

CARIM INDIA – DEVELOPING A KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR POLICYMAKING ON INDIA-EU MIGRATION

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A Cultural Narrative on the Twice Migrated Hindustanis of the Netherlands

Limanungla Longkumer

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**A Cultural Narrative on the Twice Migrated
Hindustanis of the Netherlands**

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CARIM-India – Developing a knowledge base for policymaking on India-EU migration

This project is co-financed by the European Union and carried out by the EUI in partnership with the Indian Council of Overseas Employment, (ICOE), the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore Association, (IIMB), and Maastricht University (Faculty of Law).

The proposed action is aimed at consolidating a constructive dialogue between the EU and India on migration covering all migration-related aspects. The objectives of the proposed action are aimed at:

- Assembling high-level Indian-EU expertise in major disciplines that deal with migration (demography, economics, law, sociology and politics) with a view to building up migration studies in India. This is an inherently international exercise in which experts will use standardised concepts and instruments that allow for aggregation and comparison. These experts will belong to all major disciplines that deal with migration, ranging from demography to law and from economics to sociology and political science.
- Providing the Government of India as well as the European Union, its Member States, the academia and civil society, with:
 1. Reliable, updated and comparative information on migration
 2. In-depth analyses on India-EU highly-skilled and circular migration, but also on low-skilled and irregular migration.
- Making research serve action by connecting experts with both policy-makers and the wider public through respectively policy-oriented research, training courses, and outreach programmes.

These three objectives will be pursued with a view to developing a knowledge base addressed to policy-makers and migration stakeholders in both the EU and India.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: <http://www.india-eu-migration.eu/>

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Abstract

Migration in the search of work and under the dictates of the colonial indentured system took Indians to foreign lands. Their experience as indentured labour in the Dutch plantations in Suriname in the 19th century led these Indians to hold strongly to their notions of Indian identity in Suriname, identifying themselves as “Hindustanis”. However, with the transfer of sovereignty to Suriname and the option to settle in the Netherlands, the identity of these Indians underwent further changes, negotiations and re-imagining. This study undertakes a socio- cultural analysis to examine how the twice migrated Hindustani identify with both the societies, that is, ancestral India and the Netherlands as home. The paper aims to facilitate a disaggregated understanding of how the PIOs perceive their ‘Indian identity’, being part of the Indian Diaspora and their level of engagement with India. More specifically, the paper deals with the present generation of twice migrated Hindustanis who were born in the Netherlands to one (or both) parents who belong to the first generation Surinamese Hindustanis either born or migrated from Suriname (Indian origin).

In a period of changing paradigms of identity recognition-- multicultural, integrationist to assimilative—the author argues that there should be a pragmatic approach in understanding such evolving situations which are country- specific. The nomenclature, “Hindustani” in itself may require clarification for the twice migrated Hindustani born in the Netherlands wherein an individual has the option of a “Dutch identity”, “Hindustani identity with a Suriname background” and “twice migrated Hindustani” identity.

1. Introduction

According to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Government of India, India has the second largest Diaspora in the world. Taking into account the different waves of migration over hundreds of years, the overseas Indian community today is estimated at over 25 million and is spread across every major region in the world (MOIA Annual Report 2011: 8). However, the Indian Diaspora cannot be easily defined as “one great Indian Diaspora”. Characteristically heterogenous, the Indian Diaspora has been shaped over the centuries, driven by a number of reasons such as mercantilism, colonialism and globalization. The significant diversity in the Indian Diasporas is reflected in its languages, cultural practices, religious traditions and regions in India to which these Diaspora belong to.

A major wave of emigration of Indians to the Netherlands took place post-World War II. It was during the time of British India when thousands of Indian workers were inducted as indentured labour to work in the plantations in the Dutch colony of Suriname.¹ A majority of these labourers came from the then United Provinces encompassing Agra and Oudh, which approximately correspond to the present-day Indian States of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.² The region was known for its internal migration; as such the immigrants were from various backgrounds, religion and class, speaking a variety of languages and dialects.³ This fact contributed to the origin of the ‘Sarnami Hindustani’ language which is a combination of Bhojpuri and Awadhi which became an important language in Suriname.⁴ What compelled these Indians to migrate was a combination of poverty, personal difficulties coupled with an enterprising zeal, to seek greater and better opportunities in an imagined foreign land.⁵

There were several reasons for migration by the indentured labourers. Several stories⁶ reveal that they were promised riches and a better future. The first batch of 410 labourers left the Calcutta port on 26th February 1873 which took well over three months. However, only 399 labourers survived the journey owing to the long duration of journey and presumably harsh conditions on the ship.⁷ As such, those who perished along their journey took to their grave memories of India, their familial ties and the unique stories and direct links to India even before setting foot on foreign lands. Additionally, it is worthy to note that since the working conditions on the plantations were said to be deplorable with exhaustion and diseases adding to its woes, many labourers perished during the indentureship.⁸ One can only get a sense of the voyages that the indentured labourers undertook which is made available to us through literature and oral traditions passed down for generations.

There were people of different professions – farmers and even non-agricultural professions such as policemen, soldiers, barbers, domestic servants, artists, performers and even wrestlers who undertook the arduous voyage from India to Suriname. There are accounts which depict how many of these people arrived in the docks of Calcutta (Kolkotta) laden with jewelry and personal possessions like

¹From the original number of 34, 000 immigrants to these Dutch plantations, one-third returned to India and the rest chose to stay in Suriname. The indentured labourers began to identify each other as ‘Hindustanis’. During the transfer of sovereignty to Suriname in 1975 migration gained its peak whereby several Hindustanis migrated to the Netherlands.

²Bal (2012: 5) The migrants mostly headed from the districts of Gorakhpur, Basti, Gonda, Fyzabad, Jaunpur, Benares, Azamgarh which is a region known for internal migration.

³Ibid.

⁴Choenni (2009: 113), Gowricharan and Choenni (2007: 346).

⁵Bal (2012: 5).

⁶Ibid.

⁷Choenni (2011: 4).

⁸Choenni (2011: 7), citing Bhagwanbali (2010).

musical instruments and religious books.⁹ One important characteristic that these voyages inadvertently had was that there were no differentiations made or special treatment given with regard to the caste system; every individual lived through the same broad experiences. Thus, the interaction necessitated by the close proximity aboard the ships gave rise to a sense of commonality based on shared experiences. It is said that friendships and relationships were forged and they became “jahaji bhais” and “jahaji bahins”.¹⁰ Though the days of indentureship of British Indians is long over, it is said that over one third of them returned to India once their contract had expired, 16% perished during the indentureship and the remaining settled down as colonists in Suriname.¹¹

The abandonment of the indentured system in 1916 led to the end of colonial politics wherein, segregation gave way to a process of integration. Thus, the immigrants became ‘settlers’ and abandoned the idea of going back to India altogether and made Suriname their home country. It is therefore opined that the indentured labourers did not constitute a separate ethnic community from the start but gradually formed one. This community of indentured labourers who settled in Suriname did not approve of “racial mixing” and wanted to preserve and maintain their ‘Indian’ cultural heritage. It is important to note that simultaneously, back in India, foreign policy urged overseas Indians to identify with their adopted country. Such a severance of tie increased the apprehensions of the immigrants and they further felt the need to preserve their tradition and build a separate identity.¹²

It was in 1927 that the immigrants who were born in the Suriname were officially given a Dutch nationality. Gradually, the descendants began to identify themselves as a separate ethnic community known as Hindustanis.¹³ In fact, it is argued by different scholars that the Hindustanis had to necessarily sweep aside socio-religious differences and build a common identity in order to compete with the other migrant communities (such as the Creoles).¹⁴ Thus, setting aside differences and then migration history, the descendants of the British Indian indentured labourers in Suriname grew into a distinctive community with its own socio-cultural dynamics.

However, in the year 1975, approximately 125,000 Indians left Suriname at the time of independence for the Netherlands.¹⁵ Today, the Netherlands has the second largest population of people of Indian origin in Europe- People of Indian Origin (PIO) and the Non Resident Indians (NRIs). Present day statistics reveal that the Hindustanis form the largest community of Surinamese origin numbering 345, 000 in the Netherlands. Half of the twice migrated Suriname Hindustanis are less than 25 years of age. These individuals were mostly born and raised in the Netherlands (Choenni, 2003: 170). In terms of religion, 80% are Hindu, 15% are Muslim and 5% are Christians, and these religions are characterised by several sub groups represented by several religious organisations. Additionally, talking from a People of Indian Origin (PIO) perspective, the Hindustanis form the

⁹Similar accounts exist of indentured labourers from India going to British Guyana. The religious texts carried by these labourers, added to their self-confidence as Hindus and were symbolic of the teachings necessary to build a new community (Seecharan 1997: 44).

¹⁰Choenni (2009: 119).

¹¹Choenni (2011:10).

¹²Bal (2012: 6) citing Hajary. Studies of indentured Indian labourers in British Guyana reveal how these labourers despite the internal caste, religion, language and region chose homogeneity as a “mode of separation and resistance” (Ramsaran 2008: 180).

¹³Bal (2012: 6). While the majority of Hindustanis identified themselves as “Hindus”, the percentage of Muslims among the British Indian migrants was approximately 17.5 percent.

¹⁴Bal (2012: 6). Despite some friction between Hindu and Muslim Hindustanis in Suriname, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, or perhaps because of them, religious distance between these Hindus and Muslims was less than the ethnic distance that existed between the Hindustanis and communities of Dutch, African (Creole), Chinese, Amerindian and Javanese descent.

¹⁵The Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora (2002) states that “more than 1/3 of the PIO population availed of a provision in the Independence Act providing Surinamese to migrate to the Netherlands before the transfer of power in 1975”, available at www.moia.gov.in

largest of the Indian Diaspora, and are recorded as first- and second-generation Surinamese numbering around 160, 000 individuals. On January 1st, 2009, the Netherlands counted as many as 26,800 “third-generation Surinamese”, wherein approximately 45.5% (10,000) of these are Hindustanis. In fact, these Hindustanis do not appear in the official statistics as Indians or Surinamese but as “native” or “autochthonous” Dutch.¹⁶

Taking into account the above facts about the past migration history of the Suriname Hindustanis, I put forward an open-ended question, “how do we understand the twice migrated Hindustanis of the Netherlands, particularly the present generation of the twice migrated Hindustanis?” Are they to be identified as Dutch citizens alone or only as Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs). Should we think of them in terms of persons of Indian origin with their Suriname history, or all of the mentioned identities or a whole new identity? Indeed scholars such as Bal (2012: 1) have discussed the notions of identity of a Hindustani (Indian origin)¹⁷ and concluded that it is “complex and multi-layered” wherein some Hindustanis have notions of a shared Indian identity, while others emphasize on their Surinamese or Dutch belonging. What remains unclear is whether these twice migrated Hindustanis are confronted with a sense of cultural rootlessness or cultural rootedness? The paper attempts to answer this question.

2. Purpose of the Study

To set the context, we need to understand the framework and the purpose of the present study. The concept of Diaspora has been productively used to indicate the emigration and settlement of people in a country other than their country of origin and ancestry and also the retention of the cultural identity in the host country. Thus, when the Government of India talks of its Diaspora it refers to the Indians who migrated to different parts of the world and have generally maintained their Indian identity.

Accordingly, we can identify two distinct groups of people from the Indian community in the Netherlands- the wave beginning in 1873 categorized as People of Indian origin (PIOs) who originally migrated from British India to Suriname as indentured labour, and then from Suriname to the Netherlands when Suriname got its independence in 1975; and the Non Resident Indians (NRIs), a more recent wave consisting of mainly Indian professionals. Thus, a PIO is “a person who or any of whose ancestors¹⁸ was an Indian national and who is presently holding another country’s citizenship/ nationality i.e. he/she is holding foreign passport, and an NRI is one who is an Indian citizen who is ordinarily residing outside India and holds an Indian Passport.”¹⁹

The Diaspora’s relationship with the ‘homeland’ is much discussed²⁰ and rightly so since an understanding of the nature of relationships may provide an insight into interlinking social aspects. The case of the twice migrated Hindustanis can be contextualized in the backdrop of the phenomenon of assimilation which occurs simultaneous to acculturation. What we see is the inevitable outcome of the passage of time wherein the migrant ‘Suriname Hindustani’ community has necessarily adapted to the host Dutch community. The community eventually reflects a multicultural society consisting of varied cultural groups wherein, assimilation into the Dutch community is also clearly visible.

¹⁶See Bal, 2012: 4.

¹⁷Choenni (2011: 11) By Hindustanis we refer to the people of Hindostan. In other words, the term for British India in Hindi. In English this is written as Hindustan.

¹⁸Ancestry is traced upto fourth generation under the PIO Card Scheme of the Government of India and also allows available for spouses of Indian citizens or a person of India origin. PIOs of all countries except Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are eligible.

¹⁹Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora (2000: vii), Comparative Chart on NRI/PIO/PIO Card Holders/ OCI (Downloaded from <http://mha.nic.in/pdfs/oci-chart.pdf> dated 31st May 2012.)

²⁰Mukadam and Mawani, 2007: 195.

However, what has been maintained throughout generations is the ethnicity that contributes to the Hindustanis' identity formation.²¹ Acknowledging a common ethnicity contributes to a sense of belonging enabled by a shared origin, whether a Suriname Hindustani or a twice migrated Hindustani. Choenni quotes from the study of Martenz and Verweij who show that 95% of Hindustanis in the Netherlands viewed themselves as Hindustanis. A follow up study after 10 years revealed that 93% of this group still identified themselves as Hindustanis.²² However, it is important to remember that belonging to the same ethnicity need not produce uniformity in feelings or affection for the "motherland"- these people of Indian descent may or may not identify themselves as Indians or identify themselves with India.

The paper aims to facilitate a disaggregated understanding of how the PIOs perceive their 'Indian identity', being a part of the Indian Diaspora and their level of engagement with India. More specifically, the paper will deal with the present generation of twice migrated Hindustanis who were born in the Netherlands to one (or both) parents who belong to the first generation Suriname Hindustanis either born or migrated from Suriname (Indian origin).

Before proceeding forward, I submit that given the limited time, the research paper depends on secondary materials and thus has its limitations. An extensive qualitative study would provide an in-depth understanding and hence analysis of parameters that are responsible for identity formation among the twice migrated, second generation Suriname Indians of the Netherlands. To bridge this gap, I have attempted to arrive at some face-value perspectives of these "migrants" through limited personal interviews. The methodology employed is further elaborated below.

3. Research Methodology

Research of any type commences with a problem, the answers to which the investigator seeks to find out with an array of techniques, methods, and theoretical perspectives.²³ Each investigator's style of research can be uniquely individual, even though we may use the same basic methods and techniques. As mentioned earlier, owing to certain constraints in time and resources at hand for an in-depth study of the subjects who reside abroad, this paper is based largely on secondary materials and limited first-hand information.

As a part of my research design, my initial steps consisted of reading through literature related to the subject matter of the paper and some first-hand interviews. Such restrictive methodology was used because of the limited time and limited resources. However, the data at hand was sufficient to proceed with a discussion. As such, I used purposive sampling which gave me the ability to choose the informants relevant to the research topic. This purposive sampling was further broken down into purposively quota sampling, wherein I could select informants based on a certain criteria.

My only field area was the 10th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)²⁴ held in 2012 in Jaipur where I had the opportunity to interact with the twice migrated individuals from the Netherlands. The informants were in the age group of 25 to 32 years of age, born in the Netherlands with one or both

²¹Ethnic identity differs from other social identities in the sense that it involves common denominators such as origins, history and cultural heritage –for example language and religion- that are shared by members of an ethnic group (Choenni, 2011: 13).

²²Choenni, 2011: 12.

²³Srivastava, 2004: 2.

²⁴Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) -- an initiative of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Government of India-- is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contributions of the overseas Indian community in the development of India. The day marks the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa to India in 1915 to lead India's freedom struggle. The PBD conventions have been held every year since 2003 to enable a platform for overseas Indians to engage and interact with the government and the people of India for mutually beneficial activities. The PBD conventions are organized along certain themes and priorities set by the Ministry each year.

parents who were Suriname Hindustani. However, there were few respondents who did not fall under the parameters of the sample selected. There were NRIs who were settled in the Netherlands for several decades and in the age group of 50-above whose views I have taken into consideration to facilitate analysis of data. During the initial interviews, I conducted structured interviews which provided focus. However, on establishing rapport with the respondents, based on the structured questions at hand, the ‘interaction’ gave way to other questions and responses which enriched the data.

After the interaction with the respondents during the 2012 PBD, I continued to engage with them through telephonic interviews. In due course this led me to connect with several other respondents through questionnaires which were dispatched through e-mails. As such the genuineness of the responses cannot be cent percent validated.

4. Perspectives on the Identity of Twice Migrated Hindustanis

The term Diaspora may be deconstructed to arrive at an understanding of the twice migrated Hindustani identity. We need to understand that “heterogeneity of cultural orientations is especially salient when speaking of twice migrants, but reflects a general challenge when theorising Diaspora”.²⁵ What we may therefore agree to recognize is the fact that the present generation of the twice migrated Hindustanis belong to a post-Diasporic generation. The efforts made by the first generation (migrants) necessarily ensured that the cultural ethos of the motherland India was retained. This meant that marriages happened by and large between individuals belonging to the same community which further ensured that ethnicity (cultural and physical) was maintained.²⁶ However, the cultural ethos is not completely reflective of the original form and may be adjusted to the host “home” country.

Thus, what may be derived from the above observation are certain parameters which are instrumental in the identity formation of the twice migrated. The two main parameters are the ‘Dutch nationality’ and ‘the Indian cultural heritage’ with which the present generation of twice migrated individuals identify with and contribute to the formation of their individual identity. This observation finds basis in Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff (2003) who have researched relations between Indians and Hindustanis in Suriname, in which it was emphasized that the respondents “felt Surinamese in their national identity and Hindustani in their cultural identity”.²⁷

Lal²⁸ observes that the question of ‘Indianness’ overseas, assumes significance since, “one is more easily an Indian abroad than in India; the category of ‘Indian’ is not contested abroad as it is in India. Furthermore, studies show that when a migrant community finds itself in minority in the host country, a heightened sense of an ‘all- identity’ is established enabling a common background, and the regional affiliations and identities that prevailed formerly in the home country²⁹ may assume lesser importance.

²⁵Lynnebakke, 2007: 239.

²⁶(Choenni, 2011: 11). Even after 138 years, and more specifically, after nearly 100 years – in 1916 when the last Hindustani indentured labourers emigrated to Suriname- Hindustanis have remained a clear identifiable group. A large part of their descendants did not mix with other ethnic groups.

²⁷In Lynnebakke (2007: 240-241).

²⁸Lynnebakke (2007: 239) discusses Lal.

²⁹Home country is the term used by Lal to give an all-encompassing term for the ‘origin country’ of the migrant. “Motherland” in other parts of the paper have been used, when the respondents themselves have used the term. This gives an insight into their perception.

4.1. Socio-Cultural Dimensions to Identity Formation

The cultural prominence of Hindustanis is reinforced by the fact that the Hindustanis constitute the largest Hindu community in the Netherlands.³⁰ In fact, according to Vertovec (2000)³¹, Hinduism acts as a catalyst for ethnic consciousness and community mobilization among Indian migrants and their descendants. Keeping in mind that all the respondents (selected at random) were Hindus, it was found that religion plays a vital role in facilitating the continuity of ‘Indianness’ for the twice migrated Hindustani community. Even for the young Hindustanis, India is viewed as a centre of origin of their religion which they regard as a ‘special’³² identity contributing to their ‘identity’ formation. Thus, the Hindu religion is one of the aspects which contributes to the formation of a Hindustani identity wherein there are individuals of the community who chose to identify with being “a Dutch with Indian religion”³³. Religious celebrations such as the Ram Lila are organised in a big way. However, care is taken to see that this is celebrated as a cultural event and not an event that promotes or propagates religion. Much of the intention behind these celebrations is to motivate the twice migrated young Hindustanis to learn more about India and the religion. A majority of the respondents, on the other hand, have been a part of these celebrations more out of curiosity than actual religious inclinations. Indeed the power of impressions is obvious when faced with questions about “India”. Few respondents whom I interviewed said that they felt upon their visits to India that “spirituality” seems to be waning in India itself. For instance, a respondent said that it appeared that people in India were careless about maintaining a sense of purity during temple worship, a demand necessitated of devotees according to religious traditions. It was also perceived that some also did not fully appreciate the readily-available opportunities to worship in a temple and instead took it for granted.

Generations have passed since the first ancestors of the Hindustanis migrated from India to Suriname and thereafter to the Netherlands. The essence of their religion (here, Hinduism) still plays an integral role in their daily lives. Festivities like the Ram Lila, enthusiasm for classical music and dance and the Sarnami Hindustani language (which is a mixture of Bhojpuri and Awadhi) have their origins in India and have been steadily retained in the lives of the twice migrated Hindustanis. Studies show that the cultural and religious manifestations of the Hindustanis grant them both visibility and distinctiveness amongst the various communities in the Netherlands.³⁴ While it is true that maintaining religion traditions play an important role in the formation of ‘identity’, it is questionable whether it defines the twice migrated Hindustani identity, ‘Indianness identity’ or the self-identity.

Literature³⁵ discusses the fact that as many as 80 per cent of the indentured labourers migrated from the same region³⁶ in India and over time negotiated an all-Indian identity. As such the first Hindu migrants (indentured labourers) invariably occupied the same societal position and religious affiliations which contributed to their Indian identity and maintaining their Indianness over the years.

³⁰The strength of the Hindustani community in the Netherlands is displayed by the community-specific schools, television stations, and a separate national level media organization such as the OHM set up in the Netherlands. In 2003, it was estimated that of the approximately 400 different socio-cultural Hindustani organisations active locally, more than 300 of them would qualify as Hindu organizations (Bal, 2012: 9).

³¹Lynnebakke (2007: 240) discusses the views of Vertovec.

³²The Government of India acknowledges the existence of this special identity harboured by the Suriname Hindustani Hindus and that such a reason may be why so many Surinamese Indian travel agents look for travelers from the Netherlands to the religious sites in India, available at www.moia.gov.in.

³³In the words of respondents.

³⁴Bal (2012: 6).

³⁵Lynnebakke (2007: 256).

³⁶Supra note 2.

The socio-economic, caste and regional identities were all cast aside and assumed importance only whilst differentiating from the Non Resident Indians (NRIs) settled in the Netherlands.³⁷

For instance, the rigidity of the caste system is less pronounced among the Suriname Hindustani community whereby a feeling of 'Indianness' is felt more strongly by the community they belong to and not by the caste. It may be assumed that the stringent caste system ethos began to melt away when the indentured labourers were packed off on ships from the docks of Calcutta. Also, the low number of women meant that marriages took place by setting aside the rules related to marriage and caste. The present day perception regarding the importance of the caste system for the Suriname Hindustani is still debatable. For instance, in the course of my interviews, the Hindustani youths mentioned that they viewed the caste system is possibly an essential characteristic of Indian society but not so much a part of Hindustani culture in the Netherlands. However the need to consider socio-economic benefits while forging new relationships such as marriages remains true even for present day Hindustanis in the Netherlands. Thus, one of my respondents mentioned about parental preference for children to marry someone from "similar working class".³⁸

The present generation of the twice migrated Hindustanis born in the Netherlands feels that there is little in common or connection with other people of Indian origin in the Netherlands, as they belong to different societies. During the interviews conducted, I came across a few respondents who still maintained ties with Suriname such as that of relationship ties with relatives.³⁹ I did not, however, discuss further on the socio-cultural perspectives on Suriname as it was not a part of the present study. It was however evident that the older generation of Hindustanis who had at one point of time lived in Suriname were more aware of Suriname than the present generation of Hindustanis. Bal (2012: 7) discusses that the first generation of migrants from Suriname in the Netherlands may identify as Surinamese, but the young Hindustanis born in the Netherlands do not share the same feelings for Suriname as the older generation. This is where the twice migrated Hindustanis are faced with a situation wherein there is a continuation of earlier customs and traditions in varying degrees, and of growing up in the Dutch society of the Netherlands which they identify as their 'home'. Therefore, what can be inferred from the above is a situation of assimilation and acculturation.⁴⁰

It is most interesting that a person of Indian origin born in the Netherlands may share a more comfortable relationship with an indigenous Dutch than with an NRI in the Netherlands but still feel a connection with India and call the Netherlands her "homeland" and India as her "motherland". What we are presented with is a scenario where even if the individuals in question are of the same origin (Indian), their social identity is uniquely attached to the community they are born and brought up in. When such habitualised pattern of activity is displayed by a number of individuals, it reveals an institutionalisation of a particular identity. They begin to possess a sense of what they are doing and communicate with each other in the same terms about what they are doing. The members of that particular community follow coordinated processes of doing things together in interrelated and institutionalised ways giving them both personal and collective identity and influencing the actions of one another. This membership to a group involves organisation and categorisation which depends on mutuality and reciprocity that are framed by authority. As such, allocations necessarily will

³⁷For the NRIs, the socio-economic, caste and regional identities appear to be of greater importance than similar cultural origins (Lynnebakke, 2007: 258).

³⁸Bal (2012:6) discusses that aspects such as class and education are more important than caste to the Hindustanis while selecting marriage partners.

³⁹As mentioned earlier in the methodology section, I interviewed few individuals who did not conform to the identified age group identified for the study.

⁴⁰See Keefe and Padilla (1987: 15) who discuss Linton, Herkskovits and Redfield: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come in continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups". See also Teske and Nelson (1974: 351-367) who discuss Johnson's (1963) view of assimilation which is defined as a process of change during which the immigrant seeks to identify himself in various respects with members of the host group and becomes less distinguishable from them.

simultaneously reflect a formation of boundaries. However, the preceding point does not justify the degree of connectedness to India that the parents (older generation) still feel towards India.

Thus, what we may infer from the two individual phenomenon of the visible pattern of habituation and the continuing degree of connectedness with India is that the extent of time passed from the period of migration to the present time plays an important role in determining the importance of India in the individual's life. However, it should be realized that such a factor is not the only determinant, but other determinants such as the oral traditions and personal choice may also influence the perceptions of the individuals.

Let us take into consideration ethnicity, oral traditions, religion and the impact of the Dutch culture in determining the Hindustani identity of a twice migrated individual. Identity by its very nature is multi-faceted; it does not necessarily remain static but is constantly facilitating and redressing situations. Ethnicity, as a part of the Hindustani identity, has remained a constant factor despite its various re-interpretations according to circumstances. Therefore, approaching the study with an ethnicity-based perspective can enable a focus in understanding the Hindustani identity. However, this perspective reveals the quandary of the twice migrated Hindustanis who find themselves in a position where they identify themselves as equal citizens in their country of birth, "home country" (Netherlands) whilst still fostering attributes of the ancestral "motherland" (India) by way of narrations passed on by their parents and older generations and the consistencies of their ethnic physical attributes.

The cultural attributes of the "motherland", India continue to affect the present generation of twice migrated Hindustanis not only by way of engagement facilitated by their parents, but also because they feel that it is a rich cultural heritage which they want to maintain. Thus, the relationship between the present and the past contributes to identity formation, identifying who they are and how they relate history to their lives today.

Some scholars like Lal,⁴¹ claim that "however unlike Indian communities across the world might be they all maintain some sort of tenuous link with the motherland". According to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA)⁴², Government of India, the identity of the Indian Diaspora is based on a combination of culture and language and interestingly, the influence of films⁴³. Each of these constituent factors are believed to play a role in keeping the identity alive and may even determine the identity of future generations. It further adds that such determinants will influence whether one will remain attached to the roots of one's parents and forefathers or will get assimilated in the culture of the country of residence and acquire a new identity. Indeed the far reaching impact of Bollywood films is not only on the Indian Diaspora in countries such as the U.S. and U.K. but also as far as Senegal according to some.⁴⁴

⁴¹In his blog topic, "The Indian Diaspora", available at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/diaspora.html>

⁴²Refer to section, "India and its Diaspora" which provides country-specific Diaspora information. Available at www.moia.gov.in

⁴³This point has been elaborately discussed by Verstappen and Rutten in their paper, "Bollywood and the Indian Diaspora" (2007) about the influence and popularity of Bollywood movies (Indian version of the American film world, Hollywood). MOIA in fact in acknowledgement of the international influence of Bollywood films has invited Bollywood celebrities to perform or speak at the PBD.

⁴⁴For instance, Shashi Tharoor, scholar and Indian politician as panelist at the 2011 PBD on Bollywood and Entertainment recounted how the mother of his Senegalese friend was known to take a bus every month to Dakar to watch a Bollywood film. Even though she was constrained by her lack of knowledge of the Hindi language she would return "with stars in eyes about India as a result!" Excerpt of talk available at <http://www.nrimatters.com/power-nris/shashi-tharoor-on-bollywood-and-entertainment-at-pbd-2011>

From the literature on the Hindustani community, it is evident that Bollywood films are popular among the young Hindustanis. Bollywood⁴⁵ and religious affiliations are two important means through which the Diaspora maintains a relationship with their ancestral homeland. Lal describes the influence of Bollywood films as a binding force, unique to the Indian Diaspora. Indeed some of my respondents confessed to the popularity of Bollywood films. However, Bollywood for these young Hindustanis is mainly a world of glitz and glamour (which is largely the case with a majority of the Bollywood films these days). In fact, one of the respondents during a telephonic interview stressed that the influence of this trend in films to lead some individuals to believe that such glitz and glamour truly exists throughout India.

The disconnect between the younger twice migrated present generation of Hindustanis and India is echoed in their doubts about how to go about engaging with India. Change in the family structure, increased acceptance of the western recreations like music and dress, inter-racial marriages and change in language spoken “at home” in the Netherlands all coalesce to add to the differences.

In the present study, the cultural dimension is taken into perspective to analyse how the twice migrated Hindustani identify with both the societies, that is, ancestral India and the Netherlands as home. In a period of changing paradigms of recognizing identity-- multicultural, integrationist to assimilative-- there should be a pragmatic approach in understanding such evolving situations which is country-specific. The nomenclature, “Hindustani” in itself may require clarification for the twice migrated Hindustani born in the Netherlands wherein an individual has the option of a “Dutch identity”, “Hindustani identity with a Suriname background” and “twice migrated Hindustani” identity.

There were a number of terminologies such as “Dutch Indian”, “Sarnami Indian”, “Suriname Hindoestani”, “Dutch with Indian religion”, “Suriname Hindustani with Indian roots”, “Dutch Hindoestani”, “Netherlands with Bollywood influence” and “Dutch, Suriname and Indian” that the respondents identified themselves with. These terms may reflect one’s ethnic origins, ancestry, place of birth or simply personal choice. Such recognition and use of terminologies clearly indicates the situational perspectives of the individuals. Additionally, completely opposite to the above perspectives wherein individuals showed adherence to a Dutch, Surinami or an Indian identity, there were others who thought of themselves as “not Dutch, Sarnami or Indian”. The number of ways in which members of this particular community (which is in minority) choose to identify themselves, possibly makes it harder for Dutch Government to implement its integration policies⁴⁶ in multicultural Netherlands. In fact, critics of multiculturalism who believe that multiculturalism increases divisiveness and view it as a threat to social cohesion, emphasise the need for a common culture for a nation to function peacefully.

5. Conclusion

So, I reflect back on the question I raised in the beginning of the paper. Is the present generation of twice migrated Hindustanis in a situation of cultural rootlessness or cultural rootedness?

“The acceptance of diversity, difference and pluralism, the increasing porousness of national boundaries, and the globalization of culture has complicated the once narrow understanding of citizenship. Some turn to India for culture and spiritual reasons, finding its civilizational values more pertinent to their lives. Elsewhere, political persecution and cultural denigration... have

⁴⁵Verstappen and Rutten (2007: 211-233) discuss the relationship between Bollywood and Indians at length.

⁴⁶For e.g. a discussion on immigration to the Netherlands states that “since 1998 several new immigration and integration laws have been introduced. Without exception they have made Dutch immigration and integration policies stricter. More so than in other European countries, cultural belonging and cultural difference remain important concepts in policies and political debates. Immigrants and their descendants continue to be viewed as culturally distinct groups, but whereas early integration policies aimed at maintaining cultural diversity, this diversity is increasingly seen as something that obstructs integration into Dutch society”. Available at <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/The-Netherlands.2644.0.html?&L=1>

encouraged Indians to retain their cultural heritage and renew their links with India both as a potent act of resistance and as a powerful affirmation of their distinctiveness".⁴⁷

The overseas Indian community comprises a diverse global community represented by different regions, languages, cultures and faiths. What binds them together is the idea of India and its intrinsic values. The twice migrated Hindustanis identify with India as the centre of origin of their cultural heritage. This cultural heritage reflects their 'Indianness' which in turn contributes to their unique identity as twice migrated Hindustanis.

To enable a better understanding of the twice migrated Hindustanis, we may recognise three phases of identity formation with reference to migration:

- a) During the first wave of migration in 1873 when the British Indian indentured labourers were shipped to Suriname from India to work in Suriname plantations, they were Indians with an Indian identity;
- b) In Suriname they began to identify each other as 'Suriname Hindustanis' with certain Indian socio-cultural attributes contributing to their 'Indianness'; and
- c) In the wave of migration during the time of Suriname's independence in 1975, the previously Indian indentured labourers, migrated as 'Suriname Hindustanis' to the Netherlands, where they were confronted with the situation of being identified as 'Suriname Hindustanis', 'twice migrated Hindustanis', 'Indian Diaspora' or 'Dutch citizens'.

What we can infer from the identified phases of identity formation is that identity formation for the twice migrated Hindustanis has been influenced by aspects such as coercive mobility, acculturation, assimilation, multiculturalism and present day contemporariness. With the passage of time, there appears to be a growing distance between the people of Indian origin (here, the present generation of twice migrated Hindustanis) and their ancestral country, India. Even though their 'Indianness' is maintained, the twice migrated Hindustanis are now recognised as 'autochthonous Dutch'⁴⁸ by the Government of the Netherlands.

Most of my respondents harboured a critical view towards India. Though they recognize India as the 'home' of their ancestors, the seat of their 'Indianness' and cultural heritage; the Netherlands is indisputably their present 'home'. However, when it came to expressing their self-identity, there was a general consensus that they were 'Dutch citizens' with varying affection towards India.

When the word 'Diaspora' is used, Lal⁴⁹ opines that much of the literature presumes a relationship between the diasporic community and the land which they left ('motherland' or 'home'), to which the possibility of return always exists. However though the Surinamese Hindustanis are identified as its 'Diaspora' by India, I came across several respondents who expressed that they had no immediate plans to return to India although they would like to maintain relationships with relatives and friends (if any). While acknowledging the Government of India programmes like the Know India Programme⁵⁰, several of my respondents during my interactions at the 2012 PBD, said that they felt that the PBD caters mainly to the Non- Resident Indians (NRIs) and initiatives for investment in India, and does not look into engaging wholly with the Diaspora in terms of understanding Diaspora-specific needs from a socio- cultural perspective that may enable them to know India better.

⁴⁷ Lal, 2007: 346.

⁴⁸ Native Dutch. Bal, 2012: 4.

⁴⁹ <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/reflect.html>

⁵⁰ The Know India Programme (KIP) is an initiative of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs to help familiarize Indian Diaspora youth, in the age group of 18-26 years, with developments and achievements made by India. This three-week orientation programme for diaspora youth provides a unique forum for students and young professionals of Indian origin to visit India, share their views, expectations and experiences and to bond closely with contemporary India. MOIA has conducted 23 KIPs and a total of 700 overseas Indian youth have participated so far (MOIA Annual Report 2012: 17).

The present generation of the twice migrated Hindustanis find themselves in a multi-faceted cultural situation, where on the one hand, they hold Dutch passports and are thus identified as citizens of the Netherlands, and on the other hand, when they are in India, they are looked upon as foreigners and not as Indians. Again, there are situations where, in the Netherlands despite being born and brought up in the country and being a Dutch citizen, they often feel being looked at differently because of their ethnicity. Ultimately, these individuals expressed that the term “world citizen” best reflects the situation they find themselves in. However, such a situation may not be viewed as ‘unique’ or specific only to the present generation of the twice migrated Hindustanis. In fact, such a feeling may be felt by other PIOs whose ancestors migrated generations ago from India to their present domicile.⁵¹

India in itself is a cultural melting pot- with significant language⁵² and religious diversity. Faiths like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are all followed in India. Such characteristics collectively contribute to “Indianness”. Specifically discussing the sample in the present study, that is, the Hindus, there is a large influence of the religion in contributing to ‘Indianness’ of the individuals. Lal⁵³ opines there are certain forces at work that contribute to an all-encompassing ‘Indian Diaspora’ that merges the widely dissimilar elements of the Indian sub-continent into one ‘Indian community’. One of the element he identifies is Hinduism whereby the “diasporic Hindus appear to know the meaning and contours of Hinduism better than Hindus in India”.

The Indian Diasporas spread across the world maintain and nurture this “Indianness” which contributes to their “Diasporic identity”⁵⁴. In fact, the question of an ‘Indianness’ for an Indian is enhanced when overseas often contributing to a feeling of longing. More often than not, when Indians are abroad, they tend to shed their regional, linguistic and ethnic identities and adopt a common identity of being an ‘Indian’.

The final question then is, “what is the Hindustani identity for the twice migrated?” The essence of “Indianness” that is manifest in the present generation of the twice migrated Hindustani is one of “**cultural rootedness in their cultural rootlessness**”. It must be clearly understood that the twice migrated Hindustani identify themselves as a distinct cultural and ethnic community, where a distinctiveness from their Indian origin is recognised, but they do not identify themselves as Indian. In contrast, Indian immigrants (Non Resident Indians) would generally identify themselves as an Indian and definitely not constitute one ethnic or cultural community.

The accomplishments of the Indian Diaspora are widely attributed to its traditional ethos, its cultural values and heritage. One way of understanding the role of the Indian Diaspora is to consider their ability to facilitate India’s relations with other countries. This fact is widely recognised by the Government of India and is evident in the constitution of a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora in 2001 which recommended measures for a constructive relationship between India and its Diaspora. An interesting finding in this study is how some of the present generation of the twice migrated Hindustanis felt that India, in its initiatives of reaching out to her Diaspora seems to attach

⁵¹Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora (2001: xi - xii) states that a) the Indian Diaspora today is about 20 million reflecting the full multiplicity and variety of the rich social, ethnic, religious and cultural tapestry of the land of its origin and b) ...depend on the historical circumstances of emigration to a particular destination as well as the prevailing political, cultural, economic and social norms in the receiving country. The expectations that they have from their mother country also vary according to their position and status in the host country.

⁵²There are 22 Scheduled languages in India but the number of indigenous languages spoken is far higher, i.e. over 400. See The Economist. Daily Chart, Speaking in Tongues, February 15, 2012, available at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/02/daily-chart-9>

⁵³<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/reflect.html>

⁵⁴Such a term is used to discuss the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands. Available at www.moia.gov.in

more importance to the Non Resident Indians (NRIs) than the People of Indian Origin (PIO).⁵⁵ Such an apprehension may stem from the belief that the NRIs are given more importance because of their willingness and ability to invest in India. The Government of India however acknowledges that “*there is a vast divergence of needs of the different segments of the Diaspora in the field of culture. We must, therefore, adopt a balanced and coordinated approach in responding to those needs*”.⁵⁶

Having begun the paper with an open-ended question, I had assumed that I would appropriately arrive at finite answers. I find Saleh’s⁵⁷ observation useful that the expatriate Indians appear to have “mixed loyalties” both to India and their adopted country—the Netherlands. I am however left asking the question that he does: “[w]hat is so extraordinary in our Indian culture or in our history or our motherland that exerts such a strong pull?” This paper remains an initial attempt to identify new ways of understanding the Diaspora’s affinity to India and explore the different ways and reasons adopted by the Diaspora in imagining their identity.

⁵⁵ Also, refer to the Ministry of Overseas Indians discussion on India’s diaspora, “The Netherlands”, p. 4, where it states that the Surinamese Indians in the Netherlands and the NRIs have a common cultural base. Yet there is an unseen barrier among the communities. In spite of their common origin and cultural heritage, the two groups of Indians in the Netherlands have different characteristics and cultural differences. They also differ in the level of their integration with the Dutch society. Available at www.moia.gov.in

⁵⁶ See conclusions and recommendations of the Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (2001: 558).

⁵⁷ Saleh Wahid, “The Indian in them Lives on”, available at http://www.gopio.net/Dutch_Suriname_Indians.htm (downloaded on 6th Nov 2012).

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