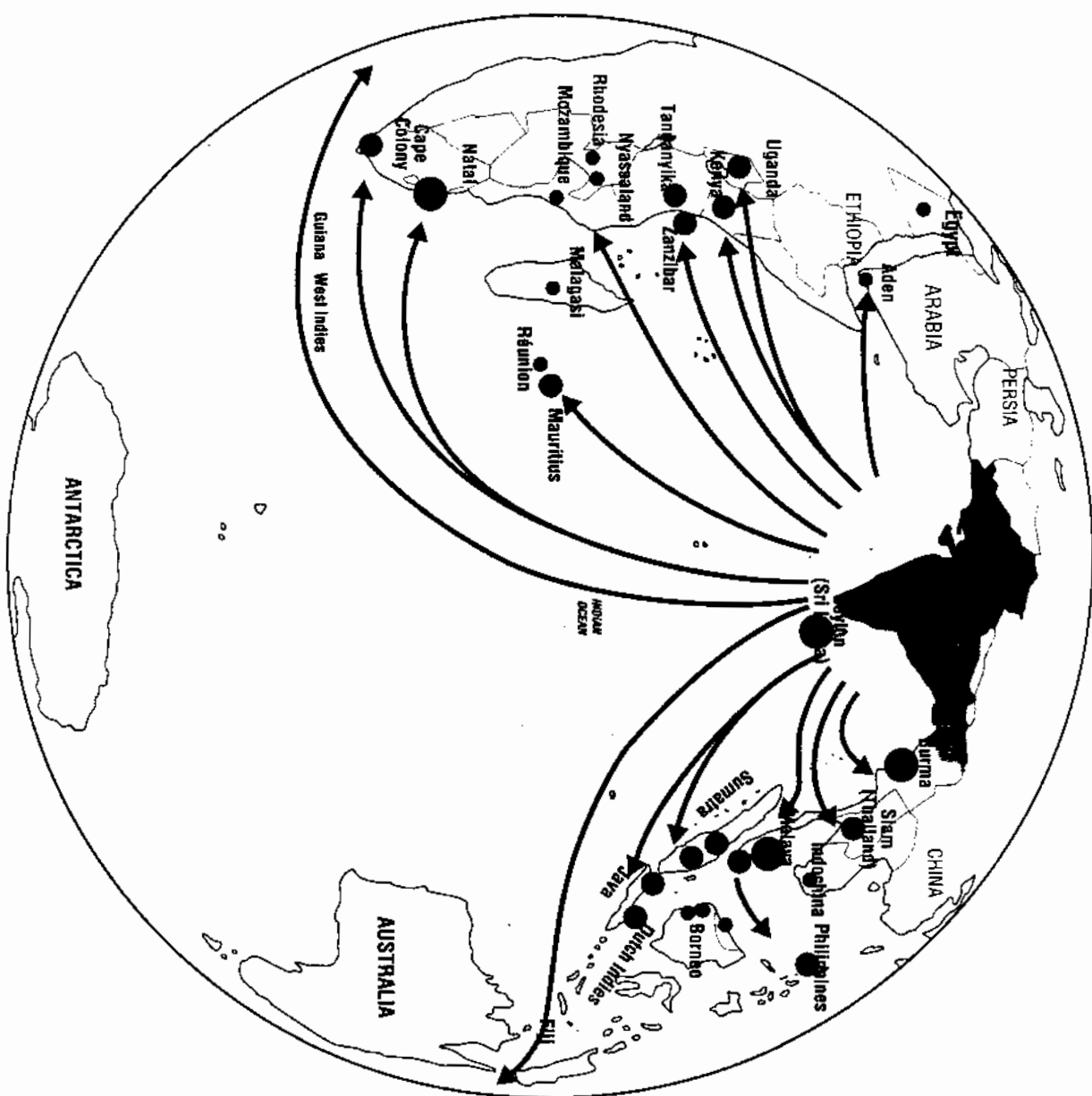


THE INDIAN DIASPORA



At the time of "British India" the term "Indian" referred to all ethnic groups on the subcontinent.

In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Britain built up the centerpiece of its empire in India. In 1947 it withdrew after deciding on partition between Muslims (Pakistan) and Hindus.

Modern Indian emigration originated with the abolition of slavery in 1833 in the British Empire. After a transition period, slaves, in the West Indies and elsewhere, became freemen in 1838. The effect in the islands where the slaves were used on plantations was immediate. In Mauritius, as in the West Indies, depression struck the sugar industry.

Indian emigration, which involved both Hindus and Muslims, who had been present in India since the sixteenth century, began in 1834, first in the Indian Ocean area. Between 1834 and 1837, seven thousand emigrants left Calcutta for Mauritius. Others went to British Guiana (1838), Trinidad (1844), Jamaica (1845), and Natal, in South Africa (1860).

In 1848, slavery was abolished in the French colonies and the planters on Réunion brought in labor from Pondicherry. By 1851 there were twenty-three thousand Indian workers in Réunion. Others went to Guadeloupe and French Guiana.

Conditions on the journey were extremely bad and mortality was high on both British and French boats. Within a few decades, there was a significant Indian presence in Natal (South Africa), Surinam, British Guiana, Trinidad, Réunion and Mauritius, Fiji (South Pacific), etc.

Famines and epidemics in India

	Number of deaths
1837	8,500,000
1861	13,300,000
1866	16,200,000
1874	17,750,000
1877	26,900,000

The indenture system, which was the name given to the type of contract used in this emigration, was based on work hiring for a given period, usually three to five years, in exchange for the price of the passage and a wage. On the expiration of the contract, the migrant worker had the choice of renewing his contract, seeking work in the host country, or returning home at the expense of the host country.

This system, instituted by the British authorities to prevent abuses, was nullified by employers' determination to make people sign contracts for the longest periods at the lowest wages. The emigrants were almost all male. The indenture system lasted until after the First World War.

THE INDIANS IN NORTH AMERICA

Around 1900, Indian emigrants, in very small numbers, began to arrive in North America, usually across the Pacific, to San Francisco and Vancouver. Canada¹ received seven thousand Indian migrants between 1900 and 1910.

Most immigrants came from the Punjab. Many of them had been civil servants in the British Empire; the Sikhs, many of whom had been in the police, went to North America via Singapore and Hong Kong.

In the United States, the Indians, like the Chinese and Japanese, worked in railway building, in sawmills, and as farm workers. In 1907 there were a thousand Indians in the United States. Immigration became significant only in the 1970s. By 1990 there were 680,000 Indians in the United States.

1. Among the other dominions, Australia remained closed until after the Second World War.

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Indian, mostly Tamil, emigration to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) dates from very early times and has continued in large numbers down to the present day. At the 1921 census, there were 1,400,000 Indians in Ceylon, almost all Tamils, out of a total population of 5.5 million.

In Burma at the same date, there were over a million Indians out of a total population of thirteen million. In Malaya, after the First World War, there were some 600,000 Indians. Mostly Tamils, the Indians who arrived in the third quarter of the nineteenth century worked in the rubber and sugar cane plantations as in the islands of the Indian Ocean or the West Indies. Indians began to arrive in Borneo (Indonesia) in 1860.

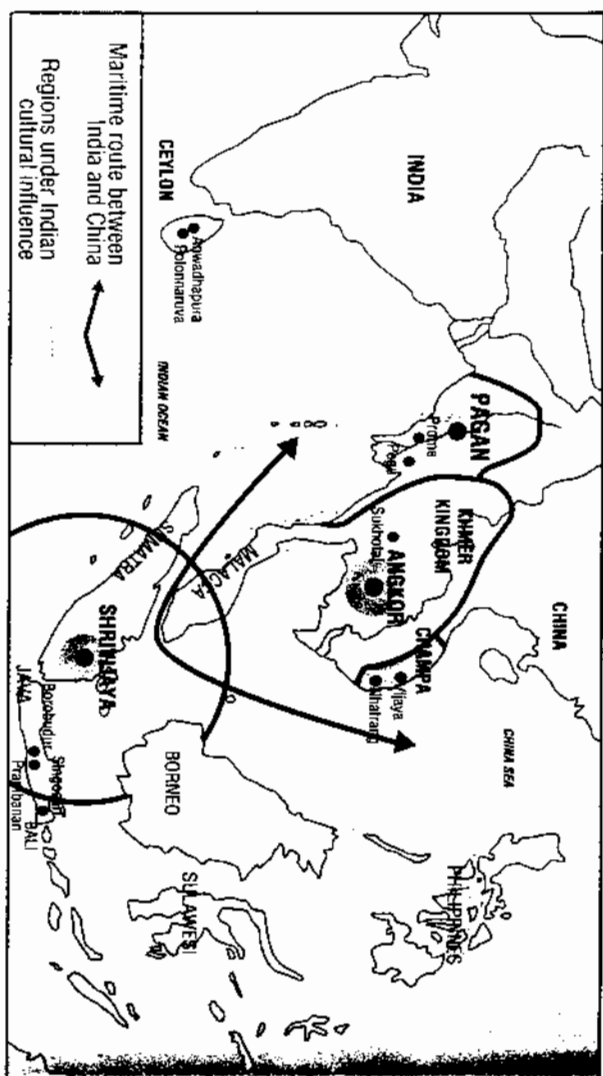
While the Indian diaspora of Tamil origin has maintained itself in Sri Lanka and even carved out a special status by force of arms, most of the Indians in Burma were expelled in the 1960s. In Thailand, Malaya, and Singapore, Indian colonies, often made up of Tamils, are still present, mostly in business. In the Indian Ocean, large colonies exist in Mauritius (over half the total population) and Réunion. The proportion of Indians in Madagascar remains small.

But outside Sri Lanka, Burma, and Malay Peninsula, where Indians were numerous during British colonial rule, the Indian presence has had little impact in southeast Asia since the penetration of Islam into that region of the world in the sixteenth century. At that time the Muslim Mughal dynasty established its dominion over almost the whole of India except for the southernmost tip.

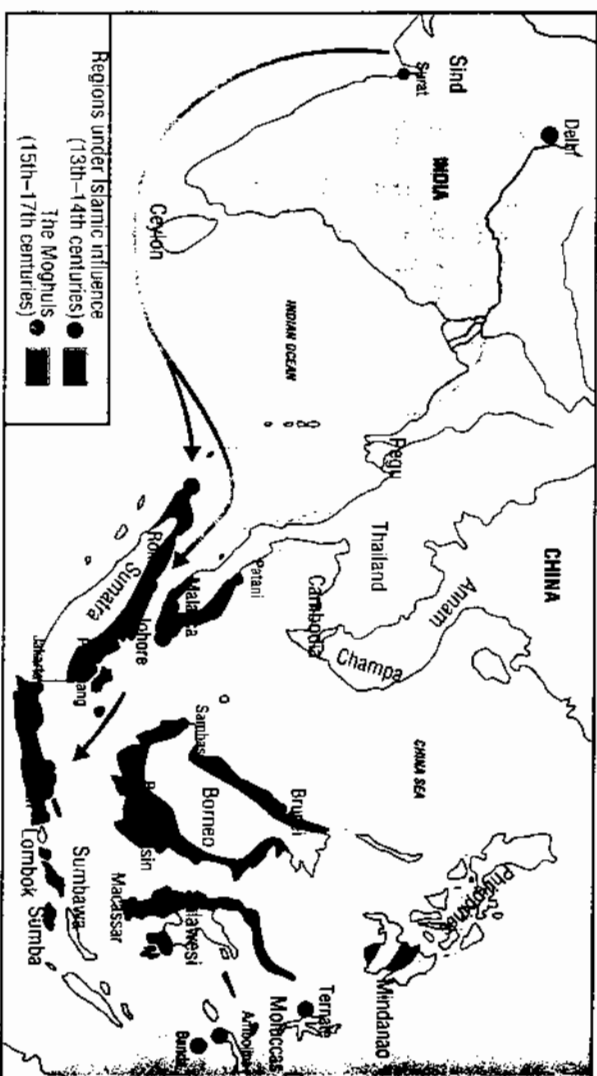
However, the cultural expansion of India in the remote past is still very much a living influence over a large part of southeast Asia, known as

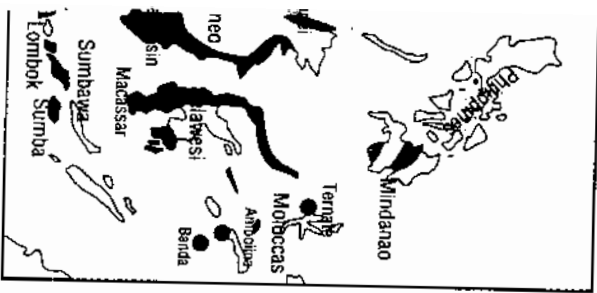
INDIAN EMIGRATION TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

HINDU ASIA ▶



THE ISLAMIZATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA ▶

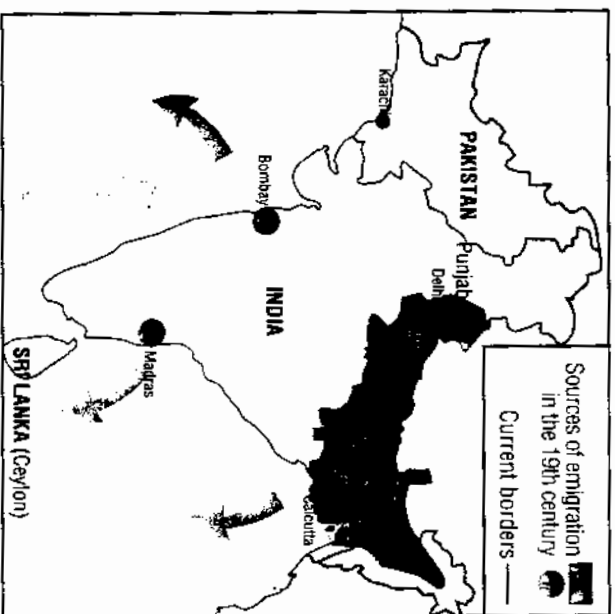




The Indians

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Hinduized Asia even though Islam has had a profound impact on several formerly Hinduized countries. India's direct or indirect influence through Hinduism and Buddhism is marked in Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Indonesia. In this last country, except in Bali, Islam has established supremacy.



▲ HOME AREAS OF INDIAN
EMIGRATION

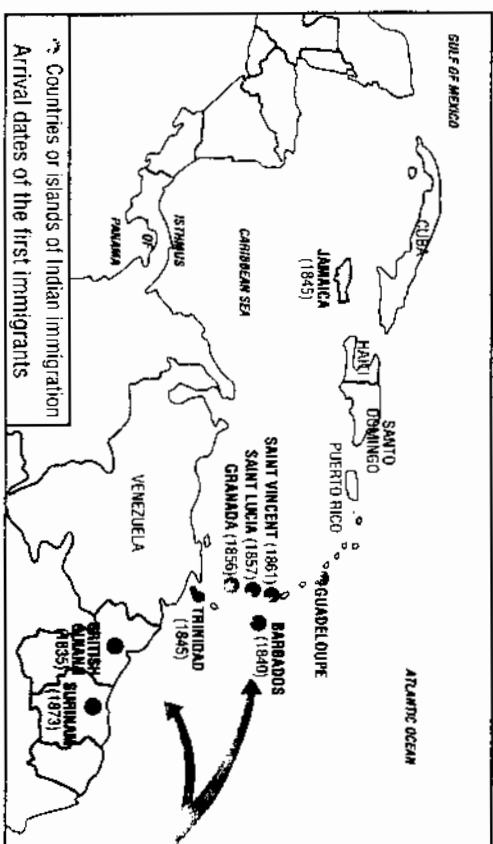
Estimate of the Indian diaspora on the eve of the Second World War

TOTAL	4 MILLION
Burma ¹	1,100,000
Malaya	750,000
Ceylon	800,000
Mauritius	300,000
South Africa	200,000
Kenya	50,000
Fiji	90,000
Uganda	20,000
Tanganyika	30,000
Zanzibar	8,000
Great Britain ²	20,000
Indonesia (Dutch)	
East Indies)	35,000
Western Europe	1,000
United States ³	6,000
West Indies: see table at right	

1. Most of the Indians in Burma were expelled in the 1960s.
2. Great Britain today has about 1.5 million Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and people from the former Indian empire.
3. The number of Indians in the United States is 680,000 (1990).

INDIANS IN THE WEST INDIES ►

	Total pop.	Indian pop.	Present since
British Guiana	337,000	150,000	1835
Jamaica	860,000	20,000	1845
Surinam (ex-Dutch Guiana)	165,000	40,000	1873
Trinidad	145,000	110,000	1844
In the Pacific (at the same date)			
Fiji	200,000	85,000	1877



It was not until 1910 that the British government introduced laws to put an end to emigration if the host country did not treat its migrants decently. At the time this concerned Natal (South Africa).

In 1911 the government of British India halted emigration to South Africa.

In South Africa itself protest movements appeared—for example the activity of the lawyer Gandhi from 1910 to 1914—to fight against the discrimination and treatment suffered by the Indians. The indenture system introduced in 1860 was challenged. It was in India during 1917 that Gandhi led a massively supported campaign against this system, which was abandoned in 1920.

At that time, in South Africa, out of a total population of 9.6 million, there were only 220,000 Indians. But in Natal there were as many Indians as whites (185,000).

There was a large Indian colony in east Africa and there was also a smaller Indian diaspora in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Madagascar.

In the course of the 1970s a policy of exclusion was imposed on the Indians, especially in Uganda. Most of those in the former British colonies of east Africa who held British passports moved to Britain.

THE INDIANS IN AFRICA

Indians in Africa (1920)

	Kenya	Tanganyika*
Total pop.	3,300,000	5,000,000
Indian pop.	42,000	23,500
European pop.	19,000	9,000
Total pop.	3,600,000	138,000
Indian pop.	20,000	15,000
European pop.	2,000	

*Tanganyika and Zanzibar now make up Tanzania.

THE SITUATION TODAY

The Indian diaspora, mostly by the second generation engaged in business, is made up of various ethnic groups (Punjabis, Gujaratis, Bengalis, etc.) and religious ones (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, etc.) who all belonged to the British Indian empire. Today it comprises some five or six million people.

Major changes have occurred in recent decades. Local nationalisms have eliminated the Indian trading minorities in Myanmar (Burma) and east Africa, especially Uganda.

Conversely, in Malaysia and Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, and the West Indies the Indian communities have put down roots and developed.

Since the sixties, migration has taken many inhabitants of the former Indian empire (Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India) to Britain. They number at least 1.5 million. The United States and Canada have taken in almost 800,000 Indians. And the number of Indians in the European Community is constantly rising. While the poorest social classes are represented, generally speaking, Indians are concentrated in the business sectors.