

**ABSTRACT**  
**THE JEWS OF INDIA**  
**PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

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When one looks at the history of Jews in India, questions arise concerning Indian history, Jewish history, and the broader history of minorities in Asia. How did a microscopic minority like the Indian Jews survive with key cultural features intact for at least one thousand years? What has been the community's history of intermarriage and conversion? What has been its experience with borrowing and blending of religious ritual? To what extent has religiosity been taken to extremes over and beyond the norms of other Diaspora communities, to preserve key elements of Jewish identity? How has Indian Jewry been affected by such modern intellectual and social movements within world Jewry as Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist Judaism; the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT); Zionism; and trends within Orthodox Judaism? Has antisemitism existed in India and affected Jews' desire to emigrate? How have state-to-state relations between the host country and the State of Israel affected the lives of Indian Jews and their desire to emigrate? What are the prospects for the survival of Indian Jewish identity into the twenty-first century?

Based on a summer of Fulbright-Hays sponsored research in many Indian-Jewish communities in 1989, plus two previous research trips, I am in the preliminary stages of grappling with these issues. Assimilating the work of the anthropologists Barbara Johnson, Johanna Spector, and Nathan Katz, the ultimate objective is to treat the questions comparatively, focusing on Indian Jewry vis-à-vis the transient and long-term resident Jewish communities of China which I have also begun to study.