WHITHER ANGLO INDIANS?
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The author suggests that in the 21st century there will be no Anglo Indians. Instead there will be Indians, English, Canadians, Americans, Australians, etc., whose parents were Anglo Indians. He contends that the current generation of Anglo Indians - worldwide - is the last. The focus of Anglo-Indians should be on guiding their children into entering their host country’s mainstream at a high socio-economic level as possible. The article also addresses various approaches for achieving this objective.

WHERE ARE WE TODAY?
The last decade has seen a revival of the international Anglo Indian community. After migrating in several waves from India to the UK in the 50’s and 60’s, and to Canada and Australia in the 60’s and ‘70’s, the community got together in a series of International Anglo-Indian reunions. The reunions started in London, England in 1989, followed by Toronto, Canada in 1992 and most recently in Perth, Australia in 1995. Having attended all three, I feel that each reunion built on the one before, had larger audiences, more activities and involved more Anglo Indians. Hundreds of individuals and families found each other and revived friendships and associations. The reunions were very emotional as members of the community had long been separated from each other and from their culture. The reunions helped fill both these voids.

There is a fourth reunion planned for Bangalore, India in 1998, and future reunions are being planned, once every three years. The first immigrant generation of Anglo Indians in their 40’s and 50’s and 60’s are behind this movement and they are obviously deriving pleasure from meeting friends and from participating in events that reinforce some of their original culture - singing, dancing and eating their unique foods. For immigrants who generally lead lonely and somewhat isolated lives these
get-togethers are a source of personal fulfilment. We are gregarious beings and community best satisfies this need.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?
The reunions have generated money and the Canadian and Australian groups who ran the reunions have contributed to Anglo Indian social and educational groups in India. There has not been any concerted effort to plan the future of the community’s children - the next generation. This group is currently merging into the mainstream of the host country, individually, as best they can. Milton Gordon in a definitive study ‘ Assimilation in American Life” states: "The American born children of immigrants, the second generation, should be realistically viewed as a generation irreversibly on its way to virtually complete acculturation to native American cultural values at selected class levels". (italics mine). And further, in writing about helping immigrant children, Gordon says "the need to deal with the interconnected problems that the second generation child traditionally faces as a member of a minority group, subject to some degree of prejudice and discrimination, and as a person being socialized in the lower and underprivileged sector of the socio-economic environment"! Ann Lobo in a study on Anglo Indians in England (Lobo, 1989) and in another study on Anglo Indians in India (Lobo, 1994) concluded that these communities were not doing well economically and socially in their host country. She attributes this decline in status to their lack of educational qualifications. Adrian Gilbert in a study comparing the Australian Anglo Indians with the Australian concludes that the Anglo Indians in Australia are doing better than people of Australian decent and he attributes this to Anglo Indians being better qualified (Gilbert 1997). Regrettably no such study exists for Anglo Indians in Canada and America.

WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING?
The message is clear. If merging into the mainstream is inevitable, and if marginal communities generally merge at a lower socio-economic sector, then it is critical that community efforts should be made to guide the next generation to merge at as high a socio-economic level as possible. The assumption is that merging at a higher socio-economic level is better than merging at a lower one. This is a reasonable assumption as higher socio-economic levels provide better creature comforts and more importantly many life style options. The question then becomes "What is
needed for the Anglo Indian community to merge at a high socio-economic level? Before trying to answer this question it is essential to understand the global environment in which we live. In this last decade, industry and commerce has transcended most national barriers. We are all part of a worldwide community. In this process there has been a transition from a manual skill base to a technological knowledge base. Further, today, technology is reducing the middle class, who were a majority (60%) in bygone decades, to a much smaller group (20%). Well developed countries are going from an apple shaped social grouping (small upper and lower classes with a bulging middle class) to a pear shaped structure (small upper and middle classes and a large lower class). [Source US Census Bureau]. A comparatively few executives and technocrats make most of the decisions and the majority perform routine functions!

The middle class to which the Anglo Indian typically belonged is being squeezed down. There is less need for typical white collar jobs and blue collar jobs (for example telephone operators are extinct, as are the huge number of skilled workers in steel mills and secretaries are on their way to becoming extinct). Instead there has been a creation of large numbers of service jobs (restaurants, shop assistants, house and lawn maintenance etc.).

What qualifies a person to compete for the diminishing upper and middle class jobs? The answer is twofold:

1. Higher Education and
2. Ambition or aspirations

EDUCATION

In the USA it has been shown conclusively that the level of education is directly related to the level of income and hence the socio economic level. A 1993 study (Time Jan’95) of income and educational level is shown below;
Today (1997) the separation has grown even wider. So the first imperative for the community is to insist that the next generation gets a university education. This is not easy. The community continues to have a cultural block carried over from the British days that study and education is not OK? Muggers - those that studied - were denigrated. The short term need to earn a living often prevented the pursuit of a college degree. And there is always the problem of the cost of an education. The current Anglo Indian generation must focus more on the need for educating the next generation, providing funds and clearly establishing the value of such an education.

ASPIRATION
The community has traditionally aspired to professions at a middle class socio-economic level like Railroad drivers, supervisors, policemen, measurers etc. This limited aspiration may have been induced by two centuries of British rule and their imposition of a ceiling for Anglo Indians. Is it possible that this mental block still continues abroad? The next generation must not be content with earning enough to live and eat comfortably. This is not "doing well". In developed countries almost anyone above the poverty level can eat and live well. Food and Shelter are at the lowest rung of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Doing well is satisfying the fourth level of the hierarchy, viz. esteem and recognition, or the fifth level - self-actualization. Our youth must aspire to the higher levels of professionalism - doctors, engineers, executives, business owners, professors and so on. The current generation must encourage the next generation to have higher aspirations.

For both these efforts there is need for strong role models. In addition to admiring sports stars and military persons, we need to acknowledge and recognize our scholars, successful business persons and leaders in various fields of professional activity. We have a few representatives of these groups, but only a few and they are not well known - this is not one of the demonstrated values of the community!

And there is need for insistent parental influence on education and aspiration. In the USA there is existence proof of the success of these approaches in the form of a highly successful current generation of Indians and Orientals.
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It should be the vision of the current and last generation of Anglo Indians that the next generation is highly educated and motivated to merge into the host country’s mainstream at a high socio economic level. To this end future reunions and community groups should provide the resources and the leadership to effect this amalgamation. It is not too late.

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