

# New lives link two worlds

**Our Shrinking Globe** | Modern travel and communications allow immigrants to retain business and personal contacts in one land while living in another

PRITHI YELAJA  
STAFF REPORTER

In a state-of-the-art office on Karve Rd. in Pune, India, a staff of 50 is troubleshooting Internet problems for clients thousands of kilometres away in Canada.

The Pune call centre is operated by Markham-based Pathway Communications, which outsources software and hardware services for hundreds of clients in Canada, from hospitals to banks.

"We're a Canadian company with roots in India. We see India as a huge opportunity," said Ashok Kalle, 51, owner of Pathway, which employs another 70 people in Markham and has quadrupled its revenues since relaunching in 2001.

## The distance between India and Canada is increasingly irrelevant for businesses

Kalle, who came to Canada from Mumbai in 1988 to work for American Express, is at the forefront of a wave of entrepreneurs capitalizing on India's growing economic potential.

That trend is set to explode over the next decade, said Joseph D'Cruz, a professor of international business at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. A Statistics Canada report projects a

South Asian population in Canada of 1.8 million by 2017.

In the years ahead, more Indian immigrants will develop businesses in Canada to link "the Indian production base for software and Internet-mediated services and customers in the U.S. and Canada," D'Cruz said.

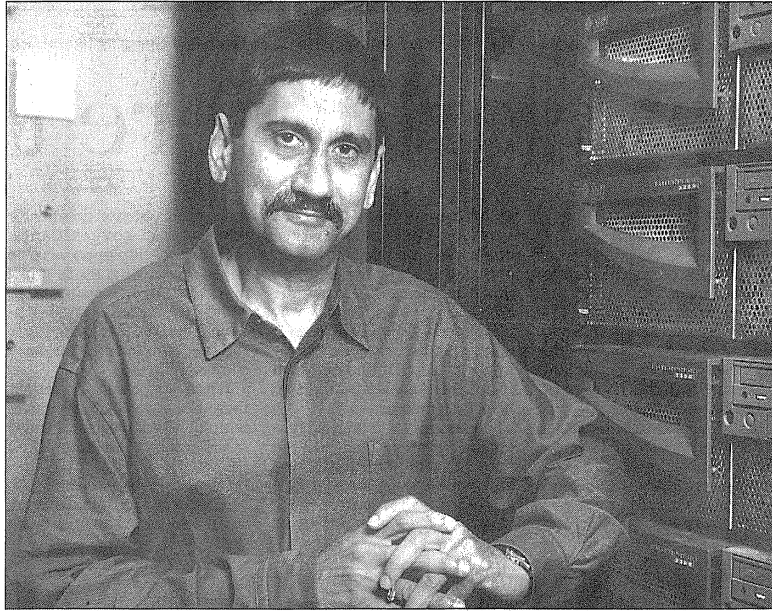
And, like Kalle — who considers himself a citizen of the world — these entrepreneurs will travel to and from India frequently. Such international mobility sets many of today's new Canadians apart from previous waves of immigrants, particularly those from Europe. They had the same emotional attachments, but did not have the practical wherewithal to maintain such strong ties to their homelands.

"The idea of a quick trip back was completely out of the question, but that's obviously changed," said Jeffrey Reitz, a professor of sociology at the

University of Toronto who specializes in immigration trends.

With global travel and communication faster and relatively cheaper than in the past, international ties are easier to maintain and stronger than ever.

"It means people consider themselves to be permanent migrants. People will make a move with a view toward ultimately returning to their homeland or moving on to another



TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

**Ashok Kalle, president of Markham-based Pathway Communications, provides computer services for hundreds of Canadian clients, from hospitals to banks, using a highly trained staff in Pune, India.**

country," meaning Canada might be just a stop on their journey, Reitz said.

The implications of this enhanced attachment to a homeland is the subject of much research and debate, he added.

The most commonly expressed downside is that immigrants will be less connected to Canada.

"Some think that intensified international linkages may slow the process of integration of immigrants into Canadian society because people may feel pro-

longed attachments to back home and therefore are less likely to be committed to their new country," Reitz said.

"Others say it makes it easier for people to become integrated into Canadian society because it's possible to do so without giving up those earlier attachments, so it's not so painful."

Moreover, these continuing attachments boost the business value of immigrants to Canadian corporations hoping to do business overseas.

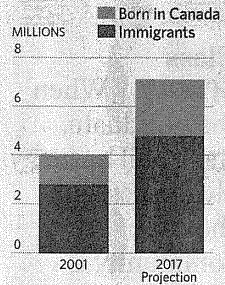
Roughly half of visible minor-

ities in Canada in 2017 will belong to two groups: South Asian and Chinese, according to the StatsCan report. However, the same trend likely won't hold true for links with China-based businesses because English isn't widely spoken there, D'Cruz said.

India, with its highly educated, English-speaking and relatively cheap workforce, is poised to become a world power in software, engineering and Internet-mediated services, providing everything from medical diagno-

## Visible, but very much Canadian

By 2017, an increasing proportion of visible minorities will be born here.



SOURCE: Statistics Canada

sis — reading X-rays and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scans — to accounting and financial analysis for clients in North America.

"There are fabulous opportunities for Canadians of Indian origin to participate in this," said D'Cruz.

A highly efficient communications infrastructure is key to developing India's potential.

"With communications that move with the speed of light using satellites and fibre optics, the distance between India and North America is completely irrelevant," said D'Cruz.

"It provides the ability, for example, for a client in Canada to issue instructions at the end of the day to an Indian subcontractor and have the Indians work on it while the client is sleeping at night here and next morning the product is available."