



INDIAN MIGRANT STUDENTS ADAPTING TO THE UK'S CULTURE: A SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT: Focusing on the role of symbolic homeland, this paper explores how the Indian students studying in the UK adapt to the host country's culture. First, the paper discusses the concept of "culture" in the context of student migration. Then borrowing from the two concepts acculturation and assimilation, which are mainly used in immigrant's adaption to the host country, I identify the various acculturation strategies that the migrant students assumes during their stay in the UK. Accordingly, the paper further discusses how socio-economic background, the sense of freedom experienced, especially by female students and the development of bicultural identities help the students to adjust and adapt to the UK's culture. The primary data for this research has been collected by using semi structured interviews. The participants for this research are Indian students who pursued Undergraduate, Masters' and PhD programs in the UK.

KEYWORDS: Acculturation, Adaptation, Assimilation, Student migration, Symbolic homeland.

INTRODUCTION

There have been various empirical findings that reveal the factors that encouraged students to travel abroad for their higher education. Moreover, the intensities of transnational connections through their transformative journey have also been discussed. However, the questions like- what happens to them after they arrive? How do they adapt to the host country's culture? And does this adaptation and adjustment among students depend on the any

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presumptions? have not been evidently addressed. By centrally placing the role of symbolic homeland in the lives of the international students, this research investigates how Indian students adapt to the host country's culture. I do this by first, reflecting on what is meant by "culture" and the representation of this concept in the studies related to student migration. Following this, I consider two underlying concepts *acculturation* and *assimilation*, and an effort is made to examine how the Indian migrant students adapt and adjust to their host country's culture.

Subsequently, I examine the different acculturation strategies that the migrant students may adopt whilst they interact with the host country's society. Although, there are four acculturation strategies (assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization) (Yu and Wang, 2011) that have been identified in the field of immigration studies, I merely consider assimilation. This is because, assimilation helps to address the constellation of mutually occurring circumstances that form the multilayer processes of adjustment into the host country's society (Morawska, 2003) Lastly, I justify how and why the concepts of acculturation and assimilation are helpful to understand the adjustments of Indians students while in the UK. I further support this by quoting significant testimonies from the interviews. Any notable variations and the recurring themes and patterns that have emerged while analyzing the data have been addressed as separate sub topics.

CULTURE AND STUDENT MIGRATION

During my interviews and interaction with the students, I realized that when the students first arrived in the UK their relocation suddenly and almost instantaneously imposed a variety of challenging roles that they were expected to learn. Here, I am referring to the habits and rituals that people in the UK follow for example, standing in a queue and waiting for their turn, not crowding while withdrawing money from the ATM and maintenance of personal space, to mention few. These local customs are common to all the visitors in the UK, however, following these kinds of practices (saying "please", "thank you" and general politeness) is likely to shape the experiences of the students and could enhance the experiences of maintaining cordial relationships with their peers, which may in turn help them to become emotionally well-adjusted in the new country. All the international students in the UK come from diverse

cultural backgrounds, and they are expected to "adjust" to a well-defined set of behaviors that require them to learn the new and "proper" roles (Spradley and Phillips, 1972). These new roles are spread around the UK educational systems and the British society. These can be in terms of abiding by the rules of the Tier 4 visa for instance attending classes, working part-time (20 hours a week), travelling in and around the UK and while entering and departing the country. This process has thus become a very important step to maintain a definite identity and to avoid conflicts. This can also be seen as coping strategy that can be applied if the students decide to stay back in the UK after concluding their studies (Pedersen, 1980; Wong-Rieger, 1984).

With globalization and the redesigning of the world into a smaller living place (Chen, 1999) people are now, more than ever, aware of the various traditions and cultures of other parts of the world, especially in a university setting (for example, formation and operation of international student bodies and celebrations of non-local festivals like *Eid*, *Diwali*, *Holi* or *Chinese New Year* within the University). Consequently, the adjustment of the international students into a new country may not be as rigid as the predecessors suggested (Spradley and Phillips, 1980; Pedersen, 1980; Wong-Rieger, 1984). However, this does not change the obvious that different cultures use different interactions, communication practices and methods, which inevitably lead to discrepancies in language, body language, conflict resolution and closure (Gudykunst and Ting-Tommey, 1998). Misunderstanding and struggling to adjust in a new country's culture can lead to frustration and confusion, affecting the student's studying and living conditions (Andrade, 2006). Yet, if this adjustment is successfully managed, then this will lead to a fulfilling stay and a chance for a better learning and understanding of a new culture and society, which will work in favor of the students (Townsend and Lee, 2004).

This brings my discussion to inquire, what is culture? In the context of student migration, culture is defined as "the set of values, beliefs, behaviors and customs that distinguish a society" (Mahoney, Trigg, Griffin and Pustay, 2001, p. 373). Similarly, according to Trompenaar's (1993) "culture is how these dilemmas reconciled since every nation seeks a different and winding path to its own ideals of integrity" (1993, p. 165). Due to the increase in education related migration, scholars have emphasized on the discussion surrounding international students' adaptation to the host country. The UK Council for

International Student Affairs (UKCIA) even published on their website¹ (2017) seven elements that contribute towards such adjustments, (a) climate: The British climate is colder, which the students can find hard to adjust to, (b) food: similarly, the taste, preparation and cooking style of British food is different; it may be bland compared to other cuisines (c) language: speaking in English all the time, getting used to the common lingos, accent and speed at which people speak may be an issue, (d) dress: students may not be used to the dressing style and it may come across as immodest and revealing, (e) social roles: students have to get used to public displays of affection or same-sex relationships, things that they might not have encountered in their home country, (f) “rules” of behavior: these include being polite, saying sorry, saying thank you, maintaining basic etiquettes and being punctual, to mention a few, and (g) values: upholding the culture they bring with them from their home country and not being judgmental regarding cultures of other countries.

While preparing the interview schedule and the questions for the participants I was mindful about not directing any questions to unfold the elements of such adjustments. This was because I wanted to avoid influencing the participants and gather the evidences of the above mentioned elements through their narratives. Subsequently, while going through the interview transcripts, I did discover some signs of adjustment. I found that, firstly, not all of the participants experienced severe adjustments issues, and, secondly, my findings exposed that the intensity and degree of such adjustments depended on two factors: (1) the place the student originally came from (big city or small town), and (2) gender. During my conversations with the participants, it was evident that those who came from big cities, which comprised of 21 participants out of a total of 24, showed no signs of experiencing any form of major cultural adjustments.

Students who grew up in big cities were used to the hustle and bustle of big cities like London. However, there were a few comments about adjusting to the weather, but most of them expressed that they enjoyed the cooler weather compared to the harsh heat in India. In addition to this, there were mentions of the local British food and how different it was compared to the food they were used to eating. However, this was not a serious issue due to the strong presence of Asian food markets and restaurants in the UK. In the section that follows, I discuss the process of acculturation amongst the Indian overseas students in the UK.

ACCULTURATION AND STUDENT MIGRATION

This section examines if there were any signs of acculturation amongst the Indian migrant students living in the UK and, if there are any, what are those? Most research on this area is limited only to immigrations, sojourners and other ethnic groups (Bartram, Poros and Monforte, 2014). Thus, this research identifies the need to include the cultural changes affecting international students as well. Acculturation, is a process by which the cultural patterns of a particular group change when they come into contact with the members of another group, which may result in the group becoming less culturally distinctive. Thus, inspired by the reasoning laid down by Gordon (Bartram, Poros and Monforte, 2014), and based on the findings of this research, I categorize and investigate the elements of acculturation in three themes: (1) Language, (2) Dressing style, and (3) Food.

Language: India has 22 major languages; however, English is also spoken widely across India. Speaking in English is not uncommon in India. However, the findings of the present research suggest that the regularity of speaking in English amongst the participants depended on where they came from (whether they came from big cities or small towns).

"I am still not very confident with my English; no one in my family speaks in English. My level of English was very secondary. Only after I moved to Delhi, I spoke to my teacher and friends in English. When I came to the UK, I was scared if people would be able to understand what I would say. I am still learning English, I would say. Back in India I hardly spoke in English and here I have to do it all of the time." (Preeti was a PhD candidate at the University of Essex; she is from a northeast part of India, from a state called Assam.)

"India is a country where you have to speak in English otherwise people will think that you are illiterate. English is something you are used to, especially when you are educated; you are expected to speak in fluent English and write in good English. I used to speak in Hindi with my friends and family back home but here, of course, I have been speaking in English much often." (Mona was an undergraduate student at the University of Essex; she comes from a small town in Uttar Pradesh.)

"In terms of language, definitely using more of the British English; my accent and everything is pretty much American. I have noticed that I have been using more

of British English while writing in social media or communicating with my local English friends.” (Ramisa PhD candidate at the University of Essex; he is from the city of Kolkata.)

For theoretical precision of my findings, I depend on Gordon's definition of acculturation, and his study about the first-generation immigrants in the American society. In his research, he considered language as the first principal element to measure the extent of acculturation (Gans, 1998, Alba and Nee, 2003). Likewise, Alba and Nee 2003) confirm that the first generation of the Irish, Italians and eastern Europeans first acculturated and later assimilated over a period of time by absorbing the customs and common practices of the American life; one of the principal approaches towards this process was fluency and proficiency in English. However, the "new" immigrants presented a slightly different picture, since they had acculturated at different rates depending on which nationality they belonged to. In the case of international students in the UK, presenting the proof of their English language proficiency is the first step towards complying with the rules of the host country. English language tests like IELTS, TOEFL and Pearson facilitate such requirements. According to the British Council, the Tier 4 (General) student visa for degree level and above requires the prospective student to score 5.5 overall and a minimum of 4 on each of the four segments, which comprises of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Hence, international students have to secure a specific score in their English language test to be eligible to study in the UK. This is the proof that they have adequate knowledge in English language and “that language acquisition is the first (and necessary) step towards creating and maintaining primary relationships with individuals and institutions in the host society” (Alba and Nee, 2003). Thus, going by this logic, language acquisition amongst immigrants in a new country is the first step towards acculturation. The testimonies of the participants confirm the same, yet it can be concluded that those who came from big cities did not have to make much of an effort to acculturate into the new country, compared to participants who came from smaller cities did not have much practice in speaking in English back in India. From language, I now move on to the style of dressing and observe any kinds of changes pointed out by the participants.

Dressing style: In this research, I consider any comments on the changes experienced by the participants in their style of dressing as a sign of acculturation. While in conversation with the students, some of the relevant comments were:

"I don't know! I wouldn't attribute this to being in England; maybe I am just becoming older, so I am dressing less like a grad student and more like an adult. I would say, maybe a bit of the British people dress so well here, especially in London. I mean in the US nobody gives a shit; everyone's in their sweat pants, but here that's not the case, so you can say that there is some kind of induction to the British style, especially when you see well-dressed people in London." (Ram is a PhD candidate at the University of Essex and he is from Kolkata.)

"I wouldn't say much has changed; in terms of clothes, I tend to follow the trend even when I was in India; that hasn't changed." (Tina is an undergraduate student at the University of Essex; she is from Delhi.)

"In the sense of clothes and dressing up, yes it has changed a bit, not too much; like, here, I cannot wear the traditional formal dress that I used to back home." (Mona is an undergraduate student at the University of Essex and she is from Uttar Pradesh.)

"Nothing has changed; I am from Mumbai; we probably dress more formally than people do here because when we go to work, we just cannot get up and go to work in casuals, we cannot wear sports shoes to work. I do wear Indian clothes here; I am very Indian when I have to be. For example, our new year or something, I have worn a kurta [traditional Indian dress], something to similar to what I used to wear at home. Also, in festivals like Diwali, I have a lot of Indian friends here so we celebrate the festival together." (Soni was a PhD candidate from SOAS, University of London, and she is from Pune.)

The findings derived from the testimonies suggest that only the male participants had a slight inclination of being influenced by the dressing style of the host country. All the female participants shared that they did not experience any changes in the way they dress. The reason for this is because females are mostly well aware of the current fashion trends globally and India itself has a large market of international clothing stores, which makes following the latest styles easier. Apart from that, India now has online stores of brands that include the UK street fashion as well, thus making the female participants conscious and less likely to change their style of clothing. In terms of wearing less Indian traditional attires, this could be because there are fewer occasions

and opportunities to wear them. Men, on the other hand shared that they were generally not very keen on following any fashion trends but were influenced by the clothes men wore in the UK. While in conversation with them, it dawned upon me that the changes in dressing styles were only because they are in a new place and observed what the other men were wearing. They felt the need to change with the availability of numerous stores on the local high street. Next, I report on the participants' acculturation towards the host country in terms of the food they consume.

Food: While discussing food and eating habits amongst the Indian migrant students in the UK, I mentioned the importance of food and that it is a part of the migrant students' identities that they bring with their homeland. While enquiring about their food habits after their long stay in the UK, the following were the most common responses from the participants:

"I still eat Indian food every day, at least one meal. If I don't have my rice than I don't think I can survive; I come from north-east India – I have to have my rice. I hate fish and chips; I tried it on my second day in the UK; I have tried it again and I still hate it; I think I don't like British food. However, I did used to make pasta and stuff in India; the frequency has increased now. I have realized that lately, I have started eating more western food after my living in the UK, except fish and chips!" (Preeti was a PhD candidate at the University of Essex she is from the state of Assam and their staple diet is rice.)

"I do cook Indian food, but now it has reduced; earlier I used to cook every day, but now if I cook Indian food, it's once in two weeks, because this year my year has been a bit hectic due to studies., I never got enough time to cook so I was living on sandwiches or noodles, just baked or oven- heated food, those things; at times I used to make salad and survive on those.". (Mona is an undergraduate student at the University of Essex; she is from Uttar Pradesh and her staple diet is flat wheat bread and lentils.)

"I have found my way around the very tedious Indian style of cooking; I do things the easy way: chuck it in the oven and you know bake stuff, and eat those kinds of things., It has made things easier and in the process, I try to cook local British food as well. In India, we don't generally have ovens and stuff". (Nilu is a PhD candidate at the University of Essex and she is from the city of Mumbai.)

It is intriguing to observe changes that the students have shared in their testimonies because, it seems like the perspectives of the students have

changed now, since they want a break from the tiresome and elaborate Indian style of cooking, thereby adapting to the UK's style of cooking. I apply the understanding of "selective acculturation" here for theoretical clarity. Similar to Gibson's (1988) concept of multi-linear acculturation, selective acculturation is a process when the immigrants' absorb and attain certain practices of the host society while maintaining their own cultural identity. Alejandro Portes (2009) had designed three acculturation concepts (Consonant, Selective and Dissonant) to analyze the way the first- and the second-generation immigrants acculturate. According to him, "selective acculturation occurred when the parents and children learn the language and culture of the host society and, at the same time, retain significant elements of their original culture or remain part of their ethnic communities" (for more, see Waters et al., 2010).

Similarly, in the case of this research the students seem to have preserved their 'Indian-ness' by cooking Indian food once in a while, but at the same time, showed signs of acculturation to the UK life by adopting the ways of cooking and a significant change in the preparation and consumption of food. The studies on immigrants' adjustments have since suggested that any group first acculturate and then assimilate into the host country's society. Therefore, the findings suggest that Indian students in adapt to the language, dressing style and food in the UK, but they still do not feel that they belong to a new culture, or that they have abandoned their home country's culture, this could be because students are by definition temporarily studying abroad (except a few who find jobs or get married and settle in the host country), so their experience is different from other immigrant groups. In the next section, I examine and address the constellation of mutually existing factors that enable the migrant students to assimilate into the UK's society.

ASSIMILATION AND STUDENT MIGRATION

I begin the final section of this paper by revealing the cluster of circumstances that contribute to the process of assimilation. I borrow from Morawska's (2003) variety of combination and the analytic strategy in assimilation. While talking about these strategies she focused on the Indian immigrants and their assimilation into American society. For the present research, I carve out the essential features of those strategies, to analyze what do these students assimilate into? For instance, according to Morawska (2003), familiarity with western life

and knowledge of the English language tends to ease the immigrants' paths to adapt to the host country's culture.

I have found this to be true in the case of this research as well. Out of a total of 24 participants, 21 came from big cities. While in conversation with the participants, I gathered that students who lived in big cities took less time to adapt to their lifestyles in the UK, compared to the other three participants who came from small cities. Similar to Morawska's (2003) multilayer process of integration in the host country, this research also analyzes the adaptation process of Indian students in three-layers discussed under the following sub headings:

Socio-economic adaptation. I begin with the socio-economic adaptation of the students, because I realized that this factor had a direct and important role causing a ripple effect on other aspects of the migrant students' experiences and their adjustments while in the UK. The findings of this research imply that the students who came from economically sound backgrounds (12 out of the total of 24 participants) they all had some experience of travelling abroad for vacations or visiting relatives for work or education. While in conversation with those 12 students, I found out that all of them gave a similar answer when I asked them about their experience in the UK.

"I did visit my sister when she was in her first year so we had, like, a family trip to, like, check out her university, so I first came to the UK when I was 15 or 16. After two years I was here to do my undergrads, so I feel I didn't have much adjustment to make while settling down here." (Alia was an undergraduate student at the University of Essex; she is from the city of Kolkata. Her father is a businessman and they have an actively running family business.)

"Actually, I have been in the UK before; I worked here. First I lived in a place just outside Glasgow, when I was 21. I was there on a volunteering exchange program, in the year 2010–11. I was supervising the same work as well, so because of that experience I already had an idea about living in the UK." (Ravi was a Masters student at SOAS, University of London, and he is from New Delhi; both his parents were working but are now retired.)

"I was excited to be away from India. I hated the US when I was studying there and also hated the UK at the beginning because I was so homesick. However, I found and I thought that the UK was different, it has excellent public transport, and the time difference was not that much, and it was closer to home. Because I

lived outside India in the US before coming to the UK, it gave a sense of adapting to a new space and place, and I feel I took less time adjusting to my life in the UK.” (Soni was a PhD candidate at SOAS, University of London. She is from Pune and both her parents are doctors.)

The common pattern among all the above testimonies is that their previous visits to the UK or any other international destination facilitated their current stay in the UK. I tie this to the economic and social status of the families that these students come from and the fact that all live in the metropolitan cities. This observation is similar to what Morawska (2003) mentions in her study about Indian immigrants, that their prior knowledge about the western ways of life and business, and fluency in speaking English had eased their process of settling down in the US. Although in her study the immigrants were settled in the US, however, in the present research the students are in the UK only for a specific time. Furthermore, the transcripts revealed an association between international travelling experience and the students' integration into the host country's society. I found that those students who had travelled outside India were aware and more acceptable regarding other cultures. They experienced less cultural adjustment and took lesser time to adjust into the new society. The students' prior travelling experiences depicted a wider perspective regarding global knowledge and the ability to view new customs without any cultural bias. The evidences of these attributes can be highlighted by the testimonies below:

“My experience in the UK has been great; I am used to travelling to foreign locations. I think that is what makes me very free regarding my food choices, making friends, and open to taste new cuisines and learn about new cultures.” (Prمود is an undergraduate student at the University of Essex and he is from New Delhi. His father runs a successful family business and his mother is a lawyer.)

“Actually, I have been travelling alone for work. I hadn't been to the UK but I have been to the US and I have been travelling alone so it was not a big deal. I feel like such experiences help a person to make new friends from different cultures, especially in London, since it is a multi-cultural city.” (Sona was a Masters student at SOAS, University of London, and she is from the city of Mumbai; both her parents are working in the government sector.)

Thus, based on the above statements, the findings of this research suggest that the students who had prior experience of travelling abroad had the

opportunity to explore new cultures, expand their knowledge and awareness. They utilized such life experiences when they came to the UK, first during their interactions within the university setting, which later expanded to other spheres of the host country's society especially after the students had a wider social circle and friends.

Freedom. Whilst looking for reasons that helped the migrant students settle in UK, I noted a recurring idea of freedom amongst the female participants (15 out of the total of 24), which was absent amongst all the male participants. On further enquiry regarding what kind of freedom they experienced after coming to the UK, some of the popular comments from them were:

"I have freedom, freedom in every sense, even what I am wearing, eating, staying alone or staying at or with boys; but with freedom comes responsibility as well; it has made me independent but responsible as well." (Mona, female, is an under graduate student at the University of Essex.)

"Absolutely, I have more freedom. Majorly in terms of security it is more secure for women here than in India. Women can go out and have fun without even thinking about being safe or safety; if nothing there is the safety bus [Student Union late-night bus service] to go back to home to among other things." (Tina, female, is an undergraduate student at the University of Essex.)

"Here people do not care about how you are dressed; they don't poke their nose in other people's business. I am not scared to go out during the day or night or evening; it's not the same when I am in my home town." (Preeti, female, was a PhD candidate at the University of Essex.)

I compare this finding to Morawska's (2003) study on Indians settled in the US and the pressure of living in a patriarchal society back in India. The study shows that most of the Indian women have embraced the notion of gender equality after coming to the US (for more, see Lessinger, 1995; Sheth, 1997; Das Gupta, 1997). Similarly, in the case of the Indian female students in the UK, they have expressed that they enjoy the "freedom" of wearing what they want to, socializing with the opposite gender (maintaining a friendly or romantic relationship), which is otherwise objected by the families, and feeling safe. It is not new information that Indian women are not safe or do not feel safe in India. Numerous news articles report that India is the most dangerous country for women. An article in *The Guardian*² states that in survey conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2018, India has been named the

world's most dangerous country for women. Thus, it comes with no surprise that young migrant women living and studying in the UK want to make the most of the freedom and sense of safety that they receive, enabling them to embrace this feature of the UK.

Bicultural identities: In order to elaborate on this point, I borrow from Nirvana Man's (1997: 153) very apt metaphor, a "salad bowl" much like the mix and match of different ingredients in a salad bowl, the migrant students also arrive in the UK with their dominant Indian culture and gets mixed with the cultures of the host country, which they adapt to during a matter of time. According to the testimonies of the participants, some of the elements from the host country's society that the students have embraced:

"Whenever I am in India, I always miss the cleaner air here in the UK; I miss the friendly people around here [the UK]. It is very dusty in India and I coughed a lot and then there is garbage all over the place. I was thinking why people can't throw their rubbish in the dustbin like they do it here; I do at least for my house when I visit. And, when I have to get inside a bus, I always insist on standing in a queue like people do it here, but they push and shove. After I started living in the UK, I have noticed such kinds of changes in me and I try to practice the same when I am visiting my hometown." (Preeti was a PhD candidate at the University of Essex, and she is from the state of Assam.)

"Even if I still think of home in India, I don't feel like I fit in there anymore, in the sense that the viewpoints of most people are very different from mine. Now it is very difficult to adjust especially when you know and are aware of certain things in life and things are not always how they seem. My life in the UK has helped me become this person; this wouldn't have been possible if I always lived in India". (Tina is an under graduate student at the University of Essex, and she is from New Delhi.)

These features (in the forms of feelings, actions and gaining perspective) of the British life that the migrant students have integrated into their lives are similar to Morawska's (2003) observation about the Indian immigrants' assimilation into the American ways of life. Yet, since UK already has a colorful multicultural society, the findings suggest that these students are assimilating into a diverse student group rather than the British ways of life as some of them may be living in the UK only while the duration of their course.

Next, to discuss how has this transition affected the lives of the students? I quote a testimony from one of the participants:

"I am between somebody from there [India] and here [UK] because I am not somebody completely from there and not somebody from here, so I am in-between right now. So there is this transition period that is going on; either I'll be knocked away at this side or knocked away at my original place." (Nilu is a PhD candidate at the University of Essex, and she is from the city of Mumbai.)

The notion of home and the sense and security of belonging to a particular place is complex in a life of a migrant. In the case of education-related migrations, migrant students have to follow a specific set of regulations and fulfill the essential border entry requirements (Tier 4 student visas in the UK) to reside in the country of destination for a specific time. This situation may change if the students are successful in securing job opportunities shift their visa from student visa to work visa. However, in reality, this is very hard to achieve for international students. Nevertheless, in their period of stay they do encounter these feelings of being in-between places, both geographically and emotionally. Thus, in such situations, the definition of home is complex, as the sense of home is trans-located since the migrants' places of origin are different from their places they reside (Ahmed, 1999). Therefore, like in the cases of many immigration stories, is home the place they have left behind? or is it the one they are creating with their experiences? This question echoes in the journeys and the stories of the migrant students as well.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the opening section of the article, the two underlying concepts I depend on to explain the adaptation of Indian students in the UK are acculturation and assimilation. Although these concepts are used to provide explanations for immigrants and permanent settlers, I utilize the ideas related to these concepts to draw a conceptual framework to analyze how the Indian students adapt to the culture of the host country. This research is aware that since students are in the UK for temporary periods, during this time they are not assimilated into the British society but into the university setting. Based on the three stages of assimilation (Bartram, Poros and Monforte, 2014) – boundary crossing, boundary blurring and boundary shifting– I examine this process in the case of the Indian migrant students in the UK. There are

clear signs of boundary crossing in the form of language, the migrant students speak more in English and familiarize themselves with the common and local jargons. Getting influenced by the British fashion and their sense of style is another sign of boundary crossing. Similarly, changes in food consumption, the students have incorporated British food and the style of cooking, and have slowly broken away from the traditional and tedious Indian style of cooking.

In the second phase of assimilation, boundary blurring, the ethnic difference between the immigrants and the native people is reduced at a societal level rather than at an individual level. For example, this can be achieved by the issuing of dual citizenship. The manifestation of this process among the Indian migrant students is unfeasible because the population of them isn't enough to form a community and undergo a societal level change. In addition to this the Tier 4 visa regulations state the duration of their stay in the country. Therefore, the only way these students can live in the UK after their courses finish is if they apply for a post study work visa or secure jobs (in which they have to follow the rules of the work visa), or if they get married to a local citizen. Lastly, the issue of dual citizenship is also not applicable to Indian citizens since the Indian Government does not allow dual citizenship.

Finally, coming to the last process of boundary shifting, which is the readjustment of the boundaries that are shifted towards either inclusion or exclusion in the destination country's society (Bartram, Poros and Monforte, 2014) the migrant students are not involved in this process since they are constantly guided by the regulations of the Tier 4 student visa. Thus, the duration of their stay has an expiration date, making them unable to go through the process of boundary shifting. Thus, according to the findings of this research, the Indian migrant students, due to the nature and restrictions surrounding their stay in the UK, show only the first sign in the process of assimilation. As concluding remarks, it is evident that the acculturation strategies and the understanding of assimilation may not be adequate to comprehend the experiences of the Indian students in the UK. This is mainly because their integration mainly occurs in university settings, their nature of migration is mainly temporary and finally, only when these students live in the UK permanently do the issues of acculturation or assimilation start to kick in. Thus, there is a need for a different and wider theoretical framework to understand the adaptation experiences of international students as a whole.

Notes

1. <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Preparation-and-Arrival>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/02/india-most-dangerous-country-womensurvey>

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