Immigration and Integration Policy and the Formation of Indian Diaspora in Canada

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ABSTRACT: This paper links public policy and community formation. The pivotal concern is the dislocation and re-location of members of the community over a period of time. Diaspora is used as a discursive signifier for such community. The policies deliberated are those that form the fulcrum of Canada's immigration and integration policy. Qualitative field study on the Indian diasporic community is received from Montreal, Vancouver and Delhi. Analysis suggests that the Indian diaspora in Canada grow in strength using the social capital etched through ethnic networks and organizations. This in turn is possible due to the Canada's immigration (point system meant to test skill and adaptability of immigrants) and well as integration (multiculturalism) policies.

INTRODUCTION

Community, according to Bauman (2001), not only has meaning but also feeling. It aims to provide safety in an ever insecure world. In a world of unprecedented migration, the disruption of community ties looks like a logical first step. Thereafter, the stage of settlement and a process of forging necessary social ties are necessitated. This paper looks at the immigration and integration policies of Canada and the formation of Indian diasporic community there. Canada is a land of immigrants and people from India are one of the fastest ethno-cultural groups there. Canadian immigration policy through its point system tests the skill and adaptability of immigrants in its social milieu. Similarly, the integration championed by the policy of multiculturalism is intended to help the immigrants.

This paper has been developed from field work done in Canada among the Indian diasporic community. It centralizes public policy and community formation. The concern is the dislocation and re-location of members of the community. Diaspora is used as a discursive signifier for such community. The policies deliberated are those that form the fulcrum of Canada's immigration and integration policy. qualitative field study on the Indian diasporic community is received from Montreal, Vancouver, and Delhi. Analysis suggests that the Indian diaspora in Canada seems to grow in strength using the social capital etched through ethnic networks and organizations. This in turn is possible due to the Canada's immigration and well as integration policies.

Diaspora

Today 'diaspora' is an all-inclusive term and according to Vertovec ('99: xiv-xxvi) it is used to describe practically any population which is considered 'deterritorialised' or transnational i.e. whose cultural origins are said to have arisen in a land other than in which they are currently residing, and whose social, economic and political networks across the borders of nation-state or indeed span the

globe. It is an ancient word although it has been given modern flavor with the passage of time (Gilroy,'91). Like the people who inhabit the spaces designated by this term, it is a transient and travel term (Mishra,'95). It has traveled from the ancient period and has acquired different meanings.

It originates in the words for dispersion and was used to describe the Greek colonialisation of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the archaic period (800-600 BC). The word 'diaspora' essentially had a positive connotation although some displacement was due to poverty, over-population and interstate wars (Cohen,'95:6). The Jewish use of the term in the pre-modern period overlaid the benign meaning (Cohen,'95) and due to this the notion of diaspora has been colored with elements of forced exile, collective suffering and infinitely strong and binding sense of identity and a great nostalgia for the mother country (Lal, '96). The negative usage of the term has remained predominant over the common scholarly connotation in the modern period. The horrific slave trade followed by the quasi-forced indenture of the Indians, Japanese and Chinese or the harsh treatment of the Armenians by the nation-building Turks all conform to the notion of being 'victimized'.

In the post World War II era the term also denotes various groups that were previously described as exile groups, overseas communities, ethnic and racial minorities (Vertovec,'99). The boom in information technology has bridged the gap between diasporas (Patel, 2000) and the current period of globalization has enhanced the practical, economic and the affective role of diasporas (Cohen,'95). The tremendous boost in information technology and communication revolution has led to movement of people from one place to another across national boundaries and we have come from nation state to what Anderson ('91) terms 'imagined communities' and transnationalism. But one man's imagined community is another man's political prison (Appadurai, 2003:23). It is within this context that I set the Indian diaspora in general and those in Canada in particular.

THE INDIAN DIASPORA

Modern Indian diaspora throughout the world dates back from the third decade of the nineteenth century when mainly forced migration as indentured laborers under the British imperialism took place. Then, there has been twentieth century migration to the developed western countries, which has by and large been voluntary, industry, and commerce oriented and with more balanced sex ratio and education. There has also been twentieth century migration to West Asia but the law of the land does not permit them to become naturalized citizens (Jain,'89).

The Indian diaspora is the third largest and spread out in the world after the British and the Chinese. It is drawn from numerous different regions of the mother country, professes varied religion, lay claim to nearly dozens of castes and is involved in a wide range of occupations. They have managed to develop distinct identities, way of life and thought wherever they have settled. They carry 'little India' with them. Indian cinema, cuisine, cricket along with the internet facility has kept the Indian diaspora cemented together (Lal, 1993). Their mode of adaptation is marked by a clear preference for economic integration more than for cultural integration (Sharma,'89). They have also benefited from local ethnic networking, the power of shared identity and other associational activities.

With the exception of the Jews no other diasporic community has suffered as much harassment as he Indians. Their expulsion from Uganda under Adi Amin speaks volumes about it. Their experience of harassment and expulsion has got them into a habit of spreading out their investments and members of their families in different countries. As a result, Indian diasporic integration has gained momentum. Indian diaspora are beginning to build up social, economic, cultural and other ties with their counterparts in India and with other overseas communities (Parekh,'93).

The 20 million strong Indian diaspora is spread over many countries (Seth, 2001:12) and have significant economic and political presence in a number of them. If we look at the distribution of the Indian population (in percentage terms) in relation to other constituent groups in some of the countries where they are present in significant numbers, we find that they constitute 70 per cent in Mauritius, 50 per cent in Guyana, 48 per cent in Fiji, 35 per cent in Surinam, 23 per cent in Nepal and likewise (Parekh,'93:8). The Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (Government of India, 2000) points that in percentage term the Indian

diaspora constitute around 2.8 per cent of the total Canadian population. Although it is a small percentage but the Indian Diaspora is most rapidly growing ethno-cultural group in Canada (Buchignani,'89).

The majority of the community is from Punjab, although most of the principal linguistic and ethnic groups of India are represented in the Indo-Canadian population. A survey conducted in 1991 showed that 49 per cent of the Indo-Canadian was Sikhs, 24 per cent were Hindus and around 10 per cent were affiliated with other religions. The Indian diasporic community in Canada is highly urbanized and almost 90 per cent of them live in metropolitan areas, especially Toronto (capital of Ontario), Vancouver (capital of British Columbia), Montreal (the largest city in Quebec), Calgary and Edmonton[1]. The immigration of people from India to Canada has been due to the push factor operating in India (explain the push factor a little bit) and the pull generated in Canada (Jain,'93). The pull generated in Canada is largely reflected in the Canadian immigration policy, which is discussed in the next section.

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

An immigration policy is a screening mechanism and it reflects the 'will' and the vision of the nation (Walker,'92). Immigration policy is of vital importance to Canada because it is a land of immigrants. Although the objectives are never clearly articulated (Whitaker,'91), the fundamental goal is Canadian nation building. In the beginning of the century the emphasis was on settling the landscape and 'aliens' were welcome for agriculture and we had some Indians during that phase. The federal government also sought partnership with private sector and the encouragement of immigration was identified with the private interests of large companies. Behind the reliance on private capital was the classical economic theory that viewed labor as a factor of production, the movement of which should not be interfered with the state (Walker,'92). The presence of distinctive Asians led to furor against them and the new immigration act passed in 1906 shifted emphasis from earlier legislation to specify many more grounds for exclusion and strengthening the control mechanism. Amendments and legislations over the next dozen years widened their exclusionary authority. Discrimination was most notably based on nationality. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, created in 1920 commenced surveillance of ethnic organizations.

Whitaker ('91) reports that officially 28,000 persons were deported from Canada between 1930 to 1935. He argues that in 1933 one immigrant was deported for every three who entered the country. He also highlights the fact that actually Canada was running a kind of disguised guest-worker system (explain a little). Following large-scale immigration in times of economic expansion, deportation served as a stabilizing mechanism. The inter war years saw the emergence of large number of refugees but Canada kept its door closed to the desperate appeals. During the world wars II immigration almost stopped and racism reached its height against the Asians. After the war, due to internal public opinion and external pressures, Canada embarked on a sustained policy of immigration based upon the absorptive capacity of the economy and society. Mackenzie King made it clear that Canada had the right to select its future citizens, as it was important to maintain the character of the Canadian population.

In 1950 a new department of Government was created for Immigration and Citizenship. The importance of private sector declined and the absorptive capacity was debated. The welfare state social program emerged, which the new immigrants could avail and so the State was at the center of the immigration policy. By now the labor-intensive agricultural frontier in the west disappeared with the more mechanization of farms. The resource sector too became capital-intensive. The need for agricultural work was not expanding anymore and most of the post war immigration was largely urban, skilled laborers with business and professional qualifications and the government had agreed by now to this. The government also began to encourage sponsored immigrants (family class) and in between 1950s and the 1960s, sponsored immigrants represented about 37 per cent of the total immigrants (do you mean all immigrants or only Indian immigrants?). Federal officials viewed sponsored movement as a way of lowering the costs of the acclimatization and integration of the immigrants.

A major landmark was in 1962 that began the process of ending overt racist discrimination. By the

mid-1960s the great postwar boom was underway. In the expanding economy, more immigrants were needed but skilled labor, technical, and professional categories were especially required. The economic recovery of Europe had sharply reduced Canada's major source of skilled labor. Educated, skilled workers in large number could precisely be found in Asia, which was most unwelcome till now. In 1967 the point system[2] was established.

The trend of immigration thereafter showed a trend towards Asia and other Third world countries. Now selectivity was geared towards labor market needs and immigration was seen as an aspect of the employment market. In 1978 a new immigration act became law and it was more liberal and positive. Whitaker ('91) delineates that now immigration and administration was designed to promote demographic goals, enrich the cultural and social fabric of Canada[3].

The growing power of the provinces had become one of the striking features of the immigration policy in the late twentieth century. Ontario, with the largest number of immigrants settling in Canada, created a ministry of citizenship, including a multicultural branch, through a budget to promote the settlement and integration of immigrants. With allophones[4] readily taking up French learning, Quebec became a leading advocate for promoting immigration (Whitaker,'91).

The refugee crisis of the 1980s became a monster that threatened to engulf the positive immigration policy. The immigration bureaucracy to many self-selected immigrants and then came the Immigration Act with two bills in 1987. The adopted the fast-track method and pressures came from all directions against the government misadventure. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms enacted in 1982 stood by the side of the defenders. Notable here is the *Singh Vs the Ministry of Employment and Immigration* ruling. Pressure at this point also came from women immigrants against their discriminatory treatment at the hand of government immigration and citizenship programs (Whitaker,'91).

Another noteworthy point about the 1980s is that the growing visibility of non-white immigrants in major Canadian cities created anti-immigration backlash. But now the nativism lacked the institutional bases of the past. The overt racism had declined but covertly it was still present in job and housing market. One policy innovation in the 1980s was the business immigration program designed to attract and select entrepreneurs, who were required to establish business that would create and retain jobs. It was criticized for being anti-poor and many deserving but it attracted lot of people from Middle East and Asia, Hong Kong in particular.

It can be argued that the overt racism witnessed in the past was not visible in the election of immigrants in the 1990s (Whitaker,'91). This with Canada's declining fertility rate an aging population has led to large number of immigrants coming here. It must be pointed out that immigration constitutes more than half of the present population growth in Canada. Most of the immigrants now are coming from Asia. In the last few years China has been at the number position of being the supply source for immigrants followed by India.

The author sees the Canadian multicultural policy as epitomizing the 'will' of the nation for integration of the diaspora/immigrants/foreign aliens. Kymlica ('88) argues that the official Canadian multicultural policy has four aims: (1) to support the cultural development of ethnocultural groups; (2) to help members of ethnocultural groups overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society; (3) to promote creative encounters and interchange among all ethnocultural groups; (4) and to assist new Canadians in acquiring at least one Canada's official language.

He uses statistics data and makes it conspicuous that naturalization rates have increased since 1971 when multiculturalism was introduced. This is relevant because in Canada the economic incentive have lessened in the last 25 years. Canadian citizenship is not required to enter the labor market or to gain access to social benefits. Kymlicka ('98) deduces that the primary reason for immigrants to take up Canadian citizenship is that they identify with Canada and want to formalize their membership in Canadian society and participate in the political life of the country. If we look at political participation, we find that immigrants have shown no inclination to support ethnic-based political parties like Parti/Bloc Quebecois or the Confederation of Religious Party but have voted traditional national parties. Immigrants

seem to uphold Canada's basic liberal-democratic principles and are overwhelming supportive of, committed to protecting, the country's political structure.

Kymlicka points out that the most important form of immigrant integration is social and if we look at two indicators of societal integration, i.e. *official language acquisition and intermarriage rates*, we come to the inference that both have gone up since 1971. It must be pointed out that intermarriage is not a deliberate attempt of the government policy. It is an offshoot of the general socio-political environment created by multiculturalism. The increase in the rate of intermarriage shows that people in Canada feel comfortable living and interacting with members of other ethnic groups. He points out that if we look at the Canadian case in comparative perspective, we find that Canada fares better than most other countries. Kymlicka ('98) brings to our notice that in a 1997 survey, people in twenty countries were asked whether they agreed that 'different ethnic groups get along well there'. The percentage agreeing was far higher in Canada (75%) than in United States (58%) or France (51%).

Kymlicka ('98) puts forward that multi-culturalism needs to be understood as a response by ethno-cultural groups to the demands that the state imposes on them in its efforts to promote integration. He argues that the critics ignore this aspect and views multiculturalism in isolation. Multiculturalism to him is a seminal response by the liberal-democratic government in Canada and its greatest impact is on the 'societal culture' of the immigrants. Societal cultures in a liberal-democracy are inevitably pluralistic and encompass the aspirations of all the groups.

Nation-building projects are a fundamental, defining feature of modern democratic state and multiculturalism is a distinctive way of responding to state project of nation building in Canada. Multiculturalism involves accepting the principles of state-imposed integration but renegotiating the term of integration. Immigrants now more so in the past have accepted the assumption that their life-chances and, even more, those of their of their children will be bound up with participation in mainstream institutions operating in either English or French.

Multiculturalism has not replaced any of the broader panoply of government policies and structures that promotes societal integration. Immigrants are still required to learn to speak either English or French. Immigrants from the non-traditional source countries come to Canada and with an aim of replacing the existent socio-cultural practices but for integrating in the existing structure. They are not to be feared for being a national or territorial minority. At best multiculturalism provides a transitional institutional separateness as a fair deal for the immigrants to integrate. It is a response that Canada exerts on the immigrants to into common institutions.

Multiculturalism was introduced without any real idea of what it would mean, or any long-term strategy for its implementation. But it has undergone changes, adapting it to the needs and new challenges. It was introduced largely as a way of deflecting opposition to the apparent privileging of French and English that was implicit in the introduction of official bilingualism. Although it has come a long way and has seen many changes.

It is within this context that we see the formation of Indian diaspora in Canada. Immigrants in the last three years (1999-2001) from India have constituted 10 % of the total immigrants to Canada. Most immigrants from India come as sponsored immigrants and in this category their percentage is around 18 % in the last three years[5].

THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN CANADA

Indians began to move to Canada in significant numbers around 1875, mainly to build the Canadian Pacific railways (Parekh,'93:6). Migration to Canada in the early phase was mainly for manual labor. Initially the Indian diaspora was Punjabi-speaking, predominantly of the Sikh religion and mainly worked on the Canadian Railways being built during that period. Besides working on the railways, they also worked in the lumber industry.

This occurred under the British Imperialism when there was massive emigration of people from one part of the empire to another. Between 1904 and 1908, more than 5,000 Indian men landed in British Colombia out of which about 3,000 crossed into the United States. Of these nearly all had traveled as directly as possible from their villages, although a

small number had served in the Sikh regiments in the Far East. Most of them were non-literate and a few spoke English (Johnston,'84).

In 1907, the economy of British Columbia took a tumble and about 5000 white men were out of work in Vancouver alone. This at a time when oriental immigration continued to increase led to a series of events and white rioters drove 400 Indians mill workers out. What followed due to this and a number of other related events was the Canadian government coming up with strict measures against the people from India. Those who wanted to come to Canada were required to have $ 200 in their possession on arrival while European immigrants needed only $25. Importantly people from India were required to come by a continuous passage from the 'home' country. This was impossible because the steamship companies, on instruction from the government did not provide the service (Johnston,'84:7). As a consequence immigration of the people from India declined substantially.

Immigrants in the first phase had difficulty in adjusting in Canada — at work and in their logging, in their patterns of life as well as in language, culture and the attitude of the host population. Johnston ('84:8) argues that family life with children going to school and contacts with the neighborhood would have helped in adjustment, but Indian diaspora during this phase was predominantly male, who had come single to make money and enhance their family position in India. These immigrants formed an egalitarian community in which the strongest ties were those of kinship and village. Leadership was through the force of personality and initiative was random. The most important organization was the gurudwara management communities. To prevent the Canadian authorities from using vagrancy as an excuse to deport Sikhs, the organization looked after the unemployed ones. From 1910, the different organs of the gurudwara management committees led agitations against the immigration laws, raising funds to fight individual cases, and focused attention on the position of men settled in Canada who was unable to bring in their wives (Johnston,'84).

After World War I, the Canadian government changed its position on the admission of wives and children in response to the pressure from Britain, which argued that Canada's policy was damaging the British position in India. After 1918, Indian men settled in Canada were allowed to bring in their wives and children less than eighteen years. Yet very few women came during the early phase of migration to Canada. There were instance of few marriages between Sikh men and Canadian women (Johnston,'84). With little family life and the ageing Indian diasporic population, a permanent community of Indian diaspora in Canada could not develop in this phase.

By the early 1920s, six sawmills and two shingle mills in British Columbia were owned and operated by Sikhs. Some went into business as suppliers of fuel, bidding for waste wood and sawdust from sawmills and supplying to private homes. Some got involved in importing tea, and a few owned farms. The law of the land kept them away from employment in municipal or provincial government jobs, or any work with timber operation cutting on Crown land. They also could not obtain hand-logging licenses, were discouraged from obtaining commercial licenses and were excluded from craft unions (Johnston,'84).

The British Columbia provisional and municipal election act denied the Indian diasporic community the right to vote and it was only in 1930s that the C.C.F party took up the Asiatic cause. Attitude towards the Indian community also shifted more significantly in the aftermath of the Second World War as North Americans became more sensitive to charges of discrimination (Johnston,'84). The Indians along with the Chinese in British Columbia got the right to vote only in 1947. In 1951, Canada agreed to accept a token number of unsponsored immigrants, symbolically ending an era that begun in 1908.An annual quota was established for India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, over the sponsored category (Johnston,'84).

In late 1950s, the New Conservative government of John Diefenbar opened the immigration door a couple of more inches. The quota was increased to 300 in 1957 and remained in force until 1968 when the 'point system' was introduced. The proportion of people of Indian origin increased substantially in Canada with the relaxation in immigration rules and more so with the introduction of point system. Johnston ('84:14) points that between the census of 1961 and 1976, Canada's Indian origin population increased about 20 times.

Migration of Indians to Canada was no longer only from Punjab but also from other parts of India like Gujarat and Maharashtra. Not just from India but the Indian diasporas in places like Fiji, Mauritius, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania also moved in. Most of the Indo-Canadians are immigrants who have come to Canada since 1972 (Jain,'93). Once discriminatory barriers were removed the number of people coming from Indian increased substantially. The increase after 1973, when the right of visitors to apply for immigrant status was revoked, was due to an amnesty granted by the government to persons who were already in Canada but who had not yet appealed for immigrant status (D'Costa,'92). In 1978-82 there was a decline consistent with the decline of the total number of immigrants, followed by an increase in 1983-87.

The South Asians and Indian diaspora forms a significant proportion of the total South Asians in Canada. As already mentioned, the immigration in the last three years has been substantial. There is rising number of Indian immigrants in Canada during 1991-2001. The Indian immigrants to Canada are just after the Chinese immigrants.

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICY AND THE FORMATION OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA

During the early period Indian diaspora in Canada found total exclusion and remained at the bottom of the social/racial hierarchy. Immigration was almost banned for the Asians after the first decade and so there was less hostile atmosphere for those who had settled. Buchignani ('80) argues that due to less visibility and therefore hostile social atmosphere; there was some social and economic participation. He also points out that after 1947; there was an ideological shift about how other Canadians viewed them. Some rights and privileges were also given like the voting right to Indians in British Colombia in 1947.

The 1967 immigration process stood to disregard race, ethnicity, and nationality in the selection of immigrants. The overt discrimination against the Indian diaspora in Canada ended, as it was difficult for individuals or institutions to discriminate openly. But discrimination had not been totally eliminated. The government policy of multiculturalism has led the away to create a level-playing field for all immigrant/ethnic minorities in Canada. The earlier barriers have lessened to an extent. Accommodation by the host society and adaptation by the immigrants both play an important part in the formation of a diasporic community (Buchignani,'80). The policy of multiculturalism has sensitized the public sphere (Oberoi, 2003) and has served as both accommodating the Indian diaspora and helping them to adapt to the Canadian society.

Buchignani ('80) points out that all difficulties with regard to adaptation come from the perception that Indian diaspora have distinct cultural practices. They are perceived to have curried food with associated smell and use saris, turbans, and different footwear, different color sense, beards, long hair etc. Among linguistic etiquette, they are categorized different due to the use of distinct home language, different accent and speaking loudly. The individual experiencing these are minimal and it is more on the community level.

The Indians themselves operate at the level where they are unsure of their social identity. But the future prospects of adaptation of the Indian diaspora in Canada look bright. One obvious change that is emerging is that the Indian diaspora is being acculturated in the Canadian values and behavior. But the number of people coming from India and settling in Canada has varied with the Canadian immigration policy. The coming up of the multicultural policy for immigrant/ethnic minority integration was devised as a by-product of the Anglophone and Francophone tussle where the Anglophone managed to grant rights to all minority and not just the French.

Several government policies including that on multiculturalism has led to the integration of Indian diaspora in Canada. But those policies became necessary because of the large number of immigrants coming from different countries with varied cultural/ethnic diversity. The Indians along with others from Asia and other Third World countries were screened in the second half of the century when those from potential countries dried up. Not just the number but also the nature of immigrants from India has varied with the changing Canadian immigration policy.

The immigration policy has played the most significant role in the formation of Indian diaspora in Canada. During the initial phase the immigration policy was devised to attract the peasants and

therefore most migrants were from the peasant class. India and Canada are both under the British Commonwealth and the British pressure played an important role in shaping the attitude of the immigration bureaucracy in the middle of the last century. When the Canadian immigration policy became more positive from the late sixth and early seventh decade, large number of Indians has flocked to the Canada.

The Canadian pull for the professionals and entrepreneurs lured the Indians and presently we have sizeable number of professional of Indian origin. The Indians have used the sponsored immigration and most immigrants to Canada are due to this. Today, it must be reiterated most immigrants in the sponsored category come from India (CIC, 2002). With the increasing number of professional immigrants from the 1980s and the space provided in Canada, those from India have turned from proletarian to mobilized diaspora[6]. Motswani ('93) points out that the Indian diaspora are making valuable contributions in the field of medicine, engineering, business, law and even politics.

EPILOGUE

The Indian diaspora in Canada will be making their mark especially under the liberal policies. The social capital of the community with growing strength is something along which the community is growing to draw its strength. The youth of the community are groomed in the culture and values of the homeland and the spaces and opportunity provided by the policies of the host context in Canada. The Indian diasporic community keeps on various association using their social networks and social ties. The strength of these ties is the pivot around which the integration of the community in Canada depends. My field study informs me that effort of Government of India, especially after several reports like that of L. M. Singhvi, has initiated programs and policies which will keep the diaspora connected with the homeland and collaborate enthusiastically for the development of the homeland as well as their integration in the host milieu.

NOTES

1. Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora. Government of India 2000.
2. The point system was a systematic device in which points were allocated on the basis of level of education, special vocational preparation, experience, occupational demand, arranged employment, designated occupations, age, knowledge of English and French, personal suitability etc. A minimum of 70 out of 100 was necessary
3. The official policy of Multiculturalism was initiated in 1971 to help integrate immigrant/ethnic minority in Canada and it became an Act in 1988.
4. Immigrants whose mother tongue is neither English or French
5. Canadian Immigration and Citizenship.
6. Armstrong (1976) theorizes proletarian diaspora essentially as a disadvantaged product of the modernized politics and mobilized diaspora as an ethnic group that does not have a general status advantage, yet enjoys material advantages.

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