



British Indians and Indian Americans

Drawing parallels between second generation return migrants to India in their motivations to return

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Overview

- Discussion of “return” migration of second generation Indian-Americans and British Indians to their paternal homeland, India
- Evaluation of existing literature in terms of how youth and childhood experiences fare in narratives of motivations to return
- How might narratives of motivation for British Indians relate to their Indian American counterparts?
- Literature on second generation British Indians not directly related to motivation to “return” to India as no academic research exists on this yet in the British context
- Instead, refer to **wider literature on childhood, youth, early adulthood and links to and interest in India** as a basis for hypothesising what the differences and similarities might be between British and American Indians in their motivations to return



Existing Knowledge

- Within the research area of return migration, a number of studies focus particularly on first generation migration
- Current research on return migration focusses on recent first-generation migrants not born in the US or UK (e.g. Rendall and Ball 2004, Blunt, Bonnerjee and Hysler-Rubin 2012)
- Those born in the Indian sub-continent and move to the UK and US do not always stay there
- It is not just the country that migrants return to
- There are risks for the migrants and their families when they return to India



Contribution to Knowledge

- Research on second generation '**counter-diasporic migration**' relatively limited
- Process whereby the second generation relocates to the ancestral homeland (King and Christou 2010)
- There has been some academic discussion about British second generation returnees in relation to the Greek, Polish and Caribbean communities (see King and Christou 2010; Reynolds 2008; Górný and Osipovič 2006)
- This paper one of the first to discuss what the case might be for the Indian community in Britain



Indian community in America

- Migration flows from India differ for America and Britain
- 1900 – 1910: first significant wave of Indians came to America
- Dramatic increase in the number of Indians that immigrated to America from 1965 onwards. They were granted visas for having skills needed in the US (Rangaswamy 2000)
- By 1984, over 100,000 Ugandan refugees rendered stateless were accepted into America (Kasozi et al. 1994)



Indian community in Britain

- Migration from India to Britain spans four centuries
- More came after the 1950s in response to the post war labour needs of the British economy (Visram 2002)
- 1972 -1975 – Influx of Asians into the UK from East Africa
- By 2001, East African-born Asians in England and Wales numbered 193,000 in 2001 and when taking their British-born children into account, they made up around one-third of the Indian ethnic population in the UK (Peach 2006)



Myth of Return

- Active myth of eventual return to the home country is at the centre of much diaspora theory (Cohen et al 2012)
- **US**-lack of full commitment to remaining in the US, something that makes the acculturation of Indian immigrants more fractured than with other immigrant groups
- **UK**-discussed in relation to not only Indian but all South Asian communities in Britain including the Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups (Anwar 1979)

Myth of Return

- Earlier accounts of families returning from the UK with little success. Some have suggested that the myth would become invalid over time (Bhatti 1999)
- Might not be entirely true - the roots of this myth may be interconnected with the decision to return amongst second generation Indians
- British Pakistanis - Bolognani (2007) argues that although for the majority the idea of returning is still a myth, it has gained new momentum amongst new generations through the contemporary political context. Is this new momentum true of British Indians as well?



Childhood experiences

- Jain (2012) explored highly-skilled, second-generation Indian-American returnees born in the US to first-generation Indian immigrant parents
- Respondents recalled that their Indian-ness was developed from a young age through parental efforts that linked children to India and Indian culture
- Trips to India every few years to visit relatives, familiarisation with Indian language, festivals and cultural events, participation in Indian classical dance or music classes



Childhood experiences

- Childhood trips to India less frequent for second-generation East African Indians in the UK than for Indian Americans?
- Limited in terms of opportunities to travel back and visit India once they were in Africa as the high cost of steamship travel curtailed frequent trips
- Even if they did manage to return, these visits often reinforced a sense of disconnection to India (Herbert 2012)
- Less need to visit India to see elderly relatives in the immediate family as they also migrated to the UK
- Relatively new re-kindled interest in India



School and University

- Attending school and university in a host society can feature in motivations to return
- Perceived and experienced prejudice at school
- Jain(2012) - few Indian Americans in classes at schools, yet many fellow Indians around to interact with at college
- Increase in interaction with fellow Indians during early adulthood along with parental efforts that linked children to India and Indian culture contributed to a desire to learn about Indian history and culture, and featured in their motivations to return

School and University

- Increase in interaction with fellow Indians at university also evident in UK literature (Bhopal 2011)
- British Indian women and support networks at university
- Peers from the same or similar social and cultural backgrounds as themselves
- Share a common understanding of experiences of home life which may have involved certain cultural understandings
- Speak *Punjabi* together in friendship groups, language consolidating an important aspect of Indian culture



Personal Development

- A move to India can be perceived as positive for those looking for personal development opportunities
- US and UK Diaspora volunteering - programmes developed to encourage long-term engagement with the ancestral homeland, and in some cases even permanent return (Terrazas 2010)
- Jain (2012) - visits to India as forced family interactions in childhood, but in adulthood seen as opportunities for religious & spiritual development and self-discovery



Discussion

- British Indian and American Indian groups are different
- Motivations to return to India might not develop in the same way
- **However...**
- Important cross-cutting experiences during childhood, youth and early adulthood
- Many experiences recalled by American Indians in their narratives of motivations to return also documented in the wider literature on the British Indian experience
- Anecdotal evidence that British Indians are indeed exploring India for emigration purposes and sending '*rupee return remittances*'



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Are you pursuing the Indian dream?

A nightclub DJ plays a set in Mumbai. But although he has Indian origins, Anil Chawla was born and raised in the UK, and moved to India in search of better opportunities.

Indian immigrants have had a major impact on business, society and culture in countries such as Britain and the US, but now many of their children and grandchildren, like Anil, are moving in the opposite direction.

In recent years, India has become a magnet for young aspiring professionals, particularly those of Indian origin, who are trying to escape western economic woes.

The growth in India's economy is slowing down, but people continue to flock there. The number of Britons applying for lifelong visas has soared, and immigration offices in major cities are always packed.

In a complete reversal of the story of the last 50 years, some are even sending money back to their families in the West.

Are you in India? Why did you decide to go there? Have you been successful?



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By EDNA FERNANDES

UPDATED: 14:40, 9 October 2011

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From the penthouse suite at the Taj Mahal Palace hotel in Mumbai, Praful Patel surveys a magnificent sea view, including the Gateway of India, the ceremonial arch built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary in 1911. It serves as an architectural epitaph to a vanished era.



Next Steps...

- Return migration to India will have a bearing on the identity of these people, their parents and their families as being Indian, British and British Indian
- Important to learn if returning migrants also face financial risks as they may not have access to information on how to invest to generate high returns
- Primary qualitative research with second generation British Indian returnees
- Lack of quantitative data sources for emigration research
- International Passenger Survey – small sample, no ethnicity information