

# South Asian Lawyers Kick Off A New Local Bar Association

By Shama Meislawa

**In** February 2008, lawyers from the greater Sacramento area including Davis and Yuba City came together to form the South Asian Bar Association of Sacramento (SABA of Sacramento). It is the latest addition to the North American South Asian Bar Association, which has chapters throughout the United States and Canada. The mission of SABA of Sacramento is to support and promote the professional advancement of attorneys and law students of South Asian descent and serve the legal needs of the South Asian community in the greater Sacramento region. The term South Asia includes the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, among others.

The formation of SABA of Sacramento is the culmination of informal meetings over the past two years among South Asian lawyers in the greater Sacramento area and comes at a time when the number of South Asians here is rising dramatically. As recently reported by the Sacramento Bee, more than 24,300 East Indians live in the Sacramento area, an 82 percent increase since 2000. Many of them are the adult children of immigrants who moved to the United States in the 1960's and 1970's to pursue educational opportunities.

Despite these numbers, South Asians have found few voices in the political or judicial arenas of our region. There are no politicians or judges of South Asian descent here. But things nationwide are changing. Just this year, **Bobby Jindal** at age 36 took office as the first governor of East Indian descent in the United States and the youngest person ever to fill that post. And **Amul Thapar**, also of East Indian descent, was appointed late last year to the federal bench in the Eastern District of Kentucky. California, too, hopes to increase diversity on the bench, as this goal "has been made part of the 2006-2012 strategic plan for California's judicial branch." (Guillén, *Serving the Immigrant Community* (Fall 2007 - Winter 2008)

California Courts Review 21.)

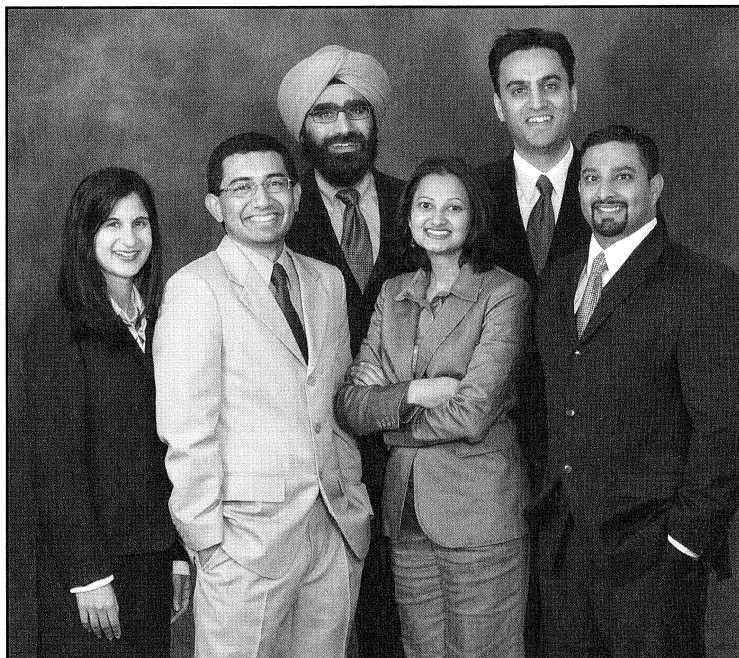
The issue of South Asians' involvement in the political and judicial arenas was discussed at a banquet in March 2008 at Gaylord's restaurant in midtown to celebrate the kickoff of SABA of Sacramento. The keynote speaker was **Ro Khanna**, a lawyer with *O'Melveny & Myers* in San Francisco who chairs the Indian American Council for the Democratic Congressional

Campaign Committee and who ran for Congress in 2004. He urged members of SABA of Sacramento to get involved in the legislative and judicial branches of government, emphasizing that South Asians have much to offer, given their success as an immigrant community in America, both educationally and financially.

The discussion at the March banquet also highlighted SABA of Sacramento's commitment to providing an avenue for South Asian attorneys and law students to serve the South Asian community in our area. The President of SABA of Sacramento,

Amar Shergill, stressed, "one of our goals is to ensure that South Asians receive legal representation that is responsive to the needs of the community." Shergill "looks forward to collaborating with the local bar and community groups that are already working towards this goal."

Supporting SABA of Sacramento's incorporation with their attendance at the March banquet were Dee Brown, President of the Asian/Pacific Bar Association of Sacramento, and **Christopher Krueger**, President of the Sacramento County Bar Association. For additional information about SABA of Sacramento, please visit [www.sabasacramento.org](http://www.sabasacramento.org). To become a member, please contact **Shama Mesiwala** at [shama.mesiwala@jud.ca.gov](mailto:shama.mesiwala@jud.ca.gov). SABA of Sacramento welcomes all who are interested in furthering its mission. ✍



Board of SABA of Sacramento: Shama Mesiwala, Niti Gupta, Amar Shergill, Mani Sidu, Neil Ranu, and Vishnu Subramaniam.

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